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### **Senate Submission Template – Schedule 9 Inquiry**

Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025

Review of Schedule 9 – Establishing the Defence and Veterans' Services Commission (DVSC)

To:

Committee Secretary

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee

Department of the Senate

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Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Date: 05/05/2025

Email (optional): [REDACTED]

Phone (optional): [REDACTED]

Connection to Defence or veteran community: VETERAN

#### **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 retraumatises those it claims to support.

[REDACTED]. HISTORICAL SEXUAL ABUSE BY HIGH RANKING OFFICER: [REDACTED]. Offence could NOT be reported in the 1980's. When it was reported as historical abuse (courage to do this came through the Royal Commission and the Restorative Engagement Program), I had to prove my case over and over again. I had 4 claims, PTSD, MDD, FIBROMYALGIA and finally ADJUSTMENT

DISORDER, bought on by the Claims Process. Each claim I won through the Appeals process, meaning, that I had to submit each claim twice. There have been 96 people involved in my claims process and I am now on permanent medication to control my Mental Health symptoms which has been exacerbated by the ARDUOUS and INTIMIDATING Claims Process.

Through the Claims Process I felt intimidated, bullied, humiliated and pushed aside. I contemplated Suicide MANY times, but I am the Sole Carer of my 3 year old Granddaughter.

Comments from Delegates and Review Officers included:

"You need to look on the positive side, You got a Pension out of it didnt you" [REDACTED]

"We cannot give you any information on your Perpetrator as he may still have family alive" [REDACTED]

"I also note that despite the information contained within [REDACTED] application for S37 consideration, she attempted to re-join Navy which I have taken as being at odds with her S37 application" [REDACTED]

### **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 \*\*\*\*\*PRIME IMPORTANCE\*\*\*\*\*

### **4. Final Statement**

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

This Schedule needs to include input from Vets that have been through the Claims Process. This process is long, degrading, intimidating.

I would like to make the following recommendations for changes within the Claims Process.

1. It needs clear guidelines and a guideline sheet of the steps involved in the process, not just "I'll send you a link"
2. There should be ONE Case Manager assigned to the VET throughout the entire process
3. Outside Welfare Agencies need to be scaled right back, there are WAY TOO MANY and this is confusing for the VET.

4. NO DELEGATE should be able to over ride a Psychologists report and downgrade VETs scores without liaising with the Doctor.
5. Scheduled regular meetings should be planned with Case Manager and Vet, to keep the Vet up to date with progress of the claim. Even if no progress has been made, a fortnightly or monthly phone call should be made.
6. Vets need to be given a checklist right from the start. Do you have a White Card, Service History, Defence Medal, whatever makes the Vet feel that they can get through this process.

Veterans and their families deserve action, not platitudes or patronizing remarks. We have waited long enough, surely DVA have learnt from the way the Vietnam Veterans were treated. This is not just about fixing systems—it is about saving lives. Again, I have almost finished the turbulent journey with DVA that started 5 years ago and yet here I am at the keyboard, expressing where they went wrong. If this makes it easier for future Claims "Victims" then I'm happy to give my time, if it falls on deaf ears, then it is just wasted time that I will never get back.