



The Hon John Eren MP

Minister for Tourism and Major Events
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Senator Linda Reynolds CSC
Chair
Defence Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
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D18/138179

Linda
Dear Senator

Thank you for the invitation for the Victorian Government to provide a submission on the terms of reference for the Inquiry into transition from the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The Premier of Victoria, the Hon Daniel Andrews MP has asked me to respond as Minister for Veterans.

Victoria commends the Commonwealth for holding an inquiry into this topic. In Victoria, the ADF transition process is regularly raised as an issue impacting veterans' wellbeing and ability to re-enter civilian life with the support they need.

The Victorian Government aims to support veterans in every way we can, and actively seek to collaborate with the Commonwealth Government to ease the transition process for those leaving the ADF through a range of initiatives.

Victoria has developed an online *Transition to Victoria* Guide which is promoted at ADF transition seminars across the country. The online guide helps to ensure information about vocational opportunities, training and other state based services is available for ADF personnel separating from the military and relocating to Victoria. The Victorian Budget 2017/18 committed \$900,000 to delivering the Public Sector Veterans Employment Strategy over four years, aiming to employ 250 veterans in the public sector in Victoria; and in 2018/19 we have committed an additional \$344,000 to support veterans to become job-ready and gain employment on Victorian government infrastructure projects.

In 2015-16 we also provided \$400,000 over four years to establish RSL Active in Victoria. The RSL Active program was developed to address social isolation experienced by some younger veterans. The program offers a range of activities for younger veterans to create and develop social networks, enhance support circles and improve mental and physical health outcomes. We have made a further budget commitment in 2018-19 to support training and capacity building in ex-service organisations (ESO), to ensure they are able to continue advocating for, and providing support services to veterans such as this into the future.

The Victorian Government continues to provide support for Victorian veterans, but we recognise that the appropriate resolution to key transition issues must be led by the Commonwealth, as the employer of the servicemen and women of Australia.

Overall the Victorian Government finds the proposed terms of reference to be appropriate. In my experience as Minister for Veterans, I have spoken with many veterans who have raised issues with the transition process, which will be captured by the proposed terms of reference for the inquiry. However, I would request on behalf of Victoria that the issue of cultural attitudes of the ADF toward its personnel is captured within the inquiry, given that:

- ESOs in Victoria report feedback that serving personnel perceive an attitudinal change toward them after submitting discharge papers, resulting in them feeling that the process is adversarial; and
- Victorian veterans report feeling that the information offered to them in the transition phase is not sufficient or useful because the ADF does not want them to leave.

I look forward to the further consultation and submission opportunities brought about by this inquiry, and welcome its future findings.

Should you have any questions relating to this submission, please contact Ms Rowena Vagg, Acting Director of the Veterans Branch in the Department of Premier and Cabinet on (03) 9651 2119.

Yours sincerely



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