# south east asian treaty organisation (seato)

## may 2005 · nurse update: 11

## Comcare alert

Proposed changes to the Comcare Guide used for assessing the degree of permanent impairment will make it more difficult for nurses to claim lump sum payments for permanent injuries under the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988.

The ANF has written to Comcare expressing our concerns that SEATO nurses with conditions that would be assessed at the minimum 10 percent whole body impairment under the current Guide would no longer be assessed at that level. For example, the assessment of a nurse with a condition affecting the lower limbs due to peripheral nerve injuries would not be assessed at the threshold level of 10 percent impairment.

Using the above example, the draft changes do not allow for the effect of "pain" to be considered in relation to the difficulties experienced by a person as a result of their illness or injury, and set more prescriptive tests such as being able to walk a distance of 500 metres or less regardless of the problems experienced.

We understand that there is broad opposition to the proposed changes, however so far there has been no feedback from Comcare on its position.

In the meantime it is essential that anyone with an illness or injury that may be related to (or aggravated by) their time in Vietnam contact Debbie Richards at the Federal Office of ANF on 03 9639 5211 to discuss the possibility of making a claim, or email: debbie@anf.org.au

If Comcare proceed with the changes, we are advised that it is unlikely that claims already in the system would be affected by the new Guide.

**If you have been thinking about making a claim, please do it now.**

## Health study - Female Vietnam Veterans

The establishment of the database containing a record of Australian women who participated in the Vietnam war in various roles is progressing slowly but more names are needed to establish a database with sufficient numbers to conduct further health studies for women.

Robert Van der Hoek, from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that so far a total of 285 woman have registered, the largest group being civilian nurses (77); followed by RAAF (58); unofficial entertainers (49); Army (43); Red Cross (15) and Official entertainers (13). Others include: journalists; allied health professionals; foreign affairs and other administrative staff.

Further information about the database is available on the AIHW website: http://www.aihw.gov.au/veteran/fvvchr/index.html or contact Robert Van der Hoek by email: Robert.vanderhoek@aihw.gov.au or phone: 02 6244 1133

## DVA Health Study on Cancer Incidence in Australian Vietnam Veterans

The report on the first study investigating cancer incidence in Vietnam veterans is still not available from DVA. It appears from the DVA website that the expected release date is now mid 2005.

## US Study of Vietnam nurses identifies issues for nurses who may work in war zones in the future

The study titled: "Lessons learned and advice from Vietnam war nurses: a qualitative study", was based on interviews with a sample of female registered nurses who served in Vietnam for the purpose of obtaining advice and guidance from the lessons learned from their experience in Vietnam.

The conclusions of the study are as follows:

*"Much can be learned from the lessons learned and advice given by Vietnam War nurses. These lessons stress that nurses need to take a pro-active role in preparing themselves for deployment to a war zone, and that institutional training for war needs to be intensive and realistic. The environmental, cultural, technological, clinical and psychosocial demands of war nursing need to be comprehensively addressed before nurses deploy to a war."*

The study by Elizabeth A Scannell-Desch, Chairperson and Associate Professor, Division of Nursing, Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, New York is published in the Journal of Advanced Nursing, Volume 49(6), pages 600-607.