



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

INCLUSION OF “NO-DISADVANTAGE” PROVISION IN THE MILITARY COVENANT

www.dfw.org.au/policy/no-disadvantage

Policy Objectives

The *Australian Veterans’ Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Act* be amended to include a provision that the Commonwealth acknowledges that veterans, or their families, will not be disadvantaged relative to any other section of the community.

Background

The Act, which commenced in October 2019, includes the Australian Defence Veterans’ Covenant (the Covenant), and recognises the unique nature of military service (UNMS). Recognition of the UNMS means there is an existing recognised basis for the provision of some veteran benefits, and appropriate ADF member remuneration and conditions of service.

However, the Covenant did not address disadvantages sometimes suffered—mainly unintended—by veteran families during and after service.

Where Can Disadvantage Occur?

A member of a serving family may be receiving treatment or be on a waiting list to receive treatment from health authorities in their current location. On posting to another state, the family member who had been receiving or waiting for treatment, may be put at the bottom of the waiting list in the new location, disrupting or delaying treatment. Similar situations exist for other state provided services such as special needs education support required for children.

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation legislation ensures civilian employees and former employee interests are represented by directors nominated by the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The Chief of the Defence Force, dual-hatted as a serving member and an “employer”, nominates two directors. There is no representation for former members of the ADF or input from ex-service organisations in the nomination process.

There are other circumstances where serving and former members and families are disadvantaged when accessing federal, state, and local government services, and sometimes to commercial and community services, due to wait times and residence requirements.

How Should it be Fixed?

Insert a new General Recognition paragraph in the Act:

The Commonwealth acknowledges that veterans, or their families, should not be disadvantaged relative to any other section of the community.

A recognised “no-disadvantage” principle can be used to identify and address inequities that may occur due to legislation or bureaucratic practice, and, in some cases, for Defence or DVA to providing funding incentive to the relevant authorities to address identified disadvantages.