

Submission to the Productivity Commission in relation to – Inquiry into Veterans' Affairs'
Legislative Framework and Supporting Architecture for Compensation and Rehabilitation for
Veterans (Serving and Ex-serving Australian Defence Force Members)

From: Geoff Griffiths.
To:Veterans@pc.gov.au

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In this submission I intend to discuss my own experience and dealings with DVA into my efforts to have my approved 'top up' hearing aids replaced and my further investigation into the 519 other SRCA veterans refused 'top ups' after the 2013 change to the act and introduction of the white card which Veterans had no say .

BACKGROUND

Date of birth 31/5/ 1949

I was enlisted in the ADF ,15 Field Regiment Artillery in 14/6 /66 and discharged on the 1/1/74 . The liability was accepted for noise induced deafness in both ears . The date of effect is 1/1 / 1974

My personal saga begins with my 5 year appointment to obtain the latest hearing test and replacement aids probably around 2013 when I had just received the white card and the spin that this would be a fairer and quicker way of assessing support services but the previous DVA Delegate contact for approvals was excellent .At Australian Hearing, Pakenham Victoria (Govt owned) I was assessed and told by the audiologist (Sue) that my category 7 Siemens Hearing aids need replacing at that level , I asked her to put that in writing which she agreed . Two weeks went by and I received a letter from her stating that Management refused to put it in writing and that I was only eligible now for the entry level hearing aids provided to pensioners and I was told I could pay \$8000 for my hearing aid replacement.

This same sinerio would have applied to the other 519 Veterans (provided by DVA) when their 5 year replacement was due . I know of many who paid for the top up ant that has been reprehensible. These Veterans should now be refunded there \$ contribution . In my case I refused and have spent the last 5 years fighting DVA for our Veterans rights.

In the end I had three ENT specialist reports and three independent audiologist reports supporting my clinical need for my replaced ' top ups '

In my investigation DVA staff told untruths in respect of the white card changes and indicated the ESORT round table of approving the change with no compensation to the 520 SRCA veterans ,I could not believe this . It took me 3 months to obtain the committee list of names and I ended up phoning them all ,many refused to engage in dialogue about the changes but those that took an interest said they had no voting rights and they were unaware of the implications to the white card changes . I still accuse them all at being a sleep at the wheel when their sole job is representing Veterans to DVA .

My investigations confirmed that public servants n SRCA were funded 'top ups via Comcare . DVA refuted this until I provided details of 20 public servants who had been funded and I a#ked how many Veterans were and they could not answer that . NONE WERE FUNDED. It appears also that Veterans sign a waiver at the audiologist not to apply for 'top ups '.

After a recent email and phone conversation with _____ , now DVA secretary she arranged a meeting in Melbourne on the 8 February 2018 , a _____ Secretary flew down and I linked up a conference call with two Audiologists one with a Phd to contribute . Within 10 min of the

meeting and my supporting letter from a Bail Justice colleague I was approved (The psychology report I had also at that meeting was never needed, I gave it to them though . I handed over four veterans files that equally had hassles , first they refused but I said they had approved my representation , since then one or two have also been funded .

A fortnight went by and I was invited to Canberra ,with a newly appointed consultant to discuss the process and identify a definition of clinical need and exceptional circumstances . We now have a 5 June 2018 meeting in Sydney when we invite the two Queensland based audiologists . It appears things are moving in the right direction .

But if it wasn't for my tenacity , which they have acknowledged and possible suicide and ACCC inquiry it may not have changed .

I tried not to leave any stone unturned in the kSt 5 years , various Ministers letters, MPs , military Associations and endless bureaucrats telling me they could not help and contact the Office of Hearing which I did once and they were not interested I was a Veteran and they just said you are only entitled to the entry level hearing aids .

I refused to deal with them again because DVA approved my disability and they were responsible for my condition when they accepted my Artillery exposure was the cause of my hearing loss .

I have countless correspondence on this matter and lam happy to share it with you . I have provided some letters to your team member John

My Detailed clinical needs warranted a replacement but they still refused:
A teacher and Criminologist
Government board member
Community Association member
Council member on a Crime Forum
A Victorian Bail Justice , conducting hearings weekdays after 4 pm till 12 midnight

Contacts made and refusal from :

Veterans review board
Military Ombudsman

29 8/ 18. Update

I have now been approved top up hearing aids , was involved in early discussions with DVA , their consultant and two Audiologists who had been working with me since 2013 . I have had a meeting in Canberra with DVA and the consultant , a meeting in Melbourne with DVA and conference call to 3 other persons interstate and on the 5 June three of us met DVA in Sydney to work through the application process and ' Veteran Centric ' reform.

Unfortunately after the resignation of DVA Secretary ,
stopped and it looks as though the hearing saga has r
legitimate Veterans in urgent need of top up hearing aids.

these meetings have now
back to what it was for other

Appreciate you confirming this latest update .

Thank you
Geoff Griffiths.
