

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF
AUSTRALIA

REPORT BY

J P DWYER AM
YEAR 2000 FELLOW

SUBJECT

**A STUDY OF THE CARE AND SUPPORT OF WIDOWS AND CHILDREN
OF WAR VETERANS; AND SERVICEMAN KILLED IN TRAINING OR
HAZARDOUS DUTY.**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Subject:

The care and support of widows and children of war veterans; and servicemen killed in training or hazardous duty.

Principal locations visited and prime contacts:

- *New Zealand* – Auckland
NZ Legion, NZ Special Air Service Association, HQ NZ Defence Force
- *United States of America* – Los Angeles, Tucson, Baltimore, Washington DC
173rd Airborne brigade Association, The American Legion, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors INC (TAPS).
- *United Kingdom* – Plymouth, Swansea, Oxford, Basildon, London
The Royal British Legion, London Legacy

Major Observations

- The USA has a major government department providing support services to the veteran community, while NZ and surprisingly the UK, only provide a basic level through Social Security entitlements.
- All three countries have a lead ex-service organization; NZ Legion, American Legion and the Royal British Legion providing a large range of services with priority to veterans; and then their dependant spouses and children.
- Regimental associations in all countries provide varying levels of local support to their own kin however this is dissipating as the age of members' increases.
- Australia with its Department of Veterans' Affairs, lead ex-service organization the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) and kindred organizations such as Legacy provide a level of service to the veteran community that must be considered as a leader in the world.
- Legacy remains a unique organization that no nation in the world has duplicated in its support for widows and fatherless children.

Dissemination and Implementation

The observations in this report will be made available to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, Legacy Co-ordinating Council, London Legacy, Department of Veteran' affairs, the RSL and the lead organizations in the countries visited.

Members of ex-service associations have already made personal requests for copies and these will be disseminated as appropriate.

A meeting with the Governor of Queensland, Major General P Arnison AC has been made and a verbal report delivered. A written and verbal report is to be delivered to the 2001 Legacy National Conference.

A personal link has been established with TAPS in the USA for exchanges of information.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Dwyer is general manager of a risk management advisory company and actively involved in community work as a legatee with Brisbane Legacy and is currently Chairman of the Legacy National Marketing committee. He is also the executive officer of the General Douglas MacArthur Brisbane Memorial Trust.

Following a successful military career, which included two combat tours of South Vietnam, John has worked in commerce, industry and local government in project management and general management roles.

John's community involvement with widows and children of deceased veterans and Australian Defence Force servicemen and servicewomen killed in training or hazardous duty began in 1993 when he was inducted as a member of Legacy.

John can be contacted by e-mail at jpdwyer@ozemail.com.au and welcomes feedback on observations in this report.

❖ Disclaimer

For the pedants and pundits, any figures and organizations quoted in the report were gleaned from documents and interviews at that time. The veracity of the details can only be assumed although every effort was made to verify the details and comments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I believe that many people have the inherent ability to succinctly write on a subject with ease and clarity, unfortunately I don't. My writing skills, first developed by the good nuns of the Sacred Heart in rural Western Australia and honed to perfection during a couple of decades of quick note taking and bullet points (no pun intended) under a jungle canopy in Vietnam, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and North Queensland have always been a chore for me.

Writing a report that gives justice to those women and children who have suffered the trauma of a loved one lost through military service has been an emotional trial. Finding the right words to express my personal experiences of engaging with people actively involved in the care of others who have faced such personal loss and tragedy has also been difficult.

How do you write a report on observations of healing and coping with life after loss?

Nevertheless, this report stands as an overview of the exchange of information, the handshakes, the hugs and seeing the pride and the anguish in the eyes of the widows, the fatherless children and the caregivers that I met in my sojourn across the globe.

Firstly, I would like to thank all those who, through networks and hospitality, made the fellowship such a success. From Geoff “**Why don't you apply...**” Shaw who started it all, to Paul “**Where's your report!!..**” Tuys who signs it off.

