

16 April 2024

Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998
Brisbane QLD 4001

To the Department of Veterans' Affairs,

RE: Veterans' Legislation Reform – Exposure Draft Consultation

Suicide Prevention Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024. We are the national peak body for the suicide prevention sector. With over 300 members representing more than 140,000 workers, staff, and volunteers across Australia, we provide a collective voice for service providers, practitioners, researchers, local collaboratives, and people with lived experience.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide recently identified that the veterans' entitlements, compensation and rehabilitation system is "so complicated that it adversely affects the mental health of some veterans and can be a contributing factor to suicidality".¹ This is concerning, and it's critical that the system is adequately reformed to help prevent suicide and ensure that veterans and their families get the support that they need and deserve.

We welcome the Commonwealth Governments efforts to simplify and harmonise the veteran's legislation framework, however several additional improvements are required to ensure that veterans and their families can more easily get the support that they are entitled to. While the draft legislation seeks to simplify the veteran compensation system with all claims considered under a single Act, we have received feedback that the system is still overly complex to access and involves several bodies which veterans and their families will need to navigate. This should be rectified so that the system is not stressful or difficult to navigate to help reduce suicide risk.

In addition, it is critical that veterans and their families have the capacity to inform the development of the draft legislation to ensure that it is fit for purpose. We are concerned that the information booklet which was developed to help the public understand the changes does not provide adequate information on the proposal and governance arrangements to help people make an informed decision.² Veterans and their families may need to undertake additional research and may not have the time or ability to undertake this investigative work. The governance arrangements, and



the benefits and disadvantages of the proposal should be clearly outlined so that veterans and their families can make an informed decision and help guide the decisions that impact them.

The Australian Government has recognised that the veteran compensation system is overly complicated, difficult to understand, stressful to navigate and complex to administer, resulting in delays, backlogs and confusion for veterans and families. Despite these significant adverse effects, it is proposed that the new model for veterans' compensation will commence on 1 July 2026. To help prevent suicide and ensure the wellbeing of veterans and their families, this must be expedited, and the new system should be implemented as soon as possible.

We applaud the Commonwealth Government's commitment to ensuring that veterans and their families are well looked after and believe that the proposal is well intentioned. However, it is vital that further improvements are made to help prevent suicide and ensure that veterans and families receive the support that they need when they need it.

If you require any further information please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Nieves Murray
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report. (2022). *Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report*. [Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report | Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide](#)

² Department of Veterans' Affairs. (2024). *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024 – Exposure Draft*. [Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support \(Simplification and Harmonisation\) Bill 2024 – Exposure Draft \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

