

## VETERANS EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

**Mr MARK TAYLOR (Seven Hills) (15:02 ):** My question is addressed to the Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs. How is the New South Wales Government delivering on its election commitment to place 200 veterans in public sector roles by 2019?

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills—Minister for Counter Terrorism, Minister for Corrections, and Minister for Veterans Affairs) (15:02):** I thank the member for Seven Hills for his question. He served his country well as a member of the police force. I note that the new member for Gosford was welcomed to the Chamber today. She quite rightly had her medals with her. I say to her, "Hold tight to them; do not let them near the member for Prospect. Talking about asset grabs, he will grab your assets." I was thrilled to announce that the Veterans Employment Program has achieved two years ahead of schedule its target of employing 200 new veterans by 2019.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The program's first annual review shows that 310 former Australian Defence Force [ADF] personnel have been employed by the New South Wales Government. This means that the Veterans Employment Program has exceeded its target by 55 per cent. The program is the first of its kind in Australia. It identifies and matches ex-service men and women with government skills that match their military rank and experience. It is also proving extremely valuable in understanding the scope of veteran employment opportunities in the State. The majority of new hires—70 per cent—have been in the justice and transport clusters. However, veterans also have been employed in other areas, highlighting the program's core message that military skills are highly transferable to other roles. I am pleased to inform the House that the Victorian Government has taken our lead and recently announced its own veterans employment program, noting our success in exceeding targets and our commitment to ensuring that veterans receive better support as they transition to civilian life.

We know that stable, meaningful employment is an effective way to combat a host of welfare issues that can affect veterans, and this program will ensure that veterans have the opportunity to make an ongoing contribution to our community. But there is still more work to be done. Approximately 1,300 defence personnel separate from the ADF in New South Wales annually. It is a fact that veterans are almost half as likely to succeed in job applications. The rate of job application success for employment among veterans is only 2.54 per cent, compared with 4.2 per cent for the rest of the non-veteran labour force in New South Wales. So our hard work with this program will go on. We will continue to work with and educate key government sector organisations about what veterans can offer in terms of leadership, discipline and character. We already have had discussions with JP Morgan and Boeing about their similar programs, and I encourage the private sector to embrace this worthy cause.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** It is a shame that those opposite lack the moral courage and show continued political opportunism when it comes to veterans' issues. It is well known that some members of the New South Wales RSL State Council are being investigated for financial mismanagement. I have called repeatedly for this iconic organisation to be reformed to ensure that it represents the sacrifice of our 100,000 war dead. However, the shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs, Lynda Voltz, attempted to score political points at the expense of soldiers by describing the investigation as only "a State Government asset grab". She did not want us to investigate allegations of corruption, just as those opposite wanted us not to investigate former Labor members Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber. The member for The Entrance will come to order.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** The shadow Minister is in conflict with the Leader of the Opposition, Luke Foley, who last week said on Twitter that he is willing to work with the State Government to reform the RSL—a statement that I welcomed. This is in stark contrast with the Hon. Lynda Voltz, who said that the investigation into the RSL had "little justification". The Opposition says that there is little justification because the RSL is led by President John Haines, a former Labor Lord Mayor of Parramatta. Once again, those opposite want to protect their Labor identities from justice. [*Extension of time*]

I am heartened that the Labor leader has decided to admit that the Government is doing the right thing. On Anzac Day I was privileged to attend the dawn service in Sydney with the Leader of the Opposition. I was struck by the solemn and respectful mood of those who gathered in the pre-dawn darkness to pay their respects at the Cenotaph in Martin Place.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I am surprised that members are interjecting during an answer on this subject.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** To me, this illustrates how the New South Wales community is commemorating the Centenary of Anzac. I look forward to more veterans being deployed in our public service agencies. Lest we forget.