



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

KEY ISSUES PAPER
for discussion on the
Principles, Policies and Models
relating to
FUTURE FUNDING BY DVA OF ESO ADVOCACY
AND WELFARE SERVICES

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
AATTVA	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam Association
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGR	Above General Rate
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFRP	Australian Defence Force Rehabilitation Program
AFI	Application for Increase
AGS	Australian Government Solicitor
APPVA	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association
AVADSC	Australian Veterans and Defence Service Council
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BEST	Building Excellence in Support and Training
CAGS	Claims Assistance Grants Scheme
C&ACP	Community and Aged Care Policy Group
CBT	Competency Based Training
CDF	Chief of Defence Force
CGGs	Commonwealth Grant Guidelines
DoFD	Department of Finance and Deregulation
DFWA	Defence Force Welfare Association
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
EDWVA	Extremely Disabled War Veterans Association
EMG	DVA's Executive Management Group
ESO	Ex-Service Organisation
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FMA Act	<i>Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997</i>
GARP	Guide to the Assessment of Rates of Veterans' Pension
ICTS	Information, Communications and Technology Services Group
IPSS	Integrated People Support Services
LGA	Local Government Area
MRCA	<i>Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004</i>
NGDB	National Grants Database
OWP	Operational Working Party
PMAC	Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters
PVA	The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
RAAFA	Royal Australian Airforce Association
RAEA	Royal Australian Engineers' Association
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RC&IP	Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group
RD&S	Research, Development and Support Group
RSL	Returned and Services League of Australia
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RTO	Registered Training Organisations
SRCA	<i>Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988</i>
SMS	Short Message Service
SOP	Statements of Principles
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TCG	Training Consultative Group
TIP	Training and Information Program
TMS	Transition Management Service
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPI	Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women
VAN	Veterans' Affairs Network
V&C	Veteran and Community
V&CG	Veteran and Community Grants
VEA	<i>Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986</i>
VHC	Veterans' Home Care

VITA	Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association
VPAD	Veterans' Practitioner Activity Database
VRB	Veterans' Review Board
VVAA	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
VVFA	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
VVPPA	Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association
V&WVSA	Vietnam and War Veterans SA Inc
WWG	War Widows' Guild of Australia

1. INTRODUCTION

Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), through their practitioners, advocates and welfare officers, provide an invaluable service in assisting members of the serving and ex-service communities, which, in the main, is provided through volunteers. However, the nature of the DVA beneficiary population is undergoing change, both in terms of the ageing of the veteran population (with an increasing need for effective referral to aged care/community services) and the increasing number of younger veterans and serving members needing help.

In 2009, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs requested the Department to review advocacy and welfare services available to the veteran community through the Building Excellence and Support in Training (BEST) Program and the Training Information Program (TIP) to support this changing demographic.

There was a clear need for the Review to address the sustainability and scalability of Government-funded programs that support ESO activities in relation to claim and appeal work, and information services on broader welfare issues. Shifts in demographic trends and increasing significance of more recent legislation will underpin the need to ensure that finite government and ESO support are strategically directed into the future.

While the primary focus of the Review was on the BEST and TIP Programs, the Review team was also asked to address issues of alignment with the Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program.

Some ESOs had reported difficulty in attracting, training and retaining a sufficient number of advocates, welfare and pension officers to act on behalf of DVA beneficiaries and claimants and to deal with increasingly complex legislation. Accordingly, the Review needed to ensure that resources available are used to best effect. To this end, the Review considered the potential for collaboration and co-operation between ESOs including the sharing of facilities and resources. The Review was mindful of issues around location eg rural and remote, veteran-specific groups, and the relative size of ESOs. The question of what other forms of support available to ESOs beyond Government funding was also a consideration.

It was very important to ensure that the links between ESO advocacy services and TIP are such that current and informed advice and support are available to all DVA beneficiaries and claimants.

The level of administrative rigour that applies to the BEST, TIP and V&CG programs was also considered. Grant policies and eligibility criteria were considered in order to enhance grant application lodgement processes and supporting systems including the Veteran Practitioner Activity Database (VPAD) and other local arrangements. Opportunities to enhance DVA grant assessment and notification processes and systems were explored. Overall, attention has been given to quality assurance, better performance measurement, accountability and reporting. The intent is not to make monitoring and reporting processes so onerous that they become a disincentive to applying for program funds. Rather, it

is important in designing the new programs, that the Department can ensure that the objectives of the Review can continue to be met in future years.

The Review was also asked to:

- take into consideration relevant aspects of the Government's 2007 Election Commitments¹); and
- consider recommendations made by Professor Dunt in his *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* in relation to advocacy and advice services.

In relation to the Dunt recommendations, the Review noted his recommendation to move towards a two-tier system for the delivery of ESO advocacy and support services - the first tier to comprise largely of volunteers undertaking straightforward cases and a second tier being a new group of paid advocates with Technical and Further Education (TAFE) accreditation.

2. FRAMEWORK FOR THE REVIEW

In developing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Review, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- ensure the veteran community receives the support they need through appropriate advocacy and advice services;
- the value placed on the support ESOs provide to the veteran community in helping them access entitlements and services;
- ensure that the concept of 'volunteerism' remains a key theme;
- develop an ESO advocacy and welfare service model(s) that is sustainable, scalable and meets the needs of the veteran community, the ESOs and the Minister;
- ensure relevant data collection by grant recipients, supported by a sound performance information system, to enable outcome measurement for both the department and grant recipients;
- ensure an outcomes orientation is attained in providing grants to the veteran community;
- effective grants management and 'value for public money' is achieved;
- consultation with ex-service organisations and other stakeholders to ensure the needs of the veteran community are being effectively met.

The objectives of the Review, as stated in the ToR, are to recommend a program that ensures:

- funding levels enable efficient and effective service delivery;
- the range of items eligible for funding are distinct;
- appropriate services are provided for younger veterans;
- the distribution of available funds is transparent and fair;
- there is no duplication of ESO advocacy and welfare services funded by the Government in individual locations; and
- harmonious working relationships are established and maintained.

¹ The Labor Government's 2007 Election Commitment included establishing a Public Register of ex-service officials and conducting regular surveys of them.

Given the timeframes for the Review, discussions with the veteran and defence communities were carefully targeted to ensure that an appropriate level of consultation occurred. This consultation phase took place from October to December 2009 and included:

- broad distribution of a discussion paper and key focus points;
- face-to-face consultation nationally through Focus Groups held by the Review team, Commissioner Rolfe and Deputy Commissioners;
- face-to-face consultation at the State level through State Consultative Fora managed by Deputy Commissioners;
- attendance/discussion at National Fora with ESO leaders;
- consideration of submissions provided by ESOs; and
- issuing an Emerging Themes summary to allow for further comment.

The Review Team also visited a small number of ESOs to see the range of welfare and information provision by volunteers and through salaried claims and advocacy officers.

The Review team has considered the following government initiatives, guidelines and regulations:

- Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) – Commonwealth Grant Guidelines (CGGs);
- DoFD – *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (FMA Act) and relevant Finance Circulars;
- DoFD – Financial Management and Accountability Regulations (FMA Regulations);
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) – streamlining grant reporting requirements and reducing the administrative burden;
- Australian Tax Office (ATO) – clarification of potential tax consequences for Commonwealth grants programs;
- Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) – legal briefings on grants and funding programs;
- FaHCSIA and NEC Australia – “Broadband for Seniors” funding initiative;
- FaHCSIA – Volunteer Grants 2009;
- FaHCSIA – National Compact between the Australian Government and the Third Sector – Consultation Report (2009);
- Veterans Council Grants Program – managed through the Victorian Veterans Council (formerly the Patriotic Funds Council but now charged with a different range of responsibilities); and the
- Volunteering Australia website for general information relating to supporting volunteers in the Australian community.

3. CONSULTATION

The underlying goal of the Review team’s external consultation process was to:

- encourage ESO leaders and past grant applicants through targeted forums to provide input into the Review; and
- reinforce the Australian Government’s commitment to supporting the veteran and ex-service community where needed.

The initial consultation phase progressed through September to December 2009 and included consultation at the National, State and regional levels. Deputy Commissioners also discussed the Review at State Consultative Fora and any other opportunity that was presented in meetings with the veteran community.

3.1. Discussion Paper

A discussion paper was developed providing key focus points to assist ESOs to contribute to the Review. ESOs were also advised that they should not feel bound to address only those points as the Review was interested in obtaining the widest possible views.

3.2. Letters of advice

At the National level, the Secretary wrote to the National ESOs and members of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-service Matters (PMAC) advising them of the Review and inviting them to contribute to the Review by making a written submission. The Commissioner wrote to members of the ESO Round Table, members of the Operational Working Party (OWP), State TIP Chairs and BEST Round 11 applicants advising them of the Review and of the consultation process. At the State level, Deputy Commissioners wrote to key State ESOs and arranged consultation through State Focus Groups.

3.3. Focus Groups

The Review team held Focus Group meetings in capital cities and in regional locations. The team continues to hold ongoing discussions with members of National Fora listed above.

3.4. Submissions

Notification about the Review was provided on the Department's website along with the ToR and the discussion paper. Organisations and individuals were invited to make submissions electronically or in writing to the Review Team.

One hundred and thirty-three (133) submissions were received with representation by a broad cross section of organisations and individuals.

3.5. Emerging Themes Paper

Following the Focus Groups and an analysis of submissions, an Emerging Themes document was prepared. This document has been continually updated throughout the Review and used to support discussions held by the Review team at various National fora. A copy was forwarded to the same ESO groups that received initial advice on the Review by the Secretary, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners, seeking both comment on the themes and any further input to the review.

The Review team undertook a thorough examination of submissions received together with all of the information provided at the Focus Groups and these are consolidated into a summary document at [Attachment A](#).

4. TRAINING AND INFORMATION PROGRAM (TIP)

4.1. Discussion

The Review team is aware of strong support for the TIP program.

Observations made during the course of the Review include:

- a need for all courses to be widely available;
- enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these in overall program scope and geographical reach;
- interpersonal skills are vital and all courses should include interview techniques;
- an introductory course needs to be conducted to assess TIP course participants interest, intent and capability before further training is provided;
- recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (ie Registered Training Organisations [RTOs], Technical and Further Education [TAFE] etc);
- national consistency (with flexibility for State requirements) of program design is desirable rather than individual State designs;
- both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
- need for DVA feedback regarding quality of claims submitted through TIP trained practitioners – linked to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s; and
- a tiered structure that could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained practitioners.

The Review team recognises the distinctive relationship between DVA, ESOs and the veteran community and believes that TIP is vital in maintaining that relationship in the provision of advocacy and welfare advice.

4.2. Training Program

Since 2005, TIP has provided the following training:

Table 1: TIP Courses and Participants, 2005-06 to 2009-10

TIP Course	Number	Financial Year				Total
		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	
Pension Officer	Courses	134	141	107	86	468
	Participants	1,594	1,518	1,157	918	5,187
Welfare Officer	Courses	73	84	90	51	298
	Participants	870	1,027	1,342	1,043	4,282
Military Compensation	Courses	42	44	34	39	159
	Participants	520	521	416	450	1,907
Total	Courses	249	269	231	176	925
	Participants	2,984	3,066	2,915	2,411	11,376

Source: DVA Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group

The above activity appears substantial, however, given the considerable investment by both DVA and ESOs, the Review team believes it is very important that, in future:

- more data is provided on numbers of trained practitioners currently operating, not just those trained in any one year;
- it is clear that there is a targeted approach to training;
- there is evidence that new practitioners are supported and mentored; and
- there is visibility of training outcomes.

To date there has not been a national approach to training, however, at the TIP 2009 National Conference it was agreed that consistent training modules across all TIP courses be adopted nationally. These should be developed and regularly updated taking into consideration views expressed by ESOs. The Review team agrees with this direction and that development should be in consultation with TIP trainers and using feedback from TIP trainees.

In regard to national consistency of course offerings, the Review team notes and supports ESOs suggestions that:

- given interpersonal skills are vital, TIP training at each level should include a component on interview techniques (currently only provided in the basic eLearning and follow up face-to-face welfare courses); and
- brief introductory training (as provided in some locations), should be adopted nationally so as to gauge the longer term interest, intent and capability of a participant.

The Review team found that TIP practitioners have fairly widespread knowledge and understanding of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and its compensation focus but are less comfortable with the *Safety, Rehabilitation and*

Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) and the emphasis on rehabilitation. The Review team noted that rehabilitation is included in the eLearning Level 1 MRCA module and is in development for incorporation into Level 2 in the near future. The Review team supports this approach given the important role rehabilitation plays in optimising health outcomes for veterans and serving members, and the pivotal role of rehabilitation in the MRCA.

There is genuine enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach. This has the advantage of providing a portable consistent knowledge-base that is easily accessible to a wide range of people. It would also allow self-paced distance learning, an important factor when providing for a volunteer supported system.

The Review team believes that eLearning needs to be seen in the context of the overall training framework and should be complemented with face-to-face teaching, case study work and post training activity and support.

Other points in relation to online learning modules that need to be taken into account include:

- lack of IT skills by many volunteers and motivation to learn;
- non or limited availability of internet access in some regional locations; and
- whether eLearning could be accessed through local community education facilities.

The TIP program has seen an increase in welfare training to meet the needs of the ageing veteran population with the development of an eLearning demonstration welfare module. There was agreement at the TIP National Conference for this module to be developed further, recognising the possibility that different levels of welfare modules may be required. The Review team has been advised that a demonstration module has now been finalised and accepted by TIP. Welfare modules deemed suitable for conversion to eLearning have been identified, however the work required to develop and manage this relies heavily on volunteer participation and input. Given this, broader access to welfare training in an eLearning environment will not be available until sometime in the 2010-11 financial year.

The Review team believes that funding should be continued to support the TIP program and to extend the development and provision of eLearning modules.

4.3. Certification/Accreditation

During consultation, the predominant view was that it is unnecessary to move to a formal accreditation system for TIP through RTO registration and/or attendance at TAFE courses. The Review team agrees with this stance but does suggest the development of what could essentially be seen as a competency based training framework². The Review team understands this is in accord with the directions being taken through TIP Chairs and DVA.

² *A structured approach to training and assessment to assist individuals in acquiring skills and knowledge to perform a specific task to a certain standard. Outcomes are clearly stated so that trainees know what they have to do, trainers know what training needs to be provided and ESOs know the skill levels required.*

The development of minimum course standards and of a tiered structure for TIP practitioners appears necessary. The Review team agrees with the current structure (see table below) which is based on a matrix that encompasses nationally consistent levels (Levels 1-4) and streams (welfare/VEA/MRCA etc). The level at which particular practitioners are classified should serve as a guide to the way in which mentoring is provided across all ESOs. The table below outlines this structure.

The Review team also believes the eLearning Level 1 Basic Welfare Course should be undertaken by all trainees to ensure completeness of skills and their capacity to holistically support the veteran community.

Table 2: TIP Course Matrix

CURRENT TIP COURSE STREAMS AND LEVELS MATRIX					
Course Level	Compensation VEA	Compensation SRCA & MRCA	Compensation War/Defence Widow/ers	Welfare & Support	Skills enhancement courses, seminars and expositions
1	Basic Pensions Course	Basic Compensation Course	Basic Widow/ers Compensation Course	Basic Welfare Course	GARP User Course Electronic Tools Training
2	Advanced Pensions Course	Advanced Compensation Course	Advanced Widow/ers Compensation Course	Advanced Welfare Course	SOP User Course VPAD User Course
3	Advocate Course [VRB]	Advocate Course [VRB]			Above General Rate Course [AGR]
4	Advocate Course [AAT]	Advocate Course [AAT]			Advocacy Seminars
					Pension Update Course Military Compensation Update Course Welfare Update Course Income Support Training Welfare Expositions Focus Group Seminars Well Being Training

Source: DVA Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group

4.4. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) was an issue raised at all Focus Groups. Participants pointed to the need for DVA to monitor/evaluate primary claims and provide feedback to the relevant ESO and State TIP Chair regarding the quality of claims. TIP trainers also considered this to be an important factor in identifying training needs, including the need for refresher training.

The Review team notes that professional insurance coverage under the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA)³ includes the requirement to ensure regular refresher training is undertaken by practitioners. It is understood that State TIP Chairs keep a list/database of trained practitioners to assist in identifying when refresher training is necessary. The Review team believes this should be consistently applied, maintained, monitored and reported.

4.5. TIP Committees

The Review team believes it is necessary to ensure that TIP Committee structures and governance align with best practice.

The current process in selecting TIP Chairs appears to vary and invoked some criticism during the course of the Review, including comments made in submissions that there is a:

- lack of transparency, accountability and accessibility overall in relation to TIP governance;
- disconnect between TIP and ESOs in some locations; and
- lack of a formal selection process for TIP Chairs – and that they should have full knowledge of the legislation and effects on superannuation, and should be qualified to TIP Level 4.

In addition, some comments included the need for a selection process for TIP trainers to determine their suitability for the role.

The Review team notes the significant work being undertaken by TIP Chairs to respond to the changing needs of the veteran community. Whilst not agreeing with all of the above comments, the Review team does propose that TIP be strengthened to include transparency and accountability of TIP Chairs, at both the National and State levels, with the development of DVA guidelines which could include:

- the appointment and selection process for TIP Chairs and trainers/presenters;
- specification of length of tenure for TIP Chairs;
- prescribed minimum level of skills and knowledge for TIP Chairs;
- development of a job profile for these positions;
- guidance on TIP funds usage and acquittal;

³ VITA was established for the purpose of providing professional indemnity insurance for suitably qualified, trained and authorised members of ESOs who give advice in good faith to the ex-service community on matters relating to DVA pension and compensation entitlements and welfare support. VITA also provides an accident insurance policy to cover those people who conduct training under the auspices of TIP, providing their parent ESO is a member of VITA. The brochure on VITA can be found at: http://authoring-internet/ex-service_organisations/tip/Documents/vita_brochure.pdf

- advice regarding early communication to ESOs about training schedules and availability; and
- the participation of State Training Consultative Groups (TCG) in this process.

The Review team feels that these guidelines would ensure best practice and also support current TIP approaches. These guidelines could be developed jointly by DVA and TIP.

4.6. Public Register

Surprisingly, there was little comment provided through submissions in relation to the Government commitment to establish a register of ESO officials and conduct regular surveys of them. Of the one hundred and thirty-three (133) submissions received, three (3) agreed that a register should be held and maintained, another suggested there should be a process of ESO involvement from the grass roots if this path is taken, and only one (1) submission rejected the proposal. In Focus Group discussions, the matter was rarely raised.

