



Royal Commission Update - Brisbane Day 1 - 29 November 2021

RSL References

- Panel for large ESOs to be convened on Day 6 – Monday 6 November 2021 – following up whether RSLA is to be involved.
- RSL Queensland mentioned for providing funding to support to support organisations during the panel discussion.
- Main focus on Day1 was on Defence and Defence culture, with further mention of the failings of DVA in the final panel session.

Other key hearings

- Five panels of support organisation witnesses
- Lived experience witnesses on nine of 10 days of Brisbane Hearings Block

Next Hearing Blocks

- Public Hearing Block 2 in Sydney in February and Hearing Block 3 in March
- Hearings will then be conducted in Wagga Wagga, Townsville and Canberra

General Summary

9:30am - Mr Kevin Connor SC & Mr Peter Gray SC - Outline of Hearing Block 1

- Outline of Terms of Reference and form of proceedings
- Referenced inadequacy of statistics
- Will be re-examining previous work, including that of Dr Boss

11:00am - Ms Nicola (Nikki) Jamieson - Lived Experience

- Outlined effect of moral injury
- Discussed the damaging culture of Defence – stigma of weakness and asking for help, bullying, inadequacy of reporting lines
- Inadequacy of Defence response to Daniel Garforth’s mental health issues
- Inadequacy of timeline for investigation, response and information provided to the family following Mr Garforth’s death

12:30pm - Panel - Defence Abuse, masculinity and tribalism

Associate Professor Ben Wadham (Veteran and Sociologist Flinders University), Associate Professor James Connor (Sociologist, UNSW Canberra) and Dr Zac Zeidler (Clinical Psychologist and Postdoctoral Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne)

- Panel on Defence culture
- Included discussion of socialisation and associated ostracism, masculinities
- Discussion of Defence exceptionalism, creation of hierarchies, exclusion and out-grouping
- Poor mental health literacy across ADF and wider society

2:30pm - Panel - Support organisation panel

Mr Michael Stone (Timor Awakening), Mr John Williams (Veteran Support Centre North QLD), Mr Nick Forster-Jones (Diggers Rest), Mr Christian Lind (Veteran Health Association), Dr Michele Dunbar (Veteran Health Association)

Most urgent needs for reducing Veteran and Defence Suicide:

- Doctors need better understanding of DVA Processes
- Not enough psychiatrists, and other resources poorly allocated
- Need for prevention, early intervention in both physical and mental health
- Importance of families and family health
- Some need for specialised veterans care and clinicians
- Alternative health treatments outside of what DVA is funding - importance of physical exercise

Issues with DVA/Defence:

- Difficult to get information/transparency
- More employees and resources at DVA
- Grant funding is difficult - legal framework also difficult for ESO/support orgs
- DVA fee schedules is inadequate/not broad enough
- Services need to be delivered faster
- No linkages between DVA and Defence info/records

Best things:

- People in DVA are good people facing cumbersome system
- Critical case managers for complex cases - cancer/mental health

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