

Submission DR243 -  
Attachment:  
Supplementary  
submission -  
Compensation and  
Rehabilitation for  
Veterans - Public  
inquiry

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## Purpose

The purpose of this supplementary submission is to provide more detailed comment on the draft recommendations and findings prepared for the Commission previously. This supplementary document will address the following:

- 4.1 – Objective of the Veteran Support System (VSS);
- 5.1 – IT Systems;
- 5.3 – Notional workers compensation premiums;
- 6.1 – More extensive Joint Health Command reporting;
- 7.1 – Creation of a Joint Transition Command;
- 7.2 – JTC career planning;
- 7.3 – Education benefits; and
- 15.2 – Health insurance.

This supplementary document is intended to support and further develop the initial thoughts provided to the Commission on 11 Feb 2019.

### 4.1 – Objective of the Veteran Support System (VSS)

Having recently participated in a round table discussion regarding the Commission's mission I was able to develop a further appreciation of individual dedication to improving the means by which veterans are supported at the time of separation and post separation.

I would very much like to commend the Department of Veterans' Affairs (Department) for their introduction of the MyService online platform that allows service members more control of their interactions with the Department. The Department is committed to providing timely resolution to liability claims and general support to service members post separation.

While the Department is not perfect. Active steps are being taken to improve the processes and procedures employed to support service personnel and they are appreciated.

In so far as the restructure of the Department, I remain firmly opposed to concept of the Department of Veterans Affairs being shifted to another portfolio. Veterans' affairs, in my opinion is far too important to be subsumed under a different portfolio. At least for the time being.

Regarding the overall objective of the VSS, I like many others will remain sceptical until the end-state is realised.

On the path to realisation there will be many hurdles and many Ex-Service Organisations (ESO), and former service personnel will express their individual and collective issues with the speed and appropriateness of the implementation of VSS initiative. I would encourage the Commission and Department weather the storms and publicity all the while remaining focussed on the delivery of support services. When a direction is set there can be no deviation to the course.

### 5.1 – IT Systems

While my initial submission to the Commission urged interoperability and security, these considerations belong to the realm of the operational and / or tactical tasking.

The strategic goal of the VSS in terms of IT systems development and implementation is that the systems communicate with one another, thereby saving the service person from continuously repeating themselves, as the responsibility for support shifts from Department to Department and office to office.

### 5.3 – Notional workers compensation premiums

It is the contention of the previous submission that the concept of a notional premium or penalty be removed and in its place inserted a rigid line that if crossed will have consequences.

Defence and its senior leadership have previously entered into a number of enforceable undertakings. Enforceable undertakings cease to have meaning once an offending action is repeated, unless there is a real penalty.

The glitter of Generals and Commissioned Officers alike must feel a repercussion for activities that violate the principle of harm reduction. Careers or Commands may end as a result of violating the principle of harm reduction, however, there is no more sure way of reducing injuries to Defence personnel than to hold those in command accountable for their actions or inactions.

### 6.1 – More extensive Joint Health Command reporting

I re-assert my original position that Joint Health Command (JHC) is already over taxed and under staffed. There can be greater cooperation between JHC and external agencies. In order to create these cooperatives both sides must cease existing in silos. The Commission cannot oversee the professional development and training of Defence personnel. This is a function of Defence. Therefore, there is no additional comment to add.

### 7.1 – Creation of a Joint Transition Command

It is not the purview of the Commission to direct the formation of this command. However, should a Joint Transition Command (JTC) be raised, its headquarters should be centralised while its subordinate commands are raised at each of the Defence localities. This will require adequate resourcing, therefore government must be willing to meet the funding allocation required to commence such a venture. The creation of a JTC will require a good deal more thought than was presented in the Commission's Draft Report.

### 7.2 – JTC career planning

This is a tactical task and as such this supplementary report will offer no further comment. Discussion is encouraged but no further comment is offered in this format.

### 7.3 – Education benefits

In my submission I spoke to the creation of a Montgomery GI Bill like solution. To enhance this discussion I insert the following for consideration/discussion.

Excerpt from Wikipedia

#### *Chapter 30 (Montgomery GI Bill)*

*In 1984, former Mississippi Democratic Congressman [Gillespie V. "Sonny" Montgomery](#) revamped the G.I. Bill.<sup>[41]</sup> From 1984 until 2008, this version of the law was called "The Montgomery G.I. Bill". The **Montgomery GI Bill — Active Duty** (MGIB) states that active duty members forfeit \$100 per month for 12 months; if they use the benefits, they receive as of*

2012 \$1564 monthly as a full-time student (tiered at lower rates for less-than-full-time) for a maximum of 36 months of education benefits. This benefit may be used for degree and certificate programs, flight training, apprenticeship/on-the-job training and correspondence courses if the veteran is enrolled full-time. Part-time veteran students receive less, but for a proportionately longer period. This means for every month the veteran received benefits at the half-time, the veterans benefits are only charged for 1/2 of a month. Veterans from the reserve have different eligibility requirements and different rules on receiving benefits (see Ch. 1606, Ch. 1607 and Ch. 33). MGIB may also be used while active, which only reimburses the cost for tuition and fees. Each service has additional educational benefit programs for active duty members. Most delay using MGIB benefits until after separation, discharge or retirement

#### *"Buy-Up" option*

The "Buy-Up" option, also known as the "kicker", allows active duty members to forfeit up to \$600 more toward their MGIB. For every dollar the service member contributes, the federal government contributes \$8. Those who forfeit the maximum (\$600) will receive, upon approval, an additional \$150 per month for 36 months, or a total of \$5400. This allows the veteran to receive \$4,800 in additional funds (\$5400 total minus the \$600 contribution to receive it), but not until after leaving active duty. The additional contribution must be made while still on active duty. It is available for G.I. Bill recipients using either Ch. 30 or Ch. 1607, but cannot be extended beyond 36 months if a combination of G.I. Bill programs are used

#### *Time limit/eligibility*

MGIB benefits may be used up to 10 years from the date of last discharge or release from active duty. The 10-year period can be extended by the amount of time a service member was prevented from training during that period because of a disability or because he/she was held by a foreign government or power.

The 10-year period can also be extended if one re-enters active duty for 90 days or more after becoming eligible. The extension ends 10 years from the date of separation from the later period. Periods of active duty of fewer than 90 days qualify for extensions only if one was separated for one of the following:

- A service-connected disability
- A medical condition existing before active duty
- Hardship

For those eligible based on two years of active duty and four years in the Selected Reserve (also known as "call to service"), they have 10 years from their release from active duty, or 10 years from the completion of the four-year Selected Reserve obligation to use MGIB benefits.

At this time, service members cannot recoup any monies paid into the MGIB program should it not be utilized.

## 15.2 – Health insurance.

A matter for financial modelling would see the Gold/White card program transition into a private health insurance coverage for applicable members. Should the Commission direct this modelling to occur the results will be evident. As I am not privy to funds expended on treatments I can provide no further comment on the recommendation.

## Conclusion

This supplementary report has where required, revised my previous submission to the Commission seeking to provide further discussion points to the strategic goals of the VSS rather than continuing to make operational and tactical suggestions that are not the responsibility of the Commission.