

## PERSONAL SUBMISSION

I am grateful to be in a position to submit my personal submission to the Inquiry. Although I am a member of the RSL Drysdale, the submission is made without any affiliation to that organisation or any other ex service organisation. All views within this submission are on my own.

Who is a veteran?

The Roundtable of Australian Veteran's Ministers have made a grave error with their "agreement". Their new definition flies in the face of the meaning of *veteran* at the very basic definition level. The new definition also diminishes and downplays the service of those who have seen active service and are "Returned". It should be noted that this has run on effects for those whose long service, active service or operational service is essentially now considered the same as someone who enlisted and turned up to Initial Training and then failed. ADF Personnel has been considered a more encompassing and appropriate term to cover all who have served, for however long.

Draft Recommendation 9.2

This Draft Recommendation must not be understated. It should also be noted that those staff who do interact with veterans ensure that the information they are dealing with and providing is accurate. Too many times the first person to answer the initial call to DVA will attempt to give information before hearing the full issue and then time and resources are wasted being transferred to correct areas or worse, the caller gives up and doesn't get the information or services required.

Further, staff should be trained to speak clearly and concisely as many veterans either have hearing difficulties or conditions that make listening more difficult. This is a basic failure of many interactions I have personally encountered when speaking with various areas of the Department, especially when my call is first answered by a Client Service Officer.

#### Additional Comments

I am disappointed that yet again there is a move towards a "workers compensation scheme" which fails to acknowledge the mindset and physical requirements of military personnel. SRCA fails miserably for those of us who cannot ever work again due to our service incurred injuries. The only result that would happen by making individuals or Defence fiscally responsible for this is the "career dissipation light" that will flash every time someone is injured.

There are still issues for DRCA s20 payments. I have to declare on my tax return each year that I am employed even though I am medically retired and also receiving a Class A Disability pension from my military superannuation fund. I have written correspondence from DVA stating that I don't have to declare that I am employed but a PAYG from Department of Defence and the ATO say otherwise. Defence blames DVA, DVA blames Defence and I am left having to lie on my tax return. Meanwhile, I am effectively TPI but listed as Defence employed whilst medically retired by our Government that "thanks me for my service".

Most of my injuries fall under DRCA. My experience since being medically retired in 2007 is that I am a second class veteran, if not less. Even with a White Card, accessing

treatment, medications and service providers is difficult. It is demeaning enough when my service is questioned, let alone my eligibility for treatment and services.

If the recommendation to amalgamate DVA into Defence is undertaken, I believe that it will be detrimental for the support and services for DVA clients. Invariably when public servants are forced to move, it is those they provide services to that suffer. Usually the deadwood gets moved over and given up and the performers move elsewhere.

I am sorry that I cannot attend the public hearing in Melbourne. I would have welcomed the opportunity to speak as a female veteran, married to a TPI veteran with a 12 year old son. I will note that since Liz Cosson became Secretary of DVA there have been many positive changes. She should be afforded every opportunity to continue developing and fostering the new culture and processes in the department.