

Senate inquiry into DVA and Veterans suicides

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- e. the administrations of claims by DVA and the legislative or other constraints on effective rehabilitation and compensation for veterans; and
- f. any other related matters.

#### Issues with DVA

Since discharge I have submitted claims for numerous injuries sustained during service. On two occasions, after approximately two years to finalise I was awarded two lump sum payments. On receipt of these payments I noticed that, approximately \$6000 and \$7000 had been garnished from the payouts.

I contacted DVA and was informed that "It was taken out due to the fact that had (my ex and I) still been married my children (2 children) would have benefited from the payout". I stated that I was the one carrying the injuries and that we had been divorced for approximately 2-3 years. The, male, on the other end of the phone laughed and said too bad and hung up. This should have galvanised to what was to come when dealing with DVA.

I started my claim for PTSD in 2010. From 2010 - 2014, due to continuous disbelief about my condition, from DVA, and the numerous doctors appointments, with doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists, who didn't know my background or didn't even question me about my background I attempted suicide three times. Due to this I was admitted to Heidelberg, Ward 17 once and Northpark Private, Bundoora on two occasions.

Due to this lack of empathy from DVA my psychological stability had declined significantly. The processing times for claims, as is evident by the dates listed above, is ludicrous. If this issues wasn't one of such import it would be a joke bordering on negligence. The attitude of DVA staff is "we're right you're wrong now prove otherwise". Veterans are not out for a free handout it more about accepting the fact that Defence broke us accept the fact. Veterans and ex-service personnel should not have to "hang their head" walk away and feel "it wasn't worth it".

#### Current issues

I currently have claims in the process with DVA. My last contact with DVA was when I rang as a, DVA requested report, had not been paid for, approximately one month previous. By fluke I managed to speak to my case manager and was informed that it would take 6 -8 weeks for my medical files to reach them. Even though the report, from the psychiatrist states in black and white "suffers from PTSD" due to service. These claims have been with DVA for three months now, with no update forthcoming.

It is commonly known that there is a stigma about mental issues within defence. Numerous personnel either hide the issue or seek outside help in their own time and out of their own pocket. Veterans and ex-service personnel are subjected to numerous "hoop jumping" red tape and out right disbelief from DVA. This, again refer to the dates above, can go on for a protracted period of time leaving personnel feeling extremely more depressed, anxious and in disbelief that the Govt system they upheld is slamming doors in their face, without so much as a "by your leave".

I am trying to mentally prepare myself for the inevitable round of DVA knockbacks and disbelief. I know they are coming. I myself have lost two friends, through suicide, as they did not have the mental fortitude to battle this antiquated system.