



GULGONG RSL SUB-BRANCH

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To The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee,

I write on behalf of the Gulgong RSL Sub-Branch and the wider veteran community of Gulgong to express our dismay at the content of the Defence Amendment (Defence, Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal) Bill 2025 referred on the 4th of September 2025.

The most notable concern is the arbitrary time limit proposed to be placed on the recognition of a defence honour, an operational service award or a foreign award. This time limit is offensive and onerous. The significance of ADF service should never be diminished by time. A courageous or meritorious action worthy of medallic recognition is such, regardless of the passage of time. We have seen frequent instances when a review of actions and decision making at a different time, through a modern lens and without bias have seen the recognition of some of our most worthy recipients. This commitment to historic review and retrospective recognition enhances the integrity of the system and instills a belief in our ADF members and their families that our country cares and that their service is valued by our nation regardless of date.

Similarly, the arbitrary age limit placed on when a length of service award is reviewable also appears onerous and unnecessary. The age of a veteran does not reduce the honour of the length of their service to our nation and often a proud family gains great solace from the recognition of their service, more so than the veteran themselves. To suggest that an arbitrary birthday should be central to decisions of recognition is again offensive and counter to an ADF members moral contract of service.

Finally, the restrictions proposed on who can apply to the tribunal to seek a review appear overly restrictive and superfluous to sound decision making. If a review is warranted, then a review is warranted regardless of rank or circumstance. Often an historian will discover worthy actions that were not recorded appropriately at the time, or where a bias existed that stopped an appropriate recognition. Does that worthy action not deserve recognition for the ADF member or their family?

It would appear to the outsider looking in that all of the functions of this Bill are focused on reducing administration and transparency of decision making. Our ADF members sign a contract with the nation with which they are willing to pay with their lives. If we cannot as a nation commit to honouring this service whenever or wherever it happened for the sake of reducing administration, then what have we become? The ongoing erosion of service through the reduced conditions of service and clumsy, onerous and superfluous bills such as this are reducing the message for young Australians to be willing to serve. If you do not value the ADF why should they continue to serve or aspire to serve?

Yours Sincerely

Ian D Marsh CSC

President

Gulgong RSL Sub-Branch

23 September 2025