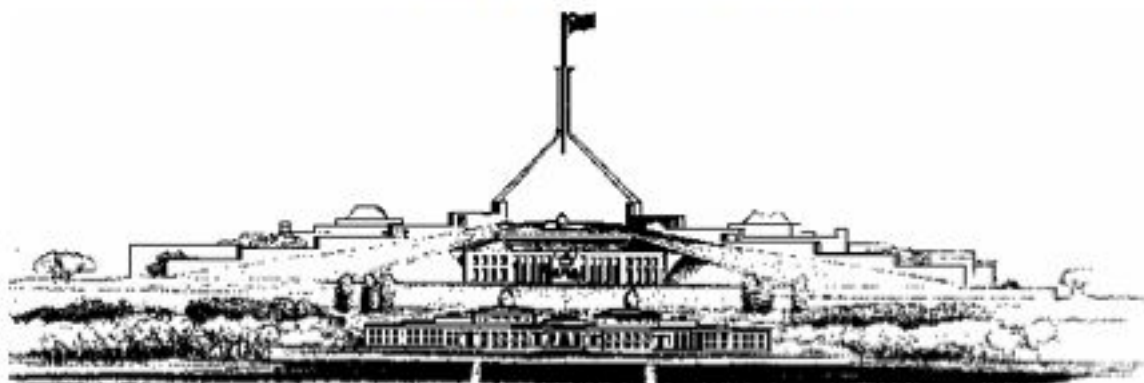




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PROOF

COMMITTEES

**Foreign Affairs, Defence and
Trade References Committee**

Reference

SPEECH

Thursday, 1 September 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 1 September 2016
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Questioner
Speaker Lambie, Sen Jacqui

Source Senate
Proof Yes
Responder
Question No.

Senator LAMBIE (Tasmania) (12:39): I seek leave to amend business of the Senate notice of motion No. 3 standing in my name and in the names of Senators Xenophon, Hinch and Culleton for today, proposing a reference to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, relating to Australian veterans.

Leave granted.

Senator LAMBIE: I, and also on behalf of Senators Xenophon, Hinch and Culleton, move the motion as amended:

That—

(a) the Senate notes that:

(i) the number of veterans who have served overseas in war and warlike circumstances since 1999 is some 50 000 personnel over 75 000 deployments which is now approaching the number of Australian veterans who served in Vietnam – 60 000 between 1962 and 1972,

(ii) some reports from ex-service organisations and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members suggest that the number of veterans in our community who have committed suicide may be more than 280 veterans since 1999,

(iii) the Turnbull Government must now take steps to acknowledge this crisis among so many ADF veterans, and undertake the necessary research so as to measure the scale of the suicide rate,

(iv) some ex-service organisations and former ADF members believe that the complexity of Australia's military compensation schemes, together with administrative failures and slow decision-making by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), is a contributing factor to imposing financial hardship, stress on families, delays in medical treatment, and even homelessness and suicide; Australian Military Compensation Arrangements must be fair and provide former members of the Defence Force and their families who suffer a service injury or disease with a strong system of compensation and other benefits,

(v) media reports and discussions with individual veterans, along with feedback from ex-service organisations have revealed a number of serious issues with the administration, governance and processes of DVA was over five years ago and is now outdated and the Turnbull Government must commit to undertaking a thorough review of DVA, addressing the issues above, and

(vi) the RSL Tasmania State Executive supports the following motion by State President Robert Dick: 'As a society, we have an obligation to ensure that we care for those called upon to serve and defend our country. When there is a failure in the system that looks after and cares for these people, it is important to understand why that failure has occurred and to rectify it to ensure that it doesn't happen again. A Senate inquiry is the most appropriate vehicle to explore these failures and identify the best means to remedy this situation and hold those responsible for the failures to account'; and

(b) the above matters be referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 March 2017, with particular reference to:

(i) the reasons why Australian veterans are committing suicide at such high rates,

(ii) previous reviews of military compensation arrangements and their failings,

(iii) the Repatriation Medical Authority's Statements of Principles, claims administration time limits, claims for detriment caused by defective administration, authorised medical treatment, level of compensation payments, including defence abuse, as contained in all military compensation arrangements,

(iv) to investigate the progress of reforms within DVA,

(v) the administration of claims by DVA and the legislative or other constraints on effective rehabilitation and compensation for veterans, and

(vi) any other related matters.