



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC

MC18-002540

- 3 DEC 2018

Mr James Brown
President
RSL NSW
ANZAC House
245 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr *James* Brown

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 August 2018 concerning motions resolved by delegates, at the NSW State Congress of the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL).

I note the motions on a range of matters from the State Congress that you have forwarded. I have asked the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Defence to fully consider these proposals and respond as appropriate. I have enclosed these responses for your information.

Thank you for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely

DARREN CHESTER

Encl

Motion:

That RSL NSW make representations to the Australian Government that there should be a separate person occupying the roles of President of the Repatriation Commission and Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, due to the potential for perceived and actual conflicts of interest to occur that could detrimentally impact on the best interests of veterans and their dependents.

Response:

The position of President of the Repatriation Commission has been jointly held with the position of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) ever since both positions came into existence.

Under the principles of public administration, the Secretary is accountable to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs for the management of the Department including appropriate use of resources and allocation of staff. Neither the Repatriation Commission nor the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission hold a budget or have staff in their own right. The Secretary of the Department provides staff to assist the Commissions in fulfilling their functions under the legislation.

The current structure, whereby the roles of the President of the Repatriation Commission and Chair of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission are both held by the Secretary, allows the President/Chair to ensure adequacy of resourcing (as Secretary) when policy issues are raised.

If these roles were separate there would be the potential for a disconnect between the office that held the budget and staffing resources with the owner of policies concerning veterans.

While the two Commissions are accountable to the Minister in terms of policy and the delivery of policies, it is the responsibility of the Secretary to have the visibility of whole of government policies and be in a position to assess how they relate to veterans. Where these policies are not aligned, it is a deliberate decision that Government would take to benefit veterans and their families.