

VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

753. Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE to the Minister for Veterans:

On Monday the Liberal–National government announced the new Veterans Advisory Council for Western Australia. Can the minister please outline the role of this new council and how it will benefit veterans in our community?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for his continued interest in the welfare of veterans in not only Western Australia, but also the entire country. I note, and again place on the record, my appreciation for his service to his country and for the fact that he is also a distinguished veteran.

This government recognises that it is important to give a voice to those returned veterans who have served our country in time of war and in other conflicts in the past going back to World War II —

Ms M.M. Quirk: Minister, you're snubbing the RSL, are you?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: One day the member for Girrawheen will make a contribution that is actually worthwhile listening to!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Right, minister.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is important to give a voice —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is important to give a voice to veterans in Western Australia so that we as a government can appreciate the issues that confront them. It is important that we do that in a way that is meaningful and adds value to the concerns of members of the veterans community so that the government can give them the dedication and respect they deserve, and can address any issue that we as a government can address. Obviously, the federal government, through the Department of Veterans' Affairs, will remain the primary authority for caring for veterans, but as a state there are still some things that we can do. Other jurisdictions have recognised that. Other jurisdictions, to some degree, have a veterans advisory council. It is a great thing that Western Australia is moving forward and doing exactly the same thing. It is envisaged that a veterans advisory committee will comprise 10 members. Hopefully, they will be representative of not only the depth, as far as conflicts go back in history, but also the width of the contribution of the three services, and indeed also the War Widows' Guild of Australia. In the coming months the government will be asking for expressions of interest through different veterans associations so that we can look at appointing a committee that can give advice and a very worthwhile voice to the government. It is also envisaged that such a committee will meet about four times a year. Although there will be no fee for the committee members, we will certainly look at meeting their sitting costs. I also expect that the membership of this committee will rotate every three years so that every organisation will get to have a say sooner or later, either directly to the government or by feeding information through the Veterans Advisory Council.

I thank the member again for his important question. It is an important announcement for the members of the veterans community in Western Australia and we are getting on with the job and giving them the voice that they deserve.