



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **ADSO WELCOMES APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONER INTO VETERANS SUICIDES**

There have been many inquiries and studies into the suicide among Veterans and their mental health and wellbeing. The 2016 Senate FADT Committee Inquiry “*The Constant Battle: Suicide by Veterans*” has become the benchmark or trigger for action by the Government. Out of that Inquiry have been positive initiatives such as a new Veteran Mental Health Strategy and a National Action Plan on Veterans’ mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention.

Sadly, the suicide among Veterans who have transitioned from the ADF continues.

The Prime Minister, after lengthy consideration yesterday announced two major steps in the fight against the scourge of veteran suicide and support for the mental health and wellbeing of current and former ADF personnel.

The group of 18 ex-service Associations that make up the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO)<sup>1</sup> welcomes the Prime Minister’s announcement that he would appoint an independent National Commissioner for Defence and Suicide Prevention tasked to investigate cases of suicide not only in the veteran community but also among serving ADF members. Also, the appointment of a Veteran Family Advocate tasked with placing families at the heart of policy and decision-making promoting better health outcomes for Veterans and reducing the risk of suicide. Both appointees must work hand in glove if the scourge is to stop.

Speaking on ADSO’s behalf, its National Spokesman, Kel Ryan, congratulated the Prime Minister for this positive step forward in the search for answers to the tragedy of Veteran suicide. He submitted that:

- a. “The mental health and wellbeing of transitioning veterans is impacted by financial distress, homelessness, incarceration which sometimes leading to veteran suicide”;
- b. “It was important that the appointed National Commissioner and Family Advocate looks at the entire spectrum of inter-related and complex issues which impact on the well-being of veterans and their families;
- c. “The true impact of the transition process from military service to civilian life demands urgent attention”.

ADSO views the appointments of an independent Commissioner and a Veteran Family Advocate as a new chapter in the care of Veterans and their families who served the nation’s bidding. They are a positive step in the march to stop the scourge of Veteran suicide.

ADSO looks forward to working closely with each appointment on initiatives to improve Veterans’ mental health.

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<sup>1</sup> ADSO comprises The Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), Naval Association of Australia (NAA), RAAF Association (RAAFA), Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARC), Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA), Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA), the Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Service Men and Women, the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia, Partners of Veterans Association of Australia, Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation (RAACC), the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia (NMBVAA), Defence Reserves Association (DRA), Australian Gulf War Veterans Association, Australian Commando Association, the War Widows Guild of Australia, Military Police Association Australia (MPAA), the Australian Army Apprentices Association, the Women Veterans Network, and the Combat Support Association.