

My operational career in the RAAF was servicing Canberra, Iroquois and Chinook aircraft. The noise was happily endured during those years as that was what I signed up to do. I considered it a privilege and duty to go where I was told and to carry out what was ordered. I reluctantly left the RAAF after 20 years service as my sons schooling was becoming a primary concern.

When I was eventually forced to consider hearing aids I was in for a rude awakening. It required the services of an RSL advocate to even get consideration and eventually hearing aids even though I supplied photos of myself at a Canberra start up, starter cartridge exhaust gas streaming, no hat, no shirt and no hearing muffs. (They were starting to leak glycerine from the pads.) To compound the matter, the aids supplied to me today are the same as supplied to age pensioners who certainly did not sign up for what I did. I feel it is further insulting to read the issues paper page 2 of this inquiry as follows:

page 2 issues paper

The unique features of military service have led to a system separate from, and more generous overall than, the system of workers' compensation and support generally available to civilian workers, including:

- ***easier access to support (through a lower burden of proof for accepting liability for a condition)***
- ***a higher level of compensation than that available to other Australian Government employees.*** (My bold and italics)

It is also galling to now find that Comcare have and are supplying much better hearing aids to public servants than to servicemen.

It was George Washington who famously wrote "The willingness of future generations to serve in our military will be directly dependent upon how we have treated those who have served in the past" There was a time when I heartily encouraged any young fellow who expressed an interest in joining the RAAF. Not so today. When I signed up to serve my country I did not expect, upon retirement, to be treated as a second class citizen.

In summary, I submit that the DVA should be a stand alone entity and come under the Minister of Defence to ensure servicemens issues can be fully addressed in cabinet.