



TPI FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

“Disabled in our Service - United in our Cause”



Federation President's Report

January 2019

Happy new year to you and your families. I hope that 2019 is as wonderful as you hope that it can be.

I must begin by firstly apologising to Amanda Rishworth MP for neglecting to thank her for attending the TPI Conference in September 2018. The State/Territory Presidents appreciated her attendance, as they always do.

What a way for 2018 to end and for 2019 to begin! On 14th December 2018, the Productivity Commission handed down its Draft Report on their investigation into ‘*Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans*’. This 704-page tome was extremely excessive especially at during the holiday period. This very large report, took quite some time to read and comprehend.

The report can be found at - <https://bit.ly/2B3NmcQ>. The Productivity Commission is asking for submissions into their report by 28th February 2019. They are also holding meetings around Australia. If you wish to book a time to see the Productivity Commissioners, you can register at <https://bit.ly/2MAc7BP>.

The major issue that the TPI Federation has with the report is the large number of recommendations within the document. Of the 48 recommendations that the Productivity Commissioners have made, there are few, if any, that the TPI Federation would agree with.

The two major items that the TPI Federation does not agree with is –

- a. The transition of DVA from full departmental status to an Agency within Defence. This is for obvious reasons. Who will listen to a Veteran, or an ESO, who does not even have the ear of a Department let alone a Minister of any standing? Who can say that Defence can look after Veterans any better than they have previously?
- b. The rejection by the Productivity Commission of the TPI Federation's claim for a fair and equitable ‘economic loss’ compensation within the TPI payment. Having received full approval of Federation's contention, by the Prime Minister, the DVA Minister and DVA, prior to the release of this report, the Productivity Commission has now reverted the argument back to the ‘package’ contention that was dismissed by all three parties in 2018. This will, if the recommendation is accepted by Government, deny our most disabled Veterans their due compensation entitlements and leave their ‘economic loss’ compensation at 63% of the current tax-adjusted minimum wage. This will be the major focus of our submission to the Productivity Commission in response to their Draft Report.

Other items that will be visited by the TPI Federation submission will be the Productivity Commission's recommendation that the following be removed –

- a. TPI/SR status for future Veterans compensation
- b. War Widows status for future Widows
- c. Amputees recreational travel expenses, financial assistance for amputees to purchase a car, attendant, compensation for attending medical treatment, transport, clothing and decoration allowances to name a few.

It is important to remember that the purpose of this investigation is to devolve DVA into an Agency so that the \$11.2bn budget can be allocated into consolidated revenue.

We must continue to remind all politicians of the 100-year legacy that DVA has provided to many current and ex-Serving Veterans, and remind them of the current DVA Budget Outcomes –

Outcome 1: Maintain and enhance the financial wellbeing and self-sufficiency of eligible persons and their dependants through access to income support, compensation, and other support services, including advice and information about entitlements.

Outcome 2: Maintain and enhance the physical wellbeing and quality of life of eligible persons and their dependants through health and other care services that promote early intervention, prevention and treatment, including advice and information about health service entitlements.

This cannot be lost!

The TPI Federation will be responding to these recommendations. A full copy of the Federation’s submission will be available on the Productivity Website and will be available at all TPI Offices when completed. This will ultimately be found at <https://bit.ly/2HCwXI6>. The TPI Federation needs your help to advise all politicians of the importance of the Veterans’, and their families, vote in the upcoming election. Keep the pressure up on the politicians so that Veterans will be listened to.

The State/Territory Offices will also try to keep you apprised of the updates on the Productivity Commission.

Of course, this was not the only thing that occurred over the December/January period. Most of you would have noticed a change to your pharmaceutical costs that came into effect as of 1st January 2019.

