

Dear Sir/Ma'am,

Lack of Training and Negative Culture in Veterans' Affairs

I appreciate that this is not the time for details on my voluminous dealings with the Department, but in brief, I left the military after 37 years service:

- A claim for bladder cancer was referred to a sports physician and refused. That decision was later overturned on appeal. Why the claim was not examined by a qualified oncologist has never been answered;
- A claim for nephrolithiasis (kidney stones) was rejected, despite an identical case (Boyd vs Repatriation) having been determined by the AAT. That refusal was also overturned on appeal;
- A claim lodged in 2008 went unanswered for **four years**. When the claim was finally allowed, the Department refused to pay medical expenses for other than the twelve month period leading up to final approval. The Department apologised, but instead of allowing for their incompetence, suggested that the veteran (myself) lodge a "Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration". At the time of writing, that claim was lodged over a year ago and has still not been determined by the Department.

This inquiry will hopefully determine whether the following assertions are true, but in my experience, despite the best efforts of staff (there are many fine public servants in DVA), they are, in too many cases, poorly trained and sometimes poorly led. There is anecdotal evidence of a culture of suspicion – that the veterans are trying to rip the system off. There may be isolated incidents of false claims, but the approach seems to be one of finding every possible way to deny a claim, which results in further expense in appeals that should have been determined very much earlier and in a far more timely manner.

To quote Senator Bernie Sanders: "If you can't afford to look after your veterans, you can't afford to go to war." The current Departmental approach is a national disgrace. I am happy to provide further detail if required.

Sincerely,

Dr Adrian d'Hagé, AM, MC, MAICD, Dip MilStud, B AppSc (Oen), B Th (Hons), PhD

Brigadier (Ret'd)