



To whom it may concern,

26th September, 2025

RE: Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025

Young Veterans Central Queensland would like to formally present this Letter to highlight what we see as a complete lack of transparency and respect for our Veterans Past and Present.

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal was established in 2011, and it was supposed to be and has been an independent body.

The Department of Defence have decided that they no longer like, they have probably never liked, their decisions being reviewed by the tribunal, so, effectively, want to rip away the jurisdiction, the ability and the powers of the independent tribunal to be able to make decisions

There are over 100,000 Australians who wore the uniform and were killed in the ultimate sacrifice for the generations that followed.

That is a sacrifice that Australians can never repay

Some our relatives and family members have either paid the ultimate sacrifice or been one of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who have served in the ADF that have been willing to make that ultimate sacrifice for us.

When it comes to bills like these, we stand together in disbelief, that this government would bring such a bill as this that will strip the rights of our service men and women to be able to effectively review decisions of Defence around honours and awards. It doesn't strip them entirely. But what it does is throttle the ability of the tribunal in the timeframes that applications for reviews must be made and of those who can bring them. It is clearly a solution in search of a problem.

As Veterans we are not surprised at this government's willingness to continue to proceed with this bill, given that they know, they must have known, the response that this bill would receive from our veteran community.

They must have known that veterans often get adverse decisions about these honours and awards from Defence, and they must have known that the ability to seek an independent review of government, from an independent tribunal would be held sacrosanct by our veterans and their families. That the government

would be introducing this bill today leaves many of us yet again sick to the core and totally betrayed.

The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal, is independent and must stay independent. It was established in 2011 under the Defence Act. It's designed to consider Defence honours and award matters. The tribunal has both a review and an inquiry function.

The legislation currently under debate shuts the door on any further review of actions in the Vietnam War. By 2029, it will shut the door on ADF members that served in Iraq. East Timor awards for review would now be shut out. Those who served earlier than 2005 in Afghanistan under the 20 year rule this year gone. Somalia gone, the First Gulf War gone.

This yet again is just another step by the Albanese government to to stop review and to stop transparency of their decisions.

Let us be clear and transparent in the context of what is being proposed: families of veterans will not have a right to seek a review for an honour under this legislation. Veterans, family members, advocates and historians must have the ability to seek review under the independent tribunal. This should not be up for debate nor should it be changed under any circumstances.

Sometimes a veteran or their family members are not able to take this journey with their matter through such a process.

That's why we have an advocacy system through the Department of Veterans' Affairs. But that shouldn't stop them from seeking the medallic recognition they could and should be entitled to at any time. Surely?

Fact: this legislation was written by the department whose decisions the tribunal was set up to review. The opposition was briefed by Defence, with no tribunal staff or members present to defend their position in opposing these changes.

Who in their right mind in Parliament think it is OK for Defence? to decide how the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force operates?

I urge the government to reconsider their position on the bill. At the very least, this bill must be reviewed and those impacted must be consulted.

Your sincerely,

Jon Felton

President- Young Veterans Central Queensland

Vice President- Gladstone RSL Sub Branch