



The Belinda McGowan Foundation Ltd

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18 March 2024

President  
Australian War Widows (Qld)  
Lvl 4 183 Wickham Terrace,  
Spring Hill, QLD, 4000

Dear Judy,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed name change from 'War Widows' to 'Wholly Dependent Partner'.

I became a war widower by default when my wife FLTLT Belinda McGowan passed away on the 21st of May 2021. Belinda is classified as a 'death in service caused by service' and she was two weeks shy of 33 years' service with the Royal Australian Airforce.

Belinda was very supportive of our key long-standing veteran support organisations: RSL, Legacy, and War Widows and always acknowledged their on-going contributions to veterans and their families.

As a recent war widower I am proud, humbled, and extremely privileged to be embraced by War Widows as a caring and compassionate organisation. The term 'War Widow' for me conveys solace, compassion, and the silent understanding of shared circumstances that have galvanised us as one. As such, I see no need to change our branding.

I am very concerned about the possibility of being referred to as a 'Wholly Dependent Partner'. I completely understand the use of the term from a policy perspective, however the term is devoid of empathy and makes no reference to our partners' ADF service.

Politicians and policy makers need to pause and reflect when making decisions regarding the name change for War Widows Australia. Our partners have paid the ultimate price for their service and surely they have earned the right to be acknowledged in any future branding.

The proposed branding without any reference to veterans, portrays disrespect for all of those who have previously served, and contempt and ignorance towards their partners who have been left behind.

The term 'Wholly Dependent Partner' implies that we who are left to grow old are dependents of our deceased partner and the Commonwealth. This is a huge assumption as many of us supported our partners during their service, and post service continue to support our communities as fully functioning independent contributing individuals.

Through my work with The Belinda McGowan Foundation (TBMF) I deal with current serving members of the ADF, veterans, war widows, community leaders and health professionals of all ages. Without exception those I talk to about this proposed change from 'War Widower' to 'Wholly Dependent Partner' see it as disrespectful.

Your sincerely,

Bruce McGowan  
Founder and Director  
The Belinda McGowan Foundation Ltd