For a range of reasons, the Review team concluded that there were effective and less onerous options than a single publicly-available register, and that a specific survey process was not required as other suggested improvements made by the team would achieve the same objective.

In regard to the register, the Review team considered that the following requirements would serve the purpose:

- In adhering to a competency based training framework, all ESOs would be required to maintain an up-to-date list of TIP practitioners who provide services under their auspices in their locality who can assist a veteran, war widow or dependant and:
 - details of the practitioners' area(s) of expertise would need to be kept up-to-date,
 - DVA would have access to those lists as required, and
 - any member of the public could request of a copy of the list for the purposes of receiving assistance with relevant services; and
- TIP Chairs would continue to be required to maintain and update a separate list of trained practitioners in their State, and:
 - these lists would be accessible by DVA and the public, as required, for relevant purposes.

It was considered that the effort involved in keeping a single register of all these details up-to-date and published to one source-of-truth website with a link to and from all individual ESO and TIP Chair websites was not an efficient solution.

In regard to the surveys, the Review team considered that the same outcome of ensuring quality would be achieved by the increased focus on quality assurance enabled by the feedback processes recommended elsewhere in this report.

4.7. Mentoring

Many comments were made about the lack of suitably qualified mentors to assist advocates and pension and welfare officers in their work. Participants at the Focus Groups felt that insufficient consideration is given by ESOs when

nominating a person to attend a TIP course and the subsequent ability to support that person to perform the work.

Comments were also made that sometimes nominations for TIP training have included individuals who have no intention of working with the veteran community afterwards. To ensure this does not happen, priority could be given to individuals who are making a longer term commitment to helping the veteran community.

Other suggestions provided through submissions and discussions included:

- a mentor being assigned to a person who has been nominated for TIP training;
- mentors be available by phone and online;
- all attendees at TIP training should be offered a mentor;
- mentors could include DVA staff with knowledge of specific legislation; and
- opportunities be provided for ESOs to advise both TIP and DVA on the work of advocates/pension officers/welfare officers.

The Review team agrees with the above points and in addition suggests that an ESO or other suitable mentor, where available, be specified on course nomination forms.

Longer term planning for the TIP Program should also include developing a policy framework for ESOs to fully support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers working in or for the organisation, both in a voluntary or paid role.

4.8. TIP PhotoID

In addition to the above discussion about moving towards a competency based training framework, the Review team also noted suggestions during the consultation process that a TIP photoID should be issued to TIP practitioners and trainers. Suggestions included that it should include the name of the person, the ESO or organisation they are representing and a validity date linked to the level of TIP competency achieved. This would also provide evidence to support personal indemnity through VITA coverage.

The Review team is interested in receiving further advice from ESOs on this suggestion.

4.9. Defence and Serving Members

The Review team found that there was a differential level of access to military bases enjoyed by ESOs across the country. Where access was freely available and encouraged by the bases, effective advice to serving members and their families was evident. In its visit to the VVPPA Centre at Granville in Sydney, the Review team noted the extent of coverage of Defence bases that the female “team” of advocates from that Centre has been able to achieve. The Centre was of the view that this is largely due to those advocates being spouses of serving members and having close links to bases, not only in NSW but also in other States, taking a holistic approach to their work and due to word of mouth referrals. It may be that over time, this pro-active approach could be replicated at other Centres.

In this regard, it is believed that TIP practitioners should continue their relationship with ADF establishments and provide support to people providing compensation and pension advice to Defence force personnel, or directly to serving personnel. The Review team is aware that TIP is a member of the Integrated People Support Services (IPSS) Regional Stakeholder Forum that oversees the ADF discharge process in various locations. The ongoing participation in the IPSS would assist TIP to retain that link with soon to be discharging members.

Suggestions

1. *Develop a competency-based training framework in which assessment and certification of trainees is merit based.*
2. *In the delivery and continued development of TIP courses:*
 - 2.1. *ensure nationally consistent training modules are provided to participants;*
 - 2.2. *develop minimum course standards;*
 - 2.3. *provide brief introductory training to gauge the longer term interest, intent and capability of course participants;*
 - 2.4. *ensure a component on interview techniques is provided at each level; and*
 - 2.5. *ensure the Level 1 Welfare Course is undertaken by all TIP practitioners.*
3. *Endorse a tiered matrix-based structure for TIP practitioners.*
4. *In relation to TIP governance:*
 - 4.1. *develop DVA guidelines so that TIP Committee structures and governance reflect best practice;*
 - 4.2. *strengthen mentoring by developing a policy framework to support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers;*
 - 4.3. *require trainees to specify an ESO or other suitable mentor - where available - on TIP course nomination forms;*
 - 4.4. *deploy the existing Quality Assurance system within DVA to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs;*
 - 4.5. *require State TIP Chairs to maintain a current list of all TIP practitioners in their State and their qualifications (to ensure refresher training is undertaken for VITA professional indemnity), with DVA and the public able to access those lists for relevant purposes;*
 - 4.6. *require ESOs to maintain a list of local TIP practitioners for referral purposes, with DVA and the public able to access the lists for relevant purposes; and*
 - 4.7. *issue a TIP photoID to all trained practitioners.*
5. *Continue DVA funding of TIP training, including extending the development and provision of eLearning modules.*
6. *Encourage TIP practitioners to continue contact with Defence establishments and in their role within the IPSS framework.*

5. BUILDING EXCELLENCE AND SUPPORT IN TRAINING (BEST) PROGRAM

5.1. BEST Grant Funding

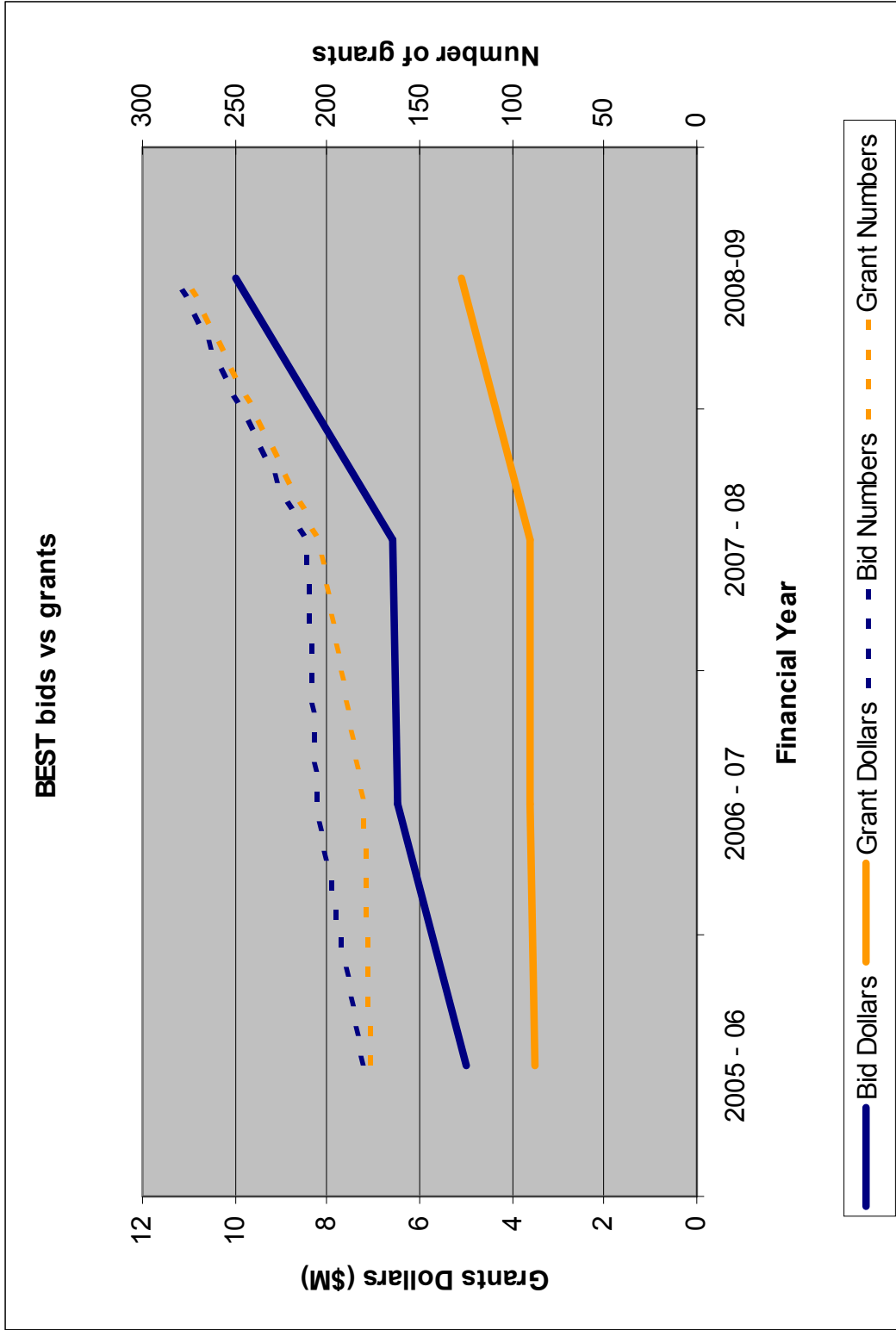
BEST annual funding is approximately \$3.8m (GST exclusive), indexed and ongoing (including the GIA component). The Government increased BEST funding by \$5m in 2007-2008 as part of its election commitment to provide for capital equipment. Of this, \$2.2m was approved for funding in 2007-2008, \$0.4m approved in 2008-2009, with the balance of \$1.2m for 2009-2010 and \$1.2m for 2010-2011.

It is noted that BEST capital equipment funds cease after 2010-2011. The Review team believes there will be a continued demand for capital funding and suggests that ESO expectations be carefully managed in this regard.

Demand continues to be high, with requests for BEST grants exceeding available funds by a ratio of around two to one in the 2008-09 financial year as shown in the following graph⁴:

⁴ Please note that all graphs and charts provided within this Report can be viewed at Attachment F and are labelled according to the reference in that Attachment.

Graph 1 of Attachment F: BEST applications 2005-06 to 2008-09

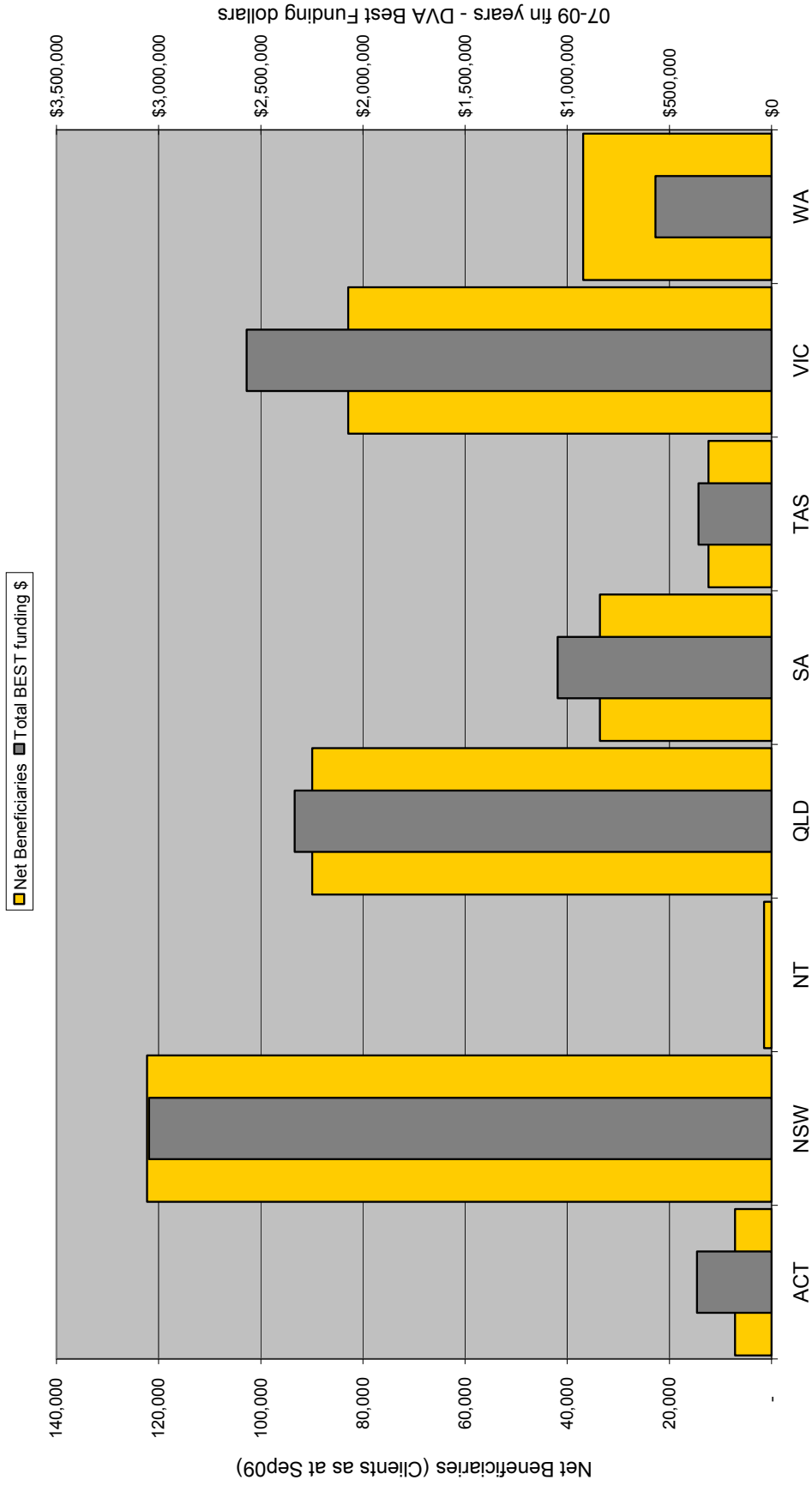


Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

As illustrated in the following chart, there is an inequity of BEST funding across the States, with Victoria receiving a significantly higher amount of funds per capita than the other States. The Review team understands that initial allocations are determined on a per capita basis based on net beneficiaries. Where a surplus of funds in any state occurs, these are distributed evenly to those states where there may be a shortfall of funds. The Review team suggests that per capita allocations to each State should be the core determinant for grant funding.

Chart 12a in Attachment F

Australia
DVA Best Funding vs Net Beneficiaries



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

5.2. Documentation

BEST forms and documentation attracted a great deal of comment, with concerns being expressed about the demands that are placed on volunteers whilst also seeking more guidance and prescription in completing documentation, eg around welfare reporting.

The Review team proposes that Guidelines be revised and updated, and the application form for BEST be amended and made available online. It is noted that work on a revised BEST application form has already commenced. The Review team believes that documentation should be continually evaluated and include views provided by ESOs and practitioners.

5.3. Transparency

Comments have been made to the Review team about transparency in the BEST grants process. In particular, the need to have better informed processes and for assessments to be more evidence based. To achieve this, access to information to support the BEST grant assessment (eg ESO membership numbers versus numbers of veterans supported and services provided, validity of data provided etc) will be required. Factors such as these will need to be addressed in any future funding formula that could be developed.

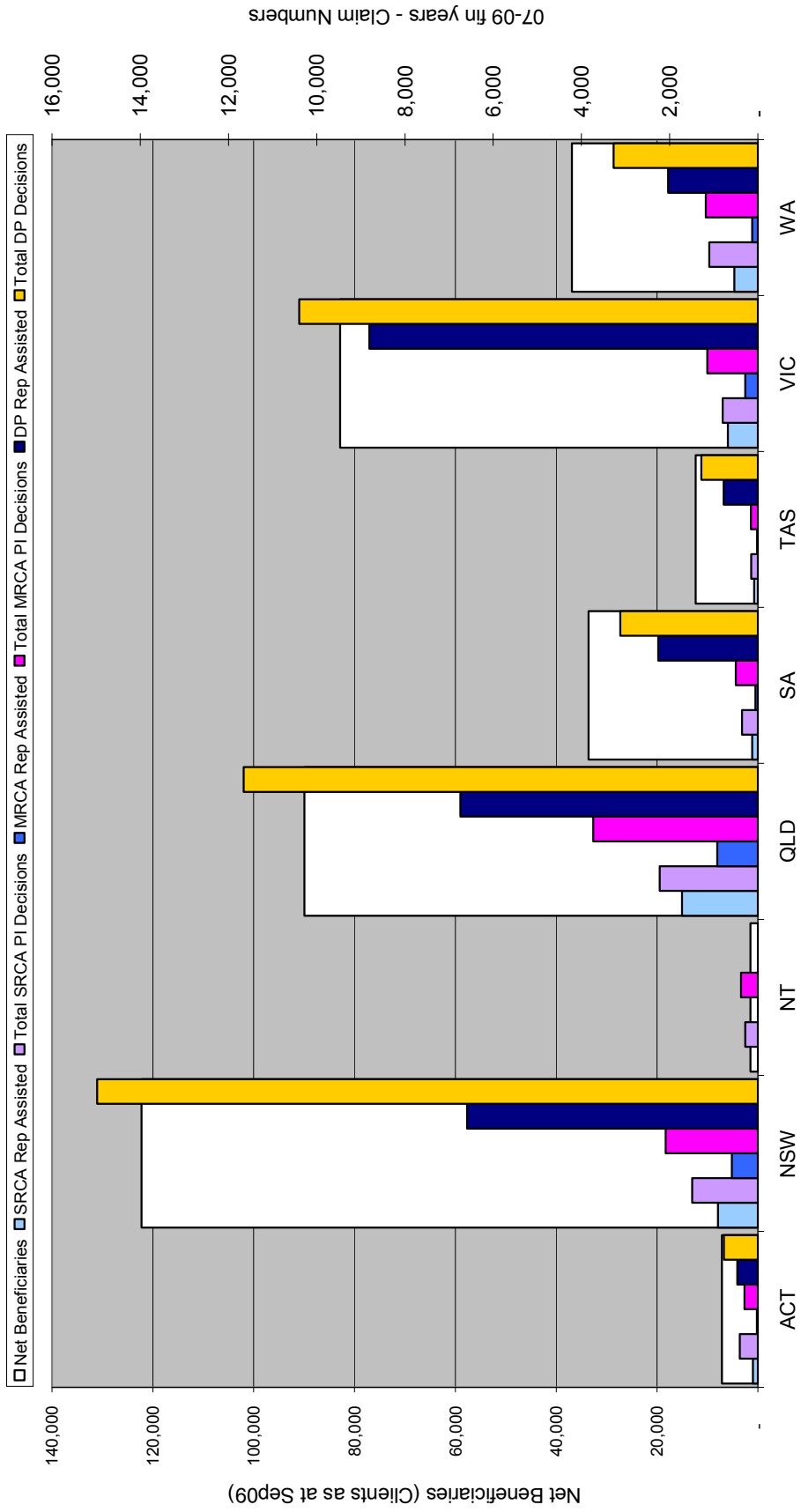
An example of the difficulty in measuring the level of work undertaken by practitioners (both paid and volunteers), is the lack of data captured by both ESOs and DVA. This can be seen in the following graphs that show the number of claim decisions⁵ made by DVA compared with how many claims have been identified as having a representative⁶.

