



**SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION
re
COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION
FOR VETERANS**

Introduction

The reason for this Submission is that in the Warwick area of Queensland we have some distinguished veterans. For example, our State Member of Parliament is Squadron Leader James Lister (ret'd) and among our Branch membership we have Lt.Col Jamie McDonald (ret'd) and his wife Major Cynthia McDonald (ret'd) all of whom have an interest in maintaining contact with other veterans. Also in this area we have some well known vineyards within the vicinity of Stanthorpe. Combining these features together, members decided to put to the Commission a proposal that the Federal Government should by way of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans, acquire in the vicinity of Stanthorpe a vineyard under the control of the Minister for Veterans Affairs, to be used for the rehabilitation of unsettled veterans.

The proposal

The proposal is a vineyard for veterans,

Reason for the proposal

The Commonwealth Government has been generous to its veterans in terms of superannuation, pensions, and health care support, but this assistance to veterans has been administered on an individual footing and on a case by case basis. There is a good reason for this, because circumstances between veterans vary, and not every size fits all.

Because of the individual basis of assistance, veterans are offered help wherever they may be. That is, scattered across Australia on small farms, in the outer suburbs, in inner city tenements, in accommodation shared with non-veterans, and in all other kinds of dwellings. In some cases, some homeless veterans may have no dwelling at all, sleeping rough in vacant allotments, city rail stations, up dark alleys, or on lonely park benches. Thus while their assistance may be offered individually they may possess the same common circumstances of isolation, anomie, loneliness, seclusion, and despair, which no amount of individual attention will resolve.

For this reason our proposal is that for veterans who have no home to go to, or who are unhappy in their present situation, unsettled with their current surroundings, cannot keep a job, or are even too stressed to even search for one, should be offered a place to live.

This place, we propose, should be where they can relive the camaraderie of their service years together, where work is guaranteed but is not compulsory, and where they can live without stress or need for the rest of their lives. We call this proposal, "A vineyard for veterans," as follows:

A VINEYARD FOR VETERANS

Tu n'abandonnes jamais les tiens, ni au combat, ni dans la vie.

(You never abandon your own, not in combat nor in life.)

[Article VII of the French Foreign Legion Code of Honour]

The Foreign Legion does not abandon its veterans. Many countries' veterans struggle to integrate back into civilian life and find purpose outside the military. The problem is especially acute for Legionnaires. Having shed their nationalities and left friends and families behind, foreign born Legionnaires often base their identities on the Legion itself. For them, retirement means losing a home, community and employment all at once.*

Australian veterans do not lose their nationality when entering Australia's armed forces, but in all other respects, upon retirement they can suffer the same traumatic experiences as Legionnaires. The Commonwealth Government is generous to its veterans in terms of superannuation, pensions and health care support, but for those of its veterans who cannot settle comfortably into civilian life, it does not give them a home.

But the Legion does give its veterans a home. The Domaine du Capitaine Danjou, is a 100 acre estate and winery in the South of France. It is a corporate body known officially as *Institution des Invalides de la Legion Etrangere* and it produces a world famous brand of wine known as "Legion Etrangere Grand Cuvee Esprit de Corps Cotes de Provence." The estate provides employment, lodging, purpose and brotherhood to retired Legionnaires who have nowhere else to go. Here the veterans still address each other by rank, and maintain amongst their community the normal standard of military courtesy. The estate gives them a purpose in life and a camaraderie reminiscent of their times together in the Legion. The Legion's motto says it all - *Legio Patria Nostra* - "The Legion is our country". So although these veterans are no longer part of the Army, in all other respects, the Legion is still their home.

Here in Australia we could do the same for those of our veterans who find it hard to live a civilian life. We could give them a place where they could still talk their military lingo like 2Cav, sitrep, auslav, ratpac, provo, teco, snafu, twenty-one hundred and all the other jargon which civilians cannot understand. Like the Legion, we could give them a vineyard in the wine growing area of Stanthorpe. For here, the State Member of Parliament is a retired Squadron-Leader, and so is his wife, the Warwick Branch has a retired Colonel, whose wife is a retired Major and the Mayor of the Southern Downs is also a retired Army officer, also a member of the Warwick Branch. Together they could give our veterans friendly support. Our Federal Member of Parliament is David Littleproud who is also the Minister for Agriculture, and with expert advice from his Department, and also from the BTWN (Wine) program of the University of Southern Queensland, our veterans would be in good hands.

This is therefore a proposal that the Minister for Veterans Affairs should seek to acquire a vineyard at Stanthorpe. Here guaranteed meaningful and empathetic employment in a semi-civilian environment with a semi-military atmosphere could be given to our veterans and here they could establish a camaraderie remembered from the time of their active service together. Let us show them that just like the Legionnaires, *they have not been abandoned, neither in combat, nor in life.*

Dawn Scrymgeour
(LNP Warwick Branch Chairman)

24 January 2019

for and on behalf of Members of the Warwick Branch

*Steinman, Alexis, "The vineyard where retired French soldiers make wine," May 02 2018, retrieved on 3 Jan 2019 from: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/french-foreign-legion-wine>