

Opening statement on behalf of Mr Barry Jackson, Managing Director of Defence Housing Australia

To be read by Mr Paul Groenewegen, Chief Financial Officer.

Unfortunately, I am unable to appear before today's Committee hearing due to a scheduled medical procedure in Melbourne. DHA's Chief Financial Officer, Mr Paul Groenewegen, will lead DHA's Senior Executive Group in my absence.

I am confident that they will be able to respond to any of the Committee's questions regarding DHA's operations and assure the Committee of our ongoing cooperation.

I am very proud to have been appointed to the role of Managing Director of DHA, an organisation with a long history of providing excellent housing solutions to our Defence Force members. I look forward to working with our Shareholders, the Ministers for Defence, Defence Personnel and Finance, to ensure that tradition continues well into the future.

I also wanted to note a particular highlight of 2019, in very difficult circumstances, for DHA.

In February, the city of Townsville endured catastrophic floods. Not since Cyclone Tracey in 1974 has a natural disaster impacted so many Australian Defence Force personnel and their families.

DHA was part of the broader Defence and Australian Government response.

Building on the knowledge and capability from DHA's responses to Cyclone Yasi (in North Queensland) and the Brisbane floods, both in 2011, DHA staff helped secure safe conditions, established functional communications and find emergency shelter for ADF members and their families.

Our Townsville regional office and national contact centres worked round the clock and we flew in staff from around the country to assist our Townsville team, some of whom were also coping with their own personal impacts from the floods

Up to 318 properties were affected and 245 ADF members, most with families, sought housing assistance immediately following the floods.

Ultimately, 101 families needed to be rehoused. 62 families were rehoused into alternative DHA Service Residences, and the remaining families rehoused in non-DHA accommodation using Rental Assistance.

To date seven Defence members, three with families, have returned to residences that have been remediated following flood damage. The returning of properties into DHA's Townsville portfolio is an ongoing process, with a further 33 flood affected properties to be returned soon. This process will continue throughout 2020.

I am immensely proud of the tireless efforts of our staff in assisting, and continuing to assist, our Australian Defence Force personnel and their families.

DHA would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by Minister Reynolds who was, at the time of the floods, Assistant Minister for Home Affairs and then subsequently the Minister for Emergency Management and North Queensland Recovery.

Thank you.