

Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra City ACT 2604

## **SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION FOR VETERANS**

I hereby submit the attached submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans for consideration in their findings.

Yours sincerely,

1. I was granted a disability pension arising out of my operational service in the RAAF. This was subsequently increased to 30%. On turning 70 I was granted a Gold Card.
2. I was unaware of any possible entitlements from Veterans Affairs (DVA) until told by a former RAAF colleague. After submitting an application I was interviewed on the telephone by an officer of DVA. She was polite, understanding, curious and thorough. In the event my application was approved. In addition, I was reimbursed the costs I had incurred from buying a hearing aid before I was aware of any DVA benefit.
3. I was invited by DVA to attend a "Heart Active" course with other veterans. I accepted and am extremely glad I did. Until this time I was suspicious of gyms believing I could manage my fitness by cycling and swimming and that gyms were financially exploitive. Cycling had become problematic as I had once fainted whilst descending a large suburban hill on my bicycle - I awoke off road but uninjured. In addition, congested roads and perhaps impaired reflexes involved me in a number of "near misses" with cars and utilities and made cycling hazardous. My problem was serious osteoarthritis in both knees making walking and jogging painful and physiologically damaging. The cross trainer (inter alia) in the gym solved this.
4. Pain and increasing immobility made an operation inevitable. My orthopaedic surgeon, one of Australia's most distinguished, did not accept DVA patients. I underwent a bilateral knee replacement and settled my account through my Private Health fund, - even so I was \$7000 out of pocket.
5. The DVA funded gym membership which superbly prepared me for my double knee replacement operation. I enjoyed rapid recovery and excellent rehabilitation. DVA funded Air Ambulance on discharge from rehab.
6. DVA have continued to fund Gym membership as part of my care under an Exercise Physiologist. I underwent a DVA funded successful left hip replacement.
7. "*I feel like I have a new life and I'm going to take full advantage of it*" may be a cliché but the combination of DVA support through my Exercise Physiologist and Gym membership and the Veterans I have encountered in the process, has meant I am psychologically very well and physically more able than I was 20 years ago. The knowledge that one's Service has not been forgotten - all Service involves various degrees of personal sacrifice even though most are not faced with the imminent danger of combat - through practical demonstration of support services provided by DVA is of great comfort as well, to me and my comrades.
8. My one recommendation for improvement concerns country and regional veterans. I think it is true that not all medical practitioners are similar in terms of skills -much like plumbers or engineers or teachers. For serious operations I believe the veteran should be entitled to choose their medical practitioner and if necessary, within reason, be entitled to receive travel costs associated with attending that practitioner. Although I had been associated with my hip replacement DVA approved Orthopaedic surgeon, I was not granted travel allowance to his rooms or to the operating hospital on the basis that there was a surgeon in my home town whom I did not trust, though technically qualified.