

**Department of Veterans' Affairs
Defence / DVA Links Steering Committee**

Summary of Meeting – 31 March 2014

The 30th Defence/Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Links Steering Committee (DLSC) was held in Canberra on 31 March 2014. The following issues were discussed at the meeting:

Support Continuum Performance Report

- The Committee reviewed the Support for Wounded, Injured and Ill Program (SWIIP) February 2014 Report.
- The Committee endorsed the completion of SWIIP Phase 2 and agreed to formally institute the program of work known as SWIIP Phase 3.
- Committee members agreed to report on the Government's response to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade Report on Care of ADF Personnel Wounded and Injured on Operations by September 2014 and March 2015.

Report from the Health Consultative Forum

- The Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs are undertaking a significant joint research program. The research is expected to deliver the largest mental health research project ever conducted by the two Departments.
- The studies will also address physical health, including traumatic brain injury, and Defence family health.

Report from the Defence Links Research Advisory Committee

- The Committee received an update on the Defence and DVA research collaborative and the coordinated, strategic research framework to improve the coordination of veteran and military research. An update was provided on a study examining the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families and the impact of service on the health of ADF members; and a longitudinal study into the effects of rehabilitation arrangements within both Defence and DVA.

Defence Familiarisation Activities

- The Committee received an update on a program designed to increase DVA staff awareness of Defence activities and agreed to reinvigorate the program.

Defence Notifications to DVA

- The Committee received an update on the current notification process between the two departments. In addition to receiving FATALCAS (battle and non-battle fatalities) and NOTICAS (serious incidents resulting in a classification of Serious Injury or Very Serious Injury) notifications, DVA is now also receiving notifications when a member leaves the ADF and consent to being contacted by DVA post-transition or separates from the ADF under certain administrative circumstances (such as physical or mental incapacity, the misuse of alcohol, or use of prohibited substances).

- DVA advised that it would like to explore the possibility of receiving notification of all separations from the ADF.

ComSuper/AIHW Data Match Exercise

- The Committee noted a proposal for a data matching exercise to be undertaken by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in conjunction with ComSuper. The data is expected to provide a baseline to compare the rates of suicide between the veteran population and the general population. The proposal will go before the Research Advisory Committee and the Human Research and Ethic Committee for consideration.

Update on Health Portal Initiative

- The Health Portal will soon be going live on the Defence Intranet and, thereafter, will go live on the Internet shortly thereafter.

Review of DVA In Person Services

- The Committee received an overview of the review into DVA In Person Services, noting there was considerable community engagement during the consultation period.
- The review of DVA In Person Services is not expected to impact current serving members.

ADF Service Women Steering Committee Report

- The Committee finalised its approach regarding the publication of the joint Defence/DVA response to the ADF Service Women Steering Committee Report.
- The joint response from DLSC is expected to be provided to the Commissioners by June 2014.

MRCA Review Implementation Education Program Reporting

- The Committee received an update on the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA) Review Implementation Education Program.
- The education campaign is expected to cover support and services available to ADF members.

MRCA 7.10 Performance Review Reporting

- The Committee agreed that it would submit to the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission that Recommendation 7.10 of the MRCA Review is satisfied by the performance reporting provided to DLSC and that DLSC would oversee ADF member transition.

Ongoing Business

- The next meeting will be held on 26 June 2014.