



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

Ref: EC24-000914

Professor Terence Campbell AM  
Chairperson  
Repatriation Medical Authority  
Level 8  
259 Queen Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Professor Campbell,

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 August 2023 to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs requesting DVA cause primary research to be undertaken to obtain sound medical and scientific evidence concerning a "possible and probable relationship" between dementia pugilistica [chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE)] and repetitive blast injury in veterans. The Secretary has asked me to respond on her behalf, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

I understand from your correspondence that you have had requests from the veteran community in relation to amending the RMA Statements of Principles to include factors to cover adverse brain effects of chronic repetitive head trauma arising from repetitive explosive blasts.

DVA is aware of significant work currently underway in the United States of America (US) to monitor and investigate blast overpressure and potential health impacts among service personnel. As you may know, DVA has also maintained an interest in research into the effects of blast and traumatic brain injury (TBI) for several years and has previously funded initiatives aimed at exploring the effects on the health and wellbeing of veterans, particularly our contemporary veterans. To date, these studies have not demonstrated a conclusive link in relation to the sorts of exposures and condition(s) considered here and have mainly resulted in recommendations for the Department of Defence around the documentation of incidents, regular assessment, and education around brain injury, as well as noting potential opportunities for future study.

Given the previous research conducted on behalf of DVA and the work currently being progressed by the US Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, we consider it would be prudent at the present time to await the results of the American studies before funding further research into this matter. DVA will be happy to liaise with you on whether you consider there is a need for further additional research following the publication of the findings of the American research. DVA engages regularly with our international counterparts and will monitor developments and convey findings to the RMA once they are available.

You may be aware the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council has a 'Traumatic Brain Injury Mission' which will provide \$50 million over 10 years to support research designed to improve the lives of all Australians who experience TBI. The TBI Mission's goal is to better predict recovery outcomes for TBI, identify the most effective care and treatments and reduce barriers to support people to live their best possible life after TBI. An Expert Advisory Panel was appointed in April 2024 to provide advice to the Minister for Health and Aged Care on the strategic priorities for research invested through this mission. DVA is advocating for the inclusion of veterans as a 'priority population' in MRFF research grants and exploring potential for partnership opportunities for research on shared priorities.

For your information, we have received a request from **s 47F** further to your advice to **s 47F** that you have asked DVA to initiate research into this issue. **s 47F** has requested DVA research be broadened to investigate the effects of blast injuries overall. We have advised **s 47F** of the current US studies and that the need for additional research will be further considered once the outcomes of those studies are known.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

**s 47F**

Veronica Hancock  
First Assistant Secretary  
Research, Evaluation and Data Division

15 July 2024