

SENATE ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES – 15 DECEMBER 2017

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – SENATOR BRIAN BURSTON

Questions for – Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister's staff/Defence/ADF advisors

1. Given the overwhelming primary and secondary evidence provided to all key stakeholders in the August 2017 submission to the Minister, much of which has been located or created through empirical research SINCE the 2011 DHAAT enquiry, will the Minister explain the consultative process between his office, Defence and the ADF recipients that led to his satisfaction that there is no new evidence?
2. Given the Minister expresses complete faith in the 2011 DHAAT findings and given that it has been pointed out that the same findings totally ignored all evidence after 1975, how can the Minister continue to believe the flawed findings or worse still, multiple errors, failures and mis-information from the NOSB which is the prime source of so-called expert advice on such matters as the RCB claim?
3. Is the Minister prepared to take disciplinary action against public service/ministerial staffers found to be generating deliberate mis-information thereby putting elected Ministers into a situation of contempt of parliament during Petition hearings now on record on the matter of the RCB petition?
4. Has the Prime Minister really been allowed to read the August 2017 RCB submission to apply his own intellect and sense of fair play, or is the Minister's Statement that the PM is comfortable with advice on the matter another fabrication by brief writers?
5. Why does the latest Ministerial rejection leave out, for the first time ever, reference to 'training', a deception to which successive brief writers have clung as the main point upon which to reject the RCB claim of being on warlike service as is proven by the evidence now available?
6. How does the Minister and his advisors propose to defend the official position they adopt on the RCB claim when the public and mass media are alerted to the scale and duration of the deliberate deception regarding the true nature of the RCB deployment during the Communist Insurgency?

7. Why does the Minister now seek to bring the RAAF into the discussion when the RCB submission is specifically based on the deception method of deploying the ARMY unit (RCB) under warlike-specific tasks to protect the airbase, tasks and supporting Rules of Engagement repeatedly documented in both Army and RAAF operational and other directives, unless to accidentally reveal the government's REAL motive - the perceived cost of recognition?
8. As the Minister is responsible for both Service Personnel AND Veterans Affairs, to what extent is he (as opposed to script writing staff) aware of the adverse effect the continued denial of justice is having on RCB veterans when they learn they are represented in Parliament by an entity that cannot seem to accept overwhelming evidence?
9. Why was Minister Bilson's determination to grade RCB as "hazardous service" in 2006 not implemented prior to, or after, the change of government in 2007?
10. Given the stated attitude of the government as contained in a conversation between a Defence official and staff of the American War Library in 2006, If the veterans were prepared to pay for their own medals, would the Minister consider recognising their contribution to Australia and the region's security and stability over a period of nearly 20 years by finally recognising RCB service as warlike?

E Kilby

for Senator Burstow