

Committee Secretary

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Dear Secretary,

My name is William Edward (Eddie) Josephs. [REDACTED]

For some thirty-one and a half years from 1969, I was a member of the Northern Territory Police and I retired a Senior Sergeant in the year 2000. During that time I worked mainly in the General Duties area however, I also spent some time as a Police Prosecutor and almost ten years on internal investigations. After leaving the Northern Territory Police I spent the next twenty years as a Veterans' Advocate. I was trained to TIP Level 4, and this allowed me to present cases before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). On 12 June 2017, I was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia (OAM) for my work With Veterans' and their families. I was a National Serviceman from 1966 to 1968 and served in Vietnam as a Tunnel Rat with 1 Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers in 1967 to 1968. I was a FSB Coral and as a result wear the UCG.

It is my understanding that the Government is overhauling the AAT and replacing it with the Administrative Review Tribunal and in doing so there is a proposal to combine Veterans' and Workers Compensation.

Before any change is made in this area it is necessary for those involved to make themselves aware of the report following the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. This interim report can be found at: <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2023-05/interim-report-dvsr-may-2023.pdf>

Without proper consideration and implementation, any changes in this area could just be the catalyst to tip some of the people involved over the edge with disastrous results.

At any time during Military Service a person employed therein could be asked to put their life on the line to achieve the goals of the Service. Except for some paramilitary organisations this rarely occurs outside Military Service.

Comcare covers workers' compensation while there are four main Acts in play concerning Military Service. They are **The Defence Act 1903, the Veterans Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA), the Defence Related Compensation Act (DRCA), and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA).**

Under the provisions of the VEA and MRCA there exists a requirement to be able to refer to a Disallowable Instrument known as a **Statement of Principle (SoP)** to be able to support a claim in relation to these Acts. It is unfortunate that this document is not well known among members of the Australian Military Service and their ignorance is, in my view, the cause of much anxiety and depression. A SoP is prepared by a group of five Professors of various areas of medicine and is an excellent method of streamlining claims for the acceptance of injuries, disease and other conditions. The SoP does however, need to find a way to become part of the vocabulary of serving Australian Military members. Until that happens the anxiety that exists when going through the claim process will probably never be eliminated.

Under the VEA and MRCA, when dealing with the Veterans' Review Board, there exists the possibility of asking for a **Case Appraisal**. The Case Appraisals notion should be extended to the AAT or the new body. The idea of a Case Appraisal is very similar to mediation between the groups involved and would be very time-saving.

I remain,

Yours Sincerely,

William E Josephs, 14 January 2024.