

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS

I would like to make a submission regarding my personal interaction with the Department of Veterans' Affairs. While I have had some claims accepted and others rejected, 3 interactions with the Department have caused me considerable stress/concern.

1. My doctor suggested that I take Turmeric to help ease inflammation of my left knee. Osteo arthritis of the knee has been accepted by DVA. I phoned DVA and was told to get my doctor to fax in a request. My doctor did so and received a form to complete which she did and returned it to DVA. The doctor subsequently received another form to fill in and she was not really happy. I told her to forget it. I now just purchase my own anti-inflammation and pain relief medicines as well as gel rub.
2. On 24 October 2016 I submitted a claim for Bilateral Pterygium – Right eye and for Pingueculae both left and right eyes. As my optometrist had stated that I required new spectacles I contacted DVA by phone and asked : if my claim is accepted will I be entitled to claim the cost of spectacles and, if so, can I purchase spectacles now and make a claim on approval. The person on the phone didn't know so put me on hold for a short time. On return to the phone they said in both cases, "Yes".

I then purchased the spectacles and on approval of my claim I submitted a claim for the cost of spectacles. I received a letter from DVA dated 26th June 2017 rejecting my claim for compensation.

I then contacted DVA and explained that I had received verbal approval and included the time, date, and name of the person I spoke to, explaining that the person I spoke to sought advice from someone else.

I received a letter dated 19th January 2018 reversing the rejection and now approving the reimbursement of the cost of spectacles. In excess of 1 year after my claim was submitted!

3. I submitted a claim for Hypercholesterolemia which was diagnosed in 1975. This claim was rejected and on 28 April 2017 I requested a reconsideration. This also was rejected. My problem is the grounds on which the rejection was made. The delegate stated:

"There is little in terms of documentary evidence that Defence can provide to respond to the attached request. Attached is a document called a 28 Day Cyclic menu. It is undated but believe it is from the late 1970s/early 1980s.

The only other advice that Defence can offer is anecdotal from former and current serving members.

- *There were options available other than meats and fried foods including varieties of vegetables and salads.*
- *Nutritional guides were available.*

I reject these assertions, but there are two things here. If we didn't eat meat, what did we eat?

We were young boys; there 800 boys at HMAS Leeuwin who joined at age 15 ½ to 16 ½ and I was 16 when I joined. We didn't expect the Navy to serve food which could cause us illness.

Reviewer also mentioned in her summary "Strong evidence from Defence".

There are some interesting aspects here:

- a. Anecdotal? Could be hearsay or even Chinese Whispers.
 - b. My claim was that from when I joined the Navy on 5 January 1966 until I was diagnosed in 1975. What use is a menu from the late 1970s or 1980s.
 - c. Interesting also, the reviewer omitted the word "late" from "late 1970s or 1980s" in their summary.
4. I made an entry in a "feedback" section on DVA website which the monitor of that site put through as a complaint and sent my "complaint" to another reviewer. In my feedback my main concern was the "anecdotal evidence" and the omission of the word "late". This reviewer simply confirmed the rejection but made absolutely NO reference to anecdotal nor the missing word 'late'.