

PROJECT MANDATE - ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT DEFENCE AND VETERAN SERVICES COMMISSION

(Recommendation 122 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide)

1 Originating Statement

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (Recommendation 122) recommends that the Commonwealth create an independent statutory entity that provides system-wide oversight and evidence-based advice to improve well-being and reduce suicide among serving and ex-serving ADF members. Schedule 9, as currently drafted, is inadequate. This mandate authorises exploratory work to design the correct capability and enabling legislation.

2 Purpose of the Project

To scope, design and cost a fit-for-purpose statutory Commission that fully meets Recommendation 122, including coercive data powers, a whole-of-government remit and transparent reporting to Parliament outside of Defence.

3 Initial Objectives

- Develop a Project Brief and full Project Initiation Document (PID) for approval by a balanced Project Board with an independent Project Executive—the single person who makes final decisions (for example, the Human Rights Commissioner).
- Provide an implementation roadmap, budget estimate and benefits profile for independent presentation to the Commonwealth.

4 Executive Sponsor

The Governor-General is the head of state and is advised by the Federal Executive Council (not caucus or cabinet). One would think that 3,000 lives and counting would be a good reason to make such a request. A fallback could be a State Governor.

5 Key Stakeholders

- The Commonwealth
- Department of Defence
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Veteran and veteran family organisations, Ex-Service Organisations' and the wider Veteran Support Network.
- Lived-experience advisory groups

6 Constraints & Deadlines

- Draft legislation ready for introduction in Q2 2026. (Not 2025).
- Work resourced within the \$X million re-profiled from Schedule 9.
- Data-sharing MoUs must comply with the Privacy Act 1988.

7 Assumptions

- Bipartisan support will continue.
- Required data can be accessed under interim agreements.
- Legal services will be available from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC drafts all government Bills introduced into the federal Parliament).
- Delayed access to Defence data could extend timelines.

- Stakeholder fatigue may limit effective consultation. Given the four interrelated project-management variables—Quality, Cost, Time and Scope—quality and cost cannot be sacrificed merely to reduce scope or accelerate time.
- Parliamentary amendments could dilute independence clauses.

9 Mandate Approval

Name/Role	Signature	Date
Person of Independent Office		

Date: xx month 2025