In particular I would like to thank Hugh Oakley-Browne and the Kiwi SAS connection in NZ; the Lacey extended family in Tucson, Arizona; Don the chef!; Mary Dunham Nichols of Baltimore whose tenacity in advocating widows support and MIA awareness is legendary; Peter McAuley the Aussie 'flag' in Winchester, West Virginia; the wonderful TAPS family across the USA; the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association; Bob Bowring, Ian Guild, Dave Woodcraft and their gracious spouses from London Legacy, Legacy Coordinating Council and the Australian Legacy family who were the inspiration for the study.

A special thank you is given to Bonnie Carroll the President and founder of TAPS, an inspiration to so many young widows and children, for giving me the opportunity (as a 'not so' old warrior) to meet and talk with General Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Honourable Togo D West Jr, Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to attend The President's Memorial Day address at Arlington Cemetery.

Finally, many thanks to Janet and Clare for bearing the brunt of my occasional irritability with computers and script and for their support of my many absences on community and extra-curricula chores in this wonderful planet we live upon.

RATIONALE OF CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP STUDY

“ The care of dependants of veterans who served their country in a war area or an operational area and who died on service or subsequently affords a field of service. Personal effort is the main essential. Safeguarding the interests of children is a service worth rendering and their interests include their mental, moral, vocational and physical welfare. Inasmuch as these are the activities of Legacy, it is our privilege to accept the Legacy of fallen comrades. “

The Charter of Legacy.

Legacy began in 1923 with the care of deceased soldiers' dependants as the main objective. It in effect institutionalised what many veterans were already doing informally, which was 'keeping an eye' on the widows and children of relatives or comrades who had not returned from the Great War.

From this beginning Legacy has developed a proud and enviable record of 77 years of service to the community, delivered by volunteers (the legatees) and a small dedicated support staff through 49 Clubs in Australia and one in London. Today the care is extended to over 130,000 widows, fatherless children and disabled dependants across Australia and parts of the UK and Europe.

In the past Australia's Legacy has been highly regarded the world over. For example, the Reader's Digest Magazine commended Australia's efforts in an article written by James A Mitchener, *“no nation in the world cares for the widows and orphans of servicemen with as much generosity, thoughtfulness and love as Australia does through this extraordinary society”* (1956). Then in 1978, (22 years later), Dr Mark Lyons author of the book *“Legacy – the First Fifty Years”*, echoed these praises when he noted that, *“Legacy is a unique organization. Nowhere else in the world is there an organization of ex-servicemen devoted solely to helping the dependants of their deceased comrades”*.

Another 22 years later, in the year 2000, do these words of praise still hold true? Does Legacy still hold its unique place in the world? Does legacy still provide this care? Has any other country duplicated the success of Legacy? Will I be able to say that Legacy is still a unique organization?

These were a few of the questions that went through my mind when I was pondering a subject of study for my Churchill Fellowship application. After some deliberation the purpose became clear – to study the efforts that our closest Allies have made to support the widows and orphans of those who were killed in war, military training or peace-keeping operations. And in effect compare those efforts to those made by Australia's Legacy.

.....*The journey begins.....*

INTRODUCTION

To compare the efforts made by Australia's Allied countries, towards their war widows and orphans, I firstly needed to have a clear understanding of what has made Legacy so special that it stands out from other ex-service organizations. Essentially, what makes Legacy so unique is the simple fact that it goes beyond the many other fine ex-service organizations by providing a special dimension of care. This is to say that Legacy extends its personal service to the *families* of deceased veterans and more recently servicemen and servicewomen killed in training for war or hazardous duty.

Legacy's charter of care and service reputation is well cemented into its place in Australia's community history. Nevertheless, due to the rapid changes of this technology centred world, the types of services delivered by Legacy have also had to keep up with the times and adapt accordingly. Thus there have been various new and exciting ways Legacy has delivered its personal services since those tough years immediately following the end of the First World War. Legacy's personal service is delivered via a "Legatee". A Legatee is an ex-service person who is allocated a widow or a family and is entrusted to provide them with assistance and a helping hand on a permanent basis. In other words, legacy provides a person to be a permanent 24-hour contact point if a difficult situation should arise.

The numbers of Legatees available to provide personal service has also changed. The membership of clubs is dropping and many Legacy clubs are now looking for alternatives to increase the numbers, for example, funded welfare officers and 'friends of Legacy' (people without a service background).

