



Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Secretary

Re: Submission on the Queensland Veterans' Council Bill 2021

I write to you in my capacity as the State President for Australian War Widows Queensland (AWWQ).

We wish to make comment on the Queensland Veterans' Council Bill 2021.

On reading the Bill we note that

The main purpose of this Act is to establish the Queensland Veterans' Council—

- (a) to manage, maintain, preserve and develop Anzac Square as the State's war memorial; and*
- (b) to administer the Fund, including by making payments from the Fund; and*
- (c) to advise the Minister about veterans' matters.*

At the outset, AWWQ welcomes the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to the recognition of the service of Australians and the investment in the commemorative space that is Anzac Square.

We also welcome the move towards making the Queensland Veterans Council a statutory body with appropriate authority to ensure that our State's war memorial is managed by veterans and for veterans.

In the Premier's speech when tabling this Bill, the Hon A. Palaszczuk said:



One of the functions of the Queensland Veterans' Council will be to monitor and provide advice to government on veterans matters. To support the Queensland Veterans' Council in providing this advice, the bill also formalises the role of the Queensland Veterans' Advisory Council. This is a ministerial advisory committee established to provide a forum for the Queensland veterans community to communicate directly with the Queensland government and provide advice on veterans matters.

The proposed new Bill states membership of council will be

(1) The council consists of the following members—

(a) the chief executive or an employee of the department nominated by the chief executive;

(b) the chief executive officer of Brisbane City Council or a council employee nominated by the chief executive officer;

(c) not more than 6 other members (each an appointed member) appointed by the Governor in Council.

(2) The appointed members may include—

(a) not more than 2 persons nominated by a veterans' organisation under section 14; and

(b) not more than 4 persons nominated by the Minister.

Under the bill, the advisory council will be replaced by the Veterans Reference Group, which will support the Queensland Veterans' Council in providing advice on veterans related matters.



The Veterans Reference Group may comprise up to 10 members drawn from the veterans' community.

Membership

(1) The veterans' reference group has the membership decided by the Minister.

(2) However, the Minister must ensure the group consists of—

(a) the appointed members under section 13(2)(a); and

(b) not more than 8 other members of the veterans' community having knowledge of, or skills and experience in, 1 or more of the following—

(i) veterans' welfare;

(ii) veterans' health;

(iii) military service;

(iv) veterans' transition from military service;

(v) veterans' employment;

(vi) veterans' aged care;

(vii) matters that affect veterans' partners, widows and dependants;

(viii) other matters that affect the wellbeing of the veterans' community.

It has long been recognised that the families of veterans have made a unique sacrifice. Over the past century there have been many families adversely affected by the service of Australian service men and women. This is not limited to the battlefield deaths of our family member but often the ongoing support we have provided to those who have suffered for many years the physical and mental harm caused by defence service.



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War Widows have been proud of our history of women supporting women and women advocating for women. Our experience as war widows and partners of wounded, injured and ill veterans is not something that others can describe on our behalf. Our lived experience is ours to tell and sadly that can often be a story of disadvantage and sometimes abuse.

We have been proud to directly represent our members under the previous Queensland Veterans' Advisory Council.

We are concerned that our voice will not be adequately heard under the above description of the process of determining members of the veterans' reference group or the Queensland Veterans' Council. There are many organisations seeking to speak on our behalf as we age and our numbers diminish but we are still able to speak for ourselves.

We respectfully request that the Bill be amended to ensure that War Widows Queensland are nominated as a member of the veterans' reference group.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Gregory

State President

Australian War Widows Guild (Queensland)

14 May 2021