

## THE ROOT CAUSE OF VETERAN ISSUES – A POSITION PAPER BY IAN LINDGREN

### INTRODUCTION

We have identified what we believe to be the root cause of the majority of veteran issues remaining unsolved, recommendations not being implemented, and no measurable headway being made to improve services to veterans and their families, so they are veteran outcome focused.

After consulting with the following three members of the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT), the Chairperson of the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association Ltd (APPVA), the President of the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Federation of Australia and the National President of the Australian War Widows Inc, then gaining the unanimous support of the APPVA Board, I write this document for all veterans, veteran families, and the wider veteran support network and seek your thoughts.

The root cause of most veteran issues is the National Consultation Framework, the myth that DVA is too complex to change, and that the veteran leaders of all 14 ESOs in the ESORT, most of who at time of writing believe that it is not their duty to hold DVA accountable. Furthermore, they hold a belief that operating under the Terms of Reference of ESORT means that what is discussed in ESORT, stays in ESORT, even if it is to the detriment of veterans and the veteran community.

Someone must have the moral courage to write about this and as an authentic leader I provide advice without fear or favour. I see issues as right or wrong, black or white because I am accountable, and have standards that I absolutely do not compromise upon.

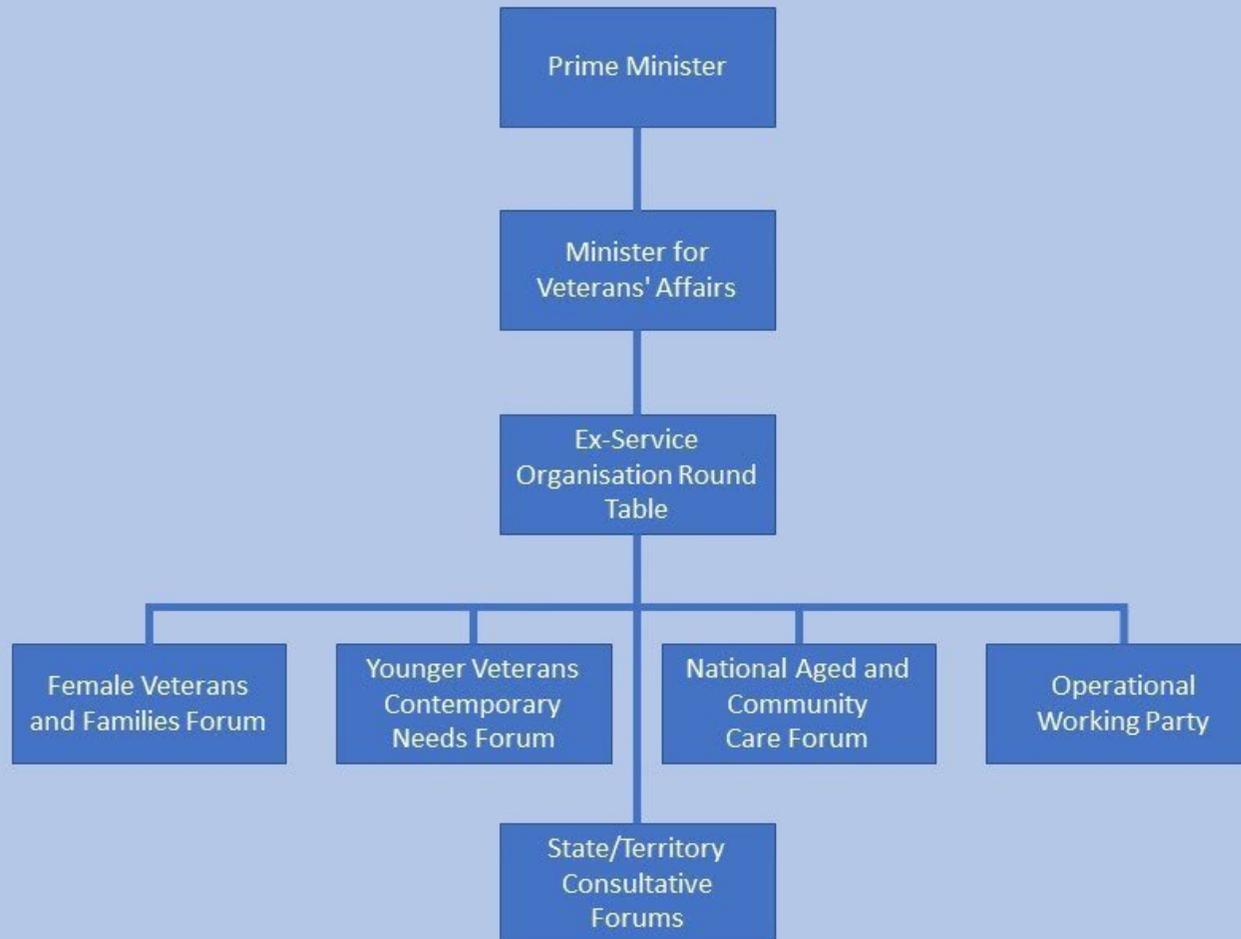
### BACKGROUND

Let's back up a little because most members of the veteran community have no idea what the [National Consultation Framework](#) or the ESORT is.

