



Royal Commission Update - Brisbane Day 5 - 3 December 2021

RSL References

Positive:

- 10:18am - Mr Adams worked with RSL Bribie Island and RSL Albury to do wellbeing work with Veterans
- 10:31am - Mr Adams re-engaged with RSL, particularly RSL Ipswich, who supported his horsemanship work:
 - Work with families of current serving members at RAAF Amberley
 - Work with students of current serving members at RAAF Amberley, providing connection particularly for children who may be affected by the uprooting nature of posting cycles
- 10:37am - Mr Adams mentioned that while there were some negative perceptions about ESO's reactions to mental health, including the RSL, but that in his experience RSL's reaction to mental health was positive and getting better
- 4:01pm - RSL effectively operates as a union for veterans in engagement with Government. Greg Melick is able to go the PM if he wants.

Negative:

- 4:10pm - RSL original purpose is to provide support to Veterans after their service - has been issues post every major conflict with this - with young veterans now driven by social media
- 4:13pm - Large organisations, such as Government and the RSL, become too large to move
- 4:15pm - Go back to what the RSL used to be - a safe space for veterans to drop into and feel connected

General Summary

- Positive RSL mentions from Mr Adams, and overall the RSL has come out in a positive light despite some negative mentions at the very end of the day
- Focus on positive aspects from Mr Adams
- Treatment of women in ADF still under the spotlight
- Many of the panels points in the final session reinforced issues raised earlier in the week - recruitment, leadership, transition, DVA, ESOs and a catalogue of services

2:00pm - Support Organisations Panel - Advocacy support

Major Heston Russell (Managing Director, Veteran Support Force) - Major General Paul Irving AM PSM RFD (National President, Defence Reserves Association) - Mr Michael von Berg MC OAM (President, Royal Australian Regiment Corporation) - Ms Pat McCabe OAM (National President, TPI Federation Australia)

ESOs:

- Cluttered landscape and deregulated
- No sources for services available (Where are you? What do you do?) i.e., Catalogue of Services
- ESOs can provide a union-type role - already operate as mediators between government, vets and all involved in the sector
- Young veterans are driven to join purposes, not organisations - also deeply involved in social media and the digital space - may hesitate on top down approach
- Large benefits in having a veterans community
- Calls for expansion of unit-level associations and peer support models

Recruitment:

- May be recruiting less resilient prospects - need to identify ways to improve this
- Better standard of psychological testing before recruitment - reduce those leaving within 12 months of joining, who are a vulnerable suicide cohort
- Standards on entry are lower than they were previously

Leadership:

- Better leadership required at all levels - before, during and after service
- Peers and mentoring should commence from joining

Transition:

- Should start from the day of joining - post-Service should be considered
- Defence is good at indoctrinating into Service identity, team and purpose - this is removed during transition - connection and tribe is removed
- No course for transition from Defence
- White Card and JTA are encouraging - need to link JTA with recruitment - JTA should be a full hub of services for veterans and their families
- Transition must be individualised and long-term - move from care, to recovery, to normalisation

DVA:

- Claims processes are woeful and complicated - often adversarial
- Moral trauma from engaging in DVA processes
- More veterans should be employed in the Department
- Legislation should be applied in beneficial form
- Entitlements space is difficult for reservists - often detrimental to mental health

Messaging, communications and engagement

- Messaging from Defence and DVA has been poor - no positive messaging re. Defence and Veterans
- Younger veterans engage with social and digital media - need better work in this space

- Use these same channels to promote the Royal Commission

Other issues:

- Simplification of legislation is required
- Incarcerated veterans are a hidden and vulnerable population
- Too many Ministers for Veterans Affairs
- Need to de-link care from compensation - empower veterans to care for themselves
- Need better accountability across Veterans' space
- Better distinctions in care between Veterans and the general population
- Better access to treatment and care, including White Cards and NLHC, needed for reservists
- Better resourcing for all treatment related to Veterans i.e., Open Arms

10:00am - Mr Isaac Adams - Lived Experience - Horsemanship

- Positive experience:
 - Mental health awareness is improving in the ADF
 - Funding is available for further education when separating
 - DVA processes have sped up
 - DVA gave good support personally when transitioning
- Transition:
 - Need for de-soldiering as opposite to military institutionalisation
 - Need to be treated as an individual within a formalised and systemic approach
 - Support required for all those in transition
- Some mention of NDIS model, although not expanded on
- Mentioned need to remove negativity and judgement, particularly through social media

11:10am - Ms Elizabeth Broderick AO and Ms Alexandra Shehadie - Past Investigation into women in the ADF

Discussed 2011/12 Reports on Review into Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force Academy and Review into Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force

Military masculinity:

- Operate on a male model - created by men, for men, run by men
- Not structured with women in mind
- Can be elements of hypermasculinity, tribalism and exceptionalism
- Commitment to mission and team are core elements
- Promotion of culture of silence - do not jack on mates
- While there is progress, there is low representation of women
- At the system level, can lead to greater propensity for sexual harassment, assault and sexism, with a normalisation of unacceptable behaviour
- Women try to fit into the dominant culture i.e., masculine
- Culture change at top levels more likely, does not trickle down to peer level

Impact of sexism/harassment:

- Fear, anxiety, relationship breakdown
- Suicidality
- Career impact
- Silencing effect - reporting not an option, thought no changes would come

Should you wish to contact the RSL NSW Royal Commission Office, please do so at submissions@rslnsw.org.au or on 0499 441 291.