In January 1992, when the pharmaceutical co-payment for Veterans commenced, it was \$2.60 with a safety net of 52 scripts for \$135.20. The cost of your pharmaceuticals this year rose to \$6.50 per script while the number of scripts required for the safety net remained the same at 60 for \$390. This is a **4.8%** increase on last year’s co-payment. Keep in mind that the pharmaceutical allowance you receive has been the same since January 2016, at \$6.20 (single rate) per fortnight with a threshold of \$372. So effectively, you are receiving 5% less than the cost of your first script each, and every, fortnight.

Date	Pharm All	Threshold		CPI +/-
		# Scripts	Cost	
1992	2.60	52	135.20	0.3
2016	6.20	60	372	1.5
2019	6.50	60	390	1.9

The TPI, who has qualifying service, is currently reimbursed the pharmaceutical allowance that is paid over a twelve-month period or prior to be given the safety net entitlement. The reimbursement amount equals the total cost of the concessional pharmaceutical co-payments made by each eligible veteran in a calendar year up to the Safety Net Threshold, minus the total annual value of the pharmaceutical allowance received.

The TPI Federation is most concerned about this inequity and is concerned as to why there is a need for this in the first place. When did our compensation pharmaceuticals become welfare pharmaceuticals? In 1992! TPIs are receiving the same amount that a Centrelink welfare recipient receives for their pharmaceuticals. Therefore, due to Government policy we have lost our pharmaceutical compensation. This should never have happened and needs to be rectified. Compensation is compensation – not welfare.

Safe Work Australia document – ‘*Comparison of workers compensation arrangements Australia New Zealand 2017*’ states on page 274 – “Medical and hospital costs Reimbursement of medical and **other treatment costs** related to workplace injury which can include hospital stays, ambulance transport, **pharmaceuticals**, aids and appliances, and household help.” In seems incredulous that the Government can treat Veteran’s compensation as welfare.

Finally, I revisit the hearing aid issue. The Veteran community seems to be slowly learning of their entitlements and that they –

NEVER, NEVER, EVER – pay for their hearing aids.

The new DVA Factsheets for hearing aids –

- a. For Veterans – HSV22 – <https://bit.ly/2PCZrem>
- b. For Providers – HIP121 – <https://bit.ly/2Unbe1Z>

It is important that your Audiologist be advised of these new DVA Factsheets and their impact on Veterans and War Widows. You are welcomed to take this letter to your Audiologist, and provide my contact number and email address, should they doubt this information.

Another announcement is that DVA will be replacing the existing Gold/White/Orange cards as the renewal date falls due. The other reason for introducing a new card is to remove the Anzac Centenary embossing now that it have been completed.

DVA has stated – *‘The new-look card will replace existing DVA health cards providing veterans with access to your **regular health benefits** and physical versions of the new card’*. They also stated that – *‘There is nothing you need to do – your existing DVA card (both physical & the new look digital card) can be used until you receive the new Veteran Card in the mail.’*

The only major difference, beside the removal of the Anzac Centenary embossing, is to remove the words ‘DVA Health Care’ and the ‘TPI’ embossing in the top right hand corner, and to have, in larger lettering, the word ‘*VETERAN*’ inserted. Be assured that the ‘TPI’ embossing will be placed mid-way on the left hand side of the new card. Contact your State/Territory Association office if you have any question on the new card.

At the base of the card, there will be a caption: *“For what they have done, this we will do”*. This caption will also be used in the Military Covenant.

On 21 January, DVA’s online claiming platform, ‘MyService’, introduced a number of improvements and features to increase the DVA services available online.

These new improvements and features will enable you to:

- Easily access information about Transport
- Request a callback

There will be many other services available through ‘MyService’. As DVA continues to expand and change our online services we will keep you updated.

If you haven’t already registered for ‘MyService’, then sign in through your ‘myGov’ login and go to DVA and then ‘MyService’. You will initially have to register using your Service number or PMKeys number. If you are a female Veteran you will need to use your Service number without the letter. Once registered you can request a new Gold Card.



Ms Pat McCabe OAM

Email: federation@tpifed.org.au

Ph: 0417 291 546

28th January 2019