Veterans and the veteran family community generally have not heard of the ESORT, however they believe that there is "a body of veterans" somewhere that represents their needs to the Commonwealth. When a leader represents a veteran and their family, the veteran expects that leader to represent them with all their skills and capabilities. Generally veteran will be disappointed if the leader defers to a senior body as opposed to arguing a point.

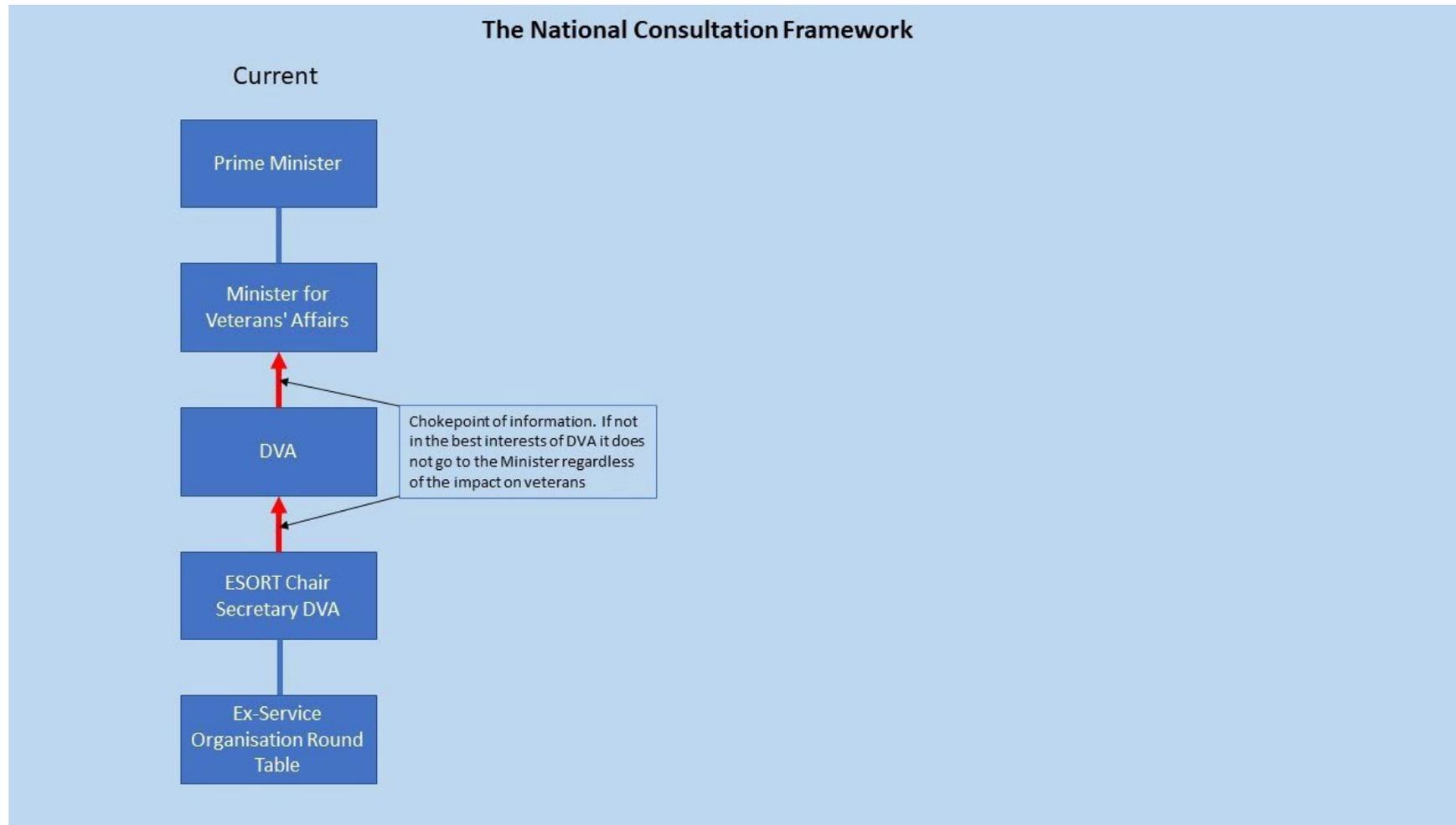
This "body of veterans" is part of the [ESORT](#) which comprises 14 national ESOs, two ADF members, six members from DVA. The Chair is the Secretary DVA. The [ESORT has a Terms of Reference](#) that states that the objective of ESORT is to act as the main forum for dialogue between DVA and the leadership of the ex-service organisations and Defence communities. ESORT is part of the National Consultation Framework, and this is depicted below.

