

Supplementary Submission : Peter Reece

Following the public hearing on 7 February I wish to add a few follow up points.

Governance

All strength to the Commission's arm breaking up DVA, but in doing so I would advise that it carefully consider the current DVA function and assess whether they could be delivered by other eg Centrelink, where in Defence they might be better placed, and whether the functions should continue at all. For example income support benefits (Service Pension and Disability Pension) are benefits of qualifying service set out originally in the DVA and are effectively redundant as they parallel the age pension and DSP. Further if the Commission continues to support the removal of the differential between peacetime and warlike service, then they are also unnecessary.

Within disability compensation the insurance model, as with SRCA is highly desirable, but I'm not sure about all the welfare add-ons. Some of these are perhaps better placed within the Defence post service care area, and others should be in the health services area. Those distinctions are pretty clear. Home Care should be combined with HACC. All health treatment, cards, and rehabilitation should go direct to the relevant Defence function and so provide continuity of care. Other functions as the Commission has identified (and more) should be abolished.

Please do not relent on your draft intention, but also make sure that the model will work and Defence can't white ant it.

Compensation for Abuse

As I indicated as examples of senior management indifference to care for service people I mentioned the death of trooper Lawrence and other cases of sheer negligence where the compensation legislation has long been inadequate. There are many other cases eg Lorna Tibble, an Airforce cadet who committed suicide after assault, the four sailors who died in the engine room fire on HMAS Westralia, Commander Robyn Fahey who was hounded until a navy doctor falsified a psychiatric referral, was charged by the WA Medical Board, fined \$10,000, and almost deregistered – but had all his costs and the fine paid by Defence and was promoted. The list is endless, but the only redress many have had is through an enormous battle for Defective Administration. The Senate Defence Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee report into military justice dealt with this fully, and was followed shortly thereafter by the RAAF F111 deseal/reseal case , which to my mind is one of the worst OH&S blunders in Australian history. Even wives who washed dirty toxic overalls were affected, and special compensation and health treatment provisions had to be introduced due to the failure of the existing disability compensation provisions.

This area has never ben dealt with properly to my knowledge, but is directly linked to military compensation

VEA History

The VEA has survived way beyond earlier governments' intentions. Effectively it was put on ice after the Korean War but reactivated for Vietnam simply because the antecedent to the SRCA did not provide for volunteers or conscripts – as it did for WWI and II. Governments' clear intention was that the military should be covered by the civilian scheme. Retrospective redefinitions of qualifying service have made a mockery of that policy, driven by the careless attitude that there are so few left it doesn't matter. Well, it dis matter and military compensation has become a farce. As I've always said, the agitation about military compensation has always been about money

Peter Reece
March 2019.