⁵ *Regardless of the outcome of the decision. The numbers do not include applications made to the VRB or AAT.*

⁶ *A representative in this instance, ie nominated on a claim, could be a lawyer, a TIP trained practitioner, a friend or a family member.*

Chart 1b in Attachment F

**Australia
DVA Clients vs Claims**



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

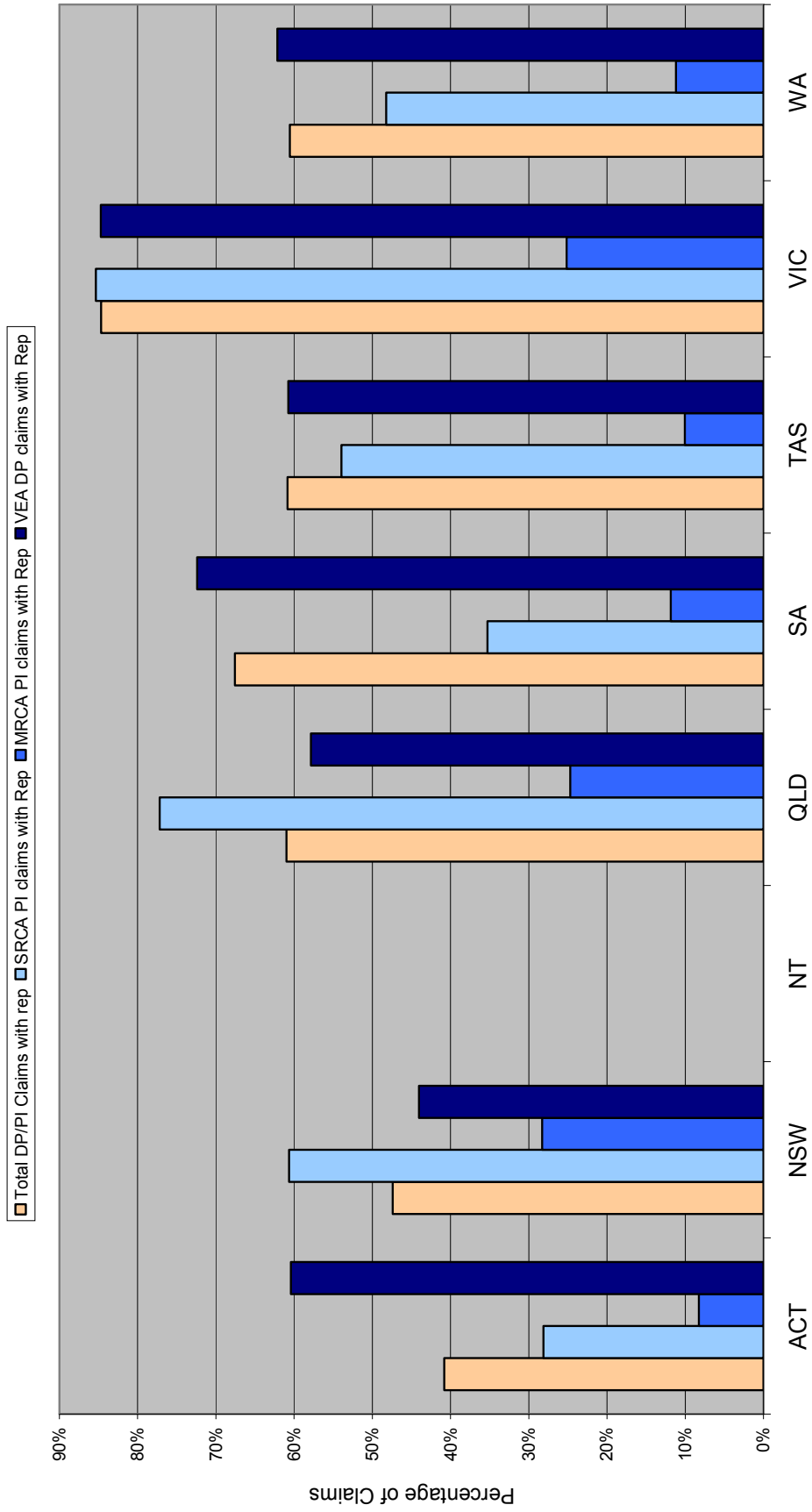
The Review team understands that the missing variable is the extent to which “non-represented” claims could in fact involve a level of practitioner support.

Of note also is the extremely low percentage of representation for MRCA claims submitted to the Department. This could be that there is a larger number of younger veterans prepared to submit their own claims, or that some assistance may be provided by ESO advocates, or DVA staff, but these are not recorded on the claim form when submitted.

Chart 11 in Attachment F

Percentage of State's total Claims with a Representative

2007/08 and 2008/09 claims data



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis

5.4. ESO and Other Support

The Review team is aware that some larger ESOs have a sound financial base and should have the capacity to contribute towards ongoing operational support for advocacy and welfare. It is suggested that BEST grant assessment processes could take into consideration the capacity for ESOs to contribute (including 'in kind' support) and to take into account the variable levels of ESO and other support that is available, for example:

- associated Club financial and other resources and assets;
- access by Victorian ESOs to the Victorian Veterans' Fund (previously known as the Patriotic Fund);
- access to funds for Queensland ESOs through profits from the RSL Art Union lotteries; and
- through other community support eg "peppercorn" rents provided through local councils.

5.5. Assessment for Funding

In the general context of the above discussion, it should be noted that ESOs have access to other government funding sources from:

- other Commonwealth Departments eg the "Broadband for Seniors" funding initiative and Volunteer Grants 2009 and 2010, both being initiatives of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
- State and Local government initiatives; and
- Community-based organisations.

Indeed, there are other organisations that could directly provide services that are relevant to the needs of the groups that ESOs represent. Alignment with these other services and avoidance of unnecessary overlap should be an imperative for ESOs and considered by DVA in assessing applications for grants funding.

Along with the above, the Review team is concerned that, in some locations, there appears to be segmentation between funds obtained through ESO club/social activities and the extent to which these become available for veteran support made available through those same ESO clubs.

To this end, the Review team is of the view that prioritisation of funding should apply, with an income and assets means test approach utilised. This could entail a requirement for some level of "matching" funds criteria for ESOs in the funding formula and matrix used to assess grant applications.

A basic premise that underpins this report is that monies should in large part be granted where there is an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers. This focus on supporting existing and prospective models leads logically to Funding Principles and application of a Funding Formula that encompass incentives for ESOs to embrace a co-operative approach.

Of course, the Review team acknowledges that there will likely always be the need to provide BEST support for smaller ESOs in more isolated areas where limited local funding or other support is available.

5.6. Funding Criteria and Funding Rounds

5.6.1. Funding Criteria

The Review team has considered the funding criteria for BEST grants and propose that they be revised so that future funding is characterised by the First Principles ([Attachment B](#)), the Funding Principles and Funding Formula outlined in [Attachment C](#), and support integrated service delivery models. This should be based on demographic data, service delivery needs (decreasing claims work over time and an increasing focus on welfare services), and sponsor support.

5.6.2. Rent

In Focus Groups and submissions comments were made in relation to funding for the cost of rent and utilities, which are excluded in the current BEST Grants Guidelines.

In regards to grant funding for rental, the Review team understands that rental costs have a significant impact on some BEST grant recipients that do not have ESO or other sponsor support. The Review considers that wholesale funding for rent could limit the overall availability of funds but recognises the difficulties some ESOs have in funding this cost themselves, particularly in Tasmania. Over the past five (5) funding rounds, substantial funds to cover rental costs have been provided to the Joint Venture Tasmania, with just over \$66,000 being provided in the most recent funding round. Other ESOs that have applied have not received grants for this purpose but the Review is aware that one ESO received rent funding via a grant variation request.

It is the Review's belief that rent should not be included in the funding criteria and a consistent approach should be applied in the future. Given that it is already provided in some circumstances, any future support through BEST will need, at the very least, to be considered on a case-by-case basis and in line with the funding formula. In considering this issue it needs to be borne in mind that some ESOs may have received funds for rent under the auspice of 'ongoing running costs'.

The Review team is interested in further ESO comments on this issue and that relating to "utilities" discussed below.

5.6.3. Utilities

In relation to funding for the cost of utilities, the Review team also believes that this should not be included in the BEST funding criteria and is aware that no grants have been provided for this purpose over the past five (5) funding rounds. Though similar to the discussion on rent above, there may be a number of ESOs who may have received funds for utilities under 'ongoing running costs'.

5.6.4. Salary or Wages

In relation to funding for salary or wages it has been noted by the Review team that approximately 80% of BEST funding is currently provided for this purpose and suggests that this be set as an absolute maximum for the next 1-2 Funding Rounds given ESO staff already employed. However, over that time, this ratio needs to be carefully reviewed to assess how and where the appropriate level should be set, or whether specific strategies should be devised to assist in reducing that percentage.

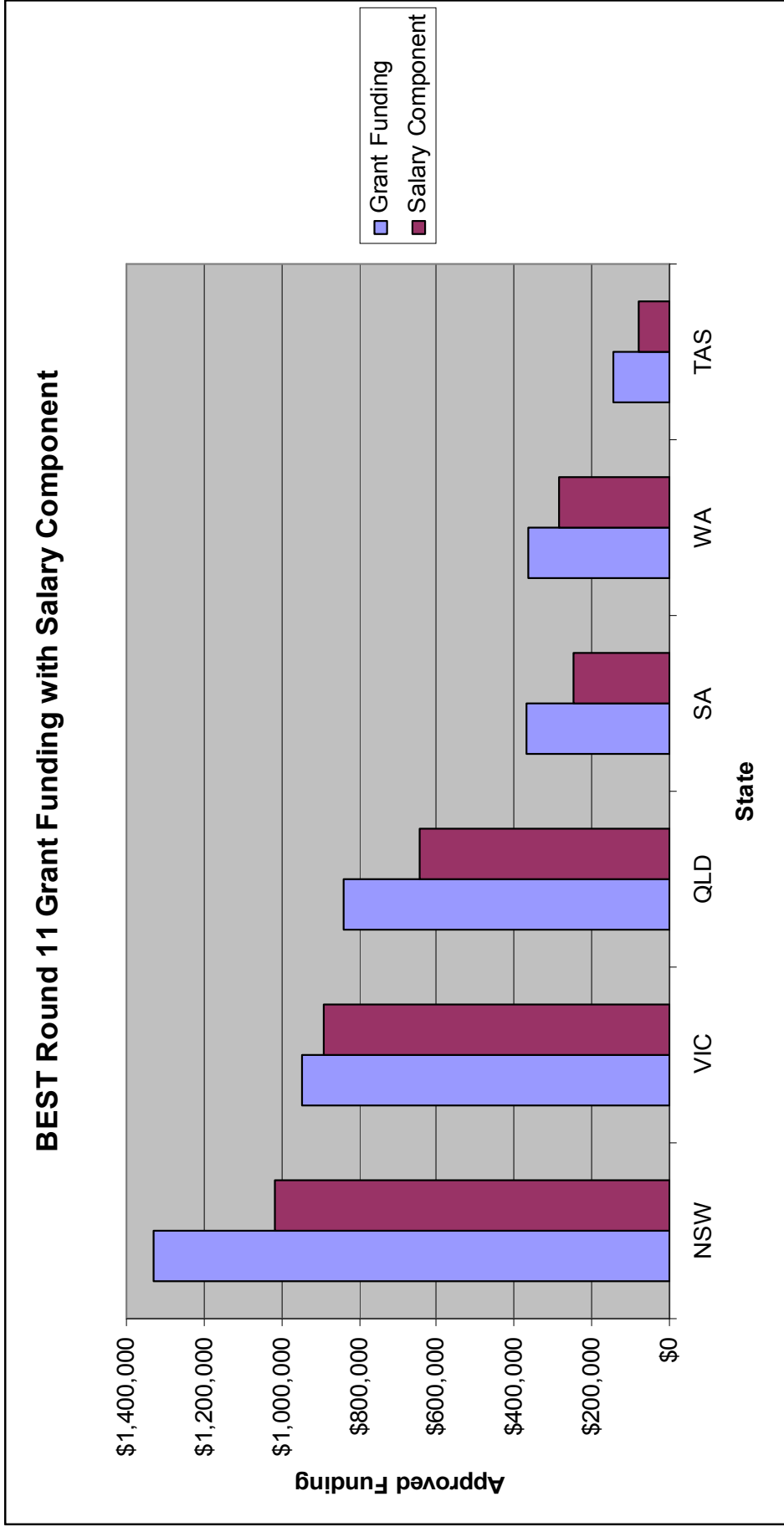
During BEST Round 11, funding for salaries and wages for one hundred and thirty-seven (137) positions was approved and provided as detailed below:

Table 3: BEST Funding – Round 11 Salary Component

State	Grant Funding \$	Salary Component \$	Salary %
NSW	1,329,260	1,019,384	76.69
VIC	948,193	892,864	94.16
QLD	838,528	645,089	76.93
SA	366,432	249,167	68.00
WA	362,384	284,632	78.54
TAS	145,992	78,925	54.06
TOTAL	3,990,789	3,170,061	79.43

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 5 of Attachment F



Source: Grants and Bursaries Section

The Review team believes that, as the numbers of volunteers reduce, there will be greater demand for salaried positions, both for administrative staff and advocates. This will need to be monitored closely, along with veteran demographic data, to determine if, over time, the appropriation for BEST grant funding is sufficient to meet the needs of the veteran community, as well as the way in which funds are distributed.

Further consideration and comment on this aspect of BEST grant funding would be appreciated by the Review team.

5.6.5. Equipment and Other Support

The Review team believes it is imperative that some BEST funds be 'partitioned' so that grants can continue to be provided for administrative and other needs for ESO operations. To this end, the Review considers that a minimum 20% of total BEST funds should be allocated for this purpose. Within this, a small amount should be set aside for instances where funds may need to be accessed in the case of an emergency (eg \$15,000).

It is noted that this 20% minimum is dictated by the counter balance of the 80% maximum to be allocated to salaries and wages. In considering movement downwards of that 80% in the medium term, equally careful consideration should be given to how and where an increase in funds for equipment and other support should be applied for ongoing targeting of government support through BEST to areas of real need.

ESOs will be expected to continue to provide either monetary (ie for additional salaried positions, rent etc) or 'in-kind' support through the use of rooms, computer equipment, internet access and consumables.

5.6.6. Funding Rounds

Throughout the Review, there has been a level of interest in changes to funding cycles, funding criteria and administrative arrangements – for example, recurrent funding with yearly reviews for BEST grants, timeliness of funds allocation, rolling programs together, keeping grants to National and State ESOs discrete.

The Review agrees with many ESOs in their concerns where funding for salary and wages occurs and the lack of certainty that currently exists for ESO management and individuals with a single year grant funding cycle. The Review team proposes a three (3) year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages, with funds to be acquitted on an annual basis and with an opportunity for reassessment to adjust funding allocations if necessary.

It is suggested that consumables and capital equipment continue to be provided through an annual funding cycle.

In response to some comments to move the financial audit requirement for acquittal of grants from a financial to a calendar year basis, the Review team believes this is not necessary.

5.7. Performance Indicators, Reporting and Evaluation

In submissions and discussions, comments were made on the need for relevant performance indicators for grant funding and for DVA to evaluate the reports provided by the grantee.

The current guidelines call for grant performance objectives to be agreed upon and quarterly reports provided. The Review team believes that the current objectives provide a sound basis to evaluate the performance of the grantee and to guide future funding. These include:

- (a) complete an agreed number of primary claims;
- (b) provide regular quarterly progress reports which will detail:
 - number of claims prepared, and comparisons with numbers of claims prepared in the last quarterly report;
 - number of appeals, and comparisons with numbers of appeals undertaken in the last quarterly report;
 - all TIP training undertaken by Advocates/Pension Officers/Welfare Officers and comparison with training undertaken in the last quarterly report;
 - number of clients assisted with welfare information and comparison with clients assisted with welfare information in the last quarterly report.
- (c) Agree a percentage of time spent on welfare assistance or number of welfare clients assisted;
- (d) reduce the time taken to prepare certificates of readiness for VRB cases;
- (e) maintain skills standards through attending TIP training at the appropriate levels; and
- (f) require other specific reporting conditions depending on the nature of the application eg where the grantee is a national ESO there is a likelihood that some may have a welfare and administration focus rather than a claims work focus.

In noting the existing guidelines, the Review team considers quarterly reporting to be overly onerous and recommends that six-monthly reporting be adopted. The reports should include advice on the distribution and expenditure of funds within the integrated approach to service delivery. Proposed IT system enhancements should enhance the capacity of ESOs to provide the information and DVA's ability to assess reports.

