

The Returned & Services League of Australia (TASMANIA BRANCH) Inc.

ABN 11 977 093 123

A/STATE PRESIDENT:
GEOFF LEITCH
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER:
NOLEEN LINCOLN OAM JP
HON STATE TREASURER
ALEX DICK



ANZAC HOUSE
206 NEW TOWN ROAD
NEW TOWN TAS 7008
PO BOX 147, NEW TOWN 7008

PHONE: (03) 6242-8900
FAX: (03) 6242-8911

ADMIN@RSLTAS.ORG.AU

The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance

**Commissioner
Productivity Commission Inquiry into DVA
Level 12, 530 Collins Street
MELBOURNE, Vic 3000**

Dear Sir

Ref: RSL (Tasmania Branch) Inc Response to “Productivity Commission data, A Better Way to Support Veterans, Draft Report”.

The Returned & Services League Ltd (National Office) initially submitted a paper in response to the Productivity Commission Review into Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA). The National Office requested input from all RSL State Branches enabling a consolidated report to be compiled and submitted in accordance with the Terms of Reference. The only State Branch to respond to this request from the National Branch was the Tasmanian Branch, and the subsequent report submitted was co-authored in the main by Mr Alex Dick (Tasmanian State Branch Advocate).

The report submitted was a consolidation of experience, views and recommendation garnered from the five Veteran Support Centres across Tasmania. These centres are manned and operated by a collaborative group made up from members from the RSL, Vietnam Veterans Association, RAAF Association and the Naval Association.

The Australian Government, Department of Defence and the veteran community all recognise that service in the Australian Defence Force is a unique occupation and all who enlist recognise that by doing so, they are foregoing certain freedoms enjoyed by other in Australian Society. This also creates unique issues within family life of serving members and they rightly expect that they will be cared for both during and after military service.

Any notion considering the possibility of passing the responsibility of veteran welfare, rehabilitation and/or compensation to the Department of Defence should be strongly resisted. Defence do not appear to have a good record of responsibility of care for members with regard to rehabilitation, either during service, or once the member has transitioned from the military. Claimants currently have significant issues with length of time that the claims process takes to process even a moderately complex claim, yet these delays seem minor when compared to the British model where claims are processed through the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Lest We Forget

In the main there needs to be an improved level of training and understanding for DVA delegates (particularly in the of interpretation of the three Acts) to truly reflect the intentions of by Parliament captured by the legislation. The original intention of the Acts was to be beneficial to the veteran, however, this is often not reflected in determinations by delegates who appear to have adopted an “Insurance Company” style attitude which at times appears highly adversarial, having a secondary effect of there being an increased need for appropriately trained advocates to assist the veteran through his rehabilitation journey. This indicates the need for an urgent overhaul of the claims system making it simpler and more user friendly, and while this task is currently being undertaken, sufficient resourcing to remedy the problems sooner rather than later must be provided.

In response to the Draft Report of the Productivity Commission, RSL Tasmania convened a meeting of the Veterans’ Support Centres across the State, including the member Ex-Service Organisations to discuss the findings in the Draft Report. Arising from that meeting, a report of observations and comments from the Veterans’ Centres was prepared (Attachment A), and additional comment was sought from the Tasmania Branch of the VVAA (Attachment B). Additional comment from the membership of the RSL was sought, and one member provided their comments to RSL Tasmania for inclusion (Attachment C). RSL Tasmania has reviewed these comments and fully supports the observations and recommendations put forth in the attached documents and finds them to be broadly consistent with the position set out in the initial RSL Tasmania submission.

RSL Tasmania, as the administrator of the Veterans’ Centres and facilitator of the meeting giving rise to the submission from the Veterans’ Centres, does not feel the need to re-state its position as laid out in that report once again in detail. As such, given the broadly similar detail between the initial RSL Tasmania submission and the attached responses to the Draft Report, RSL Tasmania endorses the attached positions and offers its support to those positions.

Yours sincerely

Robert Dick
DCCF Representative
RSL (Tasmanian Branch) Inc
11th February 2019

Attachments:

- A. **Productivity Commission Draft Report A Better Way to Support Veterans;**
- B. **VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc PRODUCTIVITY DRAFT REPORT DECEMBER 2018; and**
- C. **Wynyard Sub Branch’s comments re PCR**