



The **LGBT+** Military Charity

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

11th December 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Justice For LGBT+ Armed Forces Veterans**

In your apology on behalf of the British Nation in Parliament on 19th July, you described the 'gay ban' as an appalling failure of the British State and you said that many service personnel endured horrific sexual abuse and violence, bullying and harassment, all while bravely serving this country.

The Fighting With Pride LGBT+ Veterans Coalition writes to you as a broad coalition of military and LGBT+ charities and organisations to urge that in response to Lord Etherton's LGBT Veterans Independent Review Final Report, the Government must ensure these veterans are not let down again.

We urge you to:

- As part of the Government response to the Etherton Review, a debate in Parliament was promised by the Secretary of State for Defence. It has now been confirmed that this debate will not take place. The Government must honour its commitment to a full debate in the Commons. We are grateful to the Scottish Parliament for the debate planned at Holyrood on 13th December.
- Disregard the LGBT Veterans Independent Review's recommendation for a £50M cap upon financial awards, a stricture compelled by terms of reference that stated the Review should not '*recommend new compensation schemes, that are unconstrained*'.
- Put in place a compensation scheme which fully recognises the disadvantage and injury LGBT+ Veterans have suffered. The LGBT Veterans Independent Review found that these veterans have been treated with shocking cruelty. We consider that :
  - This arbitrary cap was set without knowledge of the numbers of veterans affected, the nature of their losses or injuries they faced.
  - The cap provides a perverse incentive for the MoD to limit the number of people coming forward to attest to the impact of the 'gay ban'. This directly opposes the policy aim to achieve fair recompense for those harmed.

- The scheme means that veterans will receive lower payouts than those who pursued individual court action, this is unfair.
- There are better ways to protect the public purse than a cap. Tariffs and categories must be agreed which can expedite the administration of the scheme and this scheme must be a 'spend out' fund
- The implementation of the cap would be hard to manage. In the 24 month period in which applications are to be considered, the last applications may well justify the highest compensation. How will this be managed if the scheme has by then 'paid out' ?
- The compensation scheme must be implemented quickly for this ageing community of veterans who have been abandoned while experiencing ill health, housing crisis, financial impoverishment, loneliness, isolation and shame for decades.

We call upon the Government to recognise this once in a lifetime moment to bring an end to the shame and dishonour imposed upon these veterans. If we are to realise this Government's ambition to be the 'best place in the world to be a veteran' and a 'global exemplar in LGBT rights' then our veterans must feel a sense of justice and experience the security and comfort in older age that we would wish for all veterans. Remove the cap and agree fair compensation for those affected by the illegal and cruel 'gay ban'.

Yours sincerely,

### **The Fighting With Pride LGBT+ Veterans Coalition**

Craig Jones MBE Executive Chair - Fighting With Pride

Caroline Paige Chief Executive - Fighting With Pride

Charles Byrne, Director General - The Royal British Legion

Lieutenant General Sir Andrew Gregory KBE CB DL

Catherine Dixon, Chair - Stonewall

Paul Martin OBE, Chief Executive - LGBT Foundation

Paula Rogers, Chief Executive - Women's Royal Army Corps Association

James Needham, Chief Executive - Help for Heroes

Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive - Age UK

Emma Norton, Chief Executive - Centre For Military Justice

Paula Edwards, Chief Executive - Salute Her

Tony Wright, Chief Executive - Forward Assist

Frank Gribben - Unforgotten Forces Scotland and Age Scotland

Alun Thomas, Chief Executive - Adferiad Wales

Cc

Rt Hon Grant Schapps MP, Secretary of State for Defence

Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP, Cabinet Office Minister for Veterans

Rt Hon Dr Andrew Murrison MP, Minister Defence People, Veterans and Service Families