

Department of Veterans' Affairs  
Defence Links Steering Committee

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**Summary of Meeting – 21 March 2013**

The Defence Links Steering Committee met for the 26<sup>th</sup> time in Canberra on 21 March 2013.

The following issues were discussed at the meeting:

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Defence and DVA**

- This was signed on 5 February 2013 at Parliament House.
- The committee recognised the importance of the MOU in supporting the continued improvement of work between DVA and Defence.

**Schedule Agreements and Key Performance Indicators**

- The Committee received an update on the Schedules to the MOU. The Committee also received the first formal performance report on the Support Continuum and agreed to the format and content with minor amendment.

**Support to Wounded Injured or Ill Program (SWIIP)**

- The Committee received an update on the progress of the implementation of SWIIP Phase 2 and agreed the closure of 25 of the 31 Phase 1 recommendations. The Committee also noted that work continued on the final six recommendations which should be completed by mid 2013.
- The committee agreed / noted all the recommendations.

**Notification of Medical and Administrative Discharges**

- DVA will explore with Defence a national and centralised approach to the notification of medical and administrative discharges.

**Joint Defence / DVA Proposal for Rehabilitation Advisory Group**

- The committee agreed the proposed formation of a joint Rehabilitation Advisory Group and noted that Defence and DVA were finalising the Group's Terms of Reference and membership.

**Veteran Mental Health Strategy 2013**

- The committee received a briefing on the Veteran Mental Health Strategy 2013 and the public consultation process. The committee noted that downloads of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Coach Australia mobile application, along with YouTube Mental Health videos, has exceeded expectations.

**Collaboration on Suicide Awareness**

- Defence and DVA work closely to share training opportunities and to ensure consistency of critical suicide awareness messages.

- A tender process is underway for the development of the next set of suicide awareness workshops and Defence, DVA and the Veterans and Veterans' Families Counselling Service (VVCS) have members on the panel to ensure the curriculum is consistent.

### **Revised Agreements for ADF Referrals to the VVCS**

- Defence and the VVCS have had an agreement in place for the past 12 years, and the revised agreement is an improvement on the current arrangements, with updated terminology, more clearly defined reporting parameters and measures to strengthen arrangements for mutual training.

### **Female Veterans' Group**

- In 2012 DVA commissioned a study on the health and wellbeing of female Vietnam and contemporary veterans which was completed by Dr Samantha Cromptoets. As a result of this study, the Repatriation and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commissions have requested that a Female Veterans Reference Group be established to examine the study findings.
- The Group will be time limited until late 2013 and will consist of approximately 12 female members from a diverse mix of backgrounds across the services, ranks and circumstances.
- The Group will report back to the Commissions with recommendations to assist in guiding further policy and programs necessary to current servicewomen.

### **Ongoing Updates and Other Issues**

- The committee received ongoing updates on the Single Access Mechanism; Review of the VVCS Stepping Out Program; On Base Advisory Service; Health Subcommittee; Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health Lifecycle Initiative, as well as report from the Interdepartmental Working Group for Streamlining Administration of Transitioning and Former ADF Members.
- The committee also heard a proposal to consider providing support for ex-service member participation in the United States Marine Corps trials for the Warrior Games, and received a briefing on the current review of the National Consultation Framework.

The next meeting will be held in June 2013.