



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Mr Allan Thomas JP
National President
Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association
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Allan

Dear Mr Thomas

I am writing to inform you that the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is implementing an internal restructure which will be completely in place by 1 March 2012.

I should start by emphasising that these changes are not about reducing the Department's current staff numbers. They are not about creating savings nor are they about incurring additional cost. The changes are being made so that DVA is best placed to best meet the current and future needs of our clients.

As you are well aware, DVA is over 93 years old and has a very strong and proud history supporting those men and women who have offered service to our nation and those families who also made sacrifices to support them. However, the environment in which DVA operates is changing. Australia's military and peacekeeping operations of the past decade has produced a new client group who in many cases have vastly different characteristics and experiences to those of our more traditional base.

In the latter part of last century, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) entered into a period of intense deployment activities, which have seen significant numbers of soldiers, sailors and airmen and women deployed, numbers that are now equivalent to those deployed to Vietnam. In fact, some have been deployed up to 10 times which can equate to 3.5 years on deployment.

Veterans, from these deployments, are a diverse group with different perspectives and service delivery expectations to veterans from earlier conflicts. The challenge DVA faces is ensuring that it meets the needs of all veterans – those that have been with us for a while, those who are accessing our services for the first time today and those who will access our services in the future. As you are aware, in recent years DVA has implemented a number of programs and initiatives in order to meet the needs of all, including programs such as the On-Base Advisory Service and the Choice and Maintainability in Veterans' Services (CMVS) program. The structural changes being implemented, are the last piece of the puzzle, which will allow DVA to have greater flexibility and capacity to respond to this new environment. I have outlined below, a number of the major changes that will occur.

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A Client and Commemorations Division, to be led by Major General Liz Cosson (ret'd), AM, CSC, will be established to provide a direct focus on the client, including veterans and their families. It will look at policy development and future planning in order to best meet the needs of all. It will also focus on client and stakeholder contact and use direct feedback received from DVA clients and stakeholders to influence development and planning activities. The Division will also look after another important priority for the coming years being the preparations for the Centenary of Anzac in 2015 and a Century of Service during 2014-2018.

The current Services Division, led by Ms Judy Daniel, will be renamed the Health and Community Services Division and will offer end-to-end policy through to service delivery elements. This will allow those who deliver DVA services to have greater access to those who create the policy and vice versa. A dedicated Mental and Social Health Branch will be established within this Division to focus on prominent social and mental health issues within the ex-service community. This is something which has been high on the list of priorities for a number of ex-service organisations that we work with.

The current Support Division, led by Mr Sean Farrelly, will be renamed the Rehabilitation and Support Division. Branches within this division have been repositioned slightly so that they more accurately reflect the contemporary requirements of clients both young and old and have been renamed so that they more accurately and intuitively reflect the work undertaken within the Branches. This Division will also be the home for a new Case Escalation Branch. With the service-related deaths of the last decade and the increase in veterans who have eligibility under multiple acts, the environment in which DVA operates has become more complex. This new branch will focus solely on more sensitive and complex cases and will look at the development of policy and delivery functions to ensure these types of cases are handled appropriately and accurately within the Department.

The design of client contact related programs, currently sitting with the Deputy Commissioner's, will be constructed at a Divisional level. This will ensure national consistency of both strategy and policy related activities. Operational delivery and local management of programs will remain the responsibility of the Deputy Commissioner's.

These changes will not impact upon how services are received in the immediate future. Instead, it is hoped that the restructure will enable us to ensure and deliver seamless, consistent service which offers choice and flexibility to all over the longer term.

If you have any questions regarding the changes, please contact General Manager, Executive Division, Liz Cosson on (02) 6289 6008. Alternatively, please feel free to raise this directly with me at the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table meeting in March.

Yours sincerely



Ian Campbell
Secretary

16 February 2012