Establishing a Veterans’ Centre.

With the aging of the Veteran Community and the identified need to provide a differing variety of services to that community, combined with the dwindling volunteer community, the drift toward centralized Advocacy from the current format is fast becoming a reality.

Combined with the above is the requirement from Government that the maximum benefit be gleamed from the tax dollar.

In his report, released in 2009, Professor Dunt discussed a variety of options that could enhance the effective provision of Advocacy Services.

There were a number of variants put forward and the model that appeared to gain the greater support was the “Hub and Spoke” option.

Briefly explained this option has the main support (hub) located within a Veterans’ Centre that then provides administration, mentoring, IT and any other support deemed relevant to Advocates, both Compensation and Welfare across a wider geographical area.

1. Location.

Probably the most important,

Is it central to the local Veteran community? Is the building adequate for the needs of the group at a reasonable cost? What geographical area will be supported from the Center?

Size of the immediate Veteran community would not necessarily be an issue as long as the surrounding area population justifies the location. Facilities and access would be more the issue.
2. **Physical Needs of Structure.**

A building to house such an organization would need to contain some of the following,

A, Greeting room or Foyer,
B, Office space.
C, Interview rooms sufficient to handle the perceived workload,
D, Meeting room, ideally large enough to accommodate in house training
E, Common room
F, Storage room. Secure.
G, Basic cooking venue and facilities.

It may be not necessary to have all of these facilities available depending on the needs of the center. For example a space could realistically fulfill more than one function, i.e. common room and basic cooking venue and facilities.

3. **Veteran Organization Support.**

The size and number of Veteran Organizations available to work together on the development of the Centre would need to be considered. Coming together as a single point of contact for multiple organizations would be far more cost effective. It must be remembered that Advocates will be working for, and administered by the Centre and not any particular sponsoring Veteran Organization.
5. **Advocacy and Administrative Support.**

Centers need to be in an area where they are reasonably close to administrative and Advocacy support. The physical size of the area being supported should be of no real consequence, the focus should be on the potential workload.

Workload should be divided into the two main areas

   A. Compensation Advocacy (C.A.)
   B. Welfare Advocacy (W.A.)

There will be a need to differentiate between the two and build into the administration some support structures that accommodate the individual needs of both.

With a sound move toward mentoring, under the present system at Moreton there is a high emphasis on the use of Skype to assist Advocates in the more remote locations.

6. **Management.**

This appears to be the most critical aspect of the whole structure. There, over the years, have been a number of “Centers” set up in different locations across Queensland. Some of these have relied on BEST funding and some have been totally supported by ESO’s. Personal commitment by individuals appears to be the cornerstone of the operations.

It is an unfortunate fact that once the driving individual moves on or is “moved on” the system tends to crumble. Effective transitional management appears to a stumbling block within the current system.