

SUBMISSION

Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Bill 2019

Please accept this submission for consideration and publication.

I put it to the Committee Chair and Members that the Bill as it stands is discriminatory to past and present members of the Reserve Forces. In that only past and present members of the Permanent Forces automatically have a right to a Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Card, solely on the basis of at least one day Permanent Forces service; whereas past and present Reserve Forces members are not extended this automatic right.

It has been reported that the so called Veterans Card will be only be issued to DVA Health Card recipients (and will replace those Health Cards, Gold, White & Orange) This is disingenuous and not helpful to ALL other veterans who are not privy to having a DVA Health Card; they will simply not get a so called Veterans Card

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

This definition would suggest that ALL persons who have served or is still serving in the Reserves will AUTOMATICALLY be issued a pin, cards or other artefact. This is certainly NOT the case as the Department of Veterans Affairs will NOT issue a Health Care Card to a person solely based on Reserve Forces service.

Discrimination in practice; a life example of the discrimination between Permanent Force service and Reserve Force service.

I served as a Permanent Forces soldier, therefore I qualify for a DVA Health Card (White Card)

My wife previously served 12 years solely in the Reserve Forces, she does not automatically qualify for any DVA Health Card

My son currently has 6 years Reserve Forces service (he continues as a Reservist), he does not automatically qualify for any DVA Health Card.

As is my real life example I qualified for a White Card, simply for serving at least one day; whereas my wife and son qualify for NO card, even though they have at least one day's service.

When my wife or son is asked about being a veteran, what are to say to a questioner? Say yes as this Bill defines them as such, and then have that questioner say 'Prove It, show me your Veterans Card' or not acknowledge that they are veterans. When both my wife and son wear the Australian Defence Medal (they have both been awarded this medal) on ANZAC Day, do they think twice about wearing it for fear that someone will ask for a Veterans Card to verify their bonafide as a veteran.

Secondly the Bill is flawed in that it only recognises DVA clients; that is persons who have sought DVA assistance, it does not cover ALL those other veterans who have not contacted DVA or sought DVA assistance.

This Bill is flawed, it discriminates against part-time Reserve Forces (which is also a fault with DVA legislation). It will empower so called 'stolen valour' vigilantes to question veterans why they have no Veterans Card, leaving an unfounded accusation of claiming veteran status.

You may ask why I care; I care because ALL those Australians who signed up and ACTUALLY served as either a Permanent Forces or Reserve Forces member (some even both) deserve the exact same recognition and assistance. My wife and son deserve not just the so called Veterans Card, they also deserve automatic issue of a DVA Health card (White) just as all Permanent Forces members have an automatic qualification for a DVA Health Card.

ENDS