

COVVHS is very pleased to support Minister Billson's proposal to undertake a health study of Vietnam veteran's sons and daughters. In addition, we are equally pleased about Mr Alan Griffin's continued commitment to this study. Mr Griffin has assured the Minister there is cross party support.

Research seems to gradually be establishing the cause of the health problems facing sons and daughters of veterans. More information is coming to the attention of veteran's families, to assist them to understand some of the reasons for their ill health.

Author of the Medical Journal of Australia article, Hedley Peach, Visiting Consultant at the Ballarat Base Hospital, and Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne, produced interesting information about the psycho-social aspects of veterans health. (Refer COVVHS web site for details. www.covvhs.org.au)

In addition, Massey University in New Zealand recently released research findings, which indicated significant genetic damage to the DNA of Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange.

Analysis of blood samples from 24 New Zealand veterans exposed to the toxic defoliant showed that the group had suffered genetic damage. Dr Al Rowland acknowledged the sample was statistically small, but said it was significant in that it showed the damage caused to DNA, and that a more extensive study was now needed.

Masters student Louise Edwards, who worked under the supervision of Rowland, said the testing and analyses demonstrated significant level of genetic damage.

This latest finding seems to be another piece in the jig saw puzzle.

Scientists often arrive at a conclusion that ends with: "further and better studies are required.".... As is the case in this New Zealand study.

It is anticipated that these findings will be further investigated, within the Australian Children's health study, shortly to commence, on the sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans.

Veteran's sons and daughters who have battled with serious health problems have long sought reasons for their illnesses, whether psychological or physical. Minister Bruce Billson has indicated he wants to help the children. Above are two very clear pathways he can follow to reach some conclusive results to finally answer our question: "Is there a higher incidence of chronic health conditions in the sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans?"

COVVHS is hopeful that the Minister will consider the information in this study.

NB

The Department of Veterans Affairs proposes to release the incidence of cancer among Australia's veterans before the end of the year.

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