



29 September 2025

**Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee  
Inquiry into the Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal)  
Bill 2025  
From: Resolute Ready LTD**

**Introduction**

Resolute Ready LTD strongly opposes the Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025.

Our organisation exists to support serving members, veterans, first responders, and connected families, and to prevent service-related trauma and suicide. The abolition or severe curtailment of current rights to seek review by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal directly undermines fairness, accountability, and justice for veterans and their families.

This Bill risks silencing the voices of those who have already endured systemic neglect, further eroding trust in Defence and government institutions. It runs counter to the intent and recommendations emerging from the **Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide**, which consistently highlighted failures of transparency, accountability, and proper recognition of service.

The government has failed to introduce the accepted recommendations of the Tribunal that Stephen Skehill chaired in regard to our Killed-In-Service Campaign.

The accepted recommendations were:

1. **Memorial Clasp and accompanying scroll** – to recognise the service-related death of a veteran;
2. **Gratitude Clasp, a lapel pin and accompanying scroll** – to recognise serious wounding or injury suffered, or serious disease contracted or aggravated, by a veteran in or as a result of service;
3. **Memorial Star and accompanying scroll**– to recognise the sacrifice of the family of a veteran whose death was service-related; and
4. **Gratitude Star and accompanying scroll**– to recognise the sacrifice of a family of a veteran who suffered a serious wound or injury or contracted or aggravated a serious disease in or as a result of service.



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[https://www.defencelivesmatter.com/\\_files/ugd/c5f951\\_e6570b49c9ba461bbbd5230ef8b2ca28.pdf](https://www.defencelivesmatter.com/_files/ugd/c5f951_e6570b49c9ba461bbbd5230ef8b2ca28.pdf)

Quote by the KIS Campaign founder:

"Throughout my 47-year military career, I've served alongside some of our Nation's bravest individuals. They served with honour and integrity and paid the ultimate sacrifice or were injured and/or wounded in service. I believe we owe them and their families a debt of gratitude. To do that, we must officially record their sacrifice through medallic recognition because it is the ADF member's medals that tell the story of their service!" WO1 (Retd) Kerry Danes, CSM.

## Key Concerns

### 1. Loss of Independent Review and Fairness

- Removing access to Tribunal review strips veterans and their families of an independent mechanism for justice.
- Defence will retain power to refuse awards, but individuals will lose the ability to challenge those decisions fairly.
- The Tribunal itself has identified that many deserving cases of recognition would have been denied without its intervention since 2011.

### 2. Impact on Families and the Intergenerational Cycle of Trauma

- Families often carry the burden of unrecognised or dismissed service, and the denial of recognition compounds grief and trauma.
- This Bill removes rights for family members, such as cousins, nieces, or nephews, to advocate on behalf of their loved ones.
- Such exclusions fail to reflect the lived reality of service trauma, where family members frequently become advocates when veterans are unable to do so themselves due to illness, injury, or suicide.

### 3. Historical and Future Service at Risk of Being Forgotten

- The Bill prevents Tribunal review of conflicts such as WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan.
- This effectively erases avenues for justice for generations of veterans, contradicting national commitments to remembrance and honour.

## Royal Commission Evidence

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide repeatedly highlighted stories of neglect, bureaucratic failures, and the devastating impact on families.



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The story of **Lorraine McKenner**, shared at the Royal Commission, exemplifies this. Lorraine described how her father John's service-related trauma was denied recognition and how the lack of accountability and compassion from Defence and government systems exacerbated their suffering. The McKenner family's experience is not an isolated case—it represents countless families whose lives are forever scarred by systemic dismissal and erasure.

Had avenues like the Tribunal not existed, even more families would be left without hope of justice, compounding grief and perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of service trauma.

<https://www.shine.com.au/resources/client-stories/deb-mckenner>

### **Intergenerational Impact**

Research and testimony before the Royal Commission highlight that when trauma goes unrecognised and unresolved, it passes to children and families. This perpetuates cycles of distress, disconnection, and suicide risk.

Resolute Ready urges the Committee to consider:

- Every time recognition is denied or justice withheld, the message to families is that service and sacrifice do not matter.
- Such denial fuels mistrust, stigma, and despair in families already carrying invisible wounds.
- Preventing Tribunal access worsens this cycle, creating long-term social and health consequences across generations.

### **Recommendations**

Resolute Ready calls for the Committee to:

1. **Reject the Defence Amendment (Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025** in its current form.
2. **Strengthen**, rather than weaken, independent oversight mechanisms such as the Tribunal, ensuring fairness and transparency.
3. **Embed family advocacy rights**, recognising that families are often left to fight for justice on behalf of veterans unable to do so themselves.
4. **Implement Royal Commission strategies** to break the intergenerational cycle of service trauma, including recognition of service, transparent appeals processes, and trauma-informed support for families.
5. **Consult lived experience organisations** such as Resolute Ready and others to ensure reforms align with community needs and prevent further harm.



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## **Conclusion**

Australia cannot afford to diminish the rights of those who have served and their families. The Tribunal has been a crucial safeguard against systemic injustice. To remove or curtail it now would be to repeat the very mistakes the Royal Commission has already exposed.

We urge the Committee to stand with veterans, families, and the community by opposing this Bill.

### **One Stop. One Call. One Life.**

Resolute Ready LTD

This submission was prepared by Lidia Hall Founder & Director Resolute Ready. We gratefully acknowledge the valued contribution of Dr Kay Danes OAM, Resolute Ready International Ambassador whose humanitarian expertise and lived experience have informed and strengthened this work. Her tireless dedication and service exemplify the spirit of compassion, resilience, and global unity that Resolute Ready strives to uphold.