



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION NATIONAL OFFICE

A member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations

31 May 2016

MEDIA STATEMENT

VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH – HEARING AIDS

The Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), together with its partners in the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO), welcomed the Government's announcement on the 3rd May 2016 that the 2016-17 Budget would provide \$37.9 million to extend non-liability health care to all current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). That meant that anyone who had served in the ADF's permanent forces would now be eligible to have treated such conditions as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and alcohol/substance abuse.

The National President of DFWA, David Jamison, proffered that, "as welcome as that initiative had been, it was a bitter disappointment to the whole veterans community that one of the well documented and readily treatable potential causes of anxiety and depression continues to be ignored".

"That being the continued refusal by the Department of Veteran Affairs to provide other than only basic level hearing devices, free to clients, when their irrefutable diagnosed clinical needs demanded devices of a far higher performance and quality to mitigate hearing loss", he said

David further said that, "this denial created the potential for unmistakable social withdrawal symptoms and isolation that develops into anxiety, depression and early onset of dementia¹. These mental health issues clearly increased hospitalisation costs² in the process. Early intervention strategies that include treating hearing loss according to the clinical needs of veterans by providing them with proper hearing aids would overcome many problems".

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DFWA – Voice of the Defence Community

¹ "In children, hearing loss impairs speech and language development, which in turn undermines academic achievement. In adults, it has a negative impact on employment opportunities and social functioning. It can cause social isolation that develops into depression and early onset dementia."

Garvan Institute of Medical Research

² "Older adults with hearing loss are more likely than peers with normal hearing to require hospitalization and suffer from periods of inactivity and depression. Hearing loss may have a profoundly detrimental effect on older people's physical and mental well-being, and even health care resources."

John Hopkins School of Medicine