



Speech By  
**James Lister**


**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, Report

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (9.30 pm): Yesterday afternoon, the final report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was released. As the LNP's shadow minister for veterans and a former Australian Defence Force officer with 17 years of service, I would like to acknowledge the report. On behalf of the LNP opposition, I thank the commissioners and their staff and, most importantly, the thousands of serving ADF members, veterans and their families who appeared before the commission, lodged submissions and participated in the work of the commission. The report, three years in the making, comprises seven volumes and thousands of pages and makes 122 recommendations. It is replete with the authentic voice of serving soldiers, sailors, aviators and their families, and it makes for sobering reading.

The royal commission found that over the past 25 years there have been more than 50 individual reviews and inquiries covering defence and veteran suicide and generating more than 750 recommendations. In spite of it all, there has been no sustained reduction in the rate of suicide by serving ADF members and veterans. The royal commission also found that over the same period 1,677 serving Australian Defence Force members and veterans died by suicide, although the commission estimates that the actual number is probably more than 3,000.

These are shameful statistics. They are a deep stain on our collective national record of support for those who wear or have worn the uniforms of our military and their families. The work of the royal commission has shone a side light on the crisis and tragedy of these suicides, and it has made it clear that suicide is preventable and that it is possible to reduce the rates of suicide and suicidality among serving Defence Force personnel and veterans. That prevention depends on a transformation in the way in which different agencies, different levels of government and the veterans community interact, on better cooperation, on better integration and continuity of services, and on a better understanding of military culture and the unique and demanding aspects of service life on serving personnel, veterans and their families.

The commission exposed a long history of systemic failures at the federal government level and also made clear in its recommendations and observations that the state and territory governments are not without some of the responsibility for the failings which have let our veterans down. State and territory governments are responsible for many of the services and regulations applying to serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Of course, the problems surrounding veterans' health and wellbeing in general, along with veterans' homelessness, domestic violence, exposure to the criminal justice system and incarceration, are certainly things which exist within the scope of state and territory governments.

There is no excuse for further inaction. We must collectively do our utmost to acknowledge the failures of the past and to get stuck into implementing the reforms which the royal commission has prescribed. The LNP opposition, if elected to govern Queensland next month, is committed to working closely with the federal government, external agencies and the veteran and ADF community to drive the necessary changes and to do better for our diggers. Lest we forget.