

OPENING STATEMENT
ALISON FRAME, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
BUDGET SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 2022-23
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE LEGISLATION
COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2023
MAIN COMMITTEE ROOM, PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Thank you Chair.

I did want to acknowledge my predecessor, Ms Liz Cosson AM, CSC and thank her for her service to the Australian community, both as a member of the Australian Defence Force, and as an Australian Public Servant, for over 40 years.

I am very honoured to be appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. I am committed to building upon Ms Cosson's legacy, and leading the Department through our journey of positive change, increased investment, and improvement of the veteran support system.

I have been connecting with stakeholders from the veteran community and DVA staff to listen to their experiences and seek their views on what we are doing well, and how we can continue to improve. I look forward to continuing to engage with the veteran community.

I have also been meeting with our key partners and other stakeholders, including the Department of Defence, to understand the current system, and how we can continue to deliver better outcomes for veterans and families. I look forward to building upon the strong engagement and collaboration between Defence and DVA, to better support current serving personnel transitioning to civilian life.

My key priorities are to deliver on the Government's election commitments and the improvements identified by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to which the government has committed. This includes continuing our important work to address the claims backlog, and supporting

veterans through the claims process, and I anticipate the Committee may seek an update on our progress in today's hearing.

It remains one of the highest priorities of the Department to support the work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, and implement the Government's response to the Royal Commission's Interim Report. The Department will continue to respond to the Commission and also to support veterans and their families during the conduct of its inquiry.

Another of my key priorities is to enhance the Department's focus on innovation - not only in the way we deliver services and support to veterans, but how we can provide better support, and programs such as the provision of Psychiatric Assistance Dogs show how this can delivery real and positive change to the experience of veterans. I am keen to build upon this work to date, to drive continuous improvement to the veteran support system, with input from the veteran community, best practice across the country and internationally, as well as ideas from our staff.

To assist in responding to questions from the Committee this evening, I am accompanied at the table by Mr Stuart Smith, Deputy Secretary, Veteran and Family Services Group; Ms Rachel Goddard, Acting Deputy Secretary, Enabling Services and Commemorations Group; and Ms Kate Pope, Deputy President, Veteran and Family Policy Group, whom along with other senior officials from the department, are here today to respond to the Committee's questions.

Thank you.

ENDS