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Australian Government
Department of Defence

DC19TF/OUT/2020/BN25153587

Fiona Patten MLC

Chair Legislative Council Committee on Legal and Social Issues

Parliament of Victoria

Spring Street

EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Ms Patten,

ADF SUPPORT TO VICTORIAN COVID-19 CONTACT TRACING AND TESTING EFFORTS

I write to you regarding the Inquiry into the Victorian Government's COVID-19 contact tracing system and testing regime. I note the Parliament of Victoria Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee (the Committee) adopted the report on 10 December 2020.

In the report, the Committee notes the findings of the Parliamentary Budget Office on expenditure relating to the contact tracing and COVID-19 testing efforts in Victoria, including expenditure on third parties.

The report states "the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that the Victorian Government spent the majority of its budget for contact tracing and testing on third-party payments, including other jurisdictions' departments, the Australian Defence Force and private contractors".

Defence provides assistance to the Australian community through a range of programs, including the Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC) arrangements. As a general rule, Defence will provide non-emergency DACC on a cost-recovery basis. During Operation COVID-19 ASSIST, however, Defence has not sought to recover costs from any state or territory government.

To avoid confusion, I request that you correct the report to reflect this fact. I have also sent a copy of this letter to Victoria's Parliamentary Budget Office for their information.

Defence is continuing to work with the states and territories on requests to support federal, state and territory responses to COVID-19. The provision of new DACC requests for assistance in 2021 will ensure that any Defence response is scalable, practical and fit for purpose.

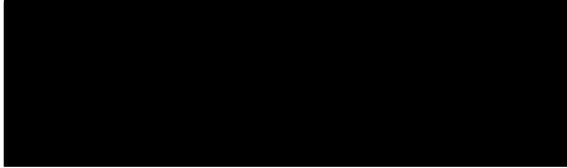
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I would like to thank you and your Committee colleagues for your service to this inquiry and wish you a happy festive season.

Yours sincerely,



JJ Frewen
Lieutenant General
Commander
Defence COVID-19 Taskforce



20 December 2020

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