Suggestions

7. In relation to BEST funding:

- 7.1. *utilise per capita allocations to each State as the core determinant for BEST grant funding;*
- 7.2. *revise the funding criteria for BEST grants in the context of the "First Principles", "Funding Principles" and "Funding Formula" and reflect that:*
 - 7.2.1. *any support through BEST for rental costs should be considered on a case-by-case basis;*
 - 7.2.2. *grant funds should not be provided for the cost of utilities;*

- 7.2.3. *in the short term, a maximum of 80% of BEST funding be set for salary and wages, to be assessed during that time to ensure a real reduction by Round 14; and*
- 7.2.4. *in the short term, a minimum 20% of BEST funds be ‘partitioned’ for consumables, internet access, computer equipment etc and for use in an emergency – to be reviewed in line with the target set in 7.2.3;*
- 7.3. *introduce a three (3) year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages with annual acquittal and an opportunity to adjust annually;*
- 7.4. *continue to provide consumables and capital equipment through an annual funding cycle; and*
- 7.5. *in the development of the funding formula, build in factors for:*
 - 7.5.1. *encouraging the further extension of integrated service delivery models (including Veteran Support Centres);*
 - 7.5.2. *reflecting a level of sponsor contribution (including means testing and “matching”); and*
 - 7.5.3. *reflecting other sources of funding and services provided through other organisations.*
- 8. *Strengthen the administration of the BEST Program by:*
 - 8.1. *the BEST guidelines being revised and updated, and the application form amended and made available online;*
 - 8.2. *utilising the current grant performance objectives with grant reporting to be on a six-monthly basis.*

6. GRANTS-IN-AID (GIA) PROGRAM (now subsumed into BEST)

6.1. Funding

Available funds for this program have remained small. In 1990, \$70,000 was provided with increases over time leading to an allocation of \$145,000.

Information on grants provided over the past four financial years is set out below:

**Table 4: GIA Bids and Grants, 2005-06 to 2009-10
(GST Exclusive)**

GIA	No. / \$m	Financial Year					Total
		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	
Bids	Number	13	13	16	13	10	55
	\$million	0.364	0.389	0.288	0.184	0.307	1.532
Grants Allocated	Number	13	12	14	13	10	62
	\$million	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.130	0.710
\$Grant / \$Bid Percentage		40%	37%	50%	79%	42%	46%

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

In 2009-10, ten (10) ESOs received grants. The Returned & Services League of Australia and the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council were the primary beneficiaries of funding, receiving 31% and 20% respectively of available funds. A listing of the grants provided is shown in the following table:

Table 5: Breakdown of BEST (GIA) funding to National ESOs in 2009-2010 (GST exclusive)

ESO	Amount \$	% of total grants
Returned & Services League of Australia Limited	40,000	31
Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council	\$26,600	20
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia	14,000	11
Australian Federation of TPI Ex-Servicemen and Women	12,000	9
Defence Force Welfare Association	9,000	7
Legacy Co-ordinating Council	9,000	7
Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association	8,000	6
Naval Association of Australia	5,035	4
Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia	3,500	3
Australian Members Committee World Veterans Federation	3,000	2
Total	130,135	100

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

6.2. Discussion

The Review team was asked to determine if any unintended consequences occurred when GIA was rolled into the BEST program during the application and approval process for BEST Round 11.

The Review team has observed that in the main, funding has been provided to the same organisations over time and it could be reasonably said that the funding could be seen to be “recurrent”, ie similar funding amounts for the same purpose, although there is a requirement that the National ESOs need to apply each year for these funds. With the move to amalgamate GIA under BEST it is expected that tighter accountability will apply.

A further area of concern for the Review team is that funds appear to be granted to some National ESOs that are quite financially secure and the team questions whether this can continue to be justified. Again, with GIA moving under the BEST program and a funding formula applied in the future, it is expected that as part of the analysis of applications and the capacity of ESOs to contribute, there may be some “levelling” of grant funding under this stream.

On examination of the applications received from National ESOs for Round 11, the Review team noted that applications included items that could be funded under both BEST criteria as well as the old “GIA type” criteria due to a lack of clear definition between the two funding streams in the guidelines current at the time. Although it appears to the Review team that National ESOs may not have suffered any substantial disadvantage, better definition of the funding stream within BEST for support to National ESO bodies should be provided in the BEST application form and guidelines. The Review team notes that this is currently taking place.

The Review team also supports the assessment process taking into account appropriately targeted distribution of funds, and is equitable and needs based.

It is believed that the \$145,000 currently allocated under GIA is sufficient and should be continued to assist National ESOs with:

- major administrative costs and/or projects for which grants cannot be obtained through State or Federal funding or through donations or fees made available from members or other benefactors;
- communication between the ex-service community, ESOs and the Australian Government; and
- the advancement of the objectives of ESOs.

Suggestions

9. For grant funding under BEST for National ESOs, ensure that:
 - 9.1. the funding stream for grants specifically for National ESOs (former GIA program) is clearly articulated in the BEST guidelines;
 - 9.2. total funding available is specified; and
 - 9.3. distribution of funds is appropriately targeted, equitable and needs-based.

7. VETERANS AND COMMUNITY GRANTS (V&CG) PROGRAM

7.1. Funding

Information on V&C Grant funding for the past four (4) financial years is provided below:

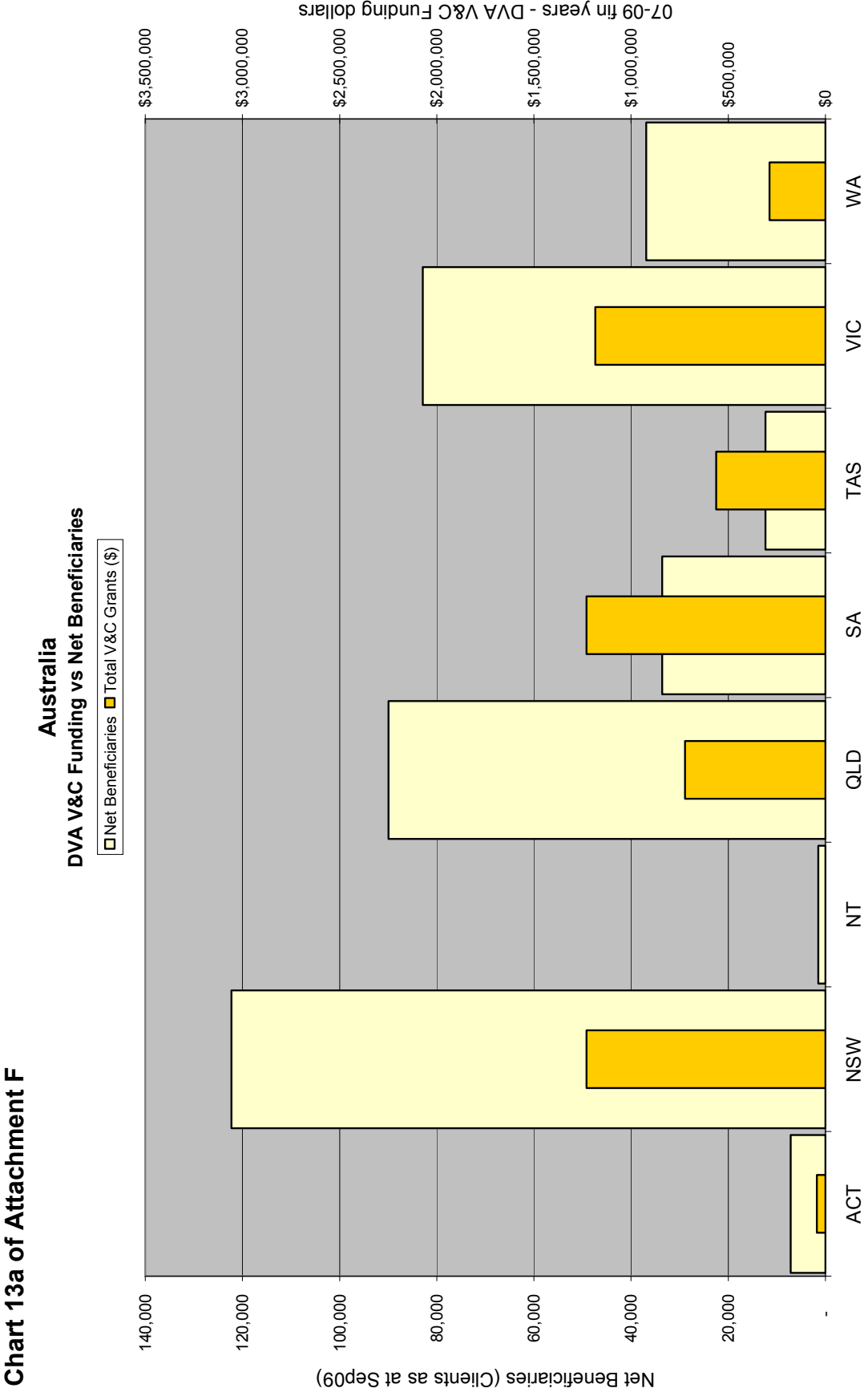
Table 6: V&CG Funding, 2005-06 to 2008-09

Grants Approved	Financial Year				Total
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	
number	227	230	232	280	969
\$million	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.5	12.0

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Similar to BEST funding, there is inequity of grant funding across the States. As can be seen from the chart below, there is an imbalance with SA and Tasmania receiving a significantly higher percentage of V&CG funds per capita than the other States. Similar to the earlier discussion regarding the BEST program, the Review team understands that initial allocations are determined on a per capita basis but that final allocations across the States may vary due to the volume of

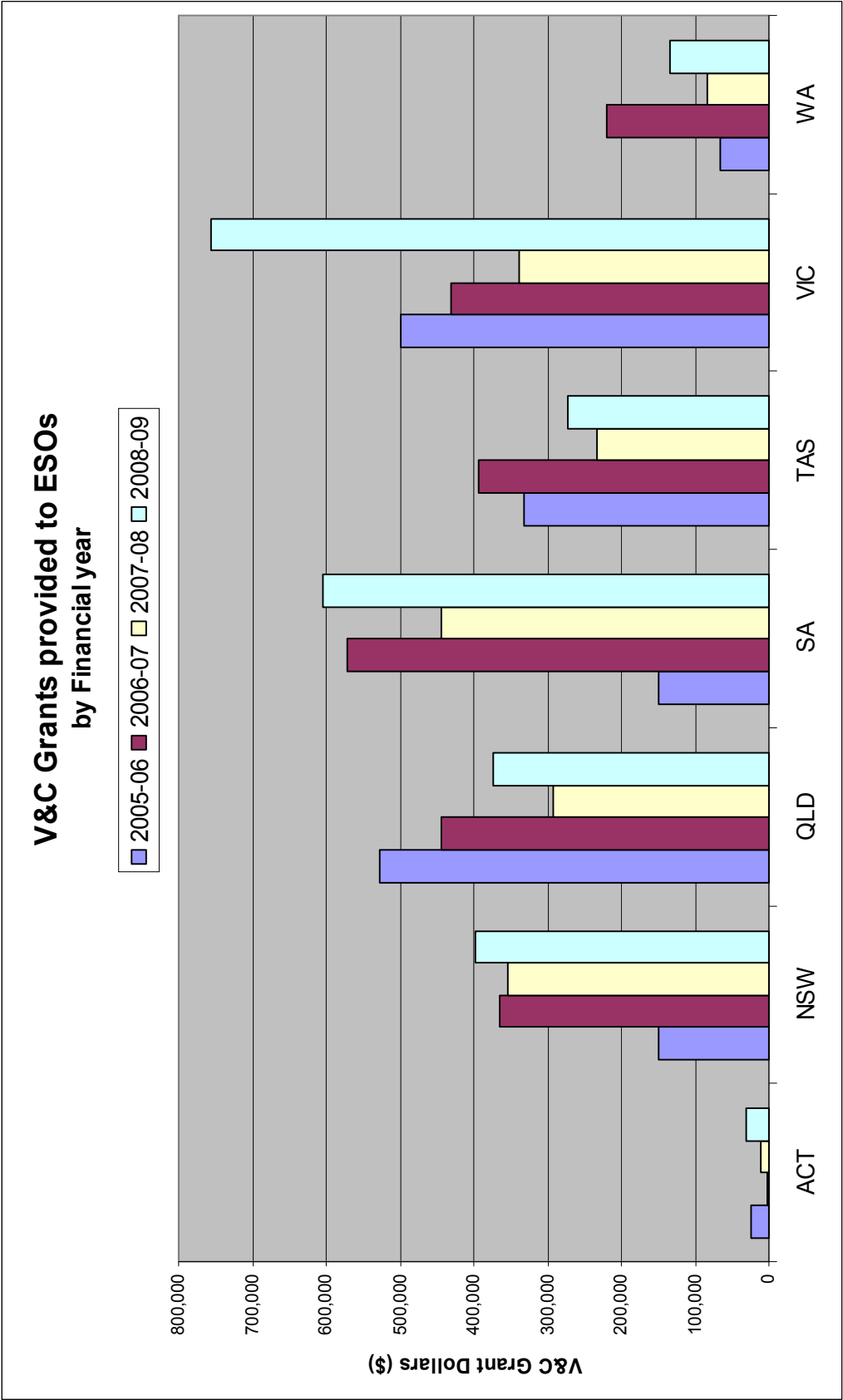
applications and the items requested. Again, the Review team suggests that per capita allocations to each State should be the core determinant for grant funding.



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis

It is also recognised that grants are provided for “one-off” projects and the levels of funding could fluctuate from year to year. The following chart shows the level of variation that has occurred over the past four financial years for funding ESOs.

Chart 15 of Attachment F

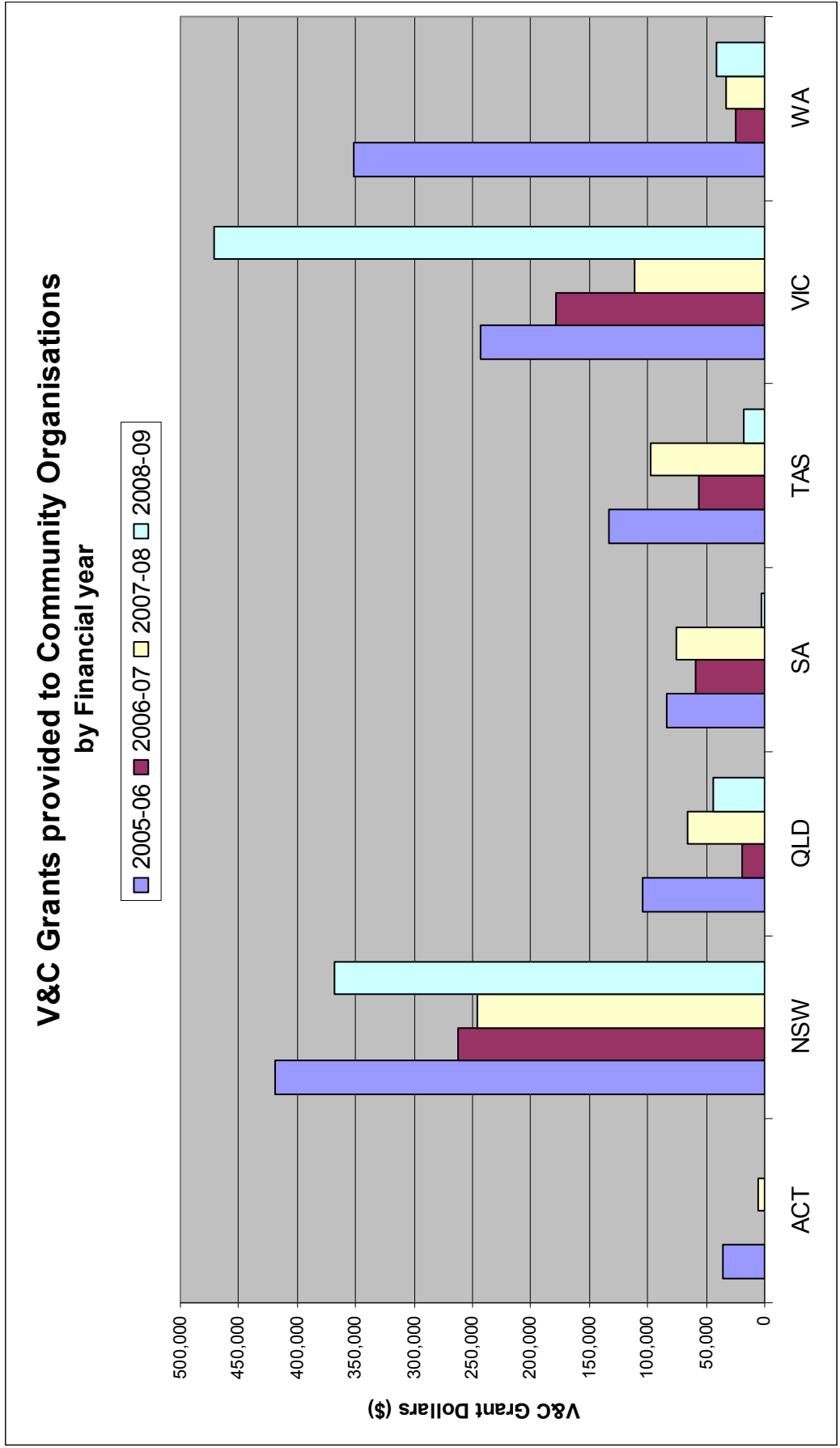


Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

In relation to the above chart it is noted that the high level of funding to SA from 2006-07 through to 2008-09 included approximately \$1.2m for refurbishments of ESO facilities, and for Victoria during 2008-09 approximately \$0.63m for similar purposes. It would be expected that this level of funding would not occur in these States, for this purpose, in the near future.

Following is a similar chart again showing variations of funding under V&CG, this time relating to grants to community organisations.

Chart 16 of Attachment F



Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

7.2. Discussion

In relation to V&CG, there has been acknowledgement by ESOs of the benefits obtained by these grants and for the current administrative arrangements. However, mention has been made of the need to consider both current funding criteria and to evaluate the outcomes that are being achieved. The Review team acknowledges the work currently being undertaken by the DVA Grants team in Adelaide in reviewing and revising current Guidelines and supporting documentation.

The number of funding rounds for V&CG has been examined regarding the overlapping of BEST and V&CG funding rounds. It is suggested that the number of rounds for V&CG be reduced from three (3) to two (2). This change could commence in 2011/2012, however consideration needs to be given to the specific timing.

Suggestions

10. Clarify V&CG funding so that:

- 10.1. *per capita allocations to each State are the core determinant for V&CG grant funding; and*
- 10.2. *funding rounds are reduced to two (2) by 2011/2012.*

8. IT SYSTEMS

8.1. Veterans Practitioner Activity Database (VPAD)

There have been a number of views expressed about the overall usefulness of VPAD through discussions at Focus Groups and in submissions. Concerns were expressed around functionality, accessibility, training, technical support and overall usefulness of the IT system for all veteran groups. Against this, there were views that it could generate enough detail to adequately case manage claims on behalf of veterans and provide reports. In summary, comments included that:

- there is a need for enhancements to proceed;
- a level of ongoing support is necessary, including through a help desk facility;
- any alternative systems that have emerged should be reigned in;
- opportunities for bringing the application process and case management together need to be explored; and
- the current system should be modified to include quality indicators relating to service delivery/performance management.

