

**Chief of the Defence Force Opening Statement to Senate Estimates**

3 December 2025

Good morning Chair and Senators,

Yesterday marked the first anniversary of the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The Minister for Defence Personnel addressed the National Press Club, to update Australians on the work we are doing to implement the Royal Commission's recommendations.

The implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations is a Defence priority. We are taking action alongside DVA and other government departments and agencies to urgently progress this work.

Our ongoing reforms to culture, systems and processes aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our people.

The Committee is likely aware of the class action filed in the Federal Court of Australia against the Commonwealth of Australia in relation to allegations of contraventions of the Sex Discrimination Act.

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I am constrained in what I can say about the class action. This is now a matter before the court and I respect the legal process that has commenced.

I can reinforce that Defence acknowledges and respects the legal rights of its members to take part in this matter or to take steps to exercise any other legal rights.

All Defence personnel have a right to be respected and deserve to have a safe and positive workplace experience. There is no place for sexual violence in Defence.

We will continue striving to eliminate sexual violence from our workplace.

I also want to comment on Australia's maritime security environment.

Australia maintains high situational awareness across our immediate region, and routinely monitors maritime and air traffic in Australia's near approaches.

As the Deputy Prime Minister said on Monday, Defence is currently monitoring a People's Liberation Army – Navy Task Group which has been operating in the Philippine Sea.

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We are aware the Task Group is composed of four ships: a Yushen-class Land Helicopter Dock, a Renhai-class cruiser, a Jiangkai-class frigate and a Fuchi-class replenishment vessel. An Australian P-8 observed the Task Group on the evening of 2 December (yesterday) in the Philippine Sea, approximately 500 nautical miles north of Palau.

I have previously stated that we have seen a greater PLA-N presence in our immediate region in recent years and we do expect to see future PLA-N extended area deployments.

We will continue to monitor this Task Group as we learn more about its direction, purpose and intent.

Finally, I would like to finish by acknowledging those who have contributed to all of Defence's work this year. The efforts of Defence's people continue to inspire us.

Serving our country requires many of our people to work when others are enjoying a summer break. I express my deep gratitude to all those who will be on duty both here in Australia and overseas.

Thank you Chair.