

8 June 2018

Committee Secretary
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By online submission

Dear Committee Secretary

Re: Consultation on Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Veteran-centric Reforms No. 2) Bill 2018

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Veteran-centric Reforms No. 2) Bill 2018 ('the Bill').

The RANZCP is a membership organisation that is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists in Australia and New Zealand. The RANZCP represents over 6000 qualified psychiatrists, who, as experts in the field of psychiatry, have a strong awareness of the unique occupational risks associated with Australian Defence Force (ADF) roles, and the mental health issues faced by many Australian veterans.

Veterans and ex-service personnel are subject to a range of factors and circumstances which impact on their mental health, including cumulative exposure to trauma, mental and physical health issues, and social and occupational stressors upon transition to civilian life. Recent results released as part of the [Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme](#) found that an estimated 46.4% of ADF members who had transitioned from full-time service within the past five years met 12-month diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder. The report notes that the most common type of disorder for the last 12 months for transitioned ADF was anxiety disorder (37%), followed by affective disorders (23.1%) and alcohol disorders (12.9%).

The RANZCP strongly supports the increased focus on mental health in the ADF, as illustrated by the development of the ADF Mental Health Reform Program including the 2018 ADF Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Similarly, the RANZCP supports all efforts made by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to safeguard the mental health of veterans and ex-service personnel.



The RANZCP welcomes further legislative efforts to support the mental health of veterans, including the introduction of recent amendments to the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* through the Bill that give effect to the Veteran Suicide Prevention Pilot.

Yours faithfully

Dr Kym Jenkins
President

Ref: 1130o