

Ian T Eglinton

Re:- Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans enquiry

I wish to make a submission to this enquiry.

I am an ex serviceman having served from January 1972 to July 1982.

I am an ex Chief Petty Officer Electronic Technical System Weapons Grade 3 Submarines.

I am now a Gold Card pensioner on a DVA TPI Pension and a Centrelink Disability Support pension.

I wish to note the following.

- My injuries occurred on the submarine HMAS Onslow on March 1st 1981. I had ongoing health issues from that day forward.
- In 1983 I submitted a claim through DVA for a list of health issues. The result of this claim were a rejection based on the reasoning that as my medical documents could not be retrieved (the Secrecies Act superseded the Freedom of Information Act); that as I was discharged medically fit, and the review claimed they could not find anything wrong with me, the claim was therefore rejected. I was told to go home and not bother them.
- With the same issues increasingly affecting me over time I again sought help from DVA in 1997. This time the review gave me a 50% disability rating with the conclusion that I had PTSD. I was handed a white card and sent home. No further explanations provided. I rang DVA and asked what to do and was told to hand the White card to the medical professional whenever I went to a doctor. I did so only to be told by numerous medical personnel that they did not know what the white card was or what it could be used for and that they had not heard of PTSD and therefore did not know what it was. I rang DVA and asked what is PTSD and they just replied that it was PTSD!!!!???? I then spent a further 10 years of frustration, pain and suffering not knowing what was wrong with me.
- When my health was at its lowest I again sought help. I was then upgraded to 70% for PTSD. By then I had a little understanding of what that was but was still not able to get much help. I had to then sell my 24 year old business as my health had got so low that I could no longer work. Within weeks of selling I was put on a 100% TPI with Gold Card.
- Once I had the Gold Card I had outside help to get into contact with VVCS as well as a Psychiatrist and a Psychologist. The Psychologist tried to assist in treating my PTSD but was having difficulties. He then sought the services of a Neuro Psychiatrist that deals with Brain Injuries. This specialist found that I had chronic brain injury from the Onslow accident in 1981. He suggested there are very few medical professionals that would understand my rare condition or indeed how to treat it. He gave me a medication that I am still on that assists with that condition. Then, and only then after 27 years of pain, suffering, agony, frustration etc. etc. at a system that would not help, even though I still had the same symptoms as listed in 1983!!!! did I get help that has allowed me to stay alive. Unfortunately too little too late.
- In 2009 my family and I went to Sydney for a plaque ceremony on the Onslow in the hope that it would provide some closure. Instead the frustration grew as for the first time the BOI of the incident was handed to me and other crew members again 27 years too late. I also found that other crew members still had no help and indeed that is so even today.

- Following this ceremony DVA was tasked with locating all the Onslow crew of that incident and ensuring they had assistance. Some crew members did not wish to speak with DVA due to the years of rejection. I had a phone call from a Representative of DVA with the opening remarks of “ I am here to help the crew of HMAS Onslow and what makes you think you are better than any one else?” I hung up the phone to this arrogant and ignorant person.
- My family (4 children & my wife) suffered thru those years with me and have their own issues now to deal with. Whilst we now have some assistance it does not pay for all those lost years, the lost income of a highly trained technician, nor the heartache I have each time I hear the waffle of politicians who rant on about “we will remember them” at Anzac and Remembrance services each year only to realise they have no intention of remembering or helping those who have been left injured by their service. Very hollow words!!
- DVA require us to provide evidence that our injuries are related to our service. This is very difficult when you consider the rare and unique environments that service personnel are engage in. It is even more difficult when you get told that the injury is not an accepted injury!!! Stagger me if an injury is not accepted???!!! An injury is still an injury regardless of whether you wish to accept it or not. **This lies at the root of most issues dealing with DVA.** If you get injured, then you are injured and need help. End of story. No buts, no ifs. I believe there are more Onslow crew that have been rejected for help on the basis of “Not accepted”. Maybe this is because most people under the same circumstances usually die. This comment was made to members of our crew soon after our accident. This is also why it is extremely difficult to ‘prove’ as there are few medical professionals that can diagnose such injuries. Maybe DVA like this situation because they can ignore so many.

I could go on and on about the issues over the years as well as the false hopes often given only to be dumped or back stabbed when making claims.

There are real issues still within the current serving members of our forces (which I have direct contact with family and friends currently serving.) The problems I experienced, the problems we had whilst I served, The issues that led to accidents when I served are all still there today just as they were back then.

The issues with DVA are still the same. It is as if they are there to ensure very few can make claims and get help. I find this utterly disgraceful, even treasonable.

Don’t listen to the hierarchy who only say what the Government want to hear. Listen to the people on the ground, although unfortunately I doubt you will hear much as there is much fear of speaking out both for serving members as well as the ex service community.

Maybe that is the intention all along.....