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## Vietnam vet jailed over eight year fraud

Georgia Waters | August 1, 2008 - 2:30PM

A Vietnam war veteran will spend the next five months behind bars after being convicted of cheating the Federal Government out of almost \$100,000.

District Court Judge Hugh Botting this afternoon sentenced Lesleigh George Lupuljev, 61, to 15 months in jail for imposition and 30 months for two charges of fraud in Brisbane.

Lupuljev, who had plead guilty to the three charges, will be eligible for parole in five months.

The court heard Lupuljev was entitled to disability and service pensions from the Department of Veterans' Affairs due to his service in the army.

But after quitting his full-time job as a Brisbane City Council bus driver in 1997, he failed to tell the department that he continued to work casually as a doorman at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre at South Bank,

Over the next eight years, he received \$97,449 to which he was not entitled, Crown prosecutors told the court.

Lupuljev's lawyers said their client had suffered from his service in the Vietnam war, and developed an alcohol addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result.

They said the money had been spent on everyday living expenses and providing

financial assistance to Lupuljev's family, and that their client had repaid the department around \$7000 so far.

In sentencing him, Judge Botting accepted Lupuljev had paid a "particularly high price" for his service in Vietnam but that the charges were serious.

However he said Lupuljev's case was different to those where the offender was involved in "deliberate subterfuge" and that the money wasn't spent on luxuries.

He didn't order Lupuljev to pay reparation to the Department of Veterans' Affairs but said the department were free to dock his future pension payments.

Lupuljev's wife, two daughters and members of his extended family packed the court during the two-day sentencing hearing.

His sister-in-law, Sue Bell, told reporters outside court that the only thing Lupuljev was guilty of was ignorance.

"There are a lot of people out there who are out to rip off the system," she said.

"My brother in law's not one of them."

Lupuljev was active in the community and a long-term member of the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) who helped to organise the Anzac Day Parade every year, she said.

Ms Bell said Lupuljev had suffered "terribly" since returning from Vietnam.

"He was at the forefront of the fighting so he did experience a lot of things and when he came back from Vietnam he did turn to alcohol," she said.

But Ms Bell said the Department of Veterans' Affairs were "just doing their job".

"What I'd like to see come out of this is that this doesn't happen to anyone else," she said.

Lupuljev's nephew, Troy Debruyn, said his uncle was a "good bloke" who would serve his jail term with his head held high.

Ms Bell said Lupuljev's wife would rely on a "very good network of family and friends" to support her while her husband was in jail.

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