

For the Senate Inquiry into the Defence Amendment (Parliamentary Approval of Overseas Service) Bill 2008 [No. 2] for inquiry and report.

It is with concern and regret that I have been advised of this Inquiry only to this day (4 OCT 09). I am currently in the UK and will need to tend to this matter upon my return to my duties on 12 October 2009.

I note that this was a referred Inquiry, that has not been widely disseminated, particularly within the Ex-service Organisation Community.

The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) has been lobbying Government for over 10 years in order to secure reclassifications of warlike service for various Operations in retrospective circumstances.

Our most recent success was the reclassification to warlike service of the Australian Training Support Team - East Timor (ATST-EM), that served on peacetime conditions of service, in a declared warlike service zone from 2000-2004. This affects over 200 men and women, primarily Army personnel.

In March 2009, we were inadvertently advised by a Departmental DEFGRAM that warlike service for ATST-EM had been reclassified from peacetime service to warlike service. This apparently was not announced through Parliament, despite assurances from the current Minister of Veterans' Affairs, The Hon Alan Griffin, MP, that there was no requirement.

Difficulties of obtaining both Veteran entitlements and medallic recognition for these veterans remain. This was a situation that was "reluctantly" accepted by the Rudd Government from the 2007 Election, where the former PM, John Howard signed an approval for retrospective reclassification for ATST-EM to warlike service on 17 October 2007.

We are intrigued as to what reason this matter has initiated such an action by the Parliament to the Senate, moreover we are concerned that the retrospective reclassification of service to warlike service will be of detrimental impact to those who have already been accepted by the current and former Governments for warlike service.

Namely, the International Military Training Team (IMTT) in Sierra Leone (OP HUSKY); The Australian Defence Force Contingent to the Medical Support Force to the Second United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR II); and of course, most recently the declaration of warlike service for ATSTEM.

Others would be those deployments identified by the Clarke Review and other Government decisions on the Berlin Air Lift 1945; Ubon in Thailand; Thai/Malay Border skirmishes with Communist Terrorist Guerillas in the late 1960's; and Viet Nam in 1975.

There exists within this association's mandate a number of operations that have been submitted through the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, which we believe the majority are with the Director General of the Nature of Service Review (DG-NOSR) Committee of the ADF - BRIG David Webster, AM, awaiting investigation, processing and final decision.

Other areas of contention for reclassification to warlike service, that have been submitted by this association include the following:

1. Reclassification from non-warlike service to warlike service for Australian Military Observers (UNMO) to the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) aka OP PALLADIN - particularly for the Israeli and Lebanese War of July to August 2006 including same for 1983 and other Arab/Israeli conflicts to which ADF UNMO were exposed in combat;
2. Reclassification from non-warlike service to warlike service of the ADF Contingent to OP HABITAT, Northern Iraq in 1991;
3. Reclassification from non-warlike service to warlike service of the Army UNMO to the UN Military Observer Group India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), aka KASHMIR, during the Indo-Pakistani wars;
4. Members of Operational Support to the UN Transitional Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG), S.W. Africa - namely RAAF Aircrew serving on operational sorties during the period of an uprising by Angolan guerillas; and
5. Members of the ADF who served on short periods of time during warlike service that have not been recognised with such entitlement.

As I am currently in London, I am unable to provide a full and comprehensive list of the operations that we are currently representing and contending, however we require reassurances that this Inquiry will not affect the above mentioned submissions and previously approved reclassifications.

The time frame for a submission on the 16th of October is un-achievable by this association, due to the very recent discovery of this Inquiry.

We therefore request:

1. Reassurances that the previously accepted reclassifications of service to warlike service remains;
2. Reassurances that the previously submitted papers on retrospective reclassification remains un-hindered by this process; and
3. The request for an extension to have adequate time to research the Defence Amendment and cause to effect a submission to the Senate Inquiry Committee. We suggest that given this was announced on 20 Aug 09, that we are give the opportunity to submit our paper around 12-20 December 2009.

I look forward to your response to our email.

Yours Sincerely:

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