



5th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment Association Inc



To the Tiger Battalion Association members, our family and friends, and our elected political leaders:

For a number of years now a heartfelt and earnest debate has been held on the requirement or otherwise for a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide. In February 2020, the Australian Government announced the creation of a permanent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention to *'inquire into, and support the prevention of, the deaths by suicide of serving and former ADF members.'*¹

Petitions have been raised; debates held; arguments for and against voraciously put forth both inside and out the veteran community as to which would be better: a Royal Commission or a permanent National Commission. And all the while our veterans, old, young, serving and ex-serving, have continued to die by their own hands at a rate that is widely recognised as being greater than usual in Australian society.

Successive Governments from both sides of politics have not created a Royal Commission under the Royal Commission Act of 1902 (Ch) into veteran suicide. The Acts to formally create the permanent National Commission were defeated in Parliament. Advice from the Attorney General's department in March 2021 is that they are not currently scheduled to be re-submitted for consideration.²

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After significant discussion the Committee of the 5th Battalion Association has chosen to make a public statement on this issue, in so doing, we support the recent statements of the national RAR Association and the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations on this issue. We recognise that not all within our own Tiger Battalion family may agree with this statement. As follows:

'The 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Association, urges our elected federal politicians - from all political parties - to establish without any further delay a Royal Commission into Australian Defence Force veteran mental health, suicide and suicide prevention. This should be the most immediate priority inquiring into these critical issues. Recognising that war and conflict are enduring, and that the need for young Australians to serve our nation in those darkest of times also endures, we also support the creation of a permanent National Commission for Defence and Veteran Suicide. Both Commissions can exist at the same time and support the other. Our veterans cannot wait any longer.'

The establishment of any Commission will only be the start. Terms of Reference will be struck, and submissions will be called for. The 5 RAR Association will strongly support this process and will seek the opinions and insights of our members to formalise a submission as part of any Terms of Reference. We also encourage our members to write to their State and Federal elected representatives to put forth their opinion on this critically important issue.

We have had enough of our veterans, old, young, serving and ex-serving, dying by their own hand. We have a responsibility to our mates of conflicts past, the current serving members of the Defence Force and all veterans and their families. *Our duty is to all of them.*

And as we all know: Duty First.

¹ [National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention website](https://www.ag.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/national-commissioner-defence-and-veteran-suicide-prevention) (https://www.ag.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/national-commissioner-defence-and-veteran-suicide-prevention)

² Phone conversation: President 5 RAR Association and Attorney Generals Department general enquiries line of Friday 26 March 2021.