

DEFENCE DVA EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY – 7 July 2017

The fifth Defence DVA Executive Committee meeting was held on 7 July 2017 in the Department of Veteran Affairs' offices in Canberra, ACT.

Attending as members:

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| Mr Simon Lewis PSM (Chair) | Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs |
| Mr Brendan Sargeant (Co-chair) | Acting Secretary, Department of Defence |
| Ms Liz Cosson AM CSC | Chief Operating Officer, Department of Veterans' Affairs |
| Ms Roxanne Kelley PSM | Deputy Secretary, Defence People, Department of Defence |

Also in attendance from DVA:

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| Mr Alex Gerrick | Assistant Secretary Communication and Engagement |
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Also in attendance from Defence:

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| Rear Admiral Brett Wolski AM RAN | Head People Capability |
| Commodore Paul Kinghorne RANR | Acting Joint Program Manager, Support for Wounded, Injured or Ill Program |

Apologies:

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| Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC | Chief of the Defence Force |
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Agenda Item 1 – Opening Remarks and Introductions

Mr Lewis welcomed members, attendees and noted that unfortunately the Chief of Defence Force was a last minute apology.

The record of the previous meeting was accepted and it was noted that the action items from the previous meeting had all been actioned. It was agreed that the two Departments were working exceptionally well together on a number of major issues and in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding for the Cooperative Provision of Care and Support.

Agenda Item 2 – Budget Outcomes

Mr Lewis briefed the Committee members on the key funding initiatives from the May 2017 Federal Budget. The Committee members agreed that it was important that the two Departments work closely in the development of the Cabinet Submissions for the next budget cycle. It was also agreed to continue the close work on Transition and Veteran Centric Reform.

Agenda Item 3 – Government Priorities Including Current Reports/Inquiries

The Committee discussed the recent Government response to the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC) report and expressed concern about the suicide levels in the ex service community. The younger involuntarily discharged members are at the highest risk.

The Committee noted the updated report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) into suicide among serving and ex serving Australian Defence Force personnel. The report updated the data through to the end of 2015 and it is expected that further analysis will be available in the near future.

The Committee noted the extensive cross community consultation undertaken by the Senate Committee inquiring into suicide by veterans and ex serving personnel. The Senate Committee is due to report by 15 August.

The Committee noted the work undertaken in both Departments around suicide prevention but also regrettably noted that the three evils of ‘homelessness, incarceration and suicides’ continued. The outcomes of these inquiries/studies will allow agencies to better focus efforts in preventative measures.

The Committee noted the update provided on the Prime Ministers Veterans Employment Program. The work being undertaken in most states was also acknowledged and the importance of linking all the initiatives was agreed. The Committee noted CDFs pre meeting comments relating to partner employment issues for serving members.

Agenda Item 4 – Defence / DVA Collaboration

The Committee noted the work being undertaken by the Transition Task Force and within each Department to improve the Transition experience. The focus has to be on ‘involuntary’ discharging members especially for service related medical reasons and the critical need for decisions/determinations to be made by DVA and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation close to or prior to discharge was stressed.

The Committee noted the very positive work on the Single Medical Assessment Process (SMAP). This new process with a single purpose focussed on the member will be trialed in the second half of 2017 and while it will not lead to a single medical appointment it will reduce duplication for the member and for the agencies involved.

The Committee noted the joint effort on the Special Forces Pilot where DVA and Defence (Special Operations Command) are working together to learn what can be improved for all ADF members. The importance of peer to peer support, trust and targeting a productive healthy living outcome was stressed. The Pilot will be conducted in the second half of 2017.

The Committee noted the efforts of the ‘Tiger Team’ exploring opportunities for closer collaboration on the purchase of health care. The aim is to better meet the needs of serving, transitioning and ex-serving members. In particular seamless transfer of rehabilitation would make a great difference to members. The Committee agreed to maintain the focus on this important initiative.

Agenda Item 5 – Defence / DVA Links Report Back

The Committee noted the report back by the DVA Chief Operating Officer and the Defence Deputy Secretary Defence People as the co-chairs of the Defence /DVA Links Steering Committee. The Committee directed that a list of achievements be presented to the next meeting.

ACTION ITEM 17/1: The Defence / DVA Links Steering Committee co-chairs present a list of achievements at the next meeting of the Defence / DVA Executive Committee.

ACTION ITEM 17/2: The Defence / DVA Links Steering Committee would consider any reports which DVA have from the Early Engagement model regarding feedback from DVA contacting ADF personnel.