

VETERANS — BRAVERY TRUST

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [9.45 pm]: I draw attention to the plight of our military veterans and praise the good work of Bravery Trust; an ex-service organisation dedicated to assisting our veterans and their families in times of need. More than 5 000 military members in Australia transition out of the services each year. The transition can be very difficult for a number of these people. Injuries and illnesses sustained as a result of time in service can manifest in periods of financial hardship, unemployment, homelessness, mental health crises, and suicide, once on the outside. My personal view is that this is cause for national shame and embarrassment. I met recently with Mr Peter Fitzpatrick, the chairman of Bravery Trust, who briefed me on the trust's operations. Importantly, Bravery Trust does not duplicate or compete with the work of other military charities or associations. Rather, it has a simple defined mission: to help current and former members of the Australian Army, Navy and Air Force and their families who have suffered an injury or illness as a result of their service and are facing financial hardship.

Bravery Trust provides this help via three means; firstly, by providing urgent financial assistance, including for items such as food and fuel costs, utilities bills, and, rather depressingly, funeral costs; secondly, through providing access to financial planning services; and, thirdly and importantly, through a \$5 million education and training fund. The latter is particularly important in assisting ex-service people transition into the civilian workforce. The transition into the civilian workforce is made difficult by the fact that the extensive training and qualifications our veterans receive while in the service are not always recognised outside the military. Nor are the leadership skills and levels of maturity that are nurtured throughout a serviceperson's career well understood after they have taken off their uniforms. Our servicemen and women are expected to take responsibility very early on in their careers for the lives and welfare of their comrades and they are charged with the operation and maintenance of sophisticated equipment worth many multiples of millions of dollars. Ex-military people possess skills and experience that make them an asset to any number of future employers. The fact remains, however, that many struggle to get a foot in the door for a job interview. Since its inception in 2012, Bravery Trust has aided more than 2 000 veterans and their families and dispersed more than \$2 million, \$1 million of which was spent in the last 12 months alone. Over \$100 000 is paid out in urgent assistance every month. It saddens me to say that demand for this service is increasing. I wish there was not a need for this kind of support. I therefore urge this chamber to remain vigilant about the unmet needs of veterans in our community, to recognise the essential work undertaken by non-government operations such as Bravery Trust and to work together across party lines so that we may serve those who served us.