

7 February 2019

Productivity Commission
Australian Federal Government

Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans

Dear Sir/Madam

Terms of reference:

“Whether the Compensation and rehabilitation system that is currently available for veterans in Australia is fit for purpose now, and whether the system is likely to effectively and efficiently support veterans and their families in the future”.

To the Commission and Productivity Commissioners, I make the following submission to your draft submission dated 14 December 2018.

- I reject your draft report dated 14 December 2018 in its entirety for the following reasons;
- Your draft report appears to be submitted without proper due process by failing to provide full and open forums for all stakeholders to give submissions on which you would draw to make your recommendations.
- This draft report was not widely advertised to the Veteran community and as a result many thousands of Veterans would even to date be unaware that this draft report has even been submitted or in fact was underway.
- You certainly have confused who are direct stakeholders and who are interested parties with their own futures at the heart of their comments..
- The dates of your draft report submission and hurried forums early in this new year (from which you state will enable you to take into consideration some views to finalise your draft report), are steeped in deception and given the detailed draft report as it is written and which has already been accepted in part by Minister Chester as per his ABC Interview dated December 2018 is a ruse to the Veteran community.

- Commissioner Fitzgerald in an ABC Interview dated December 2018 stated the following "At the end of the day, both older veterans who will retain most of the benefits & entitlements they have today, and younger veterans who have will have very different needs, will have a system that meets their needs and recognises the important service they have given". Yet your draft report states that no Veteran would be worse off due to your changes, yet from a VEA perspective at least five current allowances will be cut."
- Your draft report states that there are currently in excess of approximately half a million veterans and their dependents who are clients to the DVA in 2017, yet your report states that you had input into your draft decisions by less than a handful of entities and 153 written submissions, hardly a glowing support of a wide consultation process.
- The entities on which you have drawn are interested parties only and the only true stakeholders are the Veterans and the employer.
- The entities such as RSL State, RSL National and Mates for Mates for example as stated in your Draft report are organisations which do not represent the Veteran communities views as grass root local Sub Branches do, yet no Sub Branches were approached for input into this report.
- These organisations you mention as submitters of information are self indulgent, over staffed and are splinter groups from the main focus of Veteran care.
- Your draft report quotes RSL NSW with the following, " RSL NSW said DVA's health card system 'encourages a view of the system as a contest to be won, with the Gold Card as the prize'.
- Your draft report formulated a poor decision from this absurd, inflammatory, defamatory and slanderous statement from RSL NSW, your assessment is as follows **"The outcome sought for veterans should be rehabilitation, not monetary settlement. The 'gold card' nomenclature utilised by DVA reinforces a negative entitlement culture where success for veterans is the extraction of cash from the government, not their rehabilitation and return to being a productive member of civilian society"**
- This assessment is based on an entity which cannot be quoted as inquiries with RSL NSW revealed that this is not the official line from RSL NSW, so I request that the person who made this quote be named so that they may have a right of reply and be challenged.
- This draft report is not wellness based but rather based solely upon improving the budget bottom line.

- The very idea to dismantle DVA and bring back direct involvement by the employer (Defence), has been tried in the past and has failed, moreover this is a move which will not provide an independent and transparent body for Veteran.
- The remarks made by your report state that it is focused on wellness of the veteran, however your report reads and weighs heavily on saving money.
- Your report states that the move to dismantle DVA will produce better outcomes for the veterans, however the only evidence I can peruse from your report will be the savings on the cancellation of services and compensation to the Veteran community.
- A lot is made that the new system would be evidence based, the current system is certainly evidence based.
- The concerned entities such as RSL State and RSL National and Mates for Mates etc, have at their very base a level of self- interest and survival whilst trying to grab as many Government grants as possible, whilst the grass roots organisations such as RSL Sub Branches who administer direct support to all Veterans are barely surviving under their own financial support.
- The legality of words you have used in your report concern's me greatly. Words such as Should and Should not are used heavily with your recommended changes. These words have no obligation attached to them, such as Must and Must not. This leaves open all of your recommendations to further change at a whim.
- **The very idea of retrospective changes is repugnant.**

In summary I could continue to pull apart your report paragraph by paragraph but in part its weighting is far in favour of saving money, with a coating (which is flimsy at best) in an attempt to portray to make things better for the Veteran.

Your overall information collection from a very small number of the Veteran Community and from Organisations which are steeped in self interest, smacks of trying to formulate a pre-conceived outcome. This is very disappointing.

This move will see an increase in class actions against the Government and blow out the much coveted budget.

The Veterans were knowingly and with intent sent into harm's way, with the employer knowing the outcome, this is a far cry from a normal worker having an accident. This I believe draws a higher burden of responsibility on the employer and as such your comparison and continued push to align the Veteran Community with the Civilian Compensation system is flawed and wrong. .

I further submit that any post submissions and these hearings to be conducted around the country are farcical and theatric in nature to appease the Veterans and their supporters whilst having little or no effect upon your draft report.

I suggest that you do not understand the Veteran community and the pride in which they served this country and the patriotism that they display every day. This draft report and your assessment is inflammatory, defamatory and slanderous towards all Veterans, their families and friends. For this part your entire Draft submission is based upon only one driving point and that is to increase the budget bottom line and discard the Veterans. Improve the current DVA by proper staffing and support.

Sincerely yours,

Ken Chapman

(No signature, sent electronically)