Concomitantly, the profile of care has also changed as the large numbers of children have grown up and moved on from the legacy family to make their own way in the world. The numbers of widows requiring assistance, particularly in overcoming loneliness, are quietly increasing as the Second World War servicemen pass on. These ladies are now presenting a new challenge for Legacy - the care of the frail and aged.

Underpinning this change in Legacy's care profile is the increasing need for funds for special welfare cases. Fund raising was not an issue in the early years but it is now essential for its survival. With these societal changes there is also another new challenge for Legacy. Australia has now grown into a new society, without the majority of people having a background of family members who served in the Australian Forces (First World War, Second World War, Korea, Malaya, Borneo and South Vietnam). How will Legacy express and convey this *outgoing* duty of care and its *internal operating* needs, to a future society of Australian's quite ethnically changed to that of the mid 1900's?

It must be noted that with the gradual and recognisable change in our Australian community profile Legacy is faced with an ever-increasing competition from a number of worthy causes emerging in the community. To be recognised and therefore supported by the public of today Brisbane Legacy decided that Legacy's

duty of care and personal service needed to be defined and listed. Thus the publication of the "*Categories of services*" was formulated.

In its Strategic Plan for the new millennium Brisbane Legacy defined and listed its "*Categories of services*" as:

- Financial assistance and advice to widows
- Youth welfare (dependants)
- Widows pension advocacy
- Widow communities management and facilitation
- Counselling services for health and well being
- Self-sufficiency advice and support
- Quality support and advice by legatees
- Recreation quality for widows
- Safety and security assessments and advice
- Youth development and personal development
- Continuous Learning
- Nationwide advocacy and lobbying networks

Legacy's historic background of fundamental personal service coupled with its defined duties of care, expressed as the "*Categories of service*", gave me the clear guidelines I needed to compare Legacy with Australia's Allies support of widows and children.

THE JOURNEY

The journey commenced from Brisbane on Sunday, 30 April 2000 and was completed on Thursday 23 June 2000. The route taken took a circumnavigation of the globe principally through the three countries that have been most intimately linked with the Australian Defence Forces since the First World War. These countries were New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

The major cities that I visited were:

➤ Auckland

Hosting was by former members of the New Zealand Special Air Service who had served on operations in Malaya, Borneo and South Vietnam. Discussions were predominately on an opportunity basis. Contact with members of the New Zealand Legion and Military pensions staff in Defence Headquarters was also made.

➤ Los Angeles

Contact, visits and discussions were held at an American Legion Post and with members of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Association.

➤ Tucson

Hosting by a Vietnam veteran (Transport Corps), a chance meeting with the 90th Bomber Group (WW2) reunion and discussions with Second World War veterans.

➤ Baltimore

Hosting by a Cold War/MIA widow. (Husband was shot down during the Korean War). Discussions and meetings with Baltimore social and political women's clubs (now that was an experience of a life time!) and Second World War veterans.

➤ Washington DC

Attendance at the National Military Survivor Seminar and National Memorial Day weekend activities with widows, children and members of the United States Armed Forces.

➤ Plymouth/Swansea/Oxford/Basildon/London

Hosting by members of London Legacy across Southern England and Southern Wales. Meetings and functions attendance with Legatees, Second World War, Korean War and SAS veterans and Royal British Legion members.

WIDOWS AND CHILDREN

The real and practical task of the Fellowship was to identify and burrow through the many government departments and programs supporting the overseas veteran community. This included the veterans associations, veteran's auxiliaries and agencies existing in the countries visited. The outcome sought was to find an equivalent 'Legacy' – An organization that at the end of the day provides a constant and personal service to the widows, fatherless children and disabled dependants.

This I did not find. However, I did come across an abundance of organizations that individually had some services similar to Legacy. The sheer numbers of organizations that do exist across the world and their divergent objectives and perceptions of care were overwhelming. To research and visit them all was impossible task to meet in such a limited time. To cite all the organizations would produce a directory list that would choke 'Phar Lap'.

The modus operandi, which I eventually adopted, was to gather information from a cross-section of the primary organizations through both formal and informal discussions and questions with organisational staff. I also ventured out into the communities and listened to the widows themselves on their perceptions of the support provided to them.

