

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Department of Defence

Joint Inquiry into the facts surrounding the management of

Mr Jesse Bird's case

Review Recommendations

Review Recommendations - Joint Inquiry into the facts surrounding the management of Mr Jesse Bird's case

The review report made 19 recommendations to improve the service and experience of veterans, drawing from the learnings of Jesse's case. These recommendations include priority actions to current processes and practices in Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS), progressing actions that are already being considered as part of DVA's Veteran Centric Reform program and changes for Government consideration in the Budget context.

Of the 19 recommendations, the inquiry team identified nine priority actions:

1. The Secretary to examine the areas of potential non-compliance with current legislation and policy to provide the Minister advice regarding any redress action/s.
2. Provide delegates with a clear statement of the policy and processes when considering an interim payment of compensation for permanent impairment to ensure that interim compensation payments are being provided in all cases where appropriate.
3. Put in place controls to ensure process of registration of claims is consistently followed when needs assessment is received and not delayed by other information that is not yet provided.
4. Enhance reporting and risk factor escalation between VVCS and DVA through an offering to clients that includes an 'opt-out' model of information sharing, so that all support services are integrated for clients with diagnosed mental health issues.
5. Put in place controls to ensure that complex case management is initiated for complex or high risk clients.
6. Revise Service Level Agreement Key Performance Indicators for information sharing with partner agencies (such as Defence and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation), including timeframes for DVA to request information as soon as possible after claim registration and timeframes for partner agencies to respond.
7. Review existing Service Coordination processes that provide coordinated, tailored and empathetic response to families, for relevancy in the case of the death of non-serving clients.
8. Educate staff and monitor implementation of the inquiry recommendations above.
9. Identify indicators for veterans at risk to develop best practice case management models.

Of the 19 recommendations, the inquiry team identified the following seven recommendations for DVA to continue as part of its Veteran Centric Reform (VCR) program:

10. Continue to pilot an integrated and holistic case management approach, including a whole-of-person view, a holistic care model for veterans, and an increased focus on

transition support and vocational assistance. Subject the evaluation of this trial this will require further consideration by Government.

11. Implement better systems and processes to identify and alert staff in order to support high risk and vulnerable veterans.
12. Put in place wellness checks for uncontactable clients with mental health conditions and trigger additional support mechanisms for clients with mental health conditions who repeatedly submit incomplete documentation or exceed expected response timeframes.
13. Implement action to ensure letters and emails are accurate, easy to understand and appropriate in tone.
14. Implement action to ensure liability and compensation rejection or claim denial correspondence occurs only after a DVA staff member phones to discuss the outcome with a client. This discussion should detail:
 - a. the nature of the decision or determination;
 - b. opportunities for the member to appeal the decision, should they wish to;
 - c. alternative services that DVA can offer;
 - d. options to defer the decision and revisit at a later stage (e.g. once conditions have stabilised), not implications for recording times taken to process; and
 - e. DVA point of contact in case further explanation is desired.
15. Expand scope of reviewed circumstances to include services sought through other Government agencies and community services.
16. Introduce a case-response team with specified resources across public affairs, legal, strategic communications, executive and divisions to create a DVA response to emerging issues and messaging that is respectful and supportive in tone.

Of the 19 recommendations, the inquiry team identified three additional recommendations to the Minister for Government to consider:

17. The provision of more timely compensation payment by using a current assessment of the service-related level of permanent impairment, instead of delaying compensation payments until the service-related level of permanent impairment has stabilised.
18. The provision of more timely incapacity compensation payments for those former members of the ADF incapacitated for service or work by a mental health conditions, without the need for a determination that those mental health conditions are related to service.
19. Funding for a trial of an independent legal advocacy service to assist veterans with claim preparation and lodgements to enable long-term improvement in the quality of claims and ensure that veterans receive their entitlements with minimum administrative burden.