



Productivity Commission
Level 12, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

By email: veterans@pc.gov.au

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is the primary union representing Australian Public Service employees and is committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

The CPSU represents staff in the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the draft Productivity Commission report - A Better Way to Support Veterans.

Our members support legislation harmonisation, as this will give a better experience for veterans and their families and will simplify and streamline DVA processes. In our July 2018 submission to this inquiry, we stated "*the legislative framework for veterans' compensation and rehabilitation is complex and difficult to navigate, both for staff, and for those seeking support from DVA.*" CPSU members have found the internal piecemeal changes means there is a constant catch up to create new processes to implement small policy changes. However, any reform of the system needs to include policy experts in the design process. APS staff within DVA are the experts in delivering services to Veterans and need to be included in the design and development of any new system to ensure that the long term goals of a better experience for veterans.

CPSU members at DVA are committed to providing a high quality service to veterans and their families. To that end, members strongly support an increased focus on wellness in the way DVA does business. CPSU members also recognise that the transition to civilian life can be challenging and that support may be fragmented and poorly targeted. The CPSU supports increasing resources available to transitioning veterans and their families and the provision of holistic and comprehensive support as they move into civilian life.

In our previous Submission, we stated *“it is important that DVA ensures that staff are well trained and properly resourced to do their job. This includes having IT systems that adequately support the processes staff are expected to fulfil”* and *“the resourcing of staff in Department of Veterans Affairs impacts on its capacity to deliver services.”* CPSU members t DVA feel there is an ongoing lack of resources to fully service the veteran community, in part due to the staffing cap implemented by the Government. The impact of the staffing cap and reliance on Labour Hire staff was detailed in our previous submission:

Commonwealth has continued to apply an Average Staffing Level cap which is driving outsourcing and the use of labour hire staff within the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. The increase of non-ongoing and casual staff in the Department has resulted in fewer ongoing staff with knowledge of, and experience in, the application of legislation and related decision-making processes.

Labour hire staff in DVA are performing key customer service functions. However, due to the nominal ‘casual’ description of their positions, these workers have been denied salary progression, access to paid leave, and have lived in a constant precarious uncertainty regarding their futures. Insecure employees, with less job security, will have less investment in the future of the agency. This, and frequent staff turnover, impacts on the Department’s ability to provide effective and timely services to veterans.

If you require any further information about this matter, please contact CPSU Parliamentary Liaison Officer Elizabeth Hay .

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Newman
Deputy National President
Border Protection & International Affairs Team
Community and Public Sector Union