



DVA Issues

Funeral Benefits.

On the 7th November 2021 I wrote to the Federal Minister for Veterans Affairs, Andrew Gee MP and also to the Labor Shadow Minister Shayne Neumann, asking them to tell me why a veteran who is covered under the VEA is entitled to \$2000 to assist with the cost of his/her funeral while a veteran covered under the MRCA is entitled to \$11,459.

I asked the Federal Minister "Does the Liberal Government intend to remedy this injustice?" and asked the Shadow Minister "What would a Labor Government do to remedy this injustice."

The Federal Minister's Office replied on the 29th November 2021. His [reply](#):

*"Mr Trevor Benneworth
Secretary/Treasurer
The Radschool Association Inc.
trev@radschool.org.au*

Dear Mr Benneworth

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 November 2021 to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs concerning funeral benefits under veterans' legislation. Your correspondence has been forwarded to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for response.

You are correct in your understanding that the level of payment for funeral benefits under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 is lower than under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004. Under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, a payment of \$2,000 is available for a larger group of eligible veterans, and in some limited circumstances, their dependants. This amount is designed to help support families during a difficult time, but was never intended to reimburse the entire cost of a funeral.

This is different to the support available to veterans under other legislation administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Under the Safety Rehabilitation



and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988, and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004, a larger reimbursement amount of up to \$12,603.88 is available, but with strict eligibility criteria, and therefore a much more limited group of eligible veterans. This amount is intended to cover the cost of a funeral. Eligibility for the funeral payment under the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988, and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 is limited to clients who:

- died as a result of a condition accepted under those Acts; or*
- were eligible for the Special Rate of Disability Pension under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004; or*
- have been assessed at 80 or more impairment points under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.*

I understand that you are disappointed with the amount of funeral benefit available under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. Any increase to the amount of funeral benefit payable under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 would be a decision for the Australian Government. As this would involve additional expenditure, it would need to be considered in the Australian Government Budget process. The Department of Veterans' Affairs will consider your views when developing advice to the Australian Government about potential future policy changes.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

*Yours sincerely
Veronica Hancock
First Assistant Secretary
Veteran and Family Policy Division"*

At least they answered me, the Labor Shadow Minister hasn't even bothered to reply. What seems incongruous to me is, they know it's discriminatory but aren't prepared to do anything about it.

The Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide.

Group Captain (Retd) Carl Schiller, OAM, CSM, the National President of the Air Force Association has submitted a well thought-out and researched submission to the Royal Commission. You can read it [HERE](#).

The Commission began its hearings in Brisbane on the 29th November 2021 at the Brisbane Convention Centre. The hearing was open to the public but due to Covid restrictions, those wishing to attend had to pre-register. It will release its report in 2023 – that's right, 2023!!.





The Chairman of the Royal Commission is [Nick Kaldas](#), Nick was the Deputy Commissioner of the NSW Police Force, he received the terms of reference on the 8th July 2021. In short, the Royal Commission will inquire into systemic issues and common themes related to Defence and veteran death by suicide, including the possible contribution of pre-service, service, transition, separation and post-service issues and other matters believed by the Royal Commission to be relevant to its inquiry. You can read the full terms of reference [HERE](#).

Opinion.

A lot will be said, a lot of sad people will be identified, a lot of terrible problems will be heard, it will cost a lot – but at the end of the day, what will it achieve? Back in 2019 the Commonwealth Ombudsman found that some men and women had been provided with misleading and incorrect advice about their rate of retirement pay. That was 2 years ago, men and women were promised a fix to the DFRDB debacle but what has happened.

Answer = Nothing!

Those on a TPI pension have been robbed of its true value – politicians promise a lot but what have they done:



Answer = Nothing!

You can bet the same will come from this Commission, a lot of media coverage while it's in progress, then on completion there will be a million pages printed and bound into expensive books which will be paraded for all to see and which will then be sent to the archives, the whole thing will fade away and we'll have another inquiry into something else. And what will be done?

Answer = Nothing!

It is [estimated](#) that this Commission will cost \$174M plus. The huge amounts of money that are spent running these Royal Commissions and Enquiries is sinful. In a lot of cases, a fix would cost \$100 – but what do they do, they hold an enquiry which costs \$200. It's madness.

As Gough once said – It's time for a change!!!

DVA grants open now.

Veteran and Community Grants Program

The objective of the Veteran and Community Grants Program is to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life for members of the Australian veteran community by providing funding for projects that sustain or enhance health and wellbeing. Information about applying for this round can be found on the [Community Grants Hub](#) and [GrantConnect](#).



