

DVA HEALTH CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Meeting Summary 1/2017: 17 May 2017

The meeting was opened by the new (ex-officio) Chair, Robyn Kemp, Assistant Secretary Program Management Branch, and covered the following topics:

- Terms of Reference
- Association submission
- Principal Medical Adviser (PMA) update
- DVA update: 2017-18 Budget; Applied Research Program; support for survivors of abuse in the Australian Defence Force (ADF); Dental and Allied Health Review; Coordinated Veterans' Care (CVC) Program Working Group; and the Forum's 2017 program.

It was noted one actions arising item from the last meeting was still open and will be discussed at the next meeting *'prompt associations last half 2017 if they need a one-on-one meeting'*.

Terms of Reference

The meeting noted the Terms of Reference (ToR) had been amended to reflect recent changes, as summarised in the ToR Operating Principles 'Document amendment history'.

Association submission

The Forum discussed a member's submission on indexation under 'DVA Update: 2017-18 Budget'.

PMA update

Members were briefed on external meetings which the DVA PMA will attend.

DVA Update

2017-18 Budget

Members welcomed Budget initiatives to support veterans' health, and noted key points:

- \$11.3 billion allocated for DVA to support around 293,000 clients, including \$5 billion for health. Client numbers are reducing but pro-rata funding for health services has increased.
- Investments in mental health, rehabilitation, employment and claims processing and one year of funding for DVA's transformation agenda.
- Members welcomed proactive interventions in mental health, observing non liability health care (NLHC) works well to help stabilise at risk veterans.
- 'Guaranteeing Medicare - Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) – indexation': phased reintroduction from 2017 to 2020. Concerns were raised about veterans' access to specialist care, and that the freeze will erode providers' goodwill to treat veterans. DVA noted claims data does not indicate a drop off but will continue to monitor carefully.

Applied Research Program

The focus of DVA's research continues to be on mental health, including issues such as suicide, homelessness and PTSD, and the importance of including families, as ADF members transition out of the military. Two major, jointly funded DVA/Defence projects are:

- *Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme (TWRP)* – examining the impact of contemporary military service on the mental, physical and social health of serving and ex-ADF members and their families. Initial reports are expected later this year; and DVA will update the Forum once findings are released.
- *MRCA Rehabilitation Long-Term Study* – looking at the effectiveness of rehabilitation arrangements within DVA and ADF over the long term. The study design framework has been produced and DVA will approach the market later this year to source a suitable organisation to undertake the study (expected to take several years to complete).

Other research projects underway expected to generate results in the next year or so include: work with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on suicide prevalence; a study on homelessness; and a trial of intensive prolonged exposure therapy for the treatment of PTSD.

Work is also underway to review DVA's strategic research model. Research projects are currently prioritised on the basis of four domains: longitudinal studies; data analysis and modelling; families; and interventions. The review will consider the effectiveness of the ARP and continued relevance of these four domains. It will also look at current governance arrangements for research procured by DVA and how we engage with stakeholders in the dissemination of research. The review consultation will commence soon.

Services and support for survivors of abuse in the Australian Defence Force

DVA has set-up a specialised claims team to ensure claims are expedited and handled with sensitivity. DVA is aiming to encourage survivors who unsuccessfully claimed before to come forward. Older males in rural areas in particular may not be aware they can now access non-liability mental health care, separate to a compensation claim.

The PMA has written to provider networks, and Primary Health Network CEOs have been asked to promote NLHC to their local networks. A DVA social media campaign to promote NLHC for survivors is underway, and a broader advertising campaign is being considered. Members were invited to provide input regarding opportunities to promote further.

DVA Dental and Allied Health Review

DVA advised members it intends to complete the DVA Dental and Allied Health Review before indexation of dental and allied health fees resumes 1 July 2018.

Working with the Review's relevant clinical working group, options have been developed and tested with an ex-service community focus group to overall positive feedback.

Members were concerned the lack of feedback about the Review was impeding their ability to communicate with their constituents. DVA undertook to provide an interim update to members once the ESO Round Table (ESORT) has been briefed in August 2017.

Coordinated Veterans' Care Program Working Group

Members were briefed on the CVC Program, which commenced in 2011 for targeted Gold Card holders to improve chronic disease management and prevent readmission to hospital. Approximately one in six Gold Card holders had been enrolled since CVC commenced.

Future directions for CVC were discussed, including ongoing development of the online CVC Toolbox to assist general practices to support their DVA patients. Improvements for the CVC Program include better patient targeting, more detailed care coordination process specifications, training/education materials, and assisting practices with medication management.

Development of the Forum's 2017 work program

The meeting discussed the Forum's engagement arrangements and 2017 work program. DVA and peak bodies had co-designed current arrangements to address issues and develop effective veteran health policy and service delivery, as well as simplify DVA business interactions.

Four working groups were formed late 2015 to support the Forum's considerations, and were subsequently paused due to the DVA Dental and Allied Health Review:

- Preventative Health;
- Cross Profession Referral;
- Co-ordinated Care; and
- Item no. Rules.

Members were reminded the Forum's Co-ordinated Care Working Group had been closed, and a new CVC Working Group established. The Forum will seek to resurrect its working groups when outcomes from the Review are known.

Other business

The second edition of the DVA Provider News (DPN) e-newsletter will be published in July. Members were asked to encourage their associations' members to subscribe to the e-newsletter www.dva.gov.au/providers/dva-provider-news.

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 August. The last meeting for 2017, 25 October, will bring the wider stakeholder group together.