

RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
VICTORIAN BRANCH INC.
ABN 73 941 765 364 REG NO A0028777L

PATRON: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
STATE PRESIDENT: DR ROBERT WEBSTER OAM



RSL Victoria welcomes the announcement of independent commissioner into veteran suicides

The Victorian Branch of The Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL Victoria) welcomes the announcement of a *National Commissioner for Defence and Suicide Prevention*, but warns that action, not promises are needed to tackle the very real epidemic of veteran suicide.

RSL Victoria CEO, Jamie Twidale CSM, said that while the RSL welcomes the announcement of an independent commission, it remains sceptical that real change is possible.

“For more than 100 years the RSL has been agitating within a broken system for the rights and welfare of our veterans.”

“In 2020 we remain at the coalface of veteran support. Every day our Advocates work with Australian veterans, many of whom have been grossly let down by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Department of Veteran’s Affairs (DVA).”

Mr Twidale went on to say that while the appointment of an independent commissioner to inquire into veteran suicide is welcomed, there must be clear timelines and deliverables established before RSL Victoria and the Victorian veteran community would hold faith in the commissions abilities and power.

“Australian veterans have been let down by government initiatives in the past. Too often we see important affirmative action delayed by red tape. RSL Victoria wants to see speed of decision in the commissioner’s response to what we see as a national epidemic: veteran suicide.

“Despite our scepticism, RSL Victoria will work with the new commissioner constructively. We will appoint a dedicated staff member to engage with the Commissioner and to advocate on behalf of our veteran community. It is our views that a swift, evidence-based and practical response is needed.”

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“While we wait for the Commissioners office and terms of reference to be established, RSL Victoria will continue to do what we do best, provide vital support to Veterans and their families in need.”

Australia has lost more than 400 serving and ex-servicemen and women since 2001. And other mental illnesses such as PTSD, depressions, anxiety and substance abuse disproportionately impact the Defence Family.

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