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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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SHADOW MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE PERSONNEL
MEMBER FOR BLAIR**

LABOR TO SUPPORT A ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VETERAN SUICIDE

Labor has announced today it will support a Royal Commission into veteran suicide.

Official figures released last week showed a disturbingly high rate of suicide among current and ex-service men and women – with more than 400 deaths since 2001.

This Australian Institute of Health and Welfare research indicated that suicide rates for current and former Defence personnel compared to the rest of the Australian population are higher than ever.

Australia can no longer tolerate this senseless loss of life.

This is nothing less than a crisis and as a nation, we need to do all we can to tackle this.

Labor believes the best way to do this is through a thorough and comprehensive Royal Commission.

We are calling on the Morrison Government to do the right thing by our ex-service men and women, and establish a Royal Commission into veteran suicide as soon as possible.

This will help to shine a light on the issue, investigate why so many of our veterans are taking their own lives, and determine what measures are needed to stop these tragic deaths.

The terms of reference should include serving men and women, their transition from active service back to civilian life, and their ongoing circumstances.

The men and women who serve our country deserve our gratitude and respect, and we owe it to them to have a comprehensive examination of how we can reduce, and hopefully eliminate, these tragic numbers.

Their deaths are heartbreaking and cause immeasurable loss and grief for their loved ones left behind, their local communities, and indeed the nation.

We know many veterans and veterans' families have been calling for this for some time now – they want to prevent future suicides and other families from suffering in the way they have.

And we have listened to courageous advocates like Julie-Ann Finney, whose son David took his own life in February this year after a battle with PTSD.

Labor Members of Parliament have met with Ms Finney and she has made a strong case for a Royal Commission.

We want this to be a bipartisan effort – we want to work with the Government, the Parliament and the veteran community and do all we can to address the scourge of veteran suicide.

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Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.