



Patron in Chief: Her Majesty the Queen

NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

National President Letter to Members - 2/2019

We are fortunate to be part of an Association that has supported Navy men and women for the past 99 years. Entitlements provided by DVA are generally the outcome of considerable effort by Ex-Service Organisations (ESO), including the Naval Association. Some of our members are to be congratulated for their part in achieving this degree of support. This leads me to something we all need to be mindful of, that is the review by the Productivity Commission (PC) of DVA. The PC draft review report is available and can be read at: www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/veterans/draft

In my view, the report provides two distinct elements, one is to disband DVA and establish a statutory authority, the second element seeks to harmonise entitlements. This is the simplest of descriptions, that doesn't diminish the probability of major change. Our position at this time is to disagree with any suggestion that DVA should be disbanded. Over the past few years there has been a remarkable shift in the attitude of DVA, with respect to their focus and how they respond to individual claimants. One key example of this is the Veteran Centric Reform (VCR) project. This reform has already had a positive impact on the level of awareness and response to claims made by Veterans. Another outcome from VCR that members may be aware of is the 'MyService' software program. MyService has proved to deliver a rapid response to claims. You will need a PMKeys or Service Number to use MyService. Although we have been advised that it is somewhat difficult to involve your Advocate. The point being that DVA is making an effort to reshape how they go about their business. Whilst there will be individuals who experience adverse decisions, out of the 640,000 living Veterans today, the number who have experienced a difficult time is relatively small. That is not to say a this number is okay, but it does point to DVA at least trying to do something about it. The second element of harmonisation is more contentious, this goes to the heart of the issue. To date, individual's who have experienced war-like conditions are immediately elevated a step or two above other Service men and women, insofar as compensation. Anyone with

war-like experience will no doubt vigorously support the status quo. Alternatively, there is a view that if a Service Person is injured whilst in the ADF, particularly when on operational duty then the entitlements should be the same. If economic considerations surrounding harmonisation apply, then there is likely to be a reduction in entitlements to some individuals, that outcome would be totally unacceptable. Given the range of possibilities detailed in the PC Draft Review Report, there is considerable unease about the likely outcome. Most importantly, we must ensure the impact on future generations is preserved. The sting in the tail for existing DVA clients may be if in the future you seek further compensation or support, that additional level of support may be less than that provided today. Make sure you belong to an ESO!

📌 **CARE:** Virtually all of the discussion above relates to welfare, the framework within which DVA will care for Service & Ex-Service men and women, along with their families. *Please take note.*

📌 **COMMEMORATION:** Give some thought to the sinking of HMAS *Voyager II* when services are held on 10FEB19. Two *Voyagers* have been lost in adverse circumstances. The Battle of Sunda Strait service remembers the loss of HMAS *Perth* and USS *Houston*, this will occur on 1MAR19, more than 1,000 men were lost on 1st March 1942.

📌 **CADETS:** We reinforce the need to identify the effort supporting Cadets. Sub-sections need to report on the extent and benefit of this work.

📌 **CAMARADERIE:** Shipmates sharing their experiences with like-minded folk is imperative. Being Shipmates is what makes the difference, being a Member is how to keep that mateship alive.

📌 May all Members and potential Members be aware of our work and to make their contribution towards our four pillars. Can you log on to the NAA website? If need be, look up the tutorial on the website or ask your Secretary for advice!

Terry Makings

4FEB19