

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Inquiry into Department of Veterans' Affairs — Proposed Fit-out of New Leased Premises at
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra – 23 May 2024
Answers to questions on notice from the Veterans' Affairs portfolio

Question 1

Topic: Light rail timeframe

(Public Works Hansard Proof 23 May 2024, p 2)

The Hon Keith Pitt MP asked:

Mr PITT: In the documents we got, we read about the capacity for the proposed light rail to come in and be utilised. When's that expected to be available?

Mr McNally: I don't have that information. I'd be happy to provide it, but I believe they've started the preliminary construction and the preliminary works around the area of the precinct.

Mr PITT: If you could take that on notice, that would be great, because it's one of the justifications you use for the location.

Answer

ACT Light Rail Stage 2A will run from the City to Commonwealth Park, and will include a stop at Edinburgh Avenue (approximately 300 metres from 18 Marcus Clarke Street). Stage 2A is expected to commence operations from 2028.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Inquiry into Department of Veterans' Affairs - Proposed Fit-out of New Leased Premises at
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra – 23 May 2024
Answers to questions on notice from the Veterans' Affairs portfolio

Question 2

Topic: Veterans' Review Board

(Public Works Proof Hansard 23 May 2024, p 4)

Mr Graham Perrett MP asked:

CHAIR: I note that five work points will be provided for the Veterans Review Board, and that the Veterans Review Board is an independent statutory body that provides services to DVA clients. Can you please explain the relationship between DVA and the independent statutory board in broad strokes, especially when it comes to financial arrangements? For example, will the Veterans Review Board lease the proposed work points from the DVA? What are the arrangements?

Mr McNally: The Veterans Review Body, as you pointed out, is a statutory authority which undertakes legal assessments of the department's decisions relating to compensation payments. They're the first point of review for any veterans or family members who are not satisfied with a decision undertaken by the department.

Currently staff of the Veterans Review Board are departmental employees and there are statutory office holders undertaking the legal representations and actions of the Veterans Review Board. The Veterans Review Board is located in most of our state and territory major offices. It is not a leased arrangement. The department provides the floor plate and the support to the Veterans Review Board as part of its ongoing activities to support veterans and their families.

CHAIR: In terms of tea, coffee, furniture, power, electricity and support services, can you talk me through the arms-length arrangements between the VRB folk and the DVA?

Mr McNally: I'm not part of our finance group, so I can't go into the finer details of our financial arrangements with the Veterans Review Board because I don't have those. In my role as the assistant secretary responsible for property, I can confirm that power and all other arrangements are provided to the Veterans' Review Board without any cost recovery basis...

Ms Jocusen: I think we could probably get you some more information on that arrangement, just to confirm that, if that's helpful. As Mr McNally has suggested, those details would sit within our finance area, and we don't have the details here. I think what Mr McNally has provided is as accurate as best as we know, but we are more than happy to take that on notice and provide you with a more fulsome response.

Answer

The Veterans' Review Board (VRB) is an independent statutory tribunal, but not a separate Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The VRB receives funding and corporate services from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

The majority of the VRB's budget is used for payroll covering members and registry staff in the delivery of VRB services.

VRB's property costs are met by DVA, including power, electricity, furniture and support services (e.g. information communication technology (ICT), security). Property costs do not include tea and coffee.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Inquiry into Department of Veterans' Affairs - Proposed Fit-out of New Leased Premises at
18 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra – 23 May 2024
Answers to questions on notice from the Veterans' Affairs portfolio

Question 3

Topic: IT and support information - Separation

(Public Works Proof Hansard 23 May 2024, p 4)

Mr Graham Perrett MP asked:

CHAIR: I'm interested in—I'm not sure if this is the right term—the chinese walls in terms of IT and support information and ensuring different silos. I'd be interested in those from legal point of view—

Mr McNally: We can take that on notice.

Answer

The Veterans' Review Board (VRB) is a specialist, high volume tribunal that is independent of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The VRB uses a modular, cloud-based case management system which is operated by Services Australia. The system has strict security and user access controls in place, which ensures the system is impartial and free from external influence or bias. These controls include:

- 1) autonomy – the system is managed independently by the VRB, with control over maintenance and upgrades;
- 2) transparent governance – there is a clear governance structure in place to oversee the VRB's case management system, with the Principal member of the VRB as the system owner;
- 3) data security – the system has robust data security measures that prevent unauthorised access or manipulation of case information;
- 4) audit trail – the system maintains a detailed audit trail to track any changes made, ensuring accountability and transparency. These control measures ensure the VRB's case management system is independent and upholds the integrity and fairness of the VRB review process.