



Women Veterans Network Australia Inc

ABN: 31615786680

Connecting past and present Women of Defence with
resources, support & information.

Women Veterans Network Australia

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Dear President

‘BY THE LEFT’ – INITIATIVE ENCOURAGING FEMALE VETERAN PARTICIPATION

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an upcoming initiative for female Veterans, and to seek your support in promulgating information about the 2018 event amongst your relevant network and/or your members.

In 2016, the inaugural Female Veterans and Families Forum (FVFF) was hosted by DVA. If you would like further information about the FVFF, a copy of the report is available on the DVA webpage or via this [link](#). One of the major issues raised during the forum was recognition of female Veterans. There are many female Veterans who no longer wear their medals or march on ANZAC Day, as they feel that they are constantly being asked to prove their Service. Of those who attended the FVFF, the majority indicated that at some point they had either been questioned about whose medals they were wearing, or were asked to move their medals to the right-hand side.

This issue may come as a surprise to you, but it is one that is felt very deeply within the female Veteran community. They described their experiences as disheartening and undermining the value of their Service. This feedback prompted Minister Tehan to call on all Australians to recognise the Service and sacrifice of female Veterans. Further information is available in a Ministerial Media Release of 06 December 2016 – *Supporting female veterans and families* or via this [link](#).

In 2017, growing the respect for female Veterans in the Australian community was one of four major topics discussed during the FVFF. Minister Tehan again committed to supporting the recognition of female Veterans as stated in his Ministerial Media Release of 10 October 2017 – *Forum focused on issues confronting female veterans*, as found via this [link](#).

It must be emphasised that female Veterans do not want to be viewed differently; they want to be viewed the same – as Veterans. But to achieve this, they must first be seen. Feedback from the male Veteran community indicates that they too want both male and females to be viewed simply as one under the Veteran banner.

The first initiative is a campaign called *'By the Left'* which is aimed at encouraging female Veterans to march as a group on ANZAC Day 2018. The title is a play on words which highlights the significance of Veterans wearing their medal(s) on the left side, while incorporating a military marching word of command. In 2018, regardless of Service, Corps, Association, full-time or part-time Service or deployment location, female Veterans will be invited to march as one group in major centres on ANZAC Day 2018. Female Veterans may also choose to march, as they have previously, with the group they deem appropriate on ANZAC Day, and they will be encouraged to do so. While *'By the Left'* is a Women Veterans Network Australia initiative (WVNA), this activity will not be conducted under the WVNA banner. All groups will be invited to parade their banners, or to elect not to march under any banners.

Female Veterans acknowledge the very important role that ESOs and Associations have within the Veteran community, but the presence of female Veterans is often diluted amongst the number of groups who march on ANZAC Day. We are mindful that some may view this activity as female Veterans requesting greater recognition than male Veterans. For this reason, we are requesting your assistance in preventing possible division amongst male and female Veterans by accurately informing your members of *'By the Left's'* purpose.

Specifically, we call on your support to help inform female Veterans of *'By the Left'*. Your assistance in sharing information via your social media resources, newsletters, meetings and notice boards would be greatly appreciated. Information will be forwarded to you in February/March 2018 with relevant details for the event nearest to your location.

As stated previously, your assistance in helping our female Veterans to feel part of the Veteran community, and to be respected by the Australian community is important. We hope that *'By the Left'* will encourage much larger numbers of female Veterans to march this ANZAC Day, and for them to seek further involvement by becoming a member of and/or seeking further involvement in the ESO community.

Thank you for your assistance, and please do not hesitate to contact *'By the Left'*, coordinator Kellie Dadds on mobile 0488 224 211, or WVNA President Nicky Rothwell on mobile 0418 782 092 should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely

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