These comments were often made in the context of broader discussions of the need for IT systems to inform funding, activities and acquittal processes.

The level of computer literacy by some volunteers was seen by the Review team to be problematic. In many instances it was commented in Focus Groups and submissions that some pension officers did not, and would not, enter data and that this work was undertaken by administrative staff, when available. This leads

to either incomplete information or indeed no information at all being recorded with necessary case notes not being documented on the system.

An analysis of existing capabilities of VPAD is being undertaken through a joint DVA/TIP working group in order to identify enhancements required to develop additional functionality. The Review team understands that this is being progressed.

8.2. National Grants Database

The NGDB is a corporate resource that records information on the Department's four grants programs. The database captures grant details, provides a history of all projects for each applicant as well as capturing other information. This information assists in the preparation of documentation for grants funding round packages as well as reporting functionality.

The Review team notes that DVA is enhancing the NGDB to ensure it can meet optimal operational requirements.

8.3. New IT System

The Review team has held discussions within the Department about the possibility in the future of developing a new IT system for grants and applications. This system would need to not only perform the functionality required of the existing two systems, but also provide additional functionality that has been requested by ESOs and individuals at Focus Groups and in submissions, including the capability of electronic lodgement of assisted primary claims (work towards which is already well underway within DVA) and grant applications.

Suggestions

11. The Department should continue to consider a new online IT system for grants and applications.

9. VOLUNTEERS AND PAID PRACTITIONERS

Throughout the Review, reference has been made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework/s.

Discussions and submissions reflect support for volunteerism whilst also recognising the need to retain and provide skilled advocacy and other services. There is a clear understanding of the need to get the right balance of paid and unpaid personnel as services to veterans change to meet future needs.

This needs to be considered in the following context:

- there is a number of locations that provide qualified client services without BEST salary funding; and
- It is an important underlying principle that, where needed, ESO services are to be subsidised by BEST not fully funded by BEST.

Whilst noting some submissions called for SRCA/MRCA to be administered by appropriately appointed legal representatives, the Review team believes that higher level TIP training is both adequate and appropriate. This is particularly the case given that there are many people in the current 'pool' of volunteers who are very competent and provide advocacy and support to the veteran community at an exemplary level. The Review team noted that currently only 4% of all MRCA claims have legal representation (source: DVA MRCA data).

The Review team noted ESO concerns about aligning the notion of a tiered model to simply volunteers versus paid advocates, as stated in Recommendation 8.1 in Professor Dunt's *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* which was delivered to the Government in February 2009.

The Review team shares these concerns but does accept Professor Dunt's observation that more complex work may, over time, be increasingly conducted by paid advocates. The Review team is of the opinion that effective deployment of paid personnel will increasingly rely on the establishment of Veterans Support Centres.

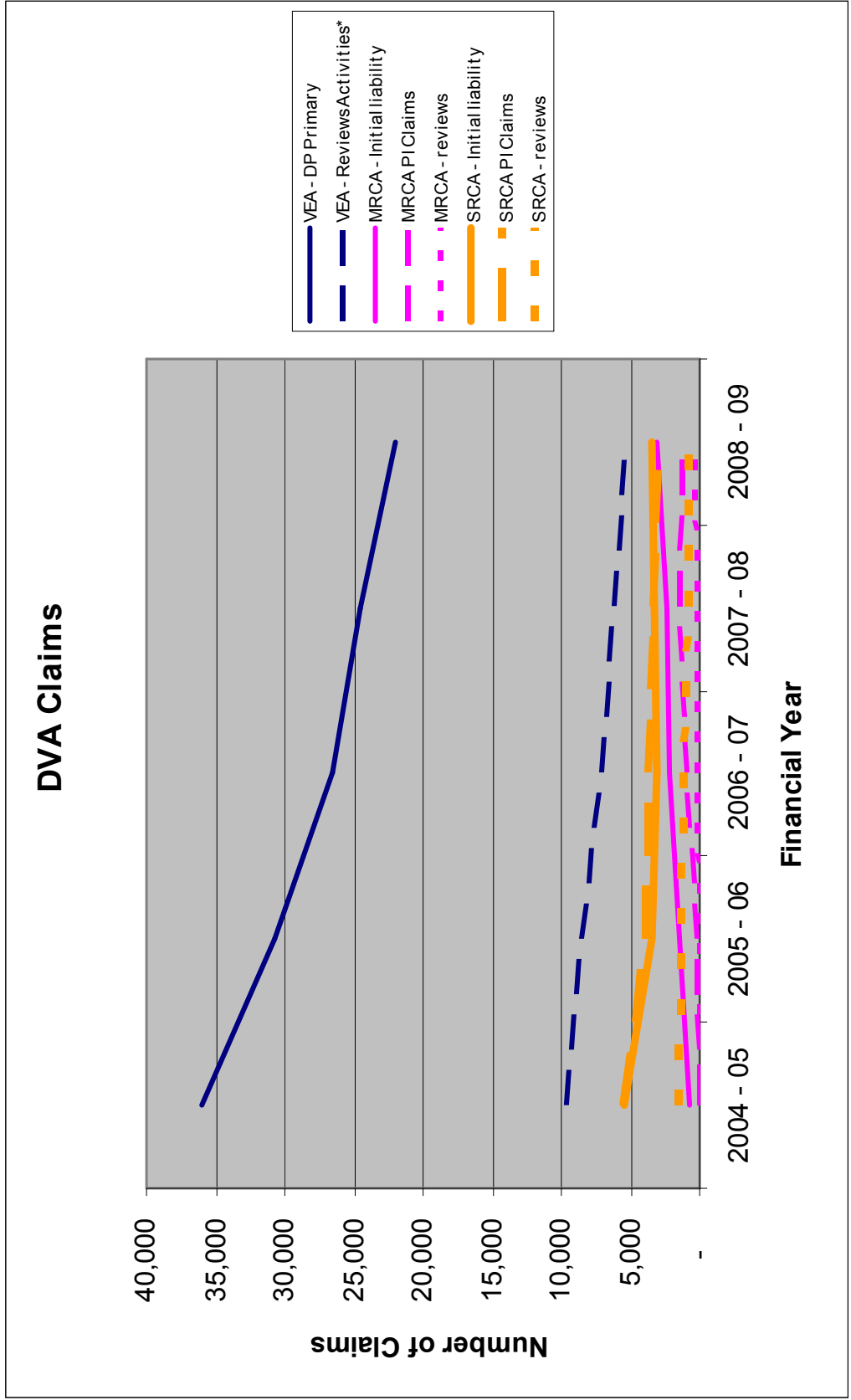
Throughout the Review reference has been made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework(s). Many ESOs have commented on the expectation that volunteers be conversant with all aspects of veteran related legislation. They argue that whilst this may be a reasonable expectation for paid practitioners it is not the case for volunteers, some of whom are reluctant to become familiar with MRCA. This issue is compounded by the fact that volunteer numbers are decreasing and are therefore, as a group, less likely to deal with the more complex claims and provide advice across the various pieces of legislation administered by DVA. Many need assistance themselves but feel pressure to continue to do their work as they feel there is no-one to take over from them.

It is reasonable to expect that volunteers should only operate within their expertise or preference. It is also expected that advocates/pension officers lacking knowledge of specific legislation will pass matters on to a qualified person. The Review team acknowledges that it is irresponsible and can be detrimental to clients for someone to try to assist outside their level of expertise.

The shift towards MRCA and away from VEA-related activity can be seen in the following graphs with:

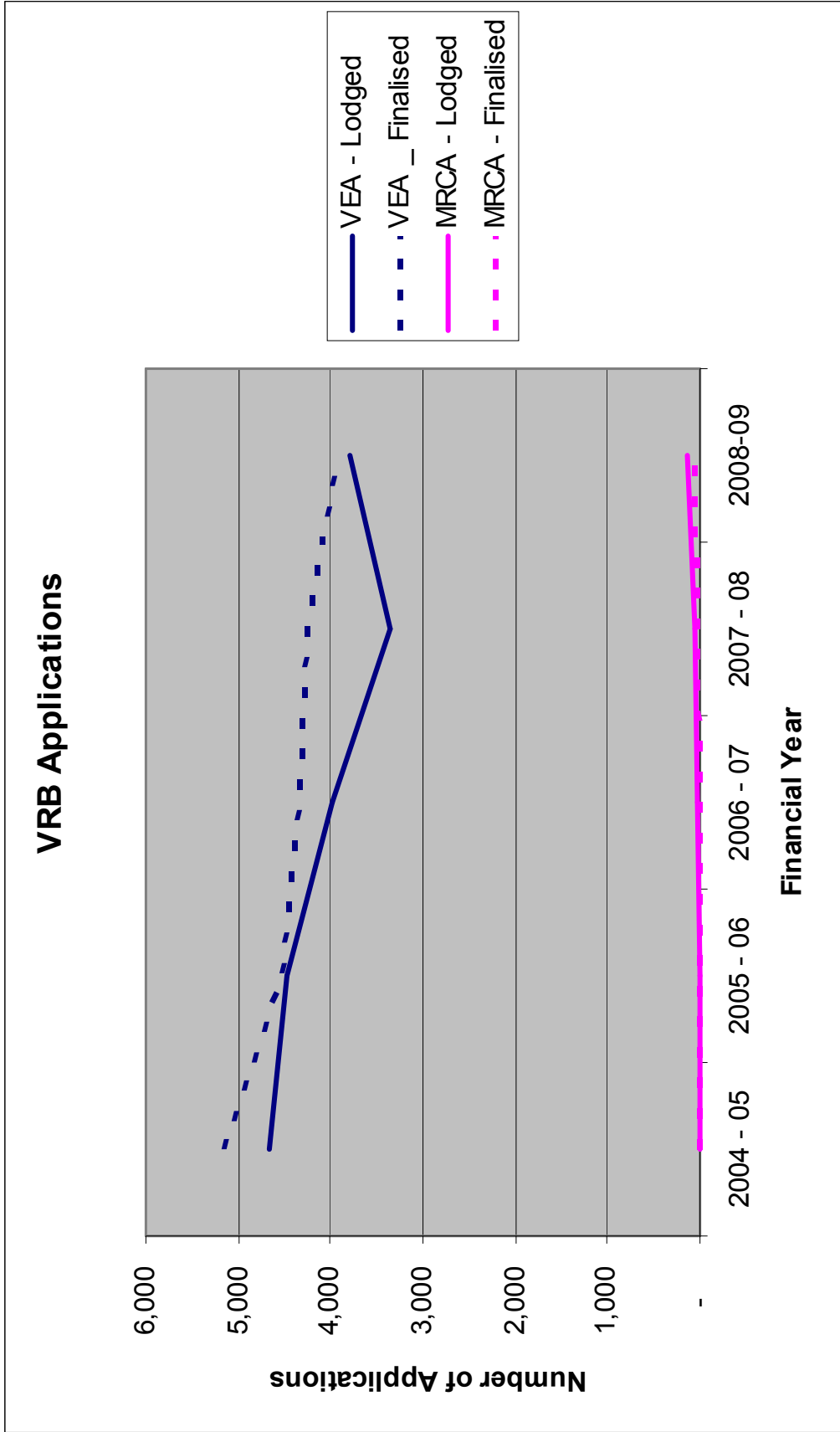
- a decrease in VEA workload over time and a marginal increase in MRCA claims (noting that, while MRCA claim numbers may be smaller they are more complex in nature which suggests that care should be exercised in drawing any simplistic conclusions from straight workload number comparisons);
- a slight increase in VRB applications over two years; and
- a decrease in VEA applications lodged with the AAT with no apparent increase yet in the volume of SRCA/MRCA applications lodged.

Graph 2 of Attachment F



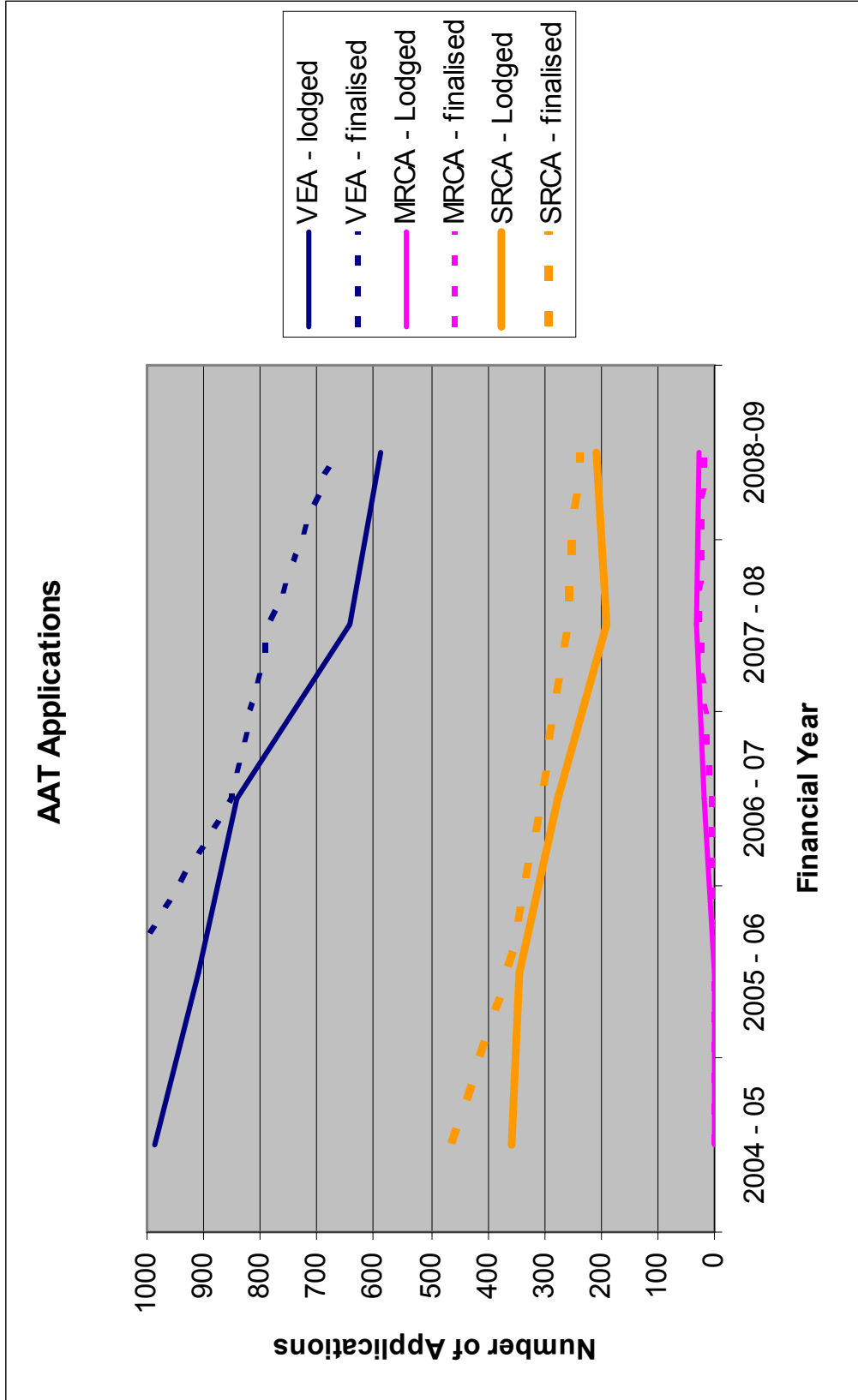
Source: Created from data within DVA Annual Reports

Graph 3 of Attachment F



Source Created from data within VRB Annual

Graph 4 of Attachment F



Source: Created from data within AAT

As previously mentioned, the Review team envisages a structure based on a matrix that encompasses nationally consistent levels and streams. In those circumstances where practitioners are remunerated this would be based on the level and stream together with overall experience and performance delivery.

The Review team proposes that the level of remuneration should be set by the employing ESO but that DVA will continue to provide guidance as to appropriate APS-equivalent salary levels which are understood to be:

- APS5 – Advocate – this level is on par with delegates/decision makers within DVA.
- APS4 – Pensioner Officers (TIP trained Levels 1 and 2).
- APS3 – Administrative Support Officers – this APS level also applies to administrative support provided under the TIP Program.

In relation to welfare officers, the Review team is of the view that these services should, in the main, be provided by volunteers. At this time, it is understood that the majority of the work by the majority of welfare officers involves more ‘social’ aspects of client care. However, it is acknowledged that there are instances where a deep knowledge of available services across federal, state and local government, or formal training qualifications, are utilised. The Review team noted that 20 welfare officers (three full-time and 17 part-time) were supported through BEST funds in Round 11. The team considers that a consistent approach should be applied when salary for welfare officers is being sought and paid by ESOs, and that an appropriate salary level is APS 3.

The Review team acknowledges that remuneration should include allowance for on-costs such as holiday leave, long service leave, superannuation and any other items as required by relevant legislation. However, consistent with the principle of subsidisation and not full payment, the Review team believes that BEST funding should not be used to meet these additional costs but that they should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.

The Review team suggests that the framework going forward should not arbitrarily draw a line between paid and unpaid personnel at work levels, or tiers as suggested in Professor Dunt’s Study. It should have regard to the particular circumstances of an ESO and service delivery needs of its veteran community, and the competency of available personnel. However, it is recognised that the more complex work may, over time, be increasingly provided by paid personnel.

Greater reliance on paid personnel could have consequences for service delivery in the future. In any event, ESOs will continue to need good, highly trained, competent and dedicated volunteers. Progression to new models of service delivery needs to recognise this skill base and respect the value of volunteers.

Suggestions

12. ESOs should determine remuneration based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA.

13. *ESOs should include on-costs in remuneration provided but these additional costs should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.*

10. WELFARE SERVICES

The Review team believes that the concept of volunteerism involves people offering to do something that they do not have to do, often without having been asked to do it, and/or without expecting payment. This is particularly relevant when considering the work of volunteer welfare officers.

The level and type of welfare services provided to the veteran community by TIP practitioners is an area of ESO activity that is increasingly difficult to evaluate or quantify. This has been recognised by TIP through the establishment of a Welfare Sub-Committee to develop and monitor progress of welfare training modules.

