

SUBMISSION BY TPDESA (TOWNSVILLE) INC

1. We have concerns with the possibility of DVA being disbanded for another outsource part time insurance agency which may not have any or little experience in veterans' affairs or issues or controlled by a board or a part time CEO or Director or any other civil authority, eg human resources (Centrelink).

Also we would like to address comments on the so called adversarial nature of DVA which our advocacy office states, in their opinion, those comments are without substance, "as delegates just follow the current legislation they are trained in". From our experience over the last 5 years there has been a marked improvement on service and support from DVA, although better communication between DVA and ADF could be improved with regards to sharing medical information etc.

2. Any system that compares civil workers type arrangements seems flawed for the mere fact that ADF personnel train and deploy to and for warlike missions at the behest of the elected government of the day and should not be treated aligned with normal workers' compensation arrangements.
3. With reference to the ADF and uniform members having to pay a levy for injury insurance the possibility this may open the gates to veterans and their dependents seeking to recoup their invested premiums back and may not promote the wellbeing that you are trying to promote.
4. Could you please advise how the review plan to manage war widows/ers and/or dependents as this topic was only briefly covered with little detail (this needs to be more transparent).
5. **Coloured card system**

TPI members are concerned by what and how they would be impacted by this possible change of system (what benefits may be eroded). This card has been earned, we have paid for this heavily and as we have no repatriation hospitals anymore it is a simple way of receiving treatment from GPs and hospitals with no fuss or argument and respect as these cards are recognized universally. What is the review proposing instead of gold cards etc (and in the case of VEA TPI gold card holders does that finally mean, our pension rates will be brought into the 21st century in line with contemporary veterans covered under later acts).

6. Any change to current acts must give assurances that entitlements would not be reduced or eroded no matter who oversees them as history proves there appears to be loopholes in many changes that can reduce entitlements. It should be time to assess all injuries the same whether you are injured while training, deployed on warlike or non-warlike and peace keeping missions. Surely in the long term with an adjustment to legislations that should make assessments easier and more cost effective.

7. **DVA**

Has and will we believe continue to avail itself of ESO, welfare (wellbeing advocates) and advocates to assist DVA and ADF members and ex-members war widows and dependents in obtaining their proper entitlements.

However, the new certified advocacy training seems to have a few flaws in that it has helped to reduce the amount of volunteers we can now access due to the high demands and types of reporting required. (It's fine if you are a paid 9-5 advocate however volunteers are required on occasions to be available 24/7.)

No-one disputes the importance of qualified advocates (however please note pension and advocates see clients from anywhere, from one month to 6 months with a few exceptions but that only represents 20% of ESO's core business).

Welfare (now wellbeing advocates) officers have continued contact until the client passes (for life). That represents 80% of our core business. So, if you apply this formula to the review, 20% is pensions, 80% is wellbeing. So that emphasizes the reviews direction of rehabilitation and wellbeing.

In conclusion, we need DVA to continue to act independently from any other government department to continue to improve and support our veteran community in a way that caters to the unique requirements of ADF members and ex as well as our war widows and widowers and their dependents and Defence does not need to meet the burden of acting as a pseudo workers comp agency.

Due to the time restraints when we received the review, I was only able to pick and discuss a small amount of this review paper but we thank you for the extended period of time that you gave us to make some small submissions.

Trevor Mullins

VLO on behalf of the President and Committee and Members of TPDESA (Townsville) Inc.