

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
Inquiry into Australia's Engagement in Afghanistan – 2 February 2022
Answers to questions on notice from the Veterans' Affairs portfolio

Question 5

Outcome: All Program: All

Topic: Afghanistan – Support to Veterans

(Written Question on Notice)

Senator Kimberley Kitching asked:

1. Please provide the committee with your sense of how veterans are coping now almost 6 months after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Have any new issues emerged? Has and is support being accessed?
2. DVA has mentioned that the SMS messages about support available were well-received. As this will be a long term issue for veterans, do you see a need to repeat this?
3. Has there been a need to take any additional steps to assist with the wellbeing of veterans?

Answer

1. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) continues to provide support to individuals impacted by the Afghanistan unrest. While the initial surge in requests for support has settled, the Department continues to monitor the situation closely for any emerging issues and will respond accordingly.
2. There is no indication the SMS message needs to be repeated at this stage; however, the Department will continue to monitor this and can reactivate the SMS messaging if required.
3. The Department's initial and ongoing service response to Afghanistan veterans and their families was in response to sudden changed circumstances. DVA will continue to monitor requests for additional support from this group as well as their feedback and will respond accordingly. For example, the website was updated in September 2021, to include a specific landing page, 'Responding to the situation in Afghanistan', that provides resources for veterans, families, mental health providers, teachers, and broader community members. The webpage includes resources on compassion; resilience and support; management of anxiety and fear; dealing with grief and loss; and speaking to young adults and children.