

Liz Cosson AM CSC

Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs

Opening statement

Senate Estimates

Date: 30 May 2018

Length: two minutes

Simon Lewis

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, Simon Lewis and congratulate him, not only on his leadership of the DVA for the last five years but also on a long and successful career in the Australian Public Service. Simon had a clear vision for the department and the need for us to change. I am very honoured to be stepping in to the role of Secretary and I am committed to continuing our progress toward change and transformation of DVA.

Progress on Inquiries and Reviews

Since the Government accepted the recommendations made in the Senate Committee's report *The Constant Battle: suicide by veterans*, a number of significant, independent and specific reviews, to examine how we can meet the needs of our ex-service men and women and their families into the future, have commenced and are in progress.

To remain transparent in how we are tracking against these reviews, we would like to table an update on DVA and Defence's progress in implementing the recommendations and to then post this on our website at dva.gov.au. I appreciate that the Committee has not had the opportunity to review this update.

Budget

In addition to \$31m investment at MYEFO in response to recommendations from the Review into Jesse Bird's suicide and the Senate Inquiry the 2018–19 Budget allocated \$11.2 billion to the

Veterans' Affairs portfolio, including around \$100 million in additional funding. This includes:

- A significant investment of \$111.9 million in the continuation of our transformation program;
- \$2.2 million to expand mental health care eligibility to certain Reservists;
- investment of \$10.8 million to provide veterans with incapacity payments at 100 per cent of their normal earnings when they are engaged in an approved full-time study program as part of their DVA rehabilitation plan;
- \$8.3 million to enhance veterans' employment services and opportunities; and
- improved communication between GPs and allied health service providers and opportunities for enhanced complex care management for our most vulnerable clients.

I look forward to updating the Committee further on these measures this evening.

Thank you.