

# THE OLD THE BOLD & THOSE STILL SERVING

Peter Adamis Abalinx 23 February 2017



The old, the bold and the grey are merely words to describe the plight of many veterans who are suffering silently at home, nursing homes, hospitals, rehabilitation, streets, old age facilities and some in mental complexes designed to support those who have suffered as a result of their service. Many would not venture past this line and pit the article down to another digger who is not happy. Yet this article is not about me, but about the plight of those before and those living today in difficult circumstances.

I will bet my bottom dollar that few would know of the toxins, the smells, the different environments, the heat, the cold, the weight, the stress, the endurance, the discipline, control and strenuous training of men and women had to endure throughout their service life. Who would know that spit polish a shoe, a boot and other footwear you would have to expose yourself to the toxins of shoe polish, let alone the brasso and other toxic chemicals in order to keep their equipment in good order.

Who would know that the anti-malaria pills, the water purification pills and the anti-mite used to ward off jingle parasites may also have toxic chemicals within and all contributing towards cancer related illnesses late in life? What about the asbestos roofs that lined the huts that we lived in or worked under for years. The air purifiers made of asbestos when wearing our decontamination or biological uniforms and running with our equipment in order to train in case of biological warfare. Then we have the poor bastards who refuelled the aircraft, smelling all the toxic fumes. The digger in the jungles carrying the platoon 77 radio sets only to find out years later that the batteries caused cancer.

The engineers, and electrical personnel who smelled the fumes from their arc welding equipment and soldering irons which cause cancer related illness later in life. Yes, our men and women were exposed to such toxic elements and to those who were married, they gave their clothes along with their uniforms to their wives and families who handled the toxic wastes and over the years fell ill with cancer. Everyone is far too afraid to bring such matters up and I am convinced that the Defence Department is aware or have been aware of such matters and have slowly over the years removed such items from the shelves and/or storage destroying millions of dollars of products that should never have been subjected to the man and woman wearing the uniform of Australia.

Today, the veteran community is up in arms over the inadequacy and inequality of pensions, services, homeless veterans, mental health issues and much much more. Both sides of Politics have promised much and yet so little has been delivered. It is a crying shame that these same veterans are trying to cope with higher living standards. Australia is a very wealthy country and yet it neglects its veteran community at a time when they need help. As Australian we need to wake up from our slumber and realise that life for a veteran and for those who have worn the uniform of Australia are fighting back in the best way they can and not asking for a handout, but to be given a fair Go. Is that too much to ask or will our political masters so to speak in Canberra, continue to fight over the price of a tooth brush and its relationship to the carbon tax. What a sad day for all Australians.

**POLITICIANS.** Politicians are of the belief that the Veteran vote is miniscule compared to the remainder of the wider community and yet it fails to understand that the Australian Defence Department is Australia's largest employer. Give veterans a Fair Go. Are we not Australians? Of course we are and as such we deserve far more than the pittance we receive when compared to the fat cats and political masters who fawn and complain over benefits being cut. They should be utterly ashamed of themselves. Money being wasted on people travelling overseas on alleged fact finding missions and coming back to criticise our way of life is just un-Australian and not on. You who have been elected are there to serve the people.

You have been elected to do the right thing and not play party politics. Have the courage to do what is right, fight the good fight and to hell with political numbers men and women. Don't be afraid if you speak out against party policy, be unified by all means but Australians and Australia comes before your needs. Remember that next time you vote on a bill and follow blindly those who lead others by the nose. Have guts and the courage to do what is right. Cemeteries are full of wannabee political heroes who thought that they would live forever. Every dog has its day and my advice is to make decisions in the best interests of this nation. You will never be alone.

**CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.** For the Captains of Industry, Chief Executive Officers, Community Presidents, Managers, Supervisors and others in the decision making roles, spare a thought for the veterans who separate from the Australian Armed Forces. When they the veterans knock on your door or you have received a resume whose experience has been in the military, do not consider them as military morons or institutionalised. Reflect for one moment upon the skills, knowledge and experience you and your company, industry or community would be getting in return when you decide to employ or hire such a man or woman over others. It does not take money or effort to spend time with these men and women to be either retrained and/or slotted into positions commensurate with their skills, knowledge, education and life time skills. You will never regret making the decision to employ an ex service member.

**ANZAC DAY.** ANZAC Day holds a special place in the hearts and minds of all Australians. The legacy forged in blood in Gallipoli has never dimmed and generations of our military have carried the torch, be it World War One or Two and subsequent campaigns since 1945. In short, from ANZAC to the current operations in Afghanistan and other theatres of war, ANZAC Day is a time to remember those that have fallen to Revere their sacrifice, Respect their courage and valour and to reflect that War is not something to celebrate. This is the true meaning of ANZAC Day: Remembrance, for those who gave their all for a freedom they would never see. Loyalty, sharing the load, burdens of responsibility and hardship as cobblers can only understand as well as a respect and forgiveness for one's foe after the battle has been won or lost.

A legacy all ANZACS leave behind is that those they leave behind to carry on, a mateship that would test the challenges of life and time. It is not about glorifying war, about flying the flag or dying for it, but a true love of life and living according to one's code, beliefs and doing the right thing. ANZAC Day and its legacy will live long after we have gone. It is after all about keeping alive the spirit of a people who have gone before us and leaving behind a legacy that in essence best describes the Australian character. We shall remember them.

