A message from the National President:

We will all be aware that work has begun within the Minister's Office to develop a harmonisation process for the three existing Acts of Parliament, the VEA, DRC and MRCA in order to fulfill the Government's commitment to deliver a better future for the veteran community. This has resulted in the implementation of a Veteran Legislative Reform Pathway for consultation within the veteran community.

In this initiative, the guiding principles are the development of a future implementation strategy in consultation with the veteran community. The aim is to produce a simpler, sustainable legislative framework which does not reduce payments currently or previously received by veterans. Details can be sourced at: www.dva.gov.au/about-us/ overview/ reporting/reviews-and-reports/veterans-legislation-reform-consultation-pathway .

Please note that the deadline for submissions is 12 May 2023.

The Ex-Services Organisation Round Table (ESORT) members (of which the NAA is a member — represented by the National President) visited Parliament House on the evening of Thursday 29th March 2023 to hear the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh's proposals in relation to the Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultative Pathway.

First; may I say that at the outset the Minister made a clear case for not adopting a process wherein we would see yet another Act being developed. As he said; that would have given us four Acts which would have inevitably led to considerable delays and much deliberation and/or debate over which one and what to do next. The proposal is to take one of the existing Acts which provides the greater degree of benefits e.g., the MRCA, and improve upon that Act for the benefit of veterans.

I see the `Grand-parenting' assurance as being a most important provision for us all to consider and to note. The Minister went on to say that while a perfect solution is not seen to be a realistic expectation, the intent is to ensure no veteran will be worse-off at the end of this process.

The salient points I took from the Minister's presentation are;

a. having a single Act affords a higher degree of clarity around entitlements for veterans than is the case with the existing three separate Acts that veterans need to navigate in order to make a claim for compensation;

b. as the MRCA provides more benefits than the other Acts, it is proposed this will be the ole ongoing scheme;

c. the intention is to make improvements to the existing MRCA, to the benefit of existing and forthcoming veterans;

d existing arrangements provided for in the VEA, DRCA and MRCA Acts will be 'Grand-Parented' so as not to disadvantage veterans in the transition and ongoing application of the 'new and improved' MRCA;

e. the intention is that current payment rates are maintained and indexed normally;

f this new Act will provide coverage for all future claims from a date to be determined, irrespective of when and where the veteran served, or when their injury or illness occurred: and,

g. the Minister welcomes submissions from veterans as to how this proposal may be improved. Submissions close on 12 May 2023.

Please consider carefully and make a submission to DVA where you feel it is warranted.

Yours aye,

David Manolas

National President

Naval Association of Australia

3 April 2023