

30 January 2026

Ms Suzanne Orr MLA
Minister for Seniors and Veterans
ACT Legislative Assembly
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to provide this submission for consideration as part of the 2026–27 Budget process.

Soldier On welcomes the continued focus by all governments on veteran wellbeing and recognises the importance of strong Commonwealth leadership in this space, especially in progressing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans suicide. At the same time, we note that veterans and their families remain a distinct community with complex, lifelong needs that often intersect with state-based responsibilities across health, mental health, employment, housing, justice and community services.

Recent Commonwealth budget settings, including anticipated savings identified through MYEFO, underscore the importance of system resilience. While efficiencies may be necessary at a national level, there is a risk that some veterans may experience changes in service levels or access over time. In this context, the role of states in supporting the veteran community becomes increasingly important.

True system resilience is achieved when multiple actors, including state and federal governments, ex-service organisations (ESOs) and community providers, work in a complementary way to provide support. In this context, the veteran community should not be viewed as an area for short-term budget savings.

We commend the commitment the ACT has demonstrated to its veteran community, and note the opportunity presented by the ACT's significant existing ADF and veteran workforce, in the context of the territory's rapid growth. Veterans represent a highly skilled, disciplined and under-utilised workforce cohort whose effective transition can contribute meaningfully to economic and infrastructure delivery objectives. We would encourage the government to consider the veteran community when allocating funding for infrastructure and workforce development initiatives.

For more than thirteen years, Soldier On have delivered integrated, practical and often life-changing support to veterans and their families across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. Our non-federated model enables consistency of care, strong governance, national quality assurance and the ability to deploy services flexibly in response to emerging need.

Central to our work is Soldier On's HELP model of care, which recognises that veteran wellbeing cannot be addressed in isolation. The model integrates:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Employment
- Learning
- Participation and social connection

This holistic approach allows Soldier On to support veterans not only at points of crisis, but across transition, recovery and long-term reintegration into civilian life. It also provides clear visibility of where systems are working effectively and where gaps persist.

Soldier On's work consistently aligns with the intent of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, as well as national wellbeing strategies, by prioritising early engagement, reducing stigma, supporting families, strengthening transition pathways and integrating services around the individual rather than the system.

Importantly, our approach is collaborative rather than duplicative, working alongside other ex-service organisations, local providers, government agencies and community services to strengthen the overall service ecosystem.

Veterans are not simply another client group. They represent a unique cohort whose service to the nation creates an enduring obligation to provide stable, accessible and trauma-informed support. This is particularly relevant at times of fiscal adjustment, when even small disruptions in service continuity can have disproportionate impacts on wellbeing, family stability and community outcomes.

Soldier On stands ready to partner with the ACT, local service providers and the broader ex-service community to support veterans and their families and to ensure that systems remain responsive, coordinated and resilient.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further should this be of assistance.



Paul Singer CVO
Chief Executive Officer