

Recommendations

The Committee recommends:

- that the Department of Veterans' Affairs ensures that all staff responsible for providing advice on offsetting have access to up to date information and appropriate training;
- that the Department creates a centre of expertise for delivery of expert advice to staff, veterans and widows about the operation of sections 30C and 74 of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*, and for quality assurance on the final calculations of offsets. This will ensure that appropriately trained staff, with the required specialised knowledge, are responsible for making veterans and widows fully aware of their entitlements under the Act; and
- that the Department must ensure that all potential recipients of lump sum compensation understand the implications for their pension of accepting a compensation lump sum; that upon accepting a lump sum, their pension will be offset for life.

The Committee recommends:

- that comprehensive and expert information be given to potential recipients once claims have been accepted, detailing the MCRS lump sum and VE Act pension, with a complete cost schedule, including the rate of offset; and
- that this information be provided to potential recipients before they are required to make a decision about whether to accept a lump sum or a pension. It should also include any other likely payments that will impact on recipients' future payments (for example, CPI increases).



Senator Sandy Macdonald
Chair