

Neville Browne Submission – Draft Findings 7.1 and 7.2

My submission relates to the above sections.

The Commission should recommend to the government that it requires a new independent authority or commission to run a programme to ensure that all former members of the ADF make a successful transition from a serving ADF member to a fit and well adjusted fully employed civilian. The only aim of such a body is the transition. The aim of the programme should be such that the ADF can use it as a recruitment tool. For lack of a better name I have called it the “Veterans Transition Authority” or VTA.

The government should make its slogan

“You give Australia your best years and Australia will stand by you forever – as a thankful nation”.

“No ifs, no buts and no interference it is a guarantee to any former member of the ADF”

Make the ADF an employer of choice for those wanting a career because the recruit will be guaranteed that after service with the ADF a new career awaits and the training is paid by the Australian people in recognition of the service to their nation.

Put simply as a person who has served in the army and have a number of relations do likewise (siblings and cousins) along with a father, grandfather and ten uncles serve in WW2 and many friends who served in Vietnam that any future system should be extremely generous to assist in the transition from defence force life to civilian life. I have seen the lack of transition first hand.

I believe that the system should not in any way be connected to the DVA nor the ADF. This reason for this statement is self evident. DVA has never demonstrated its compassion to former ADF members but instead created administrative nightmares and huge obstacles to very vulnerable people. ADF input would not be appropriate as it is a transition from the ADF.

Given that a government was to support a new system then that system should be funded in the normal budget of government with a guarantee of adequate funds to ensure that it (the system) worked and is not set up to fail.

Any new system should be run by a board or commission whereby each state and territory is represented by a member or vice member as appropriate. Members should be appointed by each state or territory with the proviso that no member can be a former public servant connected with DVA or the ADF. In essence the board should not be a resting place for retired ADF officers but rather people who know what is needed in the workforce and the workplace without any perceived political bias.

The scheme needs to operate without any bias to rank. After termination all former members are civilians and should be treated accordingly. Any required service with the Reserve of the ADF would take place after the period of transition is completed. A complete break from the ADF to a new life.

What is the scheme that I propose?

It comes in two parts with the first part a period of transition from the ADF and the second in the form of training or salary payment to employers.

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Part 1

Applies to all members who terminate their service with the ADF regardless of the cause whether it is at the termination of a period of engagement, ill health, injury or unsuitability for service life.

The person still has to come to grips with a new way of life.

The person made a contribution to the ADF regardless of position.

On termination every former member becomes an employee of the VTA is entitled to six months fully paid employment to cover any possible situation that may arise post termination.

The VTA has all the necessary resources to assist those members to access accommodation, to relocate with all the necessary assistance to ensure it happens without rules or regulations. Every possible issue should be addressed and acted upon with grace and alacrity.

The new VTA employee can then know that there is help at hand without worry or stress.

Part 2

For every former member of the ADF with service greater than six years the following applies.

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| Six years service | – One year training or salary assistance |
| Twelve years service | – Two years training or salary assistance |
| Eighteen years service | – Three years training or salary assistance |
| Twenty years plus service | – Four years salary service or salary assistance |

The training is whatever the VTA and former member agree upon based on applicable tests and aptitude assessments. Not much good wanting to be a pilot if the vision is not sufficient to gain a licence.

Salary assistance is paid either to an employer to engage a former member for an agreed period. It could be a skill acquired in the ADF or an employer who is will to train a former ADF member.

The former member will be paid the rate of pay last received in the ADF during all the above.

This is calculated to ensure that members who have acquired skills in the ADF which have a civilian equivalent get the chance to adapt those skills to a civilian workforce.

Those former members where there is no equivalent (for example an infantry soldier) then the opportunity to have a new life will be available and not just an unqualified has been. Perhaps a welder, electrician whatever is appropriate.

A former member of the ADF does not and should not be a burden to our nation. The service should be acknowledged with gratitude. As a nation we pay people to train and protect us. When those people have done their duty it is time for us as a nation to step up and acknowledge that service. Make sure that our veterans live a life with dignity knowing that their nation respects and thanks them for their service. It is a small price to pay for the service they have willingly given.