

Productivity Commission Review

I make these observations as someone who has practiced Advocacy on behalf of the Ex-Service community for the last 25 years

It is noted that the Review was released at the most inappropriate time for comment by ESO's as most had wound down for the Christmas break. Some do not hold meetings in January

The enquiry into Advocacy is yet to be released.

Having read the Review in part, as it was an extensive document, I am afraid I cannot support the amalgamation of The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense Science and Personnel'

While it may appear politically beneficial at this point in time, I can see that it will lead to an erosion of benefits to Veterans. For Defense to get its hands on an extra 15.3 billion in their budget, would be seen by them, to be a good thing. However, it will lead to an erosion of Veterans benefits as that budget is siphoned off to other areas. This may be denied at this point in time but within the fullness of time the people making the "guarantee" that this does not happen will have either retired or moved on to the next part of their careers. The next generation of administrators will have the spin that this erosion is a good and necessary thing. Sorry but have seen it all before.

Defense and DVA have a very different role in our society. Defense is to prepare for and engage I warfare at the direction of Parliament. To achieve this a high level of training and fitness is required. Super athletes would be an appropriate term here. To achieve this level of fitness the norms of society do not apply.

The role of DVA is to care for those injured in support of the aims of Defense. The role of these two Departments are poles apart and should be recognized as such.

Defense has an abysmal record of looking after injured service personnel. It is claimed that there, in recent times, has been a change in culture in regard to this. It is seen that the change is minimal and far from adequate.

While some of the other recommendations are quite beneficial and appropriate there is no guarantee that they will remain. Benefits will be competing with procurement.

The issue of Advocacy Support or the structure of such, was not addressed to any real degree. There appears to be a reliance on the current completed review that the Secretary has had for three months and refuses, for what ever reason, to release, even for comment.

It must be noted that if, either Defense or DVA were capable of looking after the injured within their responsibility there would be no need for advocacy. I think we are lightyears away from achieving that status.

William A. Kearney OAM JP. (qual)