Discussions about what is welfare at the Focus Group sessions and in submissions provided some suggestions of activities undertaken and advice and referrals provided, these included:

- reduction of social isolation;
- promotion of local support networks;
- promotion of and referrals to community care services;
- hospital visits;
- home visits;
- prison visits;
- bereavement support and advice;
- attend funerals;
- crisis management eg PTSD and suicide prevention;
- provide support to police, ambulance officers;
- bush visits eg hermits;
- treatment principles for MRCA and those under the Repatriation Health Card Scheme for the VEA;
- health entitlements;
- discharge planning;
- DVA Rehabilitation Appliance program (RAP);
- home modifications;
- DVA HomeFront program;
- DVA Veterans Home Care program;
- respite care;
- concessions;
- transport entitlements;
- dental services;
- relationship issues;
- facilitating access to emergency relief, including financial assistance;
- injury or disease advice (when visiting in the home);
- conduct of commemorative activities.

This list is by no means comprehensive but does indicate the diverse range of activities that volunteers are providing to the veteran community. It is also

important to recognise that there are a number of community based organisations that play an important role in the delivery of welfare services. As such, effective local networking can optimise the assistance that is provided to the veteran community.

It has been mentioned in discussions that many volunteers are reluctant to record the nature of work devoted to these activities but the Review team believes that some information is required by DVA, through either hours worked or specific activities undertaken, to enable measurement of the level of activity which can be used in the assessment process for grant funding and acquittal. The data required (such as numbers of clients assisted and the type of assistance provided) should be identified in enhancements to VPAD and in any new IT system developed. In the interim, information should be supplied by grant recipients. The Review team, in recognising that the level and type of welfare services is difficult to evaluate or quantify, proposes that further needs based analysis should take place.

A list of enhancements to VPAD have been identified by the TIP community which, when implemented, will provide much needed welfare activity based data to support BEST Grant applications from ESOs.

The Review team is of the belief that despite many people volunteering their services without thought of seeking remuneration or reimbursement for costs incurred, there are many instances where some costs should be considered, eg travel, telephone and internet access, particularly in regional and remote areas where long distance travel occurs. This needs to be judged on a case by case basis and on demonstrated need. The Review team would welcome further views from ESOs on this subject.

It has been noted that ESOs may be able to access other government funding sources and services provided by community based organisations. Alignment with these other services and avoidance of unnecessary overlap was identified as an imperative for ESOs, particularly in the welfare arena.

Suggestions

14. Collect statistical data in the future to measure the level of welfare activity.

15. Utilise the statistical data as a basis for a needs-based analysis for the direction of welfare services in the future.

11. MODELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

ESOs showed a clear understanding of the need to move to a model or models that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. The Review team noted this is already happening across the country as ESOs realise the potential to support each other in their bid to provide the best services to the veteran community.

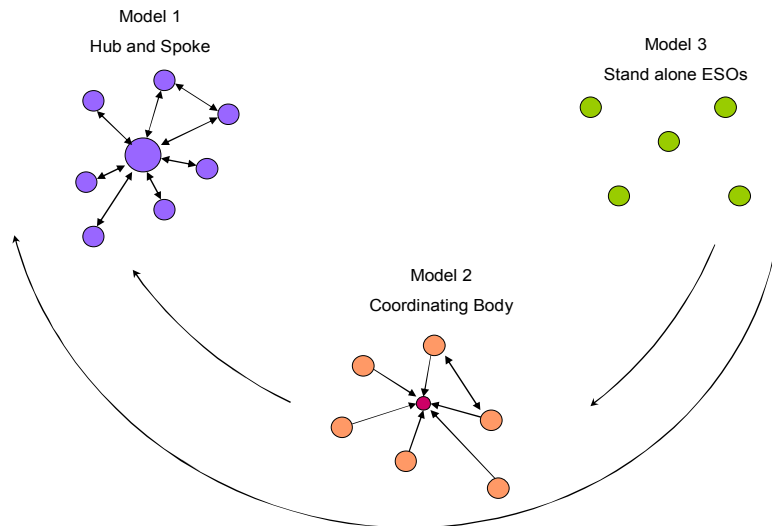
The Review team examined various models of service delivery, including outsourcing, in-sourcing and the approach being used by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) where assistance for primary claims and departmental reviews are managed within VAC, with support for further appeals to its Veterans Review and Appeals Board (VRAB) being provided by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA).

BPA is a nationwide organisation of advocates within VAC whose role is to provide free legal assistance in the preparation of applications for review or appeals and to arrange representation at hearings. All BPA advocates are lawyers and members of their respective law societies and are considered specialists in the area of disability pension claims.

The difference between the Canadian model and that in Australia is that the vast majority of assistance provided by volunteer ESO pension officers is at the primary claim level (including claims for statutory increases), notwithstanding the fact that advocates and pension officers are trained to assist at the various appeal levels, and do so with success.

The Review team believes that the Australian model whereby ex-serving members voluntarily take on a role to assist fellow veterans, war widow/er(s), dependants and serving members of the defence forces, is one that to date has worked very well, and should be continued. The very nature of this voluntary work should be valued, not understated, and continue to be supported through funding mechanisms such as the BEST grants program.

The position taken by the Review team in relation to service delivery includes the schematic diagram below which shows both the current delivery model and the proposed approach for the future. The diagram does not address the ongoing support/assistance provided by DVA through its State offices and the VAN in response to veteran pension queries. This service although difficult to quantify will continue to be a major activity for these offices.



Models for provision of advocacy and welfare services to the veteran community

Models explained

- *Currently there are versions of all 3 models identified above in operation, with most grant funding (except in Victoria) going to ESOs operating under model 3.*
- *The move towards models 1 and 2 is expected to occur over time with the reduction of volunteers willing and able to undertake pension and welfare work, along with the projected reduction in veteran numbers.*
- *While there is a preference for grant funding to be managed by a coordinating body or through a hub and spoke approach, it is recognised that not one model will suit all.*
- *It is expected that in the longer term grant funding will primarily be provided to ESOs that operate within models 1 and 2 and that a collaborative approach to service provision is the norm.*

The “hub and spoke” approach shown in Model 1 above would see a Centre (“hub”) established with ESOs and other like organisations working in a single physical locality but with responsibility for outlying ESOs (“spokes”). The mechanism for management could be through a Committee or Board of Management or some other like mechanism. A Memorandum of Understanding operating between organisations should cover ESO participation and include:

- supporting each other within the Centre;
- supporting practitioners who operate in other physical localities;
- a Code of Practice;
- a Grievance process;
- adopting the TIP Code of Ethics;
- specific privacy and confidentiality requirements; and
- identified funds accountability and reporting mechanisms.

Model 2 differs in that ESOs operate under their own banner, and through their usual home base, but where each ESO is represented on a co-ordinating body that assumes responsibility to provide mutual support (eg help desk

arrangements) and administer BEST grant funding. Practitioners across all organisations involved in the Group could come together at regular intervals to share knowledge and experience. This could occur through face-to-face meetings or regular phone or internet arrangements.

ESOs (or practitioners) establishing themselves as a Group for the purposes of integrating their service delivery for advocacy, pension claims and welfare services (including referrals) will need to consider the model under which they would like to operate.

Notwithstanding the extent to which ESO arrangements correspond to either Models 1 or 2, or variations of these, the Review team suggests the application of a common set of First Principles to apply in the administration of DVA grant funding ([Attachment B](#) refers). The First Principles could provide a guide to the establishment of governance structures and administration and management.

The Review team strongly supports these co-operative approaches but recognises that funds may still need to be provided to ESOs that could demonstrate significant levels of services to specific groups, for example Legacy and the War Widows Guild. However during the course of the Review it has been noted that at the regional level there are many instances where these organisations are working collaboratively with other local ESOs.

Wherever possible, it is suggested that funding should be provided to a lead ESO, a consortia or a management body in accordance with either Models 1 or 2, and that the First Principles are applied to ensure that:

- funds are allocated to those ESOs involved within the group; and
- best-practice accountability processes are applied, including reporting mechanisms that ensure funds allocation and expenditure has taken place in accordance with the grant application.

The premise for longer term BEST grant funding should primarily be that funds will be granted where there is an integrated approach to providing services to veterans, their spouses and/or dependants, and in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs. Equally, there needs to be ongoing recognition that allocation of funding must be flexible enough to ensure an appropriate level of assistance is able to be provided in outlying areas eg where consolidation is not an option.

Examples of models currently in operation include:

- the twenty-six Veteran Support Centres in Victoria (although the Review team recognises the progress that has been made in Victoria, the opportunity exists for further consolidation);
- the ESOs that work together and operate out of premises at the Townsville RSL Sub-branch (although BEST grants funds are provided to the individual ESOs);
- the operation managed out of Granville by the Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia; and
- the Illawarra Veterans Entitlement Service (IVES).

As well as those detailed above, there are many other Centre based approaches currently in varying forms of integration, operation or in development by ESOs.

The level of support provided by these various approaches leads logically to the establishment of a set of funding principles that could be used in deliberations of both the short and longer term recommendations of grant applications for future rounds.

Suggestions

16. Apply a common set of “First Principles” in the administration of DVA grant funding.

17. Direct BEST grant funding primarily to applicants demonstrating an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs but ensure there is sufficient flexibility to provide an appropriate level of assistance in outlying areas.

12. FUNDING PRINCIPLES AND FORMULA

There have been a number of suggestions advanced as to how funding should be determined, for example one suggestion was that criteria for funding should be based on a “fee for service” (that is, a scale of fees be established and funds provided for services delivered, eg basic consultation, preparation and lodgement of claim, additional consultations, preparation of cases for VRB/AAT). A similar suggestion was to apply a sliding scale for determining grant allocation based on a primary claim representing a set value, with additional amounts set for Section 31 and VRB reviews etc.

The Review team acknowledged that these and other suggestions had merit but on balance concluded that the Funding Principles outlined at Attachment C should apply.

It is recognised that a formula based approach may be difficult to achieve in the short term due to the lack of data sets currently available. Nevertheless, it is recommended that this approach be applied as soon as IT system developments provide sufficient data to enable the approach to be utilised.

Demonstrated sponsor support is another issue raised during the Review that needs to be considered. That is, an assessment on a case by case basis during the grant assessment process with a need to recognise that BEST grants “assist” rather than fully fund ESO operations. Accordingly, the capacity of ESOs to contribute to total service costs needs to be taken into consideration bearing in mind the variable levels of ESO and other sponsor support that are available.

An indication of the Funding Formula to be applied is also provided in Attachment C.

Suggestion

18. Apply a set of Funding Principles and, in the longer term, a Funding Formula based on demographic data, service delivery needs and sponsor support.

13. REGIONAL BASIS FOR FUNDING INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY

In its deliberations, the Review team has analysed available data (refer [Attachment D](#)), and supporting Charts and Graphs ([Attachment F](#)). Drawing on this data, it is suggested that the move to a co-ordinated approach by ESOs to the delivery of advocacy and welfare services to veterans (ie Models 1 or 2) be supported through grant funding.

The Review team has examined the possibility of targeting funding to support integrated service delivery based on demographic and geographical information – that is, looking at data such as veteran population, information and service needs, numbers of claims and appeals, and ESO presence in particular regions. This provides a background – or “map” – to identify and address the issues and challenges inherent in establishing a “hub and spoke” approach.

In considering the option of mapping to establish a regional breakdown to determine where Veteran Support Centres could be located, various models were considered. These included using Federal Electorates, Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Veterans’ Home Care (VHC) regions, and taking into consideration the location of Veterans’ Affairs Network (VAN) offices which will be integral to the support provided by the Department during implementation.

The approach considered most appropriate to apply is a combination of 2009 Statistical Districts (as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics) and LGAs to enable analysis and planning at a much greater level of detail. It is also appropriate to have regard to any collaborative work that has been undertaken already by Deputy Commissioners and ESOs in each State/Territory.

The Review team believes the 2009 ABS Statistical Districts could be considered to be “Districts”, however a Veteran Support Centre may not necessarily be required for each District. While there would be instances where one District is a Region, in other instances more than one District could form a Region or there may be more than one Region within a District (eg in metropolitan areas). As outlined above, the key variables here are population density, geographical distance, ESO locations and workload volumes.

When determining a Region, the Review team is also of the view that State boundaries should not necessarily form a hard line. Examples of this could be along the borders of NSW (Albury) and VIC (Wodonga) which could conceivably be a single Region, and similarly with the Gold Coast and Tweed Heads.

This paper provides examples of maps using the approach mentioned above to arrive at suggested Regions across Australia. These can be found at [Attachment E](#).

The Review team notes that the NSW Deputy Commissioner along with key ESOs represented on the NSW Consultative Forum have been working over the past few months to establish stakeholder forums throughout the State. The location of ESOs, the VAN presence in NSW and transport hubs and linkages were used to determine the regional areas for the stakeholder forums. The Review team believes that, although the areas that have been identified do not necessarily align with the ABS Statistical Districts, they do form an appropriate starting point.

The Review team has noted the progress being made in ESO collaboration in a number of locations and believes that this should be supported and accommodated within the suggested regional boundaries.

ESOs responses to this paper and the suggested approach and maps that have been provided will be critical in the decisions as to how ESOs are funded to achieve integrated service delivery into the future.

Suggestions

19. Request ESOs to provide a critical analysis of the suggested regional approach.

14. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

As can be seen in the above commentary, the Review team has made a number of observations which are reflected below in very general terms.

The Review team believes that the Australian model whereby ex-serving members voluntarily take on a role to assist in claims preparation is one that to date has worked very well and should be continued. The very nature of this voluntary work should be valued, not understated, and continue to be supported through funding mechanisms such as the BEST grants program.

TIP is vital in maintaining the distinctive relationship that DVA and ESOs have in the provision of welfare and advocacy services. The Review considers that the progress towards nationally consistent TIP training modules should be supported and that eLearning should be advanced in the context of the overall training framework and complemented with face to face training, case studies and mentoring.

The Review team believes there should be a move to the adoption of a Competency Based Training (CBT) framework that is merit based, encompasses eLearning and includes exercise-based assessment. There should be minimum course standards and a tiered structure for practitioners based on a matrix which reflects nationally consistent levels and streams. The DVA quality assurance framework should be deployed to ensure provision of feedback.

The Review team considers that TIP committee structures and governance should be in line with best practice, and specified in agreed and documented principles. The Review team believes that in adhering to the requirements of a

CBT framework, ESOs should maintain a list of practitioners who are available to assist the veteran community.

ESO mentoring needs to be strengthened through a policy that provides a framework for the support of advocates, pensions and welfare officers.

In regard to **BEST**, it was considered that there is a need for transparent, better informed, evidence based processes for grants assessment. Some ESOs have a sound financial base and a capacity to contribute to supporting advocacy and welfare, and some also have access to other funding sources and to other related or even overlapping services. Accordingly there is a strong argument for income and assets means testing with funds matching criteria.

The Review team believes that rent and utilities should not be included in the funding criteria. In cases where rent is already provided, a case by case assessment should be undertaken.

In relation to grant funding for salaries or wages, the Review team thought that a maximum of 80% of the quantum of funds available should be allocated for this purpose with that quantum to be reducing by Round 14. This represents an adequate transition period.

In line with the need for transparency and accountability, the Review team believes that all grant guidelines (TIP, BEST and V&CG) should be revised and the BEST application form reviewed to reflect funding streams for National ESOs (the old GIA Program). It was also thought there should be a three (3) year funding cycle for salary/wages with an opportunity for reassessment during the annual acquittal process. Contrary to some views, there does not appear to be a need to move the requirement for financial audits from a financial to a calendar year basis.

In considering grants to National ESOs, (**GIA**) the Review team found that, although ESOs may not have experienced any substantial disadvantage by the approach to Round 11 BEST funding, better definition of the funding stream within BEST for support to National ESOs should be provided.

In looking at **V&CG** administration, the Review team concluded that funding rounds should be reduced from three (3) to two (2), commencing 2011/2012.

The availability and use of **data** is fundamental to effective service delivery and efficient deployment of grant funds. To this end, discussion took place on either the enhancement or replacement of the current **VPAD** system. Shortfalls in current data were noted and this needs to be addressed to improve and assist in future planning and positioning of services. The ultimate success of the emerging Veteran Support Centre approach is very much intertwined with developments in this area.

In considering the role of **volunteers** and how **paid and unpaid** practitioners work together, the Review team shares the concerns of ESOs about aligning a tiered model simply to the construct of "paid versus unpaid". However, it is believed that more complex work will, over time, be increasingly performed by

paid personnel and that remuneration should be determined by the employing ESOs based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA. The Review also considered that transition towards more paid practitioners should be handled carefully and with sensitivity to the needs and concerns of volunteers. The Review team recognises that regardless of who delivers services, the most important issue is the quality of those services.

In considering the provision of **welfare services**, the Review team considered it important to recognise that volunteerism, by its very nature, involves people offering services without expectation of payment. The Review team did recognise that there should be some scope to recompense volunteers for some out of pocket expenses. It is considered important to recognise there are organisations other than ESOs that play a key role in the delivery of welfare services and both alignment and networking with these organisations is desirable. The Review team recognises that the level and type of welfare services is difficult to evaluate or quantify and further needs based analysis may be necessary.

In considering **service delivery models** it is recognised that ESOs have a very clear understanding of the need to move to a model(s) that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. There is evidence of this already happening across the country and that current practice can be represented as conforming to three (3) current models, characterised as stand alone, “hub and spoke” and co-ordinated services. Irrespective of whether a “hub and spoke” or co-ordinated approach is adopted, the Review team offers some first principles to guide governance, administration and management.

There is a continued need for funds to be provided to organisations demonstrating a significant level of services to specific groups such as those provided by Legacy and the War Widows Guild. The Review team did note that these groups often work closely with other ESOs at the local level.

The basic premise that should apply is that monies should in large part be granted where there is an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers. The level of support of existing and prospective Veteran Support Centres leads logically to **funding principles** and application of a **funding formula**.

To achieve integration of service delivery, the Review team has provided State and Territory maps identifying ABS Districts and a suggested **regional basis** for grant funding. ESO views on this approach are sought.

Future interaction with the veteran community was seen as very important, particularly the existing **ESO Reference Group** arrangements, both at the National and State levels. These consultative arrangements have a clear role in facilitating ESO co-operation in working towards the integration of new service delivery arrangements.

15. SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS

1. *Develop a competency-based training framework in which assessment and certification of trainees is merit based.*
2. *In the delivery and continued development of TIP courses:*
 - 2.1. *ensure nationally consistent training modules are provided to participants;*
 - 2.2. *develop minimum course standards;*
 - 2.3. *provide brief introductory training to gauge the longer term interest, intent and capability of course participants;*
 - 2.4. *ensure a component on interview techniques is provided at each level; and*
 - 2.5. *ensure the Level 1 Welfare Course is undertaken by all TIP practitioners.*
3. *Endorse a tiered matrix-based structure for TIP practitioners.*
4. *In relation to TIP governance:*
 - 4.1. *develop DVA guidelines so that TIP Committee structures and governance reflect best practice;*
 - 4.2. *strengthen mentoring by developing a policy framework to support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers;*
 - 4.3. *require trainees to specify an ESO or other suitable mentor - where available - on TIP course nomination forms;*
 - 4.4. *deploy the existing Quality Assurance system within DVA to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs;*
 - 4.5. *require State TIP Chairs to maintain a current list of all TIP practitioners in their State and their qualifications (to ensure refresher training is undertaken for VITA professional indemnity), with DVA and the public able to access those lists for relevant purposes;*
 - 4.6. *require ESOs to maintain a list of local TIP practitioners for referral purposes, with DVA and the public able to access the lists for relevant purposes;*
 - 4.7. *issue a TIP photoID to all trained practitioners.*
5. *Continue DVA funding of TIP training, including extending the development and provision of eLearning modules.*
6. *Encourage TIP practitioners to continue contact with Defence establishments and in their role within the IPSS framework.*
7. *In relation to BEST funding:*
 - 7.1. *utilise per capita allocations to each State as the core determinant for BEST grant funding;*
 - 7.2. *revise the funding criteria for BEST grants in the context of the “First Principles”, “Funding Principles” and “Funding Formula” and reflect that:*
 - 7.2.1 *any support through BEST for rental costs should be considered on a case-by-case basis;*
 - 7.2.2 *grant funds should not be provided for the cost of utilities;*

- 7.2.3 *in the short term, a maximum of 80% of BEST funding be set for salary and wages, to be assessed during that time to ensure a real reduction by Round 14; and*
- 7.2.4 *in the short term, a minimum of 20% of BEST funds be 'partitioned' for consumables, internet access, computer equipment etc and for use in an emergency – to be reviewed in line with the target set in 7.2.3;*
- 7.3. *introduce a three (3) year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages with annual acquittal and an opportunity to adjust annually;*
- 7.4. *continue to provide consumables and capital equipment through an annual funding cycle; and*
- 7.5. *in the development of the funding formula, build in factors for:*
 - 7.5.1 *encouraging the further extension of integrated service delivery models (including Veteran Support Centres);*
 - 7.5.2 *reflecting a level of sponsor contribution (including means testing and "matching"); and*
 - 7.5.3 *reflecting other sources of funding and services provided through other organisations.*
- 8. *Strengthen the administration of the BEST Program by:*
 - 8.1. *the BEST guidelines being revised and updated, and the application form amended and made available online; and*
 - 8.2. *utilising the current grant performance objectives with grant reporting to be on a six-monthly basis.*
- 9. *For grant funding under BEST for National ESOs, ensure that:*
 - 9.1. *the funding stream for grants specifically for National ESOs (former GIA program) is clearly articulated in the BEST guidelines;*
 - 9.2. *total funding available is specified; and*
 - 9.3. *distribution of funds is appropriately targeted, equitable and needs-based.*
- 10. *Clarify V&CG funding so that:*
 - 10.1. *per capita allocations to each State are the core determinant for V&CG grant funding; and*
 - 10.2. *funding rounds are reduced to two (2) by 2011/2012.*
- 11. *The Department should continue to consider a new online IT system for grants and applications.*
- 12. *ESOs should determine remuneration based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA.*
- 13. *ESOs should include on-costs in remuneration provided but these additional costs should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.*
- 14. *Collect statistical data in the future to measure the level of welfare activity.*
- 15. *Utilise the statistical data as a basis for a needs-based analysis for the direction of welfare services in the future.*

- 16. Apply a common set of "First Principles" in the administration of DVA grant funding.*
- 17. Direct BEST grant funding primarily to applicants demonstrating an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs but ensure there is sufficient flexibility to provide an appropriate level of assistance in outlying areas.*
- 18. Apply a set of Funding Principles and, in the longer term, a Funding Formula based on demographic data, service delivery needs and sponsor support.*
- 19. Request ESOs to provide a critical analysis of the suggested regional approach.*

ATTACHMENT A – Consolidated Comments from ESOs

The following is an overview of the views expressed by ESOs during the course of the Review. It is not exhaustive and in formalising their recommendations the Review team has had regard to the full and detailed analysis they have undertaken of the comments provided at the face to face consultations and those contained in the written submissions that were received.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The extent of demographic challenges has been frequently mentioned. These can be located on a continuum with the needs of younger veterans at one end and the increasing need for effective referral to aged care/community services at the other. Some of the comments made were along the following lines:

- a) younger veterans are often not aware of their service and legislative entitlements;
- b) spouses of younger veterans have very strong expectations and are challenging for advocates;
- c) 80,000 deployments since Vietnam have resulted in significant and increasing needs but many in this cohort are not well organised;
- d) need to support younger veterans in the face of complex needs and legislation; and
- e) ageing clients are requiring greater levels of personal support.

BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORT AND TRAINING (BEST)

BEST is seen by many as the most significant resource available in meeting the needs of the veteran community, and along with TIP is a vital component of overall support. Comments about its strengths were frequent and included:

- a) funding has been very beneficial to assist organisations with the provision of computer, printer, software and administrative assistance; and
- b) the direction of funding to Veteran Support Centres would increase the probability of claims being accepted and reduce the out of pocket impost on volunteers.

More critical observations were:

- a) increasing numbers of BEST applications chasing finite dollars;
- b) absence of the facility to lodge applications electronically;
- c) delay in BEST grant approvals;
- d) a general lack of DVA monitoring of claims submitted and provision of feedback;
- e) lack of ESO accountability, quality assurance and support to advocates and pension officers;
- f) absence of performance indicators;
- g) the current system fails to meet the needs of veterans in remote areas;
- h) concern that centralisation may mean that veterans may miss out on some services; and
- i) priority should be to retain motivated pension officers through respecting their efforts rather than needing to centralise ESOs.

Perceived needs included:

- a) better funding strategies and feedback mechanisms;

- b) rent, electricity and other costs being permitted where necessary as an essential element in supporting pension and advocacy work;
- c) better outcomes data and clear measurable objectives;
- d) support for necessary administrative assistance;
- e) support for VRB attendance;
- f) fair proportion of funding to war widows; and
- g) priority for funds to those advocates dealing with MRCA (consistent with the need to shift focus from compensation to rehabilitation).

There has been recognition that grant assessment processes need to recognise the capacity of ESOs to contribute to total service costs whilst taking into account the variable levels of ESO and other sponsor support that are available.

Comments made include:

- a) income and asset means testing should apply when prioritising grants;
- b) organisations with funds in excess of \$1million should not receive grant monies; and
- c) there is a need to focus on the needs of smaller organisations.

However it was reported that organisations sometimes viewed as well off may have their assets tied up in capital such as housing/property therefore monies are not readily accessible for ongoing services.

GRANTS-IN-AID (GIA)

Comments received included:

- a) GIA grants should be separate from BEST grants;
- b) a belief that complications have arisen through rolling in GIA;
- c) GIA could be consolidated into BEST but that funding should be separately identified and guidelines should clarify who is able to apply for this funding;
- d) funds need to be quarantined to ensure BEST funds are not transferred from BEST to support national ESOs;
- e) grants should not cover running costs of a national ESO;
- f) funds should be prioritised so that ESOs without commercial backing have the first call on funds;
- g) grants should only go to national ESOs with a significant body of members;
- h) that a grant funding formula be used; and
- i) that acquittals need to be tightened to ensure grants are used for the purpose for which they were given.

VETERAN AND COMMUNITY (V&C) GRANTS

There has been general acceptance of current arrangements for V&C Grants but mention has been made of the need to consider both current funding criteria and to evaluate the outcomes that are being achieved. Specific comments include:

- a) V&C grants should be retained but closely monitored and directed at projects with significant veteran involvement;
- b) current frequency of rounds provides for requirements that may present at short notice;
- c) there is a need to recognise that new organisations will need to access funding to perform a critical role for their specific constituencies;
- d) an increase in funding is needed in line with actual costs;

- e) eligible items need to be reviewed at the beginning of each funding round, at present there is narrow focus and no flexibility for innovative ideas;
- f) program could be aimed at younger members, their wives and children;
- g) the criteria for grants and application documentation should be simplified;
- h) use of grant funds to provide training for ESO managers in organisational and financial administration to provide confidence in their management skills and abilities;
- i) grants should be of value to wider cohort than the veteran community; and
- j) V&C grants should be more widely utilised by Veteran Support Centres and they should co-exist with other grants, all complimenting each other to successfully obtain necessary objectives.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Throughout the Review, there has been a level of interest in changes to funding cycles, funding criteria and administrative arrangements, eg recurrent funding with yearly reviews, timeliness of funds allocation, rolling programs together and keeping grants to National and State ESOs discrete. Specific comments were made along the following lines:

- a) the inability to plan beyond the next BEST round creates inefficiencies and can lead to excessive staff turnover;
- b) in relation to funding cycles a broad range of views were received, including:
 - a funding cycle of at least 3 years would provide certainty of tenure and enable professional training and development;
 - support for 3-5 year rolling cycles where funds are acquitted annually with an opportunity to adjust where necessary;
 - commitment to funding ESOs over 3 years could impact negatively on other prospective projects;
 - applications should be submitted annually and reviewed quarterly for supplementary funding if necessary;
 - funding for salaries/wages to be long term whereas monies for equipment and consumables to be annual;
 - annual grants provide better accountability and allow DVA to meet changing government budgetary provisions; and
 - longer term grants are able to identify purpose and outcomes;
- c) there is a need to assist members and constituents with representation at Regional and State forums;
- d) DVA should move away from an applications approach and replace this with a planning approach where grants are distributed according to services provided (based on numbers) whilst still encompassing specific proposals from organisations;
- e) preference for a less competitive system capable of covering the operating costs of volunteers, their accommodation, technical and administrative support;
- f) funding should be outcome based and reflect not only cases supported but also lobbying, social support, welfare work and the intellectual and independent advice ESOs offers Government;
- g) rent and utilities should be included, removal of utilities and rental has made it difficult to sustain a regional centre to assist all veterans therefore many committees and practitioners operate from private residences;
- h) suggestion that criteria for funding should be based on a “fee for service” basis – that is, a scale of fees be established and funds provided for

- services delivered, eg basic consultation, preparation and lodgement of claim, additional consultations, preparation of cases for VRB/AAT;
- i) suggestions that there should be sliding scale for determining grant allocation, eg primary claim a set value then an additional amount for Section 31 reviews, VRB reviews etc;
 - j) there should be transparency in the grants approval process; and
 - k) grants should properly support the work of volunteers.

APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Comment has been made to the Review team about the need to have better informed processes for grants and for assessments to be more evidence based. This involves the need for better data (eg ESO membership numbers is not a valid basis compared to numbers of veterans supported and services provided), development of workload indicators, assessment of applications (particularly the validity of data provided) and reporting processes.

There has been a very high level of recognition at all levels for the importance of transparency and accountability in the management of BEST, TIP and V&C grants.

Forms and documentation have also attracted a great deal of comment. These vary and at one level there are concerns about the demands that are placed on volunteers whilst the need has also been expressed for more guidance and prescription in completing documentation, eg around welfare reporting.

Comments made by some included that administrative processes, guidelines, forms and assessment processes are adequate and there is no need for change.

More generally comments were along the following lines:

- a) guidelines, application process and forms, assessment and notification processes should be streamlined with emphasis on funding going to the right place for work actually carried out. Forms should be more user friendly and figures supplied should be validated;
- b) applications forms change every year as does terminology, annual acquittal requirements present difficulties and there is a case for 3 year funding with continued quarterly reporting;
- c) electronic lodgement of BEST applications is preferred, essential forms should be available on the DVA website and able to be completed and submitted electronically;
- d) forms often not applicable for type of funding being sought, need to be on-line, administration cumbersome, quotes out-of-date by time received, annual audit of ESOs could encompass audits of grant funds;
- e) concerns regarding lack of DVA advice on relevant progress reports or acquittals;
- f) higher performance should be recognised in considering continuation or for a new grant;
- g) existing quarterly reports tedious to complete, perhaps an annual on-site DVA audit more useful;
- h) grant funding should be transparent, accountable, include acquittal using measurable outcomes. Claims numbers should be identified and quality and

- performance measured and assessed. Future funding should depend on prior performance, if benchmark not met then no funds;
- i) performance indicators for grant funding are necessary and could include number of claims, number of appeals, TIP training undertaken, welfare activities, numbers of clients, reduction in time taken to prepare certificates for VRB cases, maintenance of skills standards, plus other reporting requirements depending on the content of the grant application;
 - j) claims should be subject to minimum guidelines regarding the time taken, eg primary claims up to 2 hours 45 minutes, a VRB hearing from 10 hours to 15 hours, an AAT hearing from 20 hours to 24 hours;
 - k) departmental monitoring to assist volunteers to become productivity focussed;
 - l) DVA needs to appoint a grants coordinator in each State who can inspect ESOs in regard to grant funds; and
 - m) DVA to:
 - evaluate grants made in the previous year;
 - ensure all documentation is received (failure to produce a financial acquittal, quarterly or annual report, should jeopardise future assistance under BEST;
 - consider performance of grantee against objectives of grant;
 - analyse impact of quality and throughput of claims; and
 - include results achieved in DVA's Annual Report.

IT SYSTEMS – TECHNICAL SUPPORT

There have been a number of views expressed about the Veterans Practitioner Activity Data base (VPAD). These have been around the extent to which it is used or not and the reasons why, the need for enhancements to proceed and the level of ongoing support that is necessary. These comments have been made in the context of a broader discussion of the need for IT systems to inform funding, activities and acquittal processes. Critical comments included that currently:

- a) the accuracy of output and ability to produce reports is questionable;
- b) the system is time consuming, difficult to use, and both data entry and extract are cumbersome;
- c) the system is not supported with appropriate training;
- d) there is an absence of on-going technical support; and
- e) VPAD is directed more at veterans than widow(er)s and as a consequence it is not useful for Legacy advocates.

However there were some more positive views:

- a) it provides enough detail to adequately case manage submissions on behalf of veterans; and
- b) it can generate a BEST report.

But even where there was positive input there were a number of suggestions as to how it could be improved by being:

- a) expanded to include measurement of all activity;
- b) supported by an advertised help desk; and
- c) updated to provide all information pertinent to funding requirements.

In general terms there was recognition that:

- a) the plethora of alternative systems that have emerged should be reigned in;

- b) emphasis in the future should be about having the facility to enter claims and other information on-line;
- c) opportunities needed to be explored for bringing the application process and case management together;
- d) the current system should be modified to include quality indicators relating to service delivery/ performance management;
- e) eTechnology should be utilised to provide a reliable and current information flow;
- f) VPAD or its successor should be utilised to reflect outcomes being achieved and to provide an accountability platform as well as streamlining assessment and accountability procedures; and
- g) the current system should be either subject to significant enhancement or it should be withdrawn and replaced with a more user friendly system that has the necessary functionality.

ESO INTEGRATION

From discussions held, ESOs show a clear understanding of the need to move to a model or models of service delivery that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. Some general points made in support of Veteran Support Centres included:

- recognition that resources (human and equipment) need to be optimised;
- funding needs to match the service needs of veterans in particular locations;
- establishment of new Centres may need specific additional support; and
- any new model or models need to have regard to the needs of veterans in all locations.

It was felt that incentives should be provided to those ESOs that join with others to develop “combined Service Centres”, the strengths of which were commented on as follows:

- a) grants can be targeted to those in need of funding;
- b) the model as operating in Victoria provides a sound basis to deliver consistency of standards and the orderly location of resources;
- c) the Townsville RSL Sub-branch was also seen as a very good example;
- d) it is an approach better geared to provide services that involve VEA, SRCA and MRCA;
- e) it supports the provision of timely advice;
- f) these Centres can be further developed to enhance efficiency, better allocation of funding and transparency of resource usage;
- g) the Centre model serves all veterans and widows;
- h) it addresses issue of diminishing numbers of volunteers and allows for sharing of resources and knowledge sharing;
- i) it provides critical mass for grant funding and can facilitate in-house training; and
- j) it provides an effective and efficient model with a capacity for outreach and mentoring where core effort can be borne by full or part time paid staff, supported by qualified volunteers.

Concerns raised included that:

- a) shared resources need to be looked at very carefully as issues of privacy and security of files arise;

- b) the focus of the Review may be on the elimination of small service providers and on saving costs;
- c) the Review is an attempt to centralise activities to areas that are more suitable to major ESOs;
- d) internal politics may impact on sharing of resources with larger ESOs monopolising funding;
- e) the Veteran Centre approach has merit but is subject to individuals and the relative strength of organisations;
- f) the needs of widows and children are unlikely to be met;
- g) no ESO is going to look favourably at a concept where they lose their ability to provide services to their existing constituency;
- h) the idea is good in theory but difficult in practice as there is a need to resolve questions as to who is responsible for funds;
- i) grants are often small and sharing is not always practical;
- j) set up costs may be prohibitive;
- k) it would difficult to set up Centre such as in Victoria elsewhere because of logistics, geography and current limitations of facilities eg. North Brisbane;
- l) it is important to maintain an alcohol and gambling free environment as an alternative to RSLs;
- m) centralisation will see many trained and experienced Pension and Welfare Officers lost because of travelling requirements; and
- n) amalgamating small sub-branches may be a big mistake with the likelihood of losing highly trained volunteers who like to work from their own office.

One particular organisation has commented that:

- disadvantages could be created by the current grants process which favours Veteran Centres;
- partnerships and sharing of resources under joint ventures are supported but it cautions against a one size fits all approach;
- they believe partnerships already exist in many areas at a local level where most benefit can be gained; and
- they are of the view that Veteran Support Centres on their own do not facilitate a whole of life approach to advocacy and welfare support.

