



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

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REVIEW OF DVA-FUNDED ADVOCACY AND WELFARE FUNDS **COMMENT ON THE DVA KEY ISSUES PAPER**

This is a joint submission from the Defence Force Welfare Association and the Royal Australian Regiment Association.

Introduction

The Key Issues Paper (KIP) summarises an extensive amount of research on the BEST and TIP systems by the DVA research team and many ESO's and others who made submissions and attended face to face discussions. Most of the issues pertain to those that come under DVA organisation and control however BEST and TIP interface with many other functions and organisational boundaries outside DVA and further review into these is warranted.

Training, Qualification & Photo ID for TIP Practitioners

We consider that TIP is the vital link between DVA and the ESOs, in the areas of advocacy and welfare, and it requires considerable improvement if it is to be effective into the future. A standard national training system is required, which includes an e-learning capability, practical exercises and assessments. We agree that a Competency Based Training framework is appropriate, which reflects the need for different levels of expertise. We support a system for the accreditation of individuals, and for parent ESOs to maintain lists of qualified practitioners. Identity cards should be provided and the ID should where appropriate conform to Defence and/or DVA security requirements. The ID should include colour coding and the individual's photo and organisation. Consideration should also be given for the inclusion of TIP qualifications.



Rent and Utilities Payment

With emphasis in the future on integrated service delivery models, funding for rental assistance and payment for utilities should follow the agreed structure in each area. We acknowledge that there is some duplication among ESOs in service delivery and that rationalisation is required. We believe that the solution will be a mixture of the three current models, because one size doesn't fit all in this situation. We also believe that the ESOs themselves should be invited to restructure where this is needed, using a set of previously agreed criteria.

Funding for salaried positions

We accept that the pool of volunteers is shrinking and that there will be a need to replace some of them with paid practitioners at some time in the future. Where this occurs the requirement for a more professional approach and organised supervision is essential. However we do not accept the premise that paid personnel will necessarily provide a better service. There are many instances, for example in the emergency services, of volunteers working alongside paid personnel, and performing similar functions, so a mix of paid staff and volunteers is feasible, even in the same location.

In addition to the need to replace the decreasing availability of volunteers with paid employees, if the Dunt recommendation for employing paid specialist trained pension officers who undertake TAFE training is implemented, then a professional support base will be established which will require ongoing funding beyond the capacity of most ESOs. There is also an emerging requirement for funding to support administrators to coordinate the work of support centres and ESOs who provide advocacy, welfare and pension support services to veterans.

Remuneration for volunteers

Volunteers remain essential to the delivery of advocacy and welfare services, and must be well supported. They or their organisation on their behalf should be able to claim expenses as outlined in the Key Issues Paper, but should not be paid.

Monetary Value of Volunteer Work. The total monetary value of the contribution of the vital work of the army of volunteer Welfare and Pension Officers and Advocates has never been quantified. It is considered that such a value needs to be gained to ensure a clear understanding and appreciation of this unpaid voluntary input. It is recommended that a detailed, independent study be undertaken to value the dollar contribution of the many volunteers who strive on behalf of DVA and the defence and veteran community. Such a study will provide statistical substance to the participation of volunteers.

Regional basis for Fund Granting

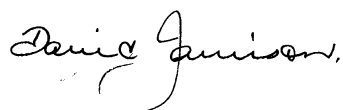
In principle this concept is supported. In Victoria the development of veteran support centres was originally to rationalise regional country support to veterans provided by individual ESO's into appropriate locations and foster cooperation between those ESO's. The ESOs

retain their independence but jointly foster each veteran support centre. There is scope to extend this concept nationally noting our comments above about the need for tailoring this approach to the specific requirements in each geographical area. There is also scope for closer integration of the services provided by the veteran support centres and VAN offices. The suggested regional basis for grant funding is generally supported provided there is sufficient flexibility in its application to take account of the peculiar geographic, ESO and veteran population spread factors in each area. Again the “one size fits all” approach should be avoided.

BEST and Grant In Aid Funding

We agree that grant assessment processes take into account the capacity of ESOs to contribute from commercial activities and take account of the variable levels of support available to them as outlined in the Key Issues Paper. We believe however that the list of support examples is incomplete and should be extended to include proceeds from other government support and “concessions” such as approval to conduct national appeals, licences to conduct lotteries etc.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Jamison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'J'.

David K Jamison. AM

National President
Defence Force Welfare Association

and on behalf of the Royal Australian Regiment Association