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**Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA)****TO:**

Senator Raff Ciccone  
Senator the Hon Sarah Henderson  
Senator Andrew McLachlan CSC  
Senator David Shoebridge  
Senator Jacqui Lambie

**CC:**

The Secretary, Senate Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade Committee  
Hon Matt Keogh MP  
The Hon. Darren Chester MP

Dear Senators,

I would like to reinforce our response at the subject FADT Committee hearing (18 August) regarding:

- The need for an urgent rewrite of the legislation to address the key Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RC) Recommendation 122; and
- Senator Lambie's concerns regarding how long a rewrite would take and the risk of further delay in the Commission's work.

The DFWA response assumed that the extant Defence and Veterans' Services Commission (DVSC) would continue the work already started while the legislation rewrite occurred. The DVSC momentum should be maintained. Incorporation of the priority changes to legislation must not be delayed until after a report is produced in 36 months' time, as suggested by DVA.

A re-write, with wide consultation, and making the urgent changes, needs to be commenced now and legislated as soon as possible - before end 2025, This is necessary to:

- Re-establish trust lost by Schedule 9 legislation totally ignoring the basic independence and transparency criteria spelt out by the RC Report; and
- Reassure distressed veterans and their families that their efforts of the last 5 years have not been in vain.

Progressing Schedule 9 with these deficiencies, is denying the importance of the RC recommendation and delaying the implementation. The history of "deny and delay" is repeating.

Changes proposed by DFWA and those outlined as Category A in the submission by the Interim Head of the DVSC are a start. The changes also need to ensure that the scopes of the Commission's inquiries are broad and inclusive and do not just examine "implementation of Government responses to recommendations" and do not specifically exclude the "external entities" in the Defence and Veterans ecosystem, as proposed by DVA.

This consultative process needs to continue after the first rewrite addressing those high priority issues.

From February to July this year, DFWA consulted with over 20 veteran organisations and collaborated on this and the two other Senate Committee Inquiries. There was unanimity concerning the critical deficiencies in Schedule 9. Advice from solicitors and KCs as suggested was not necessary to identify that Schedule 9 ignored key Royal Commission criteria.

I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity for DFWA to be heard and the courtesy shown to me as a witness at the FADT Legislation Committee as we all strive to eliminate veteran suicide and promote wellbeing of current and former ADF members and their families.

For your consideration,

Yours Sincerely

John Lewis  
**Qld President**  
for Del Gaudry CSC  
**National President**  
**Defence Force Welfare Association**

