

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
– 18 August 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 - Q5 - 18 August 2020 - ADF early access to superannuation - Gallagher

Question reference number: 5

Senator/Member: Katy Gallagher

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 01 September 2020

Question:

CHAIR: I've just got some questions on super before I hand to Senator Paterson, so, sorry, a change of questions. I notice there's been quite significant withdrawal or use of early access super by personnel to access military superannuation funds. APRA figures say \$152 million has been accessed under the early release of super scheme. Considering the scheme was intended for people experiencing hardship, how do you explain members accessing early access super through these funds?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I'm not able to speak to the details of that. We'd need to take that question on notice.

CHAIR: APRA published some figures—they're reporting against this scheme—and I just can't understand without redundancies or cuts to pay or people being stood down why they would be eligible for accessing their super through that way. But you'll take that on notice?

Lt Gen. Frewen: Yes.

CHAIR: You don't have any information about that?

Lt Gen. Frewen: No, I don't.

CHAIR: Media reports have quoted the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation saying that most of the applicants no longer work for the public service or the Defence Force, so this might be the case. Could you take that on notice too, to just give us an indication? I don't know whether you have access to that information; you may not. We might have to go to APRA, but whatever information you can find about the release of early access super and the use of defence or military superannuation funds would be appreciated.

Lt Gen. Frewen: That falls outside the remit of my task force, but we'll take that and get you what information we can.

CHAIR: If you could refer it to the relevant people through the department, that would be useful. Thank you.

Answer:

Eligibility for early access to superannuation due to COVID-19 is set by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and self-assessed. Access is generally provided for individuals who are unemployed, made redundant, had a reduction in work hours, are in receipt of certain welfare payments, such as parenting payments, or are sole traders.

Applications for the early release of superannuation funds are made by individuals directly to the ATO. Defence and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) have no visibility of Australian Defence Force (ADF) members' applications, or the claim for eligibility that they are declaring to have met.

CSC has advised Defence that the majority of applications for the military superannuation schemes have been from personnel who are no longer serving in the ADF.

Defence has advised all ADF members and Australian Public Service employees who are looking to access their superannuation early to seek independent, personal financial advice before making any decisions related to superannuation.

Senate Select Committee on COVID-19

Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic
– 18 August 2020

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 – Q6 - 18 August 2020 - Victorian Government Request (and withdrawal) for ADF personnel - Paterson

Question reference number: 6

Senator/Member: James Paterson

Type of question: Spoken

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 01 September 2020

Question:

Senator PATERSON: In June there was a request for 850 ADF personnel from the Victorian government. Who made that request on behalf of the Victorian government?

Lt Gen. Frewen: The request for Defence assistance to the civil authorities comes to us usually under the signature of the designated officer, which is in most cases either the emergency management lead or the disaster management lead in the state or territory. That particular request came to us from Commissioner Crisp, who is the commissioner of emergency management in Victoria.

Senator PATERSON: Do you have a copy of that request?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I don't have a copy with me. Defence does have a copy of that request.

Senator PATERSON: On notice, could you provide that to this committee?

Lt Gen. Frewen: Sure.

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Senator PATERSON: That request was subsequently withdrawn, and I think in fact it was withdrawn the next day. Who withdrew the request?

Lt Gen. Frewen: Commissioner Crisp withdrew the request.

Senator PATERSON: Right, and I understand that he withdrew that request after there was some public commentary I think by the police minister, Lisa Neville, saying that this was not a request that Victoria wanted to follow through with or that it did not require.

Lt Gen. Frewen: I'm not aware of that. We received the request and then we received the cancellation of the request that cited a change in operational and resourcing requirements.

Senator PATERSON: Okay. Could I ask, on notice, for a copy of that withdrawal notice as well, in addition to the initial request? And did anyone in the Victorian government explain why that requirement changed within 24 hours? I mean, 850 personnel is a lot of people. Did anyone explain what the reason for the change was?

Lt Gen. Frewen: I've not had any conversations with the Victorian government around that request.