Early in the course of the journey the second dilemma soon presented itself. As soon as I made people aware of Legacy's role and achievements through the course of conversations I was requested to give a more in-depth overview of Legacy, which then led to lengthy discussions on a myriad of subjects, related to the care of servicemen's families. What resulted was a Fellowship role reversal in almost all places I visited. With the function of the Fellowship planned as an investigative study I fell back on Winston Churchill's maxim that: "with opportunity comes responsibility" by dividing my time to both gathering information and imparting information. The former is contained in my observations in this report, the latter is encapsulated in the Brisbane Legacy "*Categories of services*" which were often discussed and presented to the organizations and individuals being visited.

Evaluations of each of the three countries are as follows:

➤ **New Zealand**

Duplication of Legacy in the form of personal service to all veterans' widows and children under the structure of one organization was not evident.

As a generalisation, when a veteran dies the broad initial support to a widow and dependant children, by such as family, NZ Legion, Regimental association, immediate government assistance, colleagues of the veteran and personal friends dissipates after three or four months (the anecdotal Australian experience is similar) and ongoing support essentially falls to community norms and programs. The variables to this continuity of support can be as complex as in Australia and are dependant on such issues as domicile location, residual finance, family ties, government policies, social programs and so on, not the least being the widows' and the children's' own resilience, robustness and values. This is where Legacy comes into its own as the one organization that continues the support, subject to eligibility and Legacy policies, for as long as the widow and dependants require.

To provide the reader a feel for the subject of veteran community assistance and the value of an organization such as Legacy to provide that 'other dimension of care' the following outlines one element of government assistance given to the veteran

community. From a financial perspective, under the provisions of the New Zealand War Pensions Act 1954 surviving spouse pensions are payable (tax free NZ\$108.37 per week compared to AUD\$212.20 per week for Australian war widows) when:

- The service person's death was due to service;
- The service person's death was not due to service but he/she was on a war disablement pension of 70% or greater at the time of death; or
- The service person could have been on a 70% or greater pension had he/she applied.

On remarriage, the surviving spouse pension ceases, but a lump sum equivalent to two years surviving spouse pension is payable.

If the marriage breaks down within 5 years (death, divorce, permanent separation) the surviving spouse pension can be reinstated.

There are no medical/health benefits available for surviving spouse pensioners, but a Community Services card or high user health card may be available based on income and/or high use of medical services.

Unlike Australia, which administers its support to veterans and dependants through the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Office of Veterans' Affairs in New Zealand is a desk position within the HQ NZ Defence Force with an external War Pensions Processing Unit.

While it can be seen that there is a measure of government support, it, like all government programs is clinical and administered to meet the legislation without any dimension of personal care and compassion. It is worth noting the words 'had he/she applied' in the aforementioned. A key element of Legacy's service delivery and care of its widows is 'Widows pension advocacy' to ensure a surviving spouse is always given the opportunity for assistance in obtaining her rightful financial entitlements. This Legacy service aims to provide a level of security and eliminate the element of chance and oversight. This is not always the case in NZ and as is the case in Australia, individuals do slip through the net of entitlements without the vigilance of a structured support organization.

Educational bursaries are available to children of veterans if the veteran:

- Is on a 70% or greater war disablement pension
- Is on a veterans' (income support) pension
- Was on a veterans' pension at the time of his/her death
- Surviving spouse is receiving pension paid due to the service-related death of the veteran
- Was a Commonwealth service person (other than NZ) whose death or permanent disability would have resulted in the payment of a pension of 70% or greater.

The age limit is 23 years and the child/dependant must be attending a secondary school or tertiary education facility.

This detail has been highlighted not only to demonstrate one aspect of the level of support both country's provide but more importantly to demonstrate the real need for support organizations 'outside the box'.

From this example one can express a level of comfort with what an eligible Australian Legacy widow can gain by knowing that Legacy is there, a phone call away, to assist and support without strings attached and without a threat to her personal autonomy.

➤ **The United States of America**

What a huge country in terms of area, population, economy and government. Despite setting up meetings and visits prior to leaving Australia, the task of delving into America's support for its veteran community was not really appreciated until I arrived in country and tried to tackle the listed organizations and myriad of agencies and support groups.