## The National Consultation Framework

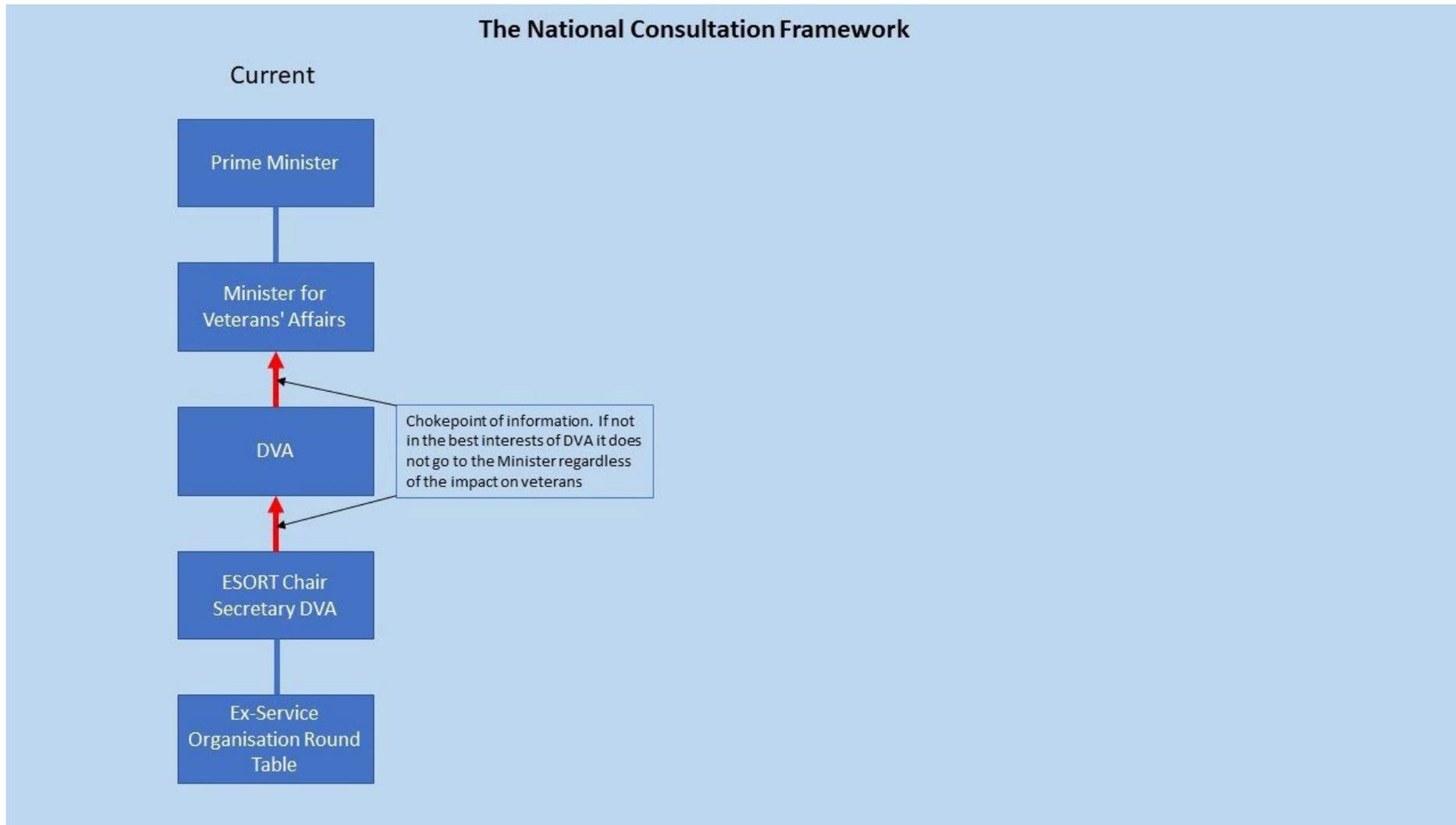


## NATIONAL CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

From the outside looking in at the National Consultation Framework it appears to be a robust national governance framework from the Prime Minister to the veteran community. This is not the case because its terms of reference limit it to facilitating communication between the veteran ex-service community and DVA. It should therefore be correctly termed the DVA Consultation Framework. One chokepoint exists as illustrated below.



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To illustrate this chokepoint, if 100% of the ex-service organisation members of ESORT believe that something is a serious veteran issue, and DVA disagrees, then the issue is shut down. Furthermore, as was explained to me this week, it is not the done thing to re-raise it.

If it is an issue that triggers systemic suicidal ideation and no ex-service organisation members of ESORT may protest, then this is not good governance. It is poor culture, it lacks stewardship, accountability, it does not take into account risk management or tolerance, it is not diligent, and it is poor stakeholder management.

While it is convenient to say that any individual or group can contact the Minister's office direct to raise an issue, if the whole veteran community has an issue, it would be better represented to the Minister's Office by the whole community through the ESORT. This is what the veteran community believe the ESO members of ESORT are doing but it is not the case.

