10 September 2019

COMMENT

SURVIVING RECENT FRIENDLY FIRE

Friendly Fire

What has been very disappointing and demoralizing in recent times are the emails, social media posts and the broader media attacks upon DVA, the ESORT and the ADSO. Especially are the attacks on individuals and ESO leaders for not being supportive of the broad veteran communities. Nothing could be further from the truth.

When these attacks get personal, lesser mortals might choose to walk away from it all but considering how far we have all come for the better we have no option "than to stay the course". Nothing is perfect in life and DVA is no different, but the improvements initiated over the last four years, through the Veteran Centric Reform program, are encouraging, but there is still a long way to go. DVA, with the ESORT and others, are engaged and are working through the Productivity Commission Report and the Cornell Advocacy Report. There is no doubt that the ESO community is being listened to in so many different areas, including families. There is a more holistic and workable approach in the case management of veterans and their families.

Unique Opportunity

The veteran community has a once in a lifetime opportunity to reset the agenda for veteran care into the future. Presently there is increasing pressure on the DVA and the Government to consider and then implement much of what the Productivity Commission has recommended. This takes time. Yes, it is frustrating and slow grinding work. The pressure on the individuals who toil within DVA for the betterment of veteran care is relentless. This coupled with the constant pot shots from those outside the tent is having a demoralizing effect on all who work within the organisation. This is unfair! They should be allowed the opportunity to focus on the task of veteran care and not be forced to continually duck ill-considered friendly fire and, some, not so friendly.

Client Satisfaction

Interestingly, a client satisfaction survey conducted by an outside organisation has found that there is an 81% overall client satisfaction rating of DVA. When this is broken down demographically by age, the satisfaction rating of those 65 years and over is 89%; 45 years to 64 years, 72%; and under 45 years only 58%. The last group is obviously the younger veteran. This poor 58% is precipitated by the complexities, duplicities and confusion across the three Acts. DVA, with overt pressure from ESO leadership, is presently reviewing these three pieces of legislation to harmonise them as either one or two Acts. This will alleviate the issues, the time and the decision-making controversy that causes such angst for the younger veteran community.

ESORT and ADSO

The ESORT and the ADSO is supportive of DVA during this difficult period of implementing some of the recommendations of the PC and all we ask of the ex-service community is to give us all a fair go. There are no cars, blazers or cigars for the work the members of the ESORT or ADSO do in these roles. It is all on a pro bono basis to try to make a difference in the best interests of veterans and their families. Some criticisms of us may be justified at times due to poor communications, most are totally unfair and unacceptable. This when individuals are personal in their attacks and not backed by fact or constructive involvement in the area of veterans' issues and veteran care.

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