To do justice to all would have taken months of research however the core aspects of veteran and family support were obvious (not dissimilar to Australia's) and the visit presented an opportunity for a first hand insight into the subject. The conclusion reached was that despite the vastness of the veteran support arrangements there is no specific organization that can be closely matched with Australia's Legacy. The lead veteran organization in the USA is the Department of Veterans affairs. Surprisingly this is the federal government's second largest department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs and national cemeteries. The programs and services are immense by Australian scales, particularly the Veteran Affairs facilities such as medical centres, clinics, Veteran Centres and Regional support offices.

As a broad analysis the provision of government benefits for surviving spouses and children are akin to Australia's, however on different scales and contexts. The nation's largest organization of wartime veterans is The American Legion, its counterparts in Allied nations being the British Legion, the NZ Legion and in Australia the RSL. The American legion's annual spend on the veteran community is in excess of US\$30 million through its 15,000 chartered posts and organised programs. While this is an impressive figure in the assistance to the veteran community across the nation, once entitlements or claims and grants are passed through they generally become a completed item as far as delivery is concerned and are signed off within the particular program. Some may be linked to further organisational or agency support if there is a need however the long term personal service to a surviving spouse was not evident.

Although the Legion, the veteran organizations and affiliate groups are numbered in the hundreds and do provide extensive support there is, as in other countries I observed, that most fundamental element missing. That is the 'other dimension of care' of trusted personal support, advice and compassion so important in meeting widow or family needs both for the short and the long term. Here one must turn to seek an organization with a charter of care such as Legacy. It is, from the Australian experience of the last 77 years, that the 'nominated and committed carer - the Legatee' who from a base of personal commitment, experience and peer affiliation can meet this need. It is a 'legatee' who has the wisdom and capacity to provide the day-to-day support to a family, on a face-to-face basis, for years if necessary.

Among the USA's nationwide network of hardworking veteran organizations and dedicated agencies there was however, one small, but dedicated and developing widows group called The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS). TAPS is making a concerted effort to look at the extra dimension of personal assistance. This is a recently established national military survivor peer support group, a referral point for grief counselling and caseworker assistance.

TAPS was created by the spouses of servicemen who had been killed while serving in the American forces. Military survivors as they now term themselves. An average of almost 2000 active duty servicemen and servicewomen 'make the ultimate sacrifice' each year while serving with the American Forces across the globe. This tragic but consistent statistic has spawned TAPS to offer that other dimension to trauma recovery and peer support.

It was my privilege to be able to attend the 6th Annual TAPS seminar held in Washington DC. A three-day activity for widows, fatherless children, counsellors and carers. I took away a number of major observations:

- Firstly, my personal feelings on the fact that it has taken so long for the veteran community to develop the recognition for an effective ongoing dimension of care, particularly for children;
- Secondly, that it has been a dynamic group of ladies, not the veterans, who have identified a need which was not being met, despite the plethora of veteran organizations and existing support groups;
- Thirdly that TAPS must now somehow fire up the men, particularly the veterans, to get involved if they wish to really extend their scope of care;
- Fourthly, some of the content of the seminar, particularly in the area of grief counselling, might well be considered by Legacy in Australia as it adjusts its profile to meet the emerging needs of this new millennium. This is particularly relevant to the fairly recent extension of Legacy service to encompass servicemen and servicewomen killed on peacekeeping operations (eg; Somalia), while training for war (eg; the blackhawk accident, Townsville) or involved in hazardous training (eg; SAS training).

A central feature of the seminar was a program for the dozens of fatherless children attending with their mothers. Staffed by widows and volunteers from the US Marine Corps, it put the soul of Legacy before my eyes. The children's activities were a real example of what TAPS can do and what Legacy has done throughout its 77 years of service.

I must note that TAPS has been preceded and runs in parallel with a sister organization, Gold Star Wives of America Inc. However, at the risk of being banned from re-entry into the USA or starting a 'ladies bunfight' it is my perception that the latter appears to be more focussed on the health, legislative and compensatory needs of veterans widows and does not provide the dimension of support that TAPS is seeking. Perhaps TAPS has an equivalent in Australia's War Widow's Guild? Time has precluded any analogy, however, the age difference and modus operandi variances are readily apparent. TAPS members are primarily in their 20's through to 40's in age whereas the War Widow's Guild members are predominantly, dare I say it, in the 70's plus age bracket. Further research I am sure would conclude that the Gold Star Wives would be the best match to the Guild with very similar aims and ages.

