

SECRETARY

OPENING STATEMENT

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Chair and Senators, I'd like to briefly update the Committee on some key developments in DVA.

[Royal Commission]

DVA welcomed the release of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide on the 9th of September. It made 122 recommendations, 41 of which are directed to DVA, individually or jointly with others including Defence.

The Government has committed to responding to the Final Report by the end of this year and is carefully considering the recommendations. To support this, DVA is working closely with our Defence and other Commonwealth, State and Territory counterparts.

I anticipate that some of your questions may cover the Final Report. We will make every effort to answer, but we are limited in what we can say while the Government considers the report.

I wish to thank the Royal Commissioners for their comprehensive inquiry.

I also sincerely thank the veteran community for sharing their experiences with the Royal Commission. I acknowledge their courage and commitment to improving the lives of future generations.

I am also deeply grateful to DVA's staff, who supported the work of the Royal Commission over the last three years.

[Legislative reform]

DVA responded quickly to the recommendations in the Royal Commission's Interim Report which were accepted by the Government in September 2022. This includes work on legislative simplification and harmonisation, with the Government introducing the amendments in July.

I thank the Committee for its recent inquiry and report on the Bill, and note the recommendation that the legislation be passed. DVA appreciated the opportunity to participate in the inquiry and thank all stakeholders who participated in it.

[Claims]

Previously, I confirmed that DVA had cleared the backlog of 41, 800 unallocated claims identified by the Royal Commission, over a month ahead of the Royal Commission's deadline.

At 30 September, we had made determinations for almost 97 per cent of the claims in the allocation backlog identified by the Royal Commission.

The latest published data at 30 September demonstrates that we are receiving claims at an increased rate, and reducing time taken to process across some claim types. Specifically:

[Incoming claims]

- We had 79,631 claims on hand, of which 88 per cent had been allocated to a claims support officer or delegate.
- More than half of these claims on hand were received in the last 200 days, and around one third in the last 100 days. Further, the number of claims we have received this financial year (25,524) is up 37.1 per cent on the same period last financial year.

[Determination rate]

- Our determination rate for 1 July to 30 September is up 6.7 per cent on the same period last year. Further, our determination rate for the 2023-24 financial year was 48.5 per cent higher than 2022-23.

[KPIs – MRCA IL]

- MRCA initial liability claims account for more than half of all new claims. For MRCA IL claims received from 1 December 2023 and determined by 30 September 2024, the average allocation time was seven days (under the 14-day KPI) and time taken to process was 84 days (under the 90-day KPI).

[Innovation and continuous improvement]

As the Royal Commission identified, there is more work to be done.

I'm pleased to share two recent innovations, concerning health approvals and invoice processing, which were identified and led by our staff.

In October, DVA began a six-month trial which allows radiologists to claim MRI scans for eligible clients referred by a GP without needing to seek prior approval from DVA. This reduces administrative burdens and wait times.

DVA has also significantly improved our timeliness in processing invoices from service providers, following increased levels of demand and delays in processing invoice payments. From 30 September, we implemented an online Provider Upload Portal. At 29 October, over 90 per cent of invoices were being lodged via the portal, and 100 per cent of all invoices were processed in under 20 days.

[Acknowledgement]

Finally, I thank DVA's committed staff for all that they do to support our veterans and families.

Thank you, Chair and Senators. We are happy to take your questions.