Supporting Younger Veterans Grants Program

The Supporting Younger Veterans Program provides grants to ex-service organisations and their partners to deliver services for the younger veterans' community that build capacity for the future. The grants also help raise awareness of the issues faced by the younger veterans' community. Information about applying for this round can be found on the [Community Grants Hub](#) and [GrantConnect](#).

Applications for both rounds close 9:00 pm AEDT on 20 January 2022.

Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program

The Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program aims to preserve Australia's wartime heritage and to involve people around the country in a range of projects and activities that highlight the service and sacrifice of Australia's service personnel in wars, conflicts and peace operations. Information about applying for this round can be found on the [Community Grants Hub](#) and [GrantConnect](#).

Applications for this round close 11.00pm AEDT on 8 February 2022.

VETAFFAIRS

We are calling for articles for the next edition of the VetAffairs paper. If you have a story to tell that showcases some of the things happening in your community in health and wellbeing, we invite you to write a short article with a photo and submit it for consideration. They ask for articles about 300 words in length with a high resolution photo.

You can send those through to your local CSA or straight to vetaffairs@dva.gov.au. The deadline for the next edition is 1 February 2022 (which is only about 6 weeks away).

DVA TV



We are thrilled to advise that DVA has launched its newest communication channel to provide updated information, support and recognition to the Defence and veteran community. DVA TV will publish a wide variety of video content to a YouTube Channel dedicated to veterans and their families, about DVA's services and the support that is available. Content on DVA TV will range from guides to accessing support, such as how to use MyService, to capturing and sharing



commemorative services, showcasing individual stories of service and posting important announcements from the department.

DVA TV will provide overviews and insights into the services available to the veteran community, including support for families, mental health programs, financial assistance and claims support, transition stories and messages of hope from the positive impacts that programs such as the Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Scheme is having on veterans' lives. We are keen to ensure that DVA TV provides informative videos on topics that you want to know more about and we welcome your suggestions for future content. Please feel free to email suggestions either to your local state team or directly to communications@dva.gov.au.

To access it, just open [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/) then in the search box at the top type DVA TV, hit your Enter key then click the blue circle to open it. Don't forget to subscribe to the channel to be notified of new content!

DVA HEART HEALTH PROGRAM



The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is offering a 52-week program designed to improve physical health and wellbeing for returned veterans, peacekeepers and those covered under the ADF firefighter scheme. It is available to individual veterans, as well as groups.

Click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) to find out more.

If you would like to discuss these program opportunities or apply to participate, you can visit the Heart Health website on <http://www.veteranshearthealth.com.au/> Alternatively, you contact Corporate Health Management on 1300 246 262 or email: hearthealth@chm.com.au

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING

R U OK? want to remind everyone that Christmas can be a difficult time for many Australians and encourage you to make a real difference in someone's life by giving the 'Gift of Conversation'. ESOs can download a variety of resources and information to use on social media and websites [HERE](#).

HIPPY Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters – This is a free two-year home-based early childhood program that involves both one-on-one and group sessions, fun excursions and also offers some parents' employment. Find out more on HIPPY Australia [HERE](#).

Accessing your COVID vaccination certificate.

Vaccinations are currently top of everyone's mind. They are the best way to protect ourselves and our community. Not surprisingly, veterans have been asking for information about how to get a COVID vaccination and how to access their vaccination certificate.



Getting your vaccination certificate.

Once you've had the jab, there are a few ways that you can get your vaccination certificate. If you received your vaccination through your regular GP clinic, the simplest way is to ask them to print a copy for you. Alternatively, you can phone the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). Call their dedicated Veteran and Defence Support Line on 1800 653 809, select Option 4 and the helpful hotline staff can mail you a copy of your certificate. The AIR Veteran and Defence Support Line can also help you check if you already have a Medicare number. Many veterans do have a Medicare number but aren't aware of it, so it is worth checking.

If you have a Medicare number, you can access your digital COVID vaccine certificate through [myGov](#) and via the Express Plus Medicare app on your mobile phone. There are some easy-to-follow instructions available on the ['How to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccinations' page](#) of the Services Australia website. If you are a DVA card holder and do not have a Medicare number, you will need to access your My Health Record and link it to your myGov account. The [Australian Digital Health Agency](#) has a help line on 1800 723 471 (24 hours, 7 days a week). They will verify your identity and give you an access code (also called an Identity Verification Code) to link your My Health Record and MyGov account. This way, you will be able to get a digital copy of your vaccination certificate via MyGov.