➤ **The United Kingdom**

The third leg of my journey took me through England and Wales. My assumption was that a nation with a history of internal conflict and expeditionary forays going back to the days of the Roman conquests and beyond would be the model of compassion and care for its warriors and their long suffering families. My assumption was incorrect.

The veterans and their dependants in the United Kingdom, unlike those of the USA and Australia do not even enjoy the services of a Department of Veterans' affairs. Care and compassion for those who have served is not a platform of government instrumentalities in the United Kingdom. Financial assistance and entitlements are available for war veterans, war disabled, war widows and dependants, however, this is delivered through the social security policies of the government of the day through the War Pensions Agency within the Department of Social Security.

The Royal British Legion is the prime ex-service organization in administering to the veterans and dependants within a charter that mirrors Australia and the USA. Founded in 1921 it is one of the largest membership organizations in the UK with its primary aim to safeguard the welfare, interests and memory of those who served. Like the RSL in Australia it provides support welfare services, nursing and care homes and advocacy services across the nation. The Legion's welfare support operates through a network of volunteers who identify needs and provide help locally and through national legacy services.

Like its Australian counterparts the Royal British Legion has not yet finalised its views on how best to deliver long term care for elderly ex-service people and their dependants. Over the year 1999 it provided assistance to some 300,000 ex-service personnel and their dependants with an expenditure of over \$80 Million on welfare services and associated programs. That said, through interviews with veterans and widows it became apparent that the extra dimension of care provided by Legacy was something to be envied and not evident within the support services available.

In addition to the Royal British Legion the UK has a large network of ex-service organizations, particularly Regimental associations who provide sterling work in supporting their own members and their dependants. Nevertheless, their effectiveness can only be measured from within and the chance for widows to eventually be forgotten or left to the whims of their families and relatives is a real issue.

There is an establishment within the United Kingdom that is greatly tied to Australia and can not be left unspoken.....

➤ **London Legacy**

London Legacy is one of Legacy's 50 Clubs and the only one located outside Australia. Formed in 1947 it was responsible for providing Legacy assistance to over 3000 recipients of Australian repatriation pensions throughout the UK. A formidable task that could only be partly met. Today London Legacy continues the task of care to widows and a number of children living in the UK, Ireland and France. It also provides a valuable service to Legacy in Australia through assistance in processing claims for War Widows pensions, Widows Pensions, Retirement Pensions and Appeals relating widows of ex-British servicemen under Legacy's banner in Australia.

As an aside, it was my sad privilege while in London to attend the service of thanksgiving for the life of Major General the Honourable Stanley ESKELL ED. Stan ESKELL, a former Australian soldier and politician had been a long-term member of Legacy and a tireless worker for London Legacy.

It was also my intention to drop in and brief an honorary member of Sydney Legacy since 1954, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, however time precluded the opportunity.

JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF

In the many hours I spent flying over the world during my fellowship I had time to reflect on a myriad of subjects relating to ex-service organizations, programs, government assistance and so on. Two questions that I often asked myself were; what particular common thread linked the lives of all widows and the children, of all nationalities, of those who had lost a loved one as a result of military service? Which element of our Legacy service, consciously or sub-consciously provided the real support for those families of deceased comrades?

I perceived, through my many chats with the widows and children, that the journey through grief was the most devastating and required the most healing through long-term support and compassion. It has been stated that 'grief is the price we pay for love' and it is 'the pulling of memories into focus'. Grief is not something that can be fixed or assisted through finance or well-meaning public programs. Awareness, acknowledgement and action are recognised as the steps through the journey of grief to healing. Reaching out to others who share a common experience can help in the learning and the growth to be able to cope.

It is this reaching out from a common bond of military service that Legacy aims for – the ideal of personal service. In 1978 Sir Roden Cutler, the first member of the Second World War to be asked to join Sydney Legacy, eloquently expressed this reaching out by legatees when he wrote *“This is what legatees hope to do, namely to develop a normal family relationship in which they share the joys and sorrows, the pride and disappointments of the family with whom they develop a sympathy and understanding”*.

