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12 March 2019

Committee Secretary
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
DEPARTMENT OF THE SENATE

**Further Submission – Australian Veterans' Recognition
(Putting Veterans and their Families First) Bill 2019**

Whilst recognising the stated closing date of 6 March 2019, this additional response has been prepared due to the publication of submissions received by the Committee after that time, and to respond in particular to one of them.

We also strongly endorse the submission put forward by Dr. Martin Hess (Submission 10) concerning the experiences of Australian Police, particularly in East Timor in 1999.

Many of our members have a high regard for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the service they provide, however the submission from the Secretary of DVA (Submission 16, dated 8 March 2019) highlights our concern that Australian police peacekeepers are being overlooked.

The consultation process followed by DVA did not involve any non-military groups, such as ourselves, although our members are included in the *Veterans Entitlement Act (VEA)*. This is acknowledged at page 3 of the DVA submission, where it is stated that:

“The definition of “veteran” used in the Bill was considered by ESORT and Veterans’ Ministers Roundtable stakeholders. DVA did not specifically direct these discussions to organisations representing non-Defence personnel who may have worked for the Australian Government overseas in the national interest. DVA submits that any amendments to the definition of “veterans” in the Bill, at this time, to recognise non-Defence personnel could be considered in the future. Any such consideration fundamentally alters the object and purpose of the Bill and would require Government consideration, and consultation far beyond the traditional stakeholders and clients known to DVA.”

The failure to consult does not in our view excuse the omission. Nor does the effort required to remedy it make it any less necessary.

If not in favour of immediately adopting our suggested amendments, DVA should have at least committed to discussions about them. To say they “could be considered in the future”, in reality, promises nothing. And to say that consultation would be required “far beyond the traditional stakeholders and clients known to DVA” seems to reflect a view that we are not part of the veteran community - despite our service, our inclusion in the VEA, and DVA’s responsibility for us.

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