



Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Hon Andrew Gee MP

MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR CALARE

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

29 September 2021

**GOVERNMENT WELCOMES INTERIM NATIONAL
COMMISSIONER'S PRELIMINARY INTERIM REPORT**

The Australian Government welcomes the Preliminary Interim Report of the interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, which has today been tabled in Parliament.

The interim National Commissioner, Dr Bernadette Boss CSC, commenced her work on the Independent Review of Past Defence and Veteran Suicides on 16 November 2020. This Report sets out the duties Dr Boss has undertaken to date, including preliminary findings and initial recommendations. It will form an important foundation for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which was established on 8 July 2021.

“On behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to thank Dr Boss for her significant effort in completing this valuable Interim Report and express my gratitude for the dedication of those involved,” the Attorney-General, Michaelia Cash, said.

“Above all, we want to thank and recognise the defence members, veterans, family members, and others personally affected by a death by suicide, who came forward to share their stories and contribute to this important work. I acknowledge the difficulties and challenges which may be involved in sharing this lived experience, and I am grateful for their valuable contribution.”

The Report examines issues related to ADF member and veteran wellbeing, mental health and suicide. The Report makes findings on prevalence, risk and protective factors, and highlights particular areas which require closer examination and change in relation to defence and veteran suicide.

The interim National Commissioner's wide-ranging activities included conducting 36 private meetings with individual families, defence members and veterans, and hosting 29 round tables with more than 150 ex-service and support organisations. The report also considers extensive information and documents produced by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and

the Department of Defence relating to policies, practices and information about specific cases.

“This Report will provide invaluable preliminary findings to Government in preventing future deaths by suicide in the veteran community, as well as areas of interest for the Royal Commission as it commences its own inquiries,” the Attorney-General, Michaela Cash said.

“I have read the report and discussed it with Dr Boss. I believe the report will make a significant contribution to current and future work being undertaken to improve veterans’ services,” the Veterans’ Affairs and Defence Personnel Minister, Andrew Gee said.

“I have no doubt the Royal Commission will also find it extremely useful and helpful,” Minister Gee said.

“We won’t be waiting until the conclusion of the Royal Commission to get cracking on reform.

“I have already directed the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to overhaul and speed up the cumbersome claims processing system and harmonise the complex veterans’ compensation legislation. That work is underway.

“Transition is of critical importance to our service men and women and their families as they move from military to civilian life.

“I have directed the Department of Defence to expedite the work of the Joint Transition Authority and its Implementation Plan.

“I have also already directed the Department of Defence to assess Dr Boss’s recommendations about mandatory transition courses to evaluate how they could integrate with existing initiatives.

“I would like to thank Dr Boss for delivering this report. Her commitment to advancing veteran support and wellbeing is greatly appreciated.”

The report is available [here](#).

If you, or someone you know, need support, you can contact:

- Lifeline Australia – 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467
- Open Arms (current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families are able to seek this free and confidential support) – 1800 011 046
- ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (for current serving ADF personnel and their families) – 1800 628 036.
- Safe Zone Support (for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families) – 1800 142 072. When you call Safe Zone Support, you do not need to identify yourself if you do not want to.
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

Individuals wishing to contact or make a submission to the Royal Commission can do so at [here](#) or contact:

- Email: dvsr.enquiries@royalcommission.gov.au
- Telephone: 1800 329 095, 9:00 am to 7:00 pm AEST Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays
- Post: GPO Box 3273
Sydney NSW 2001

MEDIA CONTACTS

Attorney-General - Guy Creighton – Guy.Creighton@ag.gov.au – 0438 815 302

Minister Gee - Ashleigh Weidmann – 0459 966 944