

Christopher Campbell

Submission to Productivity Commission inquiry on Veterans compensation and rehabilitation

This submission is in line with the Productivity Commission Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans.

As a veteran, I am grateful to give this submission freely, and hope that it helps in your endeavors to improve Veterans Quality of Life.

I have only been a Gold Card TPI for a couple of years, I was a White Card from 1981, as I left the service due to the fact that my injuries would not allow me to continue in my mustering, as an aircraft sheet metalworker.

I have suffered greatly due to my injuries, the loss of a career, ability to do the sports I would have chosen, not being able to give my children, the time and experience of my knowledge. Also, my issues that have threatened my marriage, friends that I have lost along the journey, all in all, a rather reduced Quality of Life, and one that caused myself and my family a great deal of pain due to my injuries and my psychiatric illnesses, which stemmed from my service career. It did not help to be told prior to my discharge, that I should have persisted, as my injuries were not excessive and that I was a malingerer by the Senior Medical Officer, who would not agree to a medical discharge. That's another story, and his name was [redacted], a water polo player, that thought that swimming cures everything.

I was extremely fit and active sportsman, playing golf, A grade squash, social tennis, waterskiing, and love of the outdoors bushwalking, swimming and fishing. I, also at Williamstown and Wagga Wagga, rode a bicycle too and from work most days. So, I kept myself in good condition, as one would expect being in the services.

The injuries I sustained have haunted me ever since. My chronic back and neck condition caused me much pain and inconvenience, even hospitalizing me after my wedding. The anxiety and depression, have also caused me to smoke and drink excessively, to the point of nearly destroying my marriage, and my children to take up drugs and smoking at a young age. I am not proud of this, as I was not the best role model for my children. I have always managed to provide for them, and gave them the opportunity of good schools, thanks to my very loving and loyal wife, who ran a business, worked every day of our married life. I was truly blessed, as she has held our home together, and made sure I kept my jobs over the years.

I have given you a picture of what my injuries have cost myself and my family. I believe that I have achieved far less as a person, then if I had been left as I was when I first joined. My quality of life being greatly reduced.

However, had the Australian Government been more interested in its constituents, and researched rehabilitation better, they could have improved things greatly. I have seen a number of initiatives over the years, none as good as what they offer at the moment. Please don't get me wrong, I appreciate everything DVA do for me. I believe there are ways of reducing costs with initiatives that are already in place.

The program I am suggesting, should be offered to all veterans on a permanent basis. It would make absolute commonsense, and improve the 'Quality of Life' of all veterans. I know this from my own experience, and how it has improved my life and my wife. As we live alone now, she again looking after my needs. This would not be possible, if she did not go to the Exercise Physiologist with me.

She had to have both her hips replaced, from looking after my needs prior to the Exercise Physiologist, and gained a great deal of weight due to not accessing more community activities. She

chose to stay at home and look after my needs. Her weight and her hips also made her leave work, as she became chronic, and she needed looking after as well.

So, we were both faced with being partially house bound, and unable to obtain much in the way of care, so we decided we would endeavor to improve our lifestyle. Our doctors put us both on a care plan, and it was recommended that we attend Activate Health in Yeppoon, and access the exercise program offered by an Exercise Physiologist with the view of improving our 'Quality of Life'.

When I first attended, I was suffering the ill affects of the abuse of alcohol, and I was unable to do 1 pushup. I was truly incapacitated and very unfit. My wife was told by her specialist, that he would not replace her hips unless she lost 10kg in weight. I was told that I needed to lose 20kg, to get my weight back where it should be. This would never have happened, if we had not gone to the Exercise Physiologist and the Dietician. They both worked together to get our weight down, and it worked perfectly.

My wife has had both hips replaced, and is now back fit and healthy, able to look after my needs with a small amount of Home Help. I am fit and feel much healthier then I was, and I am much more able to cope with more activities myself. I have other complications with my legs, where I suffer with compacted calves and shin splints from my service, and heart blockages, as well as high blood pressure. If it were not for the Exercise Physiologist, I would also have Stage 2 Diabetes, which I became borderline from alcohol.

I have no objection to getting Doctors referrals after every 12 visits, but this is a complete waste of tax payer money, and an inconvenience for all those involved. We know about the abuse of this service by other businesses, and the manipulation of the service, but why not just stop the abuse, and monitor the use of this service.

This is not only an exercise program, it also educates, socializes, maintains chronic medical issues, helps the Mental Health of individuals, improves the veteran's self-esteem, highlights any hidden medical issues, monitors the holistic health of a veteran, reduces the anger of veterans, and most importantly, improves the Quality of Life of all veterans, no matter their condition or age.

This program is too important to ignore, as it is a must to keep our veteran community fit and well. I don't say it's the answer to all our prayers, but it reduces doctor, physiotherapy, chiropractors, and many other ancillary costs.

I was attending Physiotherapy and Chiropractic services weekly, I haven't had to attend those services for over 12 months now. This program also works well in conjunction with other medical practices, such as having nerves burnt to reduce pain, and allow the veterans to increase their fitness. For me, this has prolonged my need for spinal fusion, which is a last resort.

In summing up, it would be a huge mistake to restrict this service, and not continue to offer it to all veterans. I believe it will greatly reduce your costs and increase the 'Quality of Life' of all veterans. I ask that you please consider this proposal, and find a way of offering it permanently for the sake of all veterans.

Thanking you

Christopher Campbell