

I wish to make comment regarding the Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Bill 2019 that is currently before Parliament.

I am a former member of the Australian Military who discharged some years ago because of medical issues. Firstly, let me say that I am very pleased the PM and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has decided to put in place a Veteran Card, Lapel Pin, and Covenant to recognise those who have served to protect Australia, its people and its interests.

My only concern is the proposed eligibility for the classification of "Veteran" in this Bill, currently:

*"veteran means a person who has served, or is serving, as a member of the Permanent Forces or as a member of the Reserves."*

This definition means anybody who served for 1 day can be called a veteran. This surely cannot be right. I believe most people would prefer to see that the title "Veteran" be given to someone who has honourably served in a branch of the Australian military for their minimum engagement period unless they were medically discharged earlier through service reasons.

There are some people who are arguing that only a service person who served in a war zone should be called a "Veteran" and some go even further stating they should be called War Veteran or Combat Veteran or some other elitist title. This is wrong on several levels and will do more to anger service people than anything else. This is because only a small percentage of military members who serve in an active war zone face danger from the enemy. Some stay in hotels while others were in support in a different country a long way from the enemy. Calling these people war/combat veterans would simply be ridiculous and would be treated with contempt by their peers who actually did face danger. Not to mention those who stayed in Australia and who were injured or even killed during dangerous exercises/training, emergency help to the community, etc.

I think the best course of action is to have just one title: "Veteran" for anyone who served in the Australian Defence Force for their initial engagement or medical discharge, irrespective of whether they served overseas, and let those service persons who want to call themselves a War/Combat Veteran do so in an unofficial capacity. These service people already have a badge that denotes they served in or near a war zone.

Having different levels of "Veteran" is unnecessary and would surely cause confusion when using the Veteran Card or Veteran Lapel Pin for discounts, I doubt shop owners are going to want to have different levels of discounts.

Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Proud former member of the Defence Force.