



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs
DEPUTY SECRETARY

EC19-001557

Ms Lyn Beverley
Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Beverley

I write to correct evidence that I presented at the Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee on 23 October 2019.

I incorrectly advised (at the bottom of page 133 of the Proof Committee Hansard) that the wellbeing and support program is a three-year program. This is in fact a two-year program and the evaluation will be fully undertaken at the end of that two-year period.

I would be grateful if you could provide this correction to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Mark Cormack
Deputy Secretary

15 November 2019

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Saluting Their Service

Senator LAMBIE: How many of the 23 recommendations from the 2017 review on veteran suicide have been implemented fully?

Ms Cosson: Do you mean *The constant battle*, the Senate inquiry?

Senator LAMBIE: That would be the one.

Ms Cosson: I've got a breakdown against each of the recommendations, but—

Senator LAMBIE: Are they in full? Have the recommendations been finished in full? My count is that at least seven—and I'm being extremely kind here—have been completely ignored.

Ms Cosson: I'd suggest they haven't been completely ignored.

Senator LAMBIE: Okay.

Ms Cosson: But if I can take that on notice—

Senator LAMBIE: That would be great.

Ms Cosson: because we've got a complete breakdown of all of the recommendations and what we're doing, so that might be helpful.

Senator LAMBIE: That would be wonderful. The review recommended:

... the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel should liaise with the Minister for Health to oversee the development of strategies ... to engage and support former members of the ADF aged 18-29 years who have left the service in the last 5 years and who could be at risk of suicide or self-harm.

What's happened with that?

Ms Cosson: We regularly engage with the Department of Health. Importantly, the Prime Minister has appointed an adviser on suicide, Ms Christine Morgan, and we've had a meeting with her, and Mr Cormack has actually written to her. I met with her yesterday as well, just to talk about the veterans suicide initiatives that we have. She is facilitating a summit in November, which I think is 13 November, and I think we'll be participating in that.

Senator LAMBIE: Another summit? Seriously?

Ms Cosson: But it's a workshop.

Senator LAMBIE: I'm sick of summits.

Ms Cosson: It's a workshop, Senator—

Senator LAMBIE: Yes, well, I've seen them all.

Ms Cosson: and she is very keen to work with us very closely.

Senator LAMBIE: Okay, so nothing's been done at this point in time for those aged 18 to 29 who have left the service and are most at risk of suicide and self-harm. We still are waiting for anything to be done. Nothing has happened.

Ms Cosson: No, no, no.

Mr Cormack: No, that's not the case.

Ms Cosson: No, we've done a lot, actually.

Mr Cormack: There's a wellbeing and support program that focuses on them.

Senator LAMBIE: Okay. How's this being evaluated? Can you supply me with all the evaluations—what's come out of that, the accomplishments?

Mr Cormack: It's into its second year and it will be the subject of a formal evaluation, and we're happy to give you the details of that on notice.

Senator LAMBIE: When is that evaluation happening?

Mr Cormack: The evaluation design is underway. The program is still running. It is a three-year program, and it's targeting support for just the sorts of people that you mentioned. The evaluation will be fully undertaken at the end of that three-year period.

Senator LAMBIE: With your 12-session treatment cycle pathway, how did you contact every serving member and veteran to let them know that was going on and explain that to them?

Mr Cormack: We used a range of communication measures. There were articles in *Vetaffairs*. There was social media. I can give you the details of all the different communication activities.