### **THE MYTH THAT DVA IS TOO COMPLEX TO CHANGE**

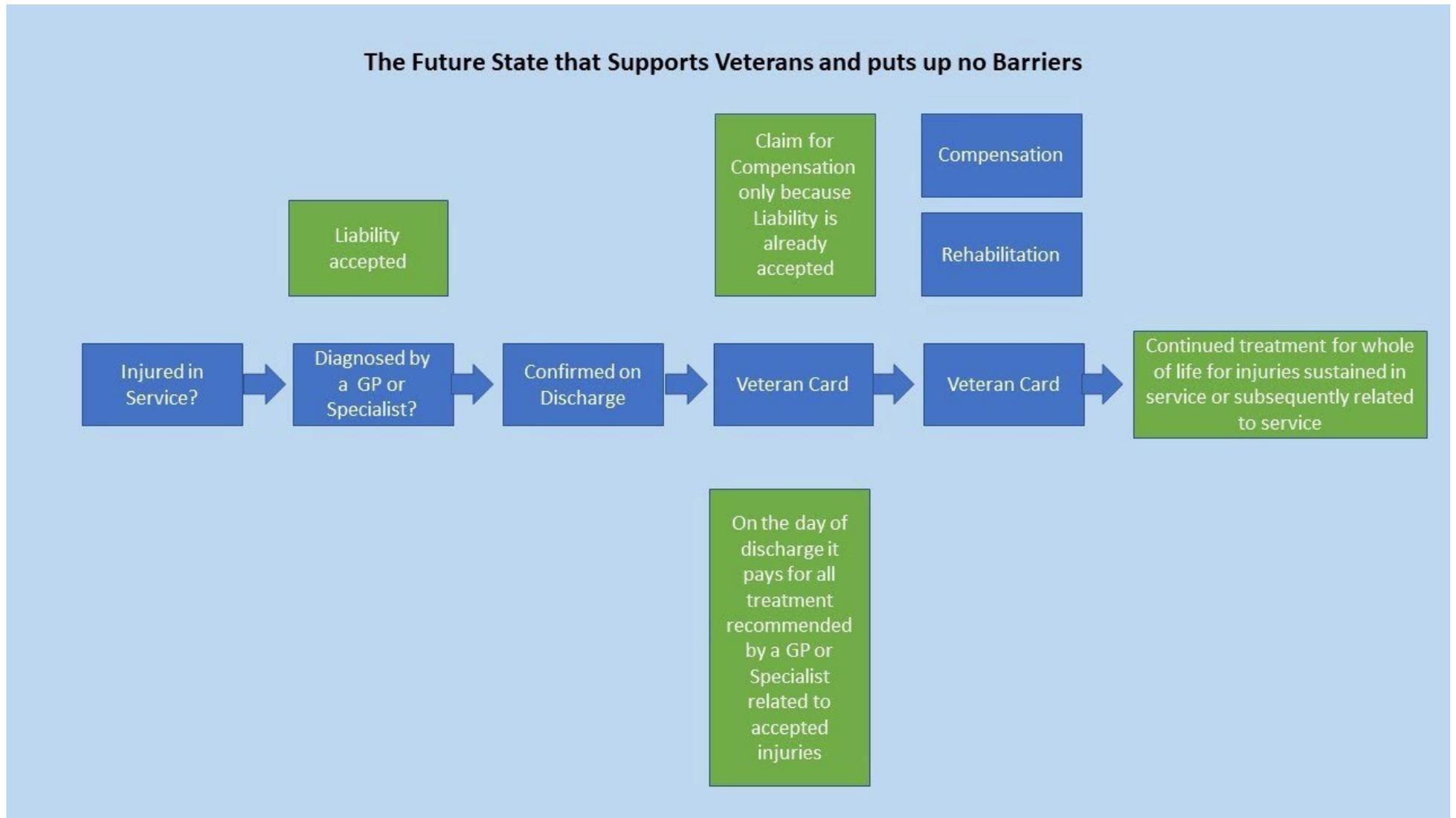
It takes over 10 years for most advocates to become certified at the highest level and by then the early frustrations with the veteran support system are overlooked because experienced advocates can achieve a lot in their opinion. More often than not the reason for remaining with the current dysfunctional system is that it is unique and too complex to change, and any changes will disadvantage one or more groups of veterans. This is not true because:

- the business processes are largely the same as workers compensation systems,
- the injuries are largely the same as injuries that occur in other professions in Australia,
- the 600,000 clients of DVA are a subset of the Australian Community with only the ACT and the NT having smaller populations,
- all state and territory legislation requires that medical expenses are accepted and paid without question, claims are acknowledged within days, and coordinated by a case manager with the whole process being transparent to all stakeholders.

This is not suggesting that DVA be subsumed by a state workers compensation system because there needs to be whole of veteran life care for veterans and their families. Civilians would not accept the veteran support system and likewise it would not be accepted by any state or territory under current legislation.

