



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of ANZAC

MEDIA RELEASE

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SENIOR AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER NEXT REPATRIATION COMMISSIONER

FOR the first time, a former Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army has been appointed as the new Repatriation Commissioner with outgoing Commissioner Major General Mark Kelly AO, DSC completing his appointment on 30 June this year.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester today announced Mr Don Spinks AM, who recently retired from the Australian Defence Force with almost 40 years' experience, had been appointed as the new Repatriation Commissioner and as a Member of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission for a period of five years from 1 July 2019.

"Mr Spinks is highly qualified and well-respected, has an impressive military career serving on multiple overseas deployments and has capably represented the concerns and views of soldiers to the Chief of Army and senior leadership over a lengthy period," Mr Chester said.

"As Commissioner, Mr Spinks will be able to use his recent service experience to assist in addressing contemporary issues faced by veterans and their families, I congratulate Mr Spinks on his appointment."

Prior to taking up his full duties on 1 July, Mr Spinks has been appointed a Commissioner on the Repatriation Commission and will receive a comprehensive handover from Major General Kelly who has served on the Commission since 2010.

Mr Chester thanked Major General Kelly for his contribution and invaluable service to the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission since 1 July 2010.

"The work of the Commissions is pivotal in the development of effective policy and programs, and the efficient delivery of services for veterans and their families," Mr Chester said.

"In his almost 10 years, Major General Kelly has achieved a great deal in support of veterans and their families, most recently in advancing Open Arms — Veterans and Families Counselling, a service

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling, provides support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Free and confidential help is available 24/7. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

that is vitally important to the ex-service community by providing early intervention and longer term mental health treatment services.

“On behalf of the ex-service community, I thank Major General Kelly and wish him all the best for the future.”

Mr Spinks served in a number of senior roles during his Army career, including 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Multi National Force and Observers – Sinai Egypt, 1st Brigade, Joint Task Force 633 on Operation Slipper and the Command Sergeant Major Forces Command – Army.

The Repatriation Commission grants pensions and benefits, and provides treatment and other services under the *Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986* to veterans and members of the Australian Defence Force, their partners, widows, widowers and children. The Commission also provides advice to the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs on related issues.

Further information about the Commissions and Mr Spinks can be found on the [DVA Website](#).

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