

Defence Reserves Association



RSL
Australia

Ref: O 037/23

15 March 2023

The Hon Matt Keogh
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: Matt.Keogh.MP@aph.gov.au
CC: minister@dva.gov.au

Dear Minister Keogh,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the organisations we lead – the Defence Reserves Association (DRA), the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), and the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL), in response to your letter of November 2022 regarding extending non-liability health care (NLHC) to all Defence Reservists.

While we thank you for your response, we refute the implication that the request for NLHC for all Reservists is being sought *purely as recognition of service in the ADF*.

It is our submission that all members of the ADF should be treated equally in their entitlement to receive appropriate medical treatment for diagnosable mental health conditions. The rate at which they experience mental health problems is irrelevant – the issue of concern is that there are Reservists who are experiencing mental health problems.

To our knowledge, in no other area affecting Defence personnel in terms of entitlements, recognition, or eligibility is the qualification of one day continuous full-time service a limiting factor.

The NLHC entitlement should be extended so that all Reservists, on completion of their initial training, become entitled to receive treatment for any mental health conditions from which they are suffering. Extending NLHC to all Reservists would remove administrative and financial barriers to accessing mental health care for past and present Defence Force members and will allow them to seek treatment as quickly as possible.

We wish to emphasise that our submission is for all Reservists to be eligible for NLHC for mental health conditions based on the same identified health need as applies to other Reservists and Regulars.

The DRA, DFWA and RSL believe that extending NLHC arrangements would be a relatively straightforward legislative amendment, but one that would demonstrate the Government's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of all current and former Defence personnel.

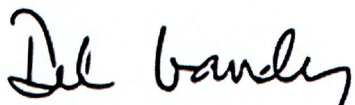
In this vein, our organisations have jointly drafted the attached submission, which outlines the issue, and our suggested solutions, in greater detail. Please note, this submission has been endorsed by several ex-service organisations in addition to our own.

We would welcome the chance to meet with you in person to discuss how our proposal should be implemented. We look forward to working with you to improve the lives of Defence members and veterans.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Annett', with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

Brigadier Michael Annett CSC
National President
Defence Reserves Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Del Gaudry', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Del Gaudry CSC
National President
Defence Force Welfare Association

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Greg Melick', with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Greg Melick
National President
Returned & Services League Australia