Although the above concerns were raised, there was a clear recognition of a need to move to a more integrated approach and many organisations identified the opportunities that would arise. These included:

- a) the creation of regional centres where ESOs are allowed to 'tender' for the provision of salaried duties to the veteran community;
- b) opportunities to work with government and business and properly structure available resources;
- c) the ability to deploy nationally accessible panels of people with necessary skills thus supporting soundly based outreach;
- d) a suggestion that five (5) groups could be strategically placed within VAN office regions in NSW with each operating autonomously and sharing intellectual assets and services to smaller ESOs within their region;
- e) another suggestion for ESOs working together on neutral ground deploying a model of operations that allows ESOs to be autonomous and goal specific in relation to service delivery (practitioners not needing to abandon their ESO but become a member of a 'guild' that provides peer support and shared intellectual assets);

- f) mutual support centres with an independent Board of Management through an initial steering committee consisting of RSL, Legacy, VVF and APPMA, formed in each region with local VAN providing Secretariat role; and
- g) the concept of a Regional Veterans Centres (perhaps 2 to 3 in the NSW Northern Rivers Region) and joint service hubs in other significant towns. The RSL could perhaps chair a preliminary identification of needs, a preliminary service delivery capability analysis, the formation of at least one Veteran Support Centre, formalise joint service hubs, allow for an extensive transition period.

It was felt that in order to achieve integration it may be necessary to:

- a) accept that such an approach would only work within an independent shopfront style environment and that workload should be examined to ensure it was shared to reduce the likelihood of burnout;
- b) have a separate allocation of DVA funds for resource issues such as rooms, computers, telephones and other items;
- c) have statistical data from DVA to develop strategic service delivery plans with demographics a key consideration;
- d) have ownership and equality so that no one ESO could dominate;
- e) ensure that structures and demographics are taken into account and there is a necessary emphasis on supporting the needs of small ESOs serving rural and remote localities; and
- f) disregard negative views and look at what has made others work, and the overall benefits such as self esteem through self help, moving from dependence to involvement, shared experience, shared insurance cover, co-operative culture, having a national system of Veteran Centres and better prospects of effective quality assurance.

PAID AND UNPAID PRACTITIONERS

The discussions that were held and the submissions received reflected support for volunteerism but also recognised the need to retain and provide skilled advocacy and other services. There is an understanding of the need to get the right balance between paid and unpaid personnel as services provided to veterans transition into the future.

The Review has noted concerns about aligning the notion of a tiered model to simply paid versus unpaid. At the same time it is evident that more complex work may, over time, be increasingly conducted by paid personnel.

Comments in support of volunteerism included that:

- a) volunteers have a role to play at all levels and that adequate services could not be provided without them; and
- b) volunteers are currently working alongside paid employees in a cohesive and harmonious manner that is leading to improved delivery of services, capability and legislative knowledge.

However, there was also general recognition of the challenges in maintaining a volunteer workforce. These included that:

- a) the volunteer base is ageing;
- b) some volunteers only work a few hours per week;
- c) volunteers are being lost because of the:

- trend to remain in paid employment longer,
 - barriers such as police checks,
 - moves to accreditation,
 - liability issues in a litigious society, and
 - expanded general community demands on volunteers;
- d) younger vets are trained and practise in basic pensions and welfare but often subsequently disengage; and
- e) ageing clients require greater levels of personal support.

These lead to increasing pressures for paid employees and comments were made to the effect that:

- a) there is a need to ensure that salaried persons are fully trained in all areas ie VEA, MRCA, SRCA and welfare matters;
- b) paid practitioners can mentor volunteers;
- c) paid advocates have very good results, as good if not better than those legally trained;
- d) paid personnel need to have performance measures to justify funding and should be tertiary qualified;
- e) there are added dimensions to consider with paid and unpaid practitioners working together in bringing issues of experience, knowledge and mentoring; and
- f) some paid representatives provide excellent service but unpaid volunteers also very necessary.

Summary comments were along the following lines:

- a) it will be beneficial to see an increase in the number of paid practitioners operating generally through Veteran Centres which in turn support regional outreach programs and continued active encouragement of volunteers;
- b) ever increasing complexity in legislation, reporting and administrative requirements, changes in technology and structural issues all contribute to the need to replace volunteers with paid staff;
- c) work carried out by paid officers should not disadvantage volunteers;
- d) transition requires good highly trained competent dedicated volunteers;
- e) progression to a new model should recognise the existing volunteer skill base;
- f) an effective transition program should respect the values and competence of volunteers;
- g) an appropriate balance must be found in transitioning to the future; and
- h) a view that ESOs can operate effectively if all levels of pension officers are volunteers with supervisory staff being paid thus ensuring DVA money is well spent because effectiveness comes from the strength of support and supervision.

LEGISLATION

Throughout the Review reference has been made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework(s).

Some observations were made to the effect that:

- a) currently, trained people were able to cover all legislation;

- b) all practitioners need to be trained in all legislation thus avoiding specialisation and inefficient workload management; and
- c) widely held familiarity of legislation will ensure necessary support for veterans.

It was generally felt that:

- a) it was problematic for all practitioners to cover all the legislation;
- b) there is a reluctance for those trained in VEA to become familiar with MRCA;
- c) there are differences and confusion in processing various Acts within DVA;
- d) DVA should transfer rather than return incorrect lodgements;
- e) training needs to adequately cover all legislation;
- f) younger veterans need to be aware of their rights under MRCA which in turn raises question of ESO access to Military Bases;
- g) there is a need to consider whether accreditation requires competence in all legislation;
- h) a Veteran Centre approach could facilitate necessary access to broadly based expertise and advice; and
- i) legislative requirements underpin the argument for more paid personnel.

WELFARE SERVICES

The increasing importance of welfare services was the subject of considerable input. Comments have been made to the effect that:

- a) overall pension activity is decreasing but MRCA and welfare activity is increasing;
- b) welfare may include support and advice or simply be about encouraging those suffering social isolation, advising on entitlement issues, causal relationships of injury or disease, recreation transport, funeral benefits, bereavement payment, payment of medical expenses privately incurred, qualifying service, home care and to promote local support networks and community care services;
- c) welfare services can differ in each rural and remote locality;
- d) some Veteran Centres were set up to assist pension work and they have no desire to work in the welfare field;
- e) the thrust of the work these days is in the welfare arena;
- f) reservists are a 'forgotten' group (deployed in battle groups not units) and return to Australia with no particular ESO to look after them;
- g) welfare needs to be broadly defined in terms of complex needs, including counselling and referral, which in turn requires trained and professionally qualified workers;
- h) the main role of welfare officers is to liaise with hospitals, bereavements, home visits – the role is not to directly service but make the necessary contacts; and
- i) what constitutes welfare services requires a full needs analysis.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION PROGRAM (TIP)

The Review team has been made aware of strong support for the TIP program. Observations made have included:

- a need for all course offerings to be widely available;
- enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach;

- recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (i.e. Registered Training Organisations, TAFE etc);
- national consistency (with flexibility for State requirements) of program design is desirable rather than individual State designs;
- both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
- need for DVA feedback regarding quality of claims – linked to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s; and
- a tiered structure could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained officers.

More specifically, comments on the following subjects include:

- course offerings;
- course content;
- eLearning;
- TIP Trainers
- accreditation/certification;
- mentoring;
- ESO role;
- DVA role;
- Register of officials;
- tiered structure for TIP trained officers; and
- other issues.

Course offerings

- a) there is a need for all courses to be more widely available, particularly due to the difficulties encountered in some areas in accessing courses, eg in rural locations;
- b) timely details of scheduled courses are needed at the local level to enable ESOs to nominate participants to attend;
- c) sometimes courses are cancelled at short notice and there is a need to reduce this as much as possible when participants are travelling large distances;
- d) there is a need to consider the time taken to travel to and from courses (reported that in some instances participants have been required to drive over 300kms on the same day that a course ends thus presenting an occupational health and safety issue); and
- e) there should be an emphasis on VITA linking to all refresher training.

Course Content

- a) there should be national consistency of program design (with flexibility for State requirements) rather than individual State courses;
- b) content needs to be directly relevant to the target audience and must not assume prior knowledge;
- c) induction courses need to be offered;
- d) compulsory welfare courses are required for both advocate/pension officers and those providing welfare advice/referral/support;
- e) there is a need for emphasis on privacy and confidentiality issues;

- f) MRCA/SRCA training needs to be more compact. This is supported by other comments that course formats are too long, particularly for volunteers who themselves may have an illness (eg a suggestion to reduce some training to 4 hours per day);
- g) interpersonal skills are vital so all courses should include interview techniques;
- h) case studies are valuable in training;
- i) role playing is valuable in training;
- j) cross cultural training is needed to help ATSI clients;
- k) shorter training sessions be considered eg refresher training over one (1) day not two (2) days;
- l) a course similar to current Level 4 (for AAT) be provided for practitioners to advocate at VRB hearings with particular emphasis on research skills;
- m) the MRCA course needs to include issues that impact on veterans eg relationships, Defence Service Loans (repayment adjustments), access to VVCS for spouses and families; and
- n) it was universally stated at Focus Group sessions that regardless of excellent course content and delivery at training sessions, the best learning comes from experience.

eLearning

There is genuine enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach. Other points included:

- a) lack of IT skills by many volunteers and no desire to learn;
- b) non availability of internet access;
- c) eLearning could be conducted through local community education facilities; and
- d) eLearning needs to be complemented with face-to-face teaching.

TIP Trainers

The good work undertaken by TIP trainers/presenters is recognised but there is, in general, a lack of TIP trainers across the country and it is becoming difficult to 'recruit' people to undertake this work, especially if there is a need for the trainers to be conversant across all legislation. Specific views about the way forward regarding TIP trainers included:

- a) trainers, and managers at State and National levels, should be qualified to TIP Level 4 standard. (This is not necessarily the view taken by the Review team which feels that a trainer/presenter should be qualified to provide information relating to the level of the course offering eg if the course relates solely to welfare then an in depth knowledge of MRCA legislation should not be necessary, but an understanding of it should be required); and
- b) an evaluation of trainer ability should be included at the time of the course or as a separate exercise.

Accreditation/Certification

There is recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns have been expressed regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (ie Registered Training Organisations [RTO], TAFE etc). The Review team agrees with the concerns expressed. Other comments include:

- a) both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
- b) the certification needs to be undertaken in a 'testing' regime and levels of achievement/attainment be awarded;
- c) a tiered structure could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained officers;
- d) the provision of an award for participation and re-qualification could be included;
- e) the nationally recognised Medical Terminology Course could be introduced into the TIP training program;
- f) all advocates should have tertiary qualifications (either TAFE or University trained) and at no cost to the ESO or volunteer; and
- g) a three (3) day welfare and pension officer introductory course be offered, allowing the practitioner to operate under supervision with an advanced two (2) day course subsequently being conducted to gain final accreditation.

Mentoring

Some volunteer claims officers and advocates believe there is a lack of suitably qualified mentors to assist them in their work. This also applies to paid advocates while they come up to speed with their knowledge of the legislations.

Suggestions include:

- a) mandatory mentoring by an ESO nominating a person for TIP training;
- b) mentors be available by phone and online;
- c) mentors could be DVA staff with knowledge of specific legislation; and
- d) all attendees at TIP training should be offered a mentor.

ESO role

Many participants at the Focus Groups felt that insufficient consideration is given by ESOs when nominating a person to attend a TIP course, and after the event in supporting that person to perform the work and monitor the work undertaken.

Other issues include:

- a) it was felt that sometimes nominations for TIP training have included individuals who have no intention of working with the veteran community afterwards and that priority be given to those who make a commitment to helping others;
- b) there are no mechanisms for ESOs to provide input to TIP; and
- c) there are no mechanisms for ESOs to provide input and feedback to DVA on the work of advocates/pension officers/welfare officers.

DVA role

- a) a necessary requirement is for DVA to monitor/evaluate primary claims and provide feedback to relevant ESO and State TIP Chair regarding the quality of claims, linking this to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s;
- b) DVA should have more involvement in TIP training, including provision of case study work;
- c) the above is tempered by a comment that the role of DVA in service delivery can lead to conflicts (unexplained); and
- d) the involvement of the VRB in conducting courses should be expanded.

Register of officials

While there has been concern expressed about a register of officials being made public, there has been agreement generally that a list of qualified/certified advocates be maintained by ESOs and Centres in their region so that information about a suitably qualified advocate can be provided to a veteran on enquiry for assistance.

Tiered structure for TIP trained officers

There were differing views about this across ESO representatives and in the submissions but in general there was an acceptance that the current system does tend to lean towards a tiered structure. Views offered include:

- a) welfare officers could be Levels 1 and 2;
- b) pension officers could be Levels 1 to 3; and
- c) existing TIP Level 4 course should be considered to be equivalent to a TAFE course. It was noted though that there are significant numbers attending this TIP course but very few who represent at the AAT.

Other Issues

Other issues raised include:

- a) identification (ID) should be provided for all TIP trained officers;
- b) some volunteers like to only work on welfare matters;
- c) there are difficulties in identifying people to undertake TIP training;
- d) TIP has become a self governing empire disconnected from the ESOs;
- e) a selection process should be utilised to select TIP Chairs and the person selected should have full knowledge of all applicable legislation, effects on superannuation and be a good communicator; and
- f) there is lack of accountability regarding TIP funds.

ATTACHMENT B – First Principles

First Principles for the management of DVA grant funding to ESOs using a co-ordinated approach

ESOs (or practitioners) establishing themselves as a Group for the purposes of integrating their service delivery for advocacy, pension claims and welfare services (including referrals) will need to consider the model under which they would like to operate (Models 1 and 2 at Attachment A refers).

First Principles include:

1. Establishment of a Board of Management (Model 1) or Committee structure (Model 2) – to include all participating organisations (if desired).
2. DVA ex-officio involvement to be available if sought.
3. Governance structures to be in line with best practice (as outlined by Volunteering Australia - *The Model Code of Practice* and the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations* which sets the benchmark for best practice and provides guidance for organisations).
4. A co-ordinated approach to the management of DVA grant funding applications be taken – a fair and transparent process for funds distribution to organisations and in the acquittal process.
5. Collection and provision of data to be in accordance with DVA program guidelines.

To set up this model, the Review team believes the following actions would need to be undertaken in the first instance if the Group was to become an incorporated body:

- at least 5 people would be required to be office bearers;
- a meeting would need to be called to elect the office bearers;
- an application for incorporation with the appropriate body would need to be lodged;
- “Model Rules” (Department of Fair Trading) would need to be adopted as the constitution (with amendments as required by the ATO);
- the TIP Code of Ethics would need to be included in the constitution;
- an ABN would be needed and registration as a “Public Benevolent Institution” with the ATO;
- VITA coverage would need to be accessed for professional indemnity insurance.

ATTACHMENT C – Funding Principles and Funding Formula

Funding Principles

1. There will be a State indicative allocation made in the first instance.
2. Funding will support the further development of the Veteran Support Centre model (or an integrated approach) and be predicated on the veteran population and service needs of a particular location.
3. Funding will be in line with a formula based approach, applied to an assessment of input/output data for a region/area such as:
 - 3.1. veteran population with weightings applied, eg for age;
 - 3.2. historical data:
 - 3.2.1. numbers of people in the veteran community assisted;
 - 3.2.2. primary and secondary claim numbers (by VEA/SRCA/MRCA);
 - 3.2.3. number of VRB/AAT claims/matters;
 - 3.2.4. time taken to assist the above;
 - 3.2.5. number and type of welfare activities provided, including time taken;
 - 3.3. projection statistics – expected increase or decrease of service delivery activity;
 - 3.4. numbers of salaried staff, volunteers and hours worked.
4. Prioritisation of funding will apply, with an income and asset means test approach being utilised, including funds matching criteria.

Funding Formula

Example

BEST funding for financial year 2020/2021 is \$6million.

Beneficiary numbers by State for that financial year and the percentage allocation are as follows:

State	VEA projected figure	Plus 10% increase to account for additional SRCA/MRCA ⁷	% of total veteran pop	% allocation using veteran pop	\$m allocation
NSW/ACT	59,200	65,000	31	31	1.86
VIC	34,400	38,000	18	18	1.08
QLD	55,400	61,000	29	29	1.74
SA/NT	16,500	18,000	8	8	0.48
WA	19,600	21,000	10	10	0.60
TAS	7,100	8,000	4	4	0.24
TOTAL	192,200	211,000	100	100	6.00

⁷ As there are no DVA projected figures for SRCA/MRCA beneficiaries a 10% increase on the number of projected VEA beneficiaries has been used.

Grant funding to ESO X (hub) which is located in NSW and has the following information.

Historical data – i.e. average provided in the previous period (to be determined):

- i. 5,000 veteran population;
- ii. 3,500 of the veteran population being aged 70+;
- iii. 500 in the veteran community assisted;
- iv. 300 primary and secondary claims;
- v. 10 veterans/war widows assisted for VRB/AAT matters;
- vi. 2 part time volunteers working solely on welfare matters;
- vii. projected decrease of claims assistance of 25%;
- viii. projected increase of welfare activity of 20%;
- ix. 0 FTE BEST funded;
- x. 1 FTE funded through other sources;
- xi. 5 volunteers (= approx 1 FTE);
- xii. \$0 ESO or “other” financial support but “in-kind” support provided by local council through a “peppercorn” rent.

These figures should be applied to a matrix (to be developed along the lines of the funding formula and taking into consideration funding priorities for a particular year).

ATTACHMENT D – Data and Statistical Analysis

Overview

A large amount of raw data was collected to provide the Review team with the information to make informed decisions.

Data from the following sources were obtained for the analysis:

- Beneficiaries – information is based on the 26 September 2009 extract of the client database and represents all persons receiving a VEA pension/allowance or holding a treatment or pharmaceutical card issued by DVA.
- Claims data – two (2) year claims data for disability pension (VEA), and Permanent Impairment (MRCA and SRCA) for the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial years based on the decision date (regardless of the decision).
- Veterans Review Board (VRB) data was collected from the VRB database and the VRB annual reports.
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) data was collected from the AAT annual reports.
- Mapping information – ABS statistical districts and LGAs (Attachment E).
- War widow manual/automatic grants – claims data.
- BEST, GIA and V&CG grant information – DVA grants database and internal spreadsheets. For consistency purposes only two financial years' information has been included in the graphs and charts, unless otherwise indicated within the Report.
- TIP – financial information and that on training modules was provided by the Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group and through the TIP Chairs.

Beneficiaries

Data collection on beneficiary numbers is undertaken by DVA at a point in time every quarter and is used in a number of publications that the department creates and which is available on DVA's website.

