



**Suzanne Orr MLA**

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water  
Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services  
Minister for Seniors and Veterans

Member for Yerrabi

Our ref: CSI-24/497

Mr Tom Duncan  
Clerk  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Duncan

*Tom,*

Thank you for your letter of 4 September 2024 regarding petition 041-24 lodged by Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA. The petition calls on the ACT Government to “provide a building or facility for Veterans of the ADF, AFP, ACT Fire Fighters, Paramedics and all other frontline responders which needs to be secure to house equipment for musicians, yoga, martial arts and other functions” to “enhance the wellbeing of all Veterans in the ACT”.

The ACT Government affirms its commitment to improving wellbeing outcomes for the significant veteran population residing in the ACT. Veterans and their families are viewed as equally significant by the ACT Government, in terms of wellbeing service provision, and inclusion of families is essential to any program or service delivered to this cohort.

The 2023-24 ACT Budget committed to the development of an ACT Veterans’ Wellbeing Framework (the Framework). The Framework will provide a principles-based approach to supporting veterans and their families now and into the future, taking into account the unique characteristics of the ACT veteran population. The 2023-24 budget also enabled the second Veterans’ and Families’ Expo to be held, supporting veteran engagement with a view to building a more coordinated and connected service system in the ACT.

The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was released on 9 September 2024. The ACT Government will work with the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to respond to the recommendations of the final report from the Royal Commission.

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This will inform future planning and investment to support the wellbeing of the ACT veteran community.

The ACT Government works closely with the Ministerial Advisory Council for Veterans and their Families, along with local stakeholders and the Commonwealth to understand the needs and opportunities for better supporting our veteran community.

Regarding the needs of other frontline workers noted in the petition, ACT Policing has access to a broad range of internal and external health and wellbeing services, including enhanced services provided through the Safety and Health Improvement: Enhancing Law Enforcement Departments program (SHIELD). ACT Policing has three dedicated mental health clinicians who work in conjunction with Welfare Officers, SHIELD and Injury Prevention and Management staff.

Policing Futures, SHIELD, ACT Policing HR and the Workplace Culture Committee have been working together on a Project called ACT Wellness Program, that focuses on supporting ACT Policing members in utilising time within the normal working hours for physical and wellness activities. ACT Policing Executives have endorsed this initiative, and work has now progressed to implement the programs across the ACT Policing workforce.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) provides wellbeing and support programs and initiatives to ESA staff and volunteers including onsite wellbeing support, peer support and chaplaincy support programs, and participation in the ADF Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills (ARRTS) program.

The ACT Government acknowledges many veterans in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have experienced physical and psychological injury because of their service to our country, and the petitioner's request to provide a functional space for veterans and frontline responders to enhance their wellbeing.

As members may be aware, an agreement between the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and RSL LifeCare has been executed for the Veterans' and Families' Hub (the hub) in Queanbeyan. This has seen RSL LifeCare awarded a grant of \$5.4 million to support the project. RSL Lifecare currently run five other hubs across New South Wales.

RSL LifeCare has secured a long-term lease for the hub site, which will be located on the second floor of the RSL Queanbeyan Sub-Branch at 251 Crawford Street, Queanbeyan. The site will have a significant refit and refurbishment, with community consultation on the hub design to commence in the coming months. In the interim, a temporary hub will operate from the first floor of the RSL Queanbeyan Sub-Branch. Timing for the opening of the temporary hub is yet to be confirmed, though the RSL LifeCare Queanbeyan Hub website indicates the hub will be operational by early 2025.


Acknowledging feedback received from stakeholders and the veteran community, RSL LifeCare's endorsed proposal included an ACT 'spoke' to extend services into the ACT. RSL LifeCare acknowledges the importance of ensuring the veteran wellbeing hub is relevant to the local

community, with a key focus of discussion between key stakeholders relating to the cross-border nature of the facility, in terms of access to the hub itself and access to services.

In-line with its election commitment to *explore a wellbeing hub within Canberra, to provide the ACT veteran community with a place to come together and connect close to where they live*, the ACT Government will continue to support the development of the Australian Government funded Veterans' and Families' Hub in Queanbeyan, which is being led by RSL LifeCare as well as working with RSL LifeCare on extending those services into the ACT to support veterans wellbeing. In progressing this important project the ACT Government will continue to engage with the Veteran community to ensure their needs are reflected in the final outcome.

Thank you for bringing this matter to the attention of the Assembly and I look forward to providing further updates as the development of an ACT Veterans Hub progresses.

Yours sincerely



Suzanne Orr MLA

28/11/24