Answer:

The requested documents are provided in the following attachments. For privacy considerations contact details for officers have been redacted.

Attachment A - Victorian request for ADF support.

Attachment B - Email from Commissioner Crisp to withdraw request.

REQUEST FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT NON-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Requests for Australian Government non-financial assistance may be phoned to Emergency Management Australia (EMA) in the first instance, but must be confirmed by e-mail from the nominated official. The format for requests is as follows:

SUBJECT:	National support requested to assist COVID-19 (Victorian response)
DATE & TIME:	24 June 2020, 1900hrs AEDT
REQUEST ID:	EMV-RFA-015CV
SITUATION:	<p>The Victorian State Control Centre (SCC) is seeking the support to ensure the emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic remains effective with the increase in positive cases identified within the state.</p> <p>Since mandatory hotel quarantine for overseas travellers entering Australia in March 2020, Victoria has managed approximately 18,500 individuals. With the continued need to maintain the mandatory quarantine, it has been identified that there is the lack of access to skilled resources to undertake specific functions.</p> <p>This request is to seek personnel augmentation and assistance for Victorian Department of Health and Human Services in the mandatory quarantine of individuals who have returned from overseas (Operations Soteria).</p>
OWN RESOURCES:	Emergency Management Victoria has exhausted internal or contract sources across emergency agencies to fulfil these roles. ADF personnel in other States have proven to be uniquely suited to roles and functions being carried out within the current environment.
PRIORITY:	<p>To commence 26 June 2020 for a period ending 31 July 2020.</p> <p>Due to the scale and complexity of the crisis, this is a high priority request, to ensure the stability in the established systems and process are continued.</p>
DELIVERY LOCATION:	The personnel would be required to operate from Melbourne metropolitan hotels that are being used for mandatory quarantine
TASK DESCRIPTION:	<p>The request is for up to 850 personnel to provide compliance and monitoring support to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) at the designated hotels being used for mandatory quarantine.</p> <p>The Personnel will be required to operate on shift rotation basis, 7 days a week for the duration of this request.</p>

JURISDICTION PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT DETAILS

NAME:	[REDACTED]	
POSITION TITLE:	Emergency Management Commissioner Executive Officer	
AGENCY/ GROUP:	Emergency Management Victoria	
BH PHONE:	[REDACTED]	MOB: [REDACTED]
E-MAIL:	[REDACTED]	

REQUEST APPROVED BY (MUST BE NOMINATED JURISDICTIONAL OFFICIAL)

NAME:	Andrew Crisp	[REDACTED]
SIGNATURE:	[REDACTED]	
POSITION TITLE:	Emergency Management Commissioner	
BH PHONE:	[REDACTED]	MOB: [REDACTED]

COMMENTS:	<p>DHHS representative will be available at on site at each location to support the deployed personnel in the field.</p> <p>The tasked personnel will be required to support the State Authorised Officers in active monitoring of quarantine compliance by individuals in hotel quarantine.</p> <p>Dependant on the operational need, the number of Defence assets may be released when they are no longer required, to enable reallocation and/or crew respite.</p>
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From: Andrew S Crisp (DJCS) [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 June 2020 12:31 PM
To: EMACOV1D-19 [REDACTED] SCC-Vic (EMC Executive Officer)
[REDACTED] ccc [REDACTED] JOSS.VIC
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Victorian Request for Assistance - RFA013, RFA014 & RFA015 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Good afternoon all,

Based on changing operational and resourcing requirements I am writing to advise you that Victoria no longer wishes to progress RFA 15, the request for up to 850 resources to support our hotel quarantine operation (Op Soteria).

Thank you for your efforts in progressing this request and as always, we sincerely appreciate the support of EMA and the ADF.

Regards,

Andrew

Andrew Crisp APM
Emergency Management Commissioner

Emergency Management Victoria
Level 23, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne 3000

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

www.emv.vic.gov.au



Working in conjunction with Communities,
Government, Agencies and Business

This office is based on the land of the Traditional Owners, the people of the Kulin Nations.
We acknowledge their history, culture and Elders both past and present.