**GIVE VETERANS A FAIR GO.** We may be grey and growing old, long in the tooth and walk with canes. Our hearing and our vision may not be the best and our bodies wracked with pain. But we who have worn the uniform of Australia we don't often complain. Are we not Australians? ON ANZAC Day when you see us on parade. Spare a thought for our men and women who have worn your uniform to keep you free from fear and aggression. Are we not Australians? For we were once young just like you. We laughed we sang we had our fair share of miseries and grief, struggles love and laughter.

How many would know of the hardships a digger, sailor or airmen would have to go through in order to have the honour of wearing the uniform. What about our reservists who are now on par with our regulars, doing their bit, on a full time/partime basis. Who would know what it is like to be absent from home for months on end and then come back to a family that hardly recognises you, let alone understand what they went through? Ask any Vietnam veteran and they will tell you. They suffered when they returned and were turned away by WW2 veterans who did not think the Vietnam War was not a real war. That is why the Vietnam veterans made sure that all those who returned from active duty would be treated warmly and welcomed back home.

**WEARING THE UNIFORM.** Yes only the medical doctors, the psychiatrists, the psychologist, the carers', the families and a few close mates are aware of what these men and women went through. They are not surprised when they hear of another veteran doing themselves in because they could not cope with what they witnessed. Mind you, this is not only for veterans but also a tribute to those who wear uniforms on a daily basis such as the police, border patrol officers, Protective Service Officers, nurses, ambulance and para military, the firemen, the State Emergency Service personnel, the Rangers and many others who keep our nation safe from harm in order that we live in comparative safety. A reminder then to those alive today to think of the freedoms you have and when you do, pause for a moment consider then those who wore the uniform to keep you safe

Life may not be easy and yet work needs to be done. We hobble around our homes to see what needs to be done. We look for our medication to sustain during the day. A life time of wearing your uniform. We don't often ask for much. We have already given. The clothes we wear have all worn out. Are we not Australians? On ANZAC Day when you see we are not on parade. You will wonder if we have gone to our grave. I guess all we ask of you is that you remember us. ANZAC Day is not about war, wearing of medals and that war is just. ANZAC Day is for remembrance, respect, reflection and reverence to those who have worn the uniform of Australia. Are we not Australians? To right we are. All we ask for is a bit of a Fair Go for veterans, their carers' and their families. After all we were there for you.

**OFFICERS, WARRANT OFFICERS AND SENIOR NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS.** I may be an old bastard to some and a pest to others but what I have to say to the Officers, Warrant Officers and Senior Non Commissioned Officers is this. Do not take your responsibilities lightly, don't let fear and procrastination be your companions, actions speak louder than words and ALWAYS stand up for the men and women you serve. Yes I did write serve even though you may all think you are leading them. Don't be afraid to take the fight up to the man and woman at the top and tell them that something is wrong.

Don't be afraid of the politics, the service pension, and the loss in rank when you are in the right. Don't fall for the political correctness or what may be the local fad at the moment. Stand your ground and be what you are supposed to be. representatives of this nation we all call home. Australia. This nation and its people are far greater in power than those who wield the big stick. Bring back integrity, credibility and respect back into our armed forces and again I say, stand up for the men and women under your command for they will go to hell and back if need be.

**RETURNED SERVICES LEAGUE.** My last comments are reserved for the members and management of RSL's throughout Australia. I challenge every one of you bastards to get off you bloody arses and do something constructive for our veterans and not just play the role. If you have the pokies to assist you, then give that money gained back to the veteran community. Work harder than you have ever worked before. Contribute the time and the money and provide resources to our veterans and their families. Our RSLs' throughout the nation have let the veteran community down with their corruptive practices and mismanagement.

I travelled to far North Queensland to a town hidden in the jungles, where I once trained and found to my amazement that one of the long-time RSLs in the area had closed down because of mismanagement. Another in New South Wales because of corruptive practices, then again we have the RSLs in Victoria that went bankrupt as a result of poor management. Get out if you are not competent and allow those who can manage the affairs of the RSL to do their job. To me, anyone on the RSL Board should be elected for their expertise and not because of mates. Mind you, not all Returned Service Clubs fall into that category, but I can guarantee the reader that many have lost the reasons why the RSLs' were first introduced.

Well I have had my say, my bitch and expressed my dismay on a number of issues and in true blue Aussie style, I will go down fighting for what I believe in. I challenge all those involved to do the right thing. 2015 and 2016 for me were years of reflection, treatment and recovery. Not to dwell on what could have been but to ensure that whatever time we have left is not squander in futile objectives that lead to nowhere. I intend to make life more meaningful and worthwhile, worthy of those who had a hand in making me who I am today. Life as we know it can only be sustained by vigilance and with that vigilance comes responsibility. Let us hope that 2017 is a good one. Apologies for the savagery of the English language, the poor grammar and punctuation.



[Peter Adamis](#) is a Journalist/Social Media Commentator and writer. He is a retired Australian military serviceman and an Industry organisational & Occupational (OHS) & Training Consultant whose interests are within the parameters of domestic and international political spectrum. He is an avid blogger and contributes to domestic and international community news media outlets as well as to local and Ethnic News. He holds a Bachelor of Adult Learning & Development (Monash), Grad Dip Occupational Health & Safety, (Monash), Dip. Training & Assessment, Dip Public Administration, and Dip Frontline Management. Website: [abalinx.com](http://abalinx.com) Contact via Email: [abalinx@gmail.com](mailto:abalinx@gmail.com) or via Mobile: 0409965538