There are many answers to COVID questions on this site. ['COVID vaccination roll-out FAQ' page](#), however, if you have any specific concerns you should talk to your trusted GP.

Disability Pension changes

From 1 January 2022, the DVA Disability Pension will be removed from the income test for Social Security payments. This will simplify the way income support payments are calculated, indexed, and administered by DVA and Services Australia. The initiative will exempt the Disability Pension from the Social Security Act 1991 income test and the rent assistance test under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986.

As part of these changes Disability Pension will be re-named 'Disability Compensation Payment' to better reflect the nature of the payment.

The Defence Force Income Support Allowance (DFISA) will no longer be paid because the Disability Pension will not reduce income support payments from Centrelink and Age Pension from DVA. These payments to affected Disability Pension recipients and their partners may increase. DVA Disability Pension will no longer affect the Rent Assistance of Service Pension, Income Support Supplement and Veteran Payment recipients. This means that Disability Pension recipients and their partners may receive increased Rent Assistance payments, or receive Rent Assistance for the first time if they are renting privately.

DVA would have contacted you towards the end of 2021 if you may become entitled to Rent Assistance to invite you to update your accommodation details so that your Rent Assistance is calculated on up to date information. If they haven't, you can update your details online using



[MyService](#) via myGov. If this is not possible, you can contact DVA via phone 1800 838 372. You will need to provide evidence of the rent you pay.

Rent Assistance is payable to Service Pension, Income Support Supplement and Veteran payment recipients who pay rent of more than the rent threshold of, as at 1 July 2021, \$127.60 (singles) and \$206.40 (couples combined) per fortnight. You cannot receive Rent Assistance if you live in state or territory government public housing. If you or your partner already receive Rent Assistance with a Family Tax Benefit payment from Services Australia, you will not be eligible for Rent Assistance from DVA as well.

The current fortnightly rate of Rent Assistance is: (These figures are adjusted every March and September)

Status	Threshold/fortnight	Max Rent assistance paid
Single	\$127.60	\$142.80
Married (combined)	\$206.40	\$134.60
Illness separated (each)	\$127.60	\$142.80

Don't say thanks.

Public servants at the Department of Veterans' Affairs have been ordered by the Minister for Veterans Affairs, Andrew Gee, to stop using the term "thank you for your service", a phrase that has grown in popularity as a public sign of gratitude towards men and women who have served in the armed forces.



Seems he feels we have nothing to be thanked for. We can thank him for his consideration next election!

Government ignores Veterans.

Brisbane Courier mail – 18 Oct 2021

Labor has lashed the federal government for sidestepping a bipartisan committee recommendation to lift the pension for disabled veterans. This year the committee called on the government to consider increasing the payment for totally and permanently incapacitated veterans. The government merely noted the recommendation, saying it would take it into account "together with the views of the ex-service community when considering future policy options for support to TPI veterans". Opposition veterans' affairs spokesman Shayne Neumann and committee chairwoman Kimberley Kitching said this was a "huge slap in the face" for the 27,000 veterans who relied on the payment.



They promised Labor would have “more to say about how we will better support veterans and their families in the lead-up to the election”.

The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women has been raising the issue of the TPI payment for several years, but the Liberal-National government has completely ignored their concerns,” they said.

Vets wait 200 days for help

Charles Miranda Daily Telegraph.

AUSTRALIAN veterans are suffering psychological harm as they battle for up to 200 days to get much needed benefits. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in damning evidence has been told how veterans are treated the first time psycho logical trauma suffered post military service has been formally linked to how Defence and Veterans Affairs departments operate. The commission was told urgent reforms were needed to not just the departments’ standard operating procedures. but also the various complex pieces of legislation that govern how veterans are dealt with.

The commission has heard the departments’ databases were not integrated and in one instance a soldier with significant physical life-changing wounds suffered on a battle field was forced to prove he was even in the army. DVA gave itself 100 days average to provide benefits, but this target on average had more than doubled in recent years to 200 days and in some instances 14 months.

Dr Bernadette Boss, the independent interim national commissioner for defence and veteran suicide prevention appointed by the federal government before it bowed to public pressure to form a royal commission, said urgent and fundamental reform was needed. The former ACT magistrate said that such was the state of procedures, it was “troubling” to learn that a member could use a wrong word or terminology and have a claim rejected or be forced to start again. People could have been saved and those who served the nation were not being adequately served in return, Dr Boss said.

