# RSL Victoria challenged on veteran support with the sale of Vesey RSL Care

Veterans are sleeping on the streets, stuck in jail, or in dangerous relationships because of the RSL Victoria's sales and mismanagement of Vesey Care, a former aged care provider, claims a new report.

**Lynne Strelhage**

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Just to stay alive

However, they claim to have come up against members who believe that vesey veterans are trying to divide the organisation and are not taking the correct steps to make change.

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ARMY VET FACES PTSD AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER

At last year's annual conference, Mr Moon was accused of using social media to "undermine the organisation and create a good work body down in the RSL and that which he wanted done, which was proper consultation.

But Mr Moon refuted the accusation and said his intention was not to divide but to offer a "voice" to veterans who had been sent a message from a veteran who had, "in our inspired to push boundaries.

"Yes, we have spent some people ... but if I'm a veteran and I'm being ignored, I'm probably worth it," he told the meeting.

Mr Moon told Leader those leading the RSL had put pokies before veterans, who are sleeping on the streets, in jail and, killing themselves.

"They've forgotten their core mission to advocate for veterans," he said.

"They've been informed by Tabcorp.

"Pokies might have been the right thing to do 30 years ago but they don't make money anymore."

RSL SUB-BRANCHES

Mr Moon believes RSL sub-branches should be sub-spaces to receive advice and get support from other veterans, but are open to the public and have pokies and bistros to make money.

He said because of the debt sacked by the gambling machines he believed RSL sub-branches, including Mitcham and Williamstown — had been sold to the property developers and turned into apartments.

"They liquidate assets to pay for the losses," he said.

He said there had been a scourge of suicides over the years and people who had been happened if they had a safe RSL space, without pokies and the public, to visit.

"There is nowhere you can go. The RSL was supposed to be a safe space," Mr Moon said.

"The RSL has dropped the ball and our veterans are killing themselves."

He said the Mitcham RSL sub-branch was completely volunteer run, not open to the public and had the unique environment of the post Vietnam conflict veterans, and she had a growing number of Vietnam veterans.

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"We haven't had one suicide, OD or car crash," Mr Moon said.

"If you can get a Bolder to join an RSL they don't kill themselves."

Former artillery officer Ian Cairnes, who served in Iraq in Operation Kruger between Iraq, Construction with Dine Pearl — who served in the Gulf War and Iraq — said he was also concerned about the sale of the aged care conversation industry.

Since his time overseas, seven veterans Mr Cairnes served with had committed suicide and one of them was a close friend and former Incumbent.

"Getting vets into work solves 80 per cent of their problems," Cairnes said.

"They can protect their families, establish homes and a place where they can go to sit in the mornings."

Mr Cairnes said he agreed that RSL Victoria was not the organisation to run purpose was to support veterans.

He said he was not against putting up against "bad business".

"By now they should have an employment program, and crisis and emergency accommodation, working out with an official funding scheme," Mr Cairnes said.

Mr Cairnes was unknown to the meeting and the financial results you could justify it, but "the core business of the organisation is the RSL".

"But you also have a long passed body and that is where all the cars are parked."

VASEY RSL CARE

Recently it was revealed RSL Victoria's aged care arm Vesey RSL Care would be sold because of a "multi-year" loss of the number of veterans and dependants using the service.

But the sale of its Kalinda Village aged care phase to allow the growing number of younger homeless veterans to use the service and they can get back on their feet.

Minutes from RSL Victoria's annual conference in July last year show a divide, with the Chair telling veterans Vesey RSL Care was primarily for aged care, which was "Not only aged care" and that the expertise in homeless is emotial revenue.

"We are not a homeless service," he said.

"There are 22 year-old Skokes, they are not aged care; they are veterans," Mr Moon told the conference.

Lenny Rich, Cam Leyland and Ian Rundbeck.

"We have heard this morning that they have been 1000 days overseas, they have done multiple tours overseas, they are in a bad state and we are not equipped to deal with them, we are not equipped to deal with them.

"They are sleeping on the streets, they are in jail, in massive numbers and they are killing themselves.

But according to a letter sent by Leader and dated April 2020, the Chair of the Mid War Widows Guild argued an agreement in 2012 had "expressly" forbid Vesey Care to sell by 2019, saying 30 per cent of clients were veterans AND 30 per cent were widows.

The documents revealed both groups believed a part of organisation's purpose status is jeopardy, and some of the vesa care would have to cease and revert to "including accommodation option for veterans and their families.

Mr Moon said the sale was a cash grab.

"They don't care about the veterans," he said.

"They hide behind the veteran brand and use two pocks on the old boys."

SPECIALISED MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Last month, the Mitcham RSL sub-branch was instrumental in providing the legal and financial support for Canadian Veteran Lenny Rich, who was charged with the Chest killing veterans Tony Rich. Care was primarily for aged care, which was "Not only aged care" and that the expertise in homeless is emotial revenue.

Mr Rich was charged with the 12-month period, during which he pleaded guilty to weapons and drug offences.

"I'll be very clear here, Cassidy has been his parents and his community. Yet the system let him down," Mr Moon said.

"He's our member and he's a good friend who is in a bit of strife — our golden rule is we don't do that."

Mr Moon pitched Cassidy on from the convention centre to work hard and look into a rural property to attend a rehabilitation program run by a fellow veteran.

Cassidy and Lenny Rich, his mission and mentor, and his mum.

This is a sticking point for Mr Moon, who says there needs to be services just for veterans.

"They've had about 17 for more than 30 years and now they're trying to go to public hospital," he said.

"Someone like Cassidy can't get into specialised care. It took us three months to get him into hospital.

"They've closed Ward 17, they've closed the RSLs and now they're closing Vesey."

An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report released in November 2019 revealed that 1 in 5 veterans had been homeless since 2001 to 2017 is serving, recent and ex-serving ADF personnel.

And according to an Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute study also published in November last year, 5.3 per cent of Australian veterans were homeless in between 2001 and 2018 experienced homelessness.

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The report found homeless veterans were more likely to be younger, unemployed, experiencing financial strain, have higher levels of psychological distress and PTSD symptoms.

It also found these veterans reported engaging in risky behaviours, including driving and gambling, smoking and using recreational drugs, serve a conviction for a crime, and have a greater number of traumatic life events happen.

RSL Victoria has been contacted for comment.

IF YOU NEED HELP

If you or someone you know needs assistance.

Lifeline on 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 or at www.beyondblue.org.au

Open Arms Veteran and Families Counselling 1800 011 046 openarms.gov.au

Safe Zone Support — for ADF - 1800 142 072.

Same Sex Couples Support 1800 184 527 www.ssss.org

Kooriemu Aboriginal support on 1800 BEAGLE (1800 232 453) www.beagle.org.au

Conversation Therapy

Help Impacts on PTSD 1800 551 800 or at bridgeline@ptsd.org.au

Suicide Calls Back Service at 1300 659 467

Headspace on 1800 650 890 headspace.org.au

Peer Force at ms.peer.force.com

Kids Helpline Counselling Service on 1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelp.com.au

13health Peer Support Crisis support 24/7 on 13 32 76

For more information on how to support others who might need help and what to say, visit Mental Health Conversations Matter.

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