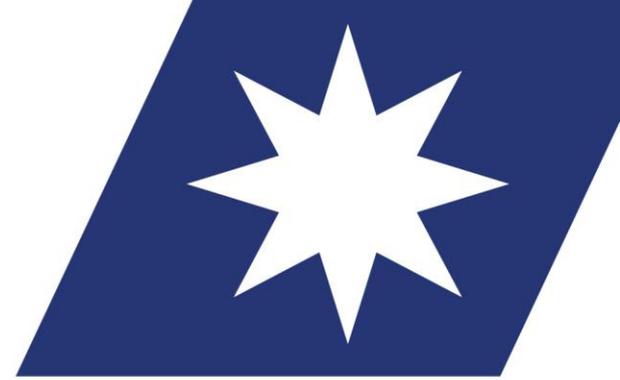


BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy



MEDIA RELEASE

5 February 2020

DVA must be examined by new National Commissioner

The newly announced National Commissioner, who will investigate suicides among Defence Force personnel and veterans, must examine the role of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in what Bob Katter labels an ongoing “national shame”.

The Member for Kennedy said there are three horrific areas where people have been left as complete outcasts of Australian society - our returned veterans are one.

“I have screamed again and again that a soldier goes sideways once he gets in touch with the DVA,” he said.

“He or she goes to the DVA and then just drops off a cliff and in some cases quite literally.

“I personally will be seeing that there will be strongest possible repercussions against the Department for its performance, and that is extended into the three other areas that have got completely out of whack with the rest of the world - one also being our First Australians. For those of us close to the action, the situation is depressing beyond belief. The other category, much of which we owe to the government, is the actions of the child support agency both in the legislation and its administration which has caused so many deaths.

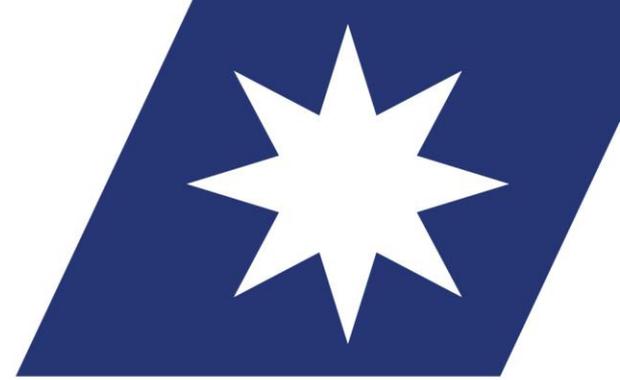
“In a lot of these cases there is overlap on the returned servicemen case. They are away doing their duty overseas and the wife gets lonely. She has to put up with trauma sometimes when her husband gets home. Both in civilian and military cases, he ends up with no wife, no home, no income – the child support agency takes his income. There is no way he can stay alive. There is just nothing left for him in life.

“In that pathetic, sad place called the Parliament of Australia, they get up and cry in the Chamber, crocodile tears with their handkerchiefs out and yet they fail to put one constructive solution forward. Whilst a lot of the men are not angels, I can quote

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numerous cases where all I could say was that the conduct of the ex-wife was cruelty. He has got no money and he can't support a second marriage, but this overlap, between service and the DVA, is reinforcing the situation for the vets.

“Due to my longevity, I remember all of the soldiers that came home to my little town of Cloncurry. There were 72 that served overseas. Some had served in battalions protecting Australia. There was not one single case of suicide or to my knowledge, alcoholism. So something is going dreadfully wrong.

“We are the garrison city in Townsville, but our veterans are at their wits' end. I have spoken to many of the veterans in North Queensland and I will meet with Jacquie Lambie tomorrow. She has previously promised a trip up to Townsville. She has been the most wonderful fighter and I consider her a very good friend.

“The DVA is an idea and department that has failed totally and miserably. I continue to call on the Minister to abolish it and replace it with a board – an authority set up consisting of people who have actually fought in the wars – under the control of ex-servicemen themselves. These blokes should be in charge. It is vitally important that a majority of this Authority are not Officers; they are NCOs – Warrant Officers down to the Diggers. Unless that occurs, this situation will just continue.”

- ENDS -

For more information contact the media phone - 0418 840 243