My time with the widows and fatherless children during my journey saw this aspect of support as the one that was the most sought after. The need for an organization to be there after the family members have departed, to give answers to questions from a common bond and to continue the care without the boundaries of financial entitlements and time constraints.

The emotional needs of future widows/widowers and dependants of servicemen and servicewomen from future conflicts may also change as our society gradually changes its values and aspirations. It may be prudent for Legacy to review its grief counselling mechanisms as it also looks to the future.

CHURCHILL ACTIVITIES

To reflect on the background of the fellowship I chose to re-read the book; "Winston Churchill, The struggle for survival" by Lord Moran, Sir Winston's doctor.

This tome I found ideal in that through refreshing myself on the struggle Churchill faced during the Second World War, it also brought into focus the places that I was to visit where the great man had been himself.

My Churchill related visits included Washington DC where Sir Winston Churchill is held in high regard and affection by all those I met.

London and the cabinet war rooms were a unique experience for one with my military background and do cause one to ponder how we would cope today in an extended conflict over so many years with our modern need for comforts and high tech support resources.

Sir Winston's birthplace, Blenheim Palace, was bathed in brilliant sunshine on the day I visited and provided a memorable aspect of the journey.

The reaction by all organizations and people encountered when they learnt that I was travelling on a Churchill fellowship was tremendous and certainly left me in no doubt as to the privilege bestowed on me. The same reaction has been reflected in Australia and to date I can account for at least two applications being submitted for fellowships with a couple of others pondering the year 2001 call.

CONCLUSION

The opportunity given to me through the fellowship can only be described as exceptional and I trust that I have done it justice. Through Legacy the care of widows and children has been a major part of my community life over the past decade and the journey undertaken was a timely opportunity to consolidate some of my perceptions and undertakings.

It was evident that in all three country's visited, New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom that there is recognition by both government and elements in their communities that support should be available for the veteran community.

The breadth and depth of this does, however, vary tremendously. The reasons are as diverse as the range of support available. Government's have never been known for their generosity to returned servicemen and servicewomen and any achievements in the provision of financial and social support can often be directly attributed to decades of lobbying and persistence by the many dedicated veteran bodies and individuals in the communities of each country involved.

Both Australia and the USA have Department's of Veteran Affairs with extensive welfare processes in support of the veterans, the widows, children and disabled dependants. New Zealand, from its size has not extended to this level, however, it does have a system in place that recognises those with entitlements. The UK on the other hand has not extended its government generosity to its veterans and their dependants apart from little more than the basic entitlements for financial assistance.

All countries have a range of ex-service organizations, regimental associations and kindred support groups. For example, the Legions are akin to the RSL in Australia and all have extensive programs in place for the care of veterans and their families. While the care of widows and children is an integral part of these ex-service organisations it is my perception that they the veterans are the priority before the families. That tangible special dimension of care expressed by Legacy through its personal service is what is sought by the widows and children interviewed in all countries. This would appear to be the missing link in the support given by the organizations mentioned in this report.

I have not introduced the subject of the disabled dependants of veterans into this study, as it is a subject worthy of a fellowship on its own. It is suffice to say that it is as much a part of Legacy's duty of care as are Legacy's other activities.

So, in answering the questions I originally asked myself I can conclude that Legacy still holds its unique place and has yet to be duplicated by another country. The widows and fatherless children of deceased veterans and those killed in military service are thankfully included in the support given by the nations observed however the effectiveness and extensiveness is a variable. Australia can be proud of its achievements and can rank itself up with, if not on top of the list of those who care for those less fortunate.

EPILOGUE

My concluding remarks in this report are written with two newspapers, dated the same day, open beside me.

One newspaper shows the triumph, the happiness and the joyful tears of a father embracing his daughter as she proudly displays the medal she has just won on a playing field in the Australian hosted Olympics – symbolising the families of this country at peace with themselves and other nations.

The other newspaper shows the despair, the anguish and the burning tears of a father embracing his son as he dies in his arms in a battlefield on the way to a playground in a Middle East town - a symbol of what the destruction of peace and goodwill can do to the innocent's of a country.

Throughout the history of Legacy the torch, the symbol of service, has continued to burn brightly to light the way for the widows and the children. Let us all pray that some day, just maybe, we will not need a Legacy, a Legion or a TAPS and we can quietly and reverently put the torch away.

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