

---

To:

Committee Secretary

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

Department of the Senate

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Email: [seniorclerk.committees.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:seniorclerk.committees.sen@aph.gov.au)

Submitted by: Mr Micheal Still

Date: 04/05/2026

Connection to Defence or veteran community: (e.g. Veteran, Family Member, Advocate, Civilian Supporter)

### 1. Purpose of My Submission

I am making this submission because I believe Schedule 9 is a critical opportunity to stop repeating the failures that have harmed veterans and their families for decades.

The creation of the Defence and Veterans' Services Commission (DVSC) must not be symbolic or advisory—it must be an independent, permanent, and legislatively empowered body capable of holding Defence, DVA and other institutions accountable. Anything less risks continuing the deadly cycle of delay, denial, and neglect.

### 2. My Experience / Observations (optional)

I've served and seen first-hand how bureaucracy retraumatizes those it claims to support. I have watched too many mates fall through the cracks. I myself was driven to suicide and was revived in hospital. Costing me my wife and family of 20 years.

The long waiting periods for IL to acceptance of claim, seeking help and then compensation. The system seems geared to frustrate the veteran to the point of giving up and disappearing into themselves.

### 3. What Schedule 9 Must Deliver

To meet the intent of Recommendation 122 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, the DVSC must:

- Be fully statutorily independent, reporting directly to Parliament
- Be permanently funded and free from ministerial control
- Be empowered to compel cooperation, issue findings, and make binding recommendations
- Include whistleblower protections for serving members, veterans, families, and staff
- Have a legislated obligation to track, audit and publicly report on government implementation of reforms
- Be informed and co-designed by people with lived experience of military service and suicide risk

#### **4. Final Statement**

I support Schedule 9 only if it delivers real power—not another advisory panel.

Veterans and their families deserve action, not platitudes. We have waited long enough. This is not just about fixing systems—it is about saving lives.

Signature:

Mr Micheal