

Marcus Fielding
Melbourne, VIC, 30
January 2019

Productivity Commission
Level 2, 4 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission to Productivity Commission Draft Report: A Better Way to Support Veterans

Thank you for opportunity to comment on the draft report. I make this submission as a private citizen but one who has completed 28 years full-time service, seven years of part-time service (ongoing) and who incurred a lower back injury during my service which required major surgery three years ago.

The nature of military service has changed considerably in the last 50 years - especially with the creation of a permanent full-time Defence Force. National mobilization for war (and subsequent demobilization) is a concept and practice whose days seem over. Full-time professional career Defence Force members can typically expect to undertake multiple postings and multiple deployments in the course of their service. To that end, I agree that the century old division of responsibility between the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans Affairs (and their antecedents) warrants review.

I agree that the Department of Defence should not be allowed to simply pass on the liability for any injury to its former personnel to the Department of Veterans Affairs. I agree that the present arrangements do not consider the lifetime well-being of veterans. Some mechanism where the Department of Defence incurs a 'cost' is needed in order to provide an incentive to improve working conditions, reduce risk and prevent injury, and encourage rehabilitation (within reasonable limits) over medical discharge.

Having undertaken four operational deployments I understand that these environments have a number of risks that cannot be reasonably mitigated by the Department of Defence. However, investments can be made in equipment that reduces risk and injury to service members and risk/cost-based decision making can be inculcated throughout the organisation.

Similarly, any post-service support should focus on rehabilitation (where possible) over compensation. Part of that well-being commitment should also include a greater emphasis on employment transition from Defence, as well as efforts to make transition as simple, smooth and efficient as possible. The government's commitment to provide transition support should be condition based not time based.

The concept of a peak ESO body is supported but, in my view, it is the Century old RSL of Australia which should be encouraged to continue to fulfil that role.

Regards,
Marcus Fielding