If it is accepted that the current system cannot continue and investment in it will have little return on investment, then:

- a single Veteran Act can be envisaged,
- grandfathering can be invoked so that no veteran is disadvantaged, and
- the evidence given by me, at the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide on 7 April 2022 indicates that with no advocacy training, and with the permission of Secretary DVA the APPVA Issues and Research Team have proved that a change in culture within DVA to focus on outcomes to veterans over process can move claims through DVA rapidly between two to six weeks.



This allows us to conceptualise a single act that might look like the above diagram at the high level.

## **FROM VETERAN CRISIS TO WORLD CLASS CAPABILITY**

We can move from crisis to capability using private sector enterprise architecture, project and change management where enterprise architecture defines the structure and operation of organisations with the intent of determining how an organisation can effectively achieve its current and future objectives and moving from a current state to a future state.

Where Private Sector Project and Change Management is driven by a single private sector entity that:

- manages projects in controlled environments with a single decision maker at the most senior level in the public service, and
- where effective change is coordinated top-down, and where the lasting impacts don't occur until individuals embrace change about how they do their jobs. Change management provides a structured approach to support the individuals in an organisation to move from their own current states to their future states. Those that cannot change are re-employed elsewhere.

This is depicted on the next page at the high level and then at a lower level where it is shown in more detail and identifies narrow bands of capability to place effort into until the future state is ready to be transitioned to.

**An activity managed under control to return the veteran community to a happy and healthy community**

**ANNEX C**

**Current State**

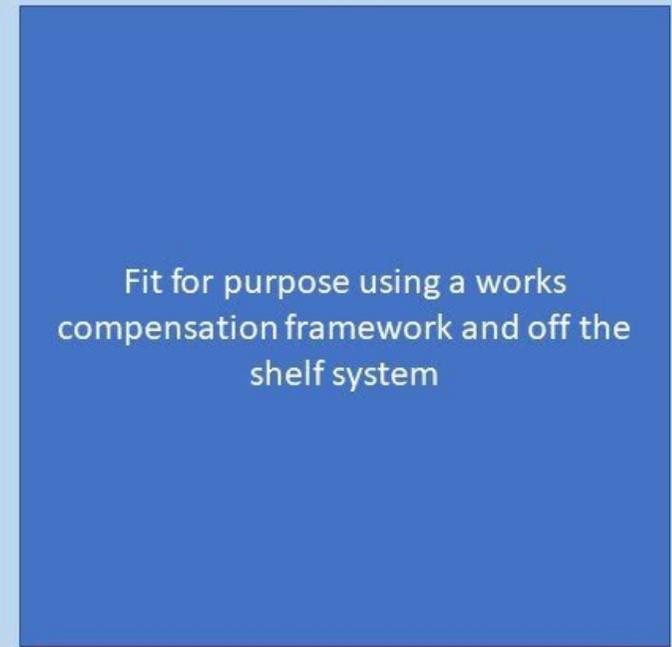


Not fit for purpose



Effort

**Future State**



Fit for purpose using a works compensation framework and off the shelf system



Effort

**An activity managed under control to return the veteran community  
to a happy and healthy community**

ANNEX E

## Current State

## Future State



## CONCLUSION

The "Veteran Crisis" exists because of poor governance and accountability, the myth that DVA is too complex to change, and the unwillingness of those ESOs chosen to represent the veteran community to challenge DVA. The "veteran crisis" does not need to exist and it can be rapidly turned around if the culture within DVA was changed to focus on veteran outcomes that deliver world class services to veterans, their families and the wider veteran support network. This can be achieved by adopting proactive case management that assists all stakeholders through the dysfunctional system, and concurrent change defined through public sector enterprise architecture, project management and change management reporting to an independent peak body that is the subject of [A Peak Body for the Veteran Support System](#) and this submission to the Royal Commission. [Submission](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Lindgren', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ian Lindgren  
Vice Chairperson  
Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association

27 Oct 22