



MEDIA RELEASE MR 10/11 **ALARM BELLS RING FOR VETERANS' WIVES**

As ANZAC Day approaches, the acting State President of the Returned and Services League of Australia, Mr Bob Crosthwaite, has drawn attention to the alarming findings in an extensive survey of the mental health of veterans and their wives.

“We’ve suspected for decades that Vietnam veterans have suffered a variety of mental health problems, and research has confirmed that,” says Mr Crosthwaite.

“But what I find of even greater concern is that the wives of Vietnam veterans are displaying symptoms of mental illness 20 or 30 times higher than in the general population.

“On ANZAC Day we will, of course, honour those whose lives were lost in war but as a community we carry an enormous debt to look after those who’ve survived but whose lives have been traumatised.”

Mr Crosthwaite said a study just completed by Dr Brian O’Toole at the ANZAC Research Institute in Sydney had established beyond doubt that the wives of Vietnam veterans are suffering significantly higher levels of depression, panic attacks, anxiety disorders and post traumatic stress disorder.

“Dr O’Toole has been working with a large group of veterans and their families for the past 20 years and his work has been recognised here and in the United States as ground-breaking,” said Mr Crosthwaite.

“It does appear that in supporting their husbands through their mental health illness, the wives are in turn affected, and this has terrible ramifications for these families.”

Dr O’Toole has warned that there is no reason to suspect that troops returning from East Timor, Iraq or Afghanistan will not develop mental disorders, and that their partners will not be similarly affected.

“These are the long-term effects of war service and we must not ignore them or sweep them under the carpet,” said Mr Crosthwaite.

“The Returned and Services League has dedicated substantial welfare resources to caring for veterans and their families but more support has to be pledged by State and Federal governments to cope with this growing burden of mental health in the veteran community.”

For further information:

Mr Bob Crosthwaite, acting State President, RSL. 0428 286889 email: bcrosthwaite@rslnsw.org.au

Dr Brian O’Toole, ANZAC Research Institute (02) 9767 6167 or 0419 252251 Email: botoole@anzac.edu.au