

Submission on draft report by Productivity Commission Veterans Services

Acknowledging that an awareness now exists the current system of veterans' rehabilitation and compensation is not 'fit-for-purpose', this proposal appears to be a tangential reaction rather than an informed and considered approach.

Recognising and correcting the present major flaws in the system is surely a far more effective and efficient use of resources than a knee-jerk 'NEW' plan.

To that end a more extensive and better informed Transition Program should be initiated without delay. This should be administered as an independent group and definitely not directly linked to, or controlled by, Defence

The DVA, as an established entity with procedures and processes already in place, should continue to administer the government Acts, strategy and intent via the Minister for DVA as the focal point for all policy aspects, but with a review and appropriate structuring within the DVA to address the major problems as now existing.

The proposed concept of a single Ministry for defence personnel and veterans is quite simply unrealistic.

It is the Commonwealth Government of Australia that commits our defence personnel to international assignments and therefore has the prime culpability for all deaths, injuries, diseases and illnesses. The Defence Department is simply the logistics arm of those decisions, but to then give such senior personnel the obligation to accept all such consequences and make appropriate restitution is laughable. It is not relevant which entity has to administer the rehabilitation and compensation matters – it is still the Commonwealth Government of Australia that ultimately is expensing tax-payers funds.

Who would be members of the proposed Veterans Services Commission ?

The proposal / expected natural consequence with the passage of time for all military personnel to be classified under a single act of parliament is laudable but will require a considerable period of time from the present

There does not appear to be consistency with delegate determinations at the present time, and while it is accepted that any form of discretionary power is not desirable generally, the appointment of an ex-service veteran to each DVA office as a counsellor/technical mentor would simplify many decisions with regard to complex claims by veterans.

Personal experience with numerous veterans' claims, associated protracted investigations and eventual determinations, strongly suggest that many of the current delegates are inexperienced with the realities of service environments

so more direct control should be exercised by the DVA senior and middle-level managerial personnel, rather than them being over-regulated by executive level restrictions.

An additional benefit of such direct determinations involvement would be a far better understanding of RMA SoP's, with the knowledge and experience level such managerial personnel have gained and could impart to less experienced, Junior delegates.

With the firm intention and commitment to support veterans generally, and an acceptance that many of the problems those veterans have, there should be a means of communication available for emergency / out of normal business hours contact to whichever entity finally has the responsibility of administering veterans' support services. To receive a recorded voice message that DVA is closed now so please call back within normal business hours is not much support or any indication of an interest in any form of so-called support.

I am available to discuss any of the above comments as required, either by personal contact, by telephone contact or electronically by email texts

Warren Rhone  
ATDP Advocate  
Veterans Support Centre  
Southport RSL Sub Branch  
Queensland 4215