

We The People  
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We the People 224 **The War after the War**



Good day to you. Recently I was contacted by a loyal 4CRB listener from Pottsville. Ron Ingledew is 71 and a retired ADF veteran. Ron, like so many others put his life on the line to keep us free and the camaraderie he has with other veterans is unique as they are members of a truly selfless club. Diggers across the services are held in high esteem and are the people's Praetorian Guard. The question is, what happens when you leave the emperor's watch and return to civilian life as one of the mob. The answer for many is very sad and an extraordinary number of our ADF personnel end up on the street, lost and broken. Many lose their families because they can't cope with the lasting mental and physical trauma. Some fight unseen phantoms and far too many take their own lives.

Ron gave me a huge dossier which records the struggle of so many Australians after the battle is over and I must admit to feeling a deep sadness as I read the individual stories of so many men and women. My own father was shattered for a time after fighting on the Kokoda track in WW2, such are the horrors of war. We recognize Anzac day each year with genuine reverence but for many, life is just one long relentless battle. When I hear of all the assistance migrants and others receive and all the money spent on those who would breach our borders or terrorise our people, I feel anger that successive governments get it so wrong at the direct expense of our retired ADF personnel. I can't imagine the loony left having to defend this country or those who appear on the endless boring panels on ABC TV being asked to actually fight for the freedom they abuse and the endless call for a 'national conversation' on the futile meaningless preoccupations they have. When the rubber hits the road it's our armed forces that defend us, who really count.

Now Ron Ingledew and his mates fight for justice behind the scenes and have done so for over 20 years. The problem for about 70,000 ex service men and women lies in their discharge papers. In one particular form there is a **'tick box'** which simply says, the person leaves able-bodied. In the past these service people didn't question that and some left the service with physical and mental time bombs on board. Over time these maladies became more evident and the energy and bravado of youth were eclipsed. So veterans went back to the ADF bureaucracy and asked for assistance with health and pension issues relating to their service. Mostly these requests were refused because their record showed that ubiquitous little **'tick box'** was marked and told the awful lie that the people were able bodied when discharged. I have the names of veterans who after many years of fighting for a fair deal and justice eventually took their own lives in brutal anguish. Some took the unfair decisions to the federal court and the cost was so crippling they lost everything and ended up on the street, destitute. No legal aid for diggers from a legal system that operates on money alone and so justice is denied.

That single **'check box'** represents a national lie of staggering proportions that denies our troops the support they deserve day after day, year after year and decade after decade. Successive governments of both persuasions refuse to even acknowledge the problem and that for many the field of war shrieks on like delayed shrapnel, striking years later. Even when the veterans ask for a review within the ADF, it is the case that the same serving officers and bureaucrats that refused these claims are also on the panel of review. That conflict of interest is a disgrace and would not be tolerated in the theatre of common sense let alone the theatre of war. Whether its Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, East Timor, Iraq or the many places our people have served, the same nasty bureaucracy fails these Anzacs and leaves them as flotsam and jetsam on a sea of anguish. It's a national disgrace and must be addressed if their courage stands for anything. Age **has wearied them** and the years **have condemned them** and their country has forgotten them. Tragically, only the Lone Pine stands as a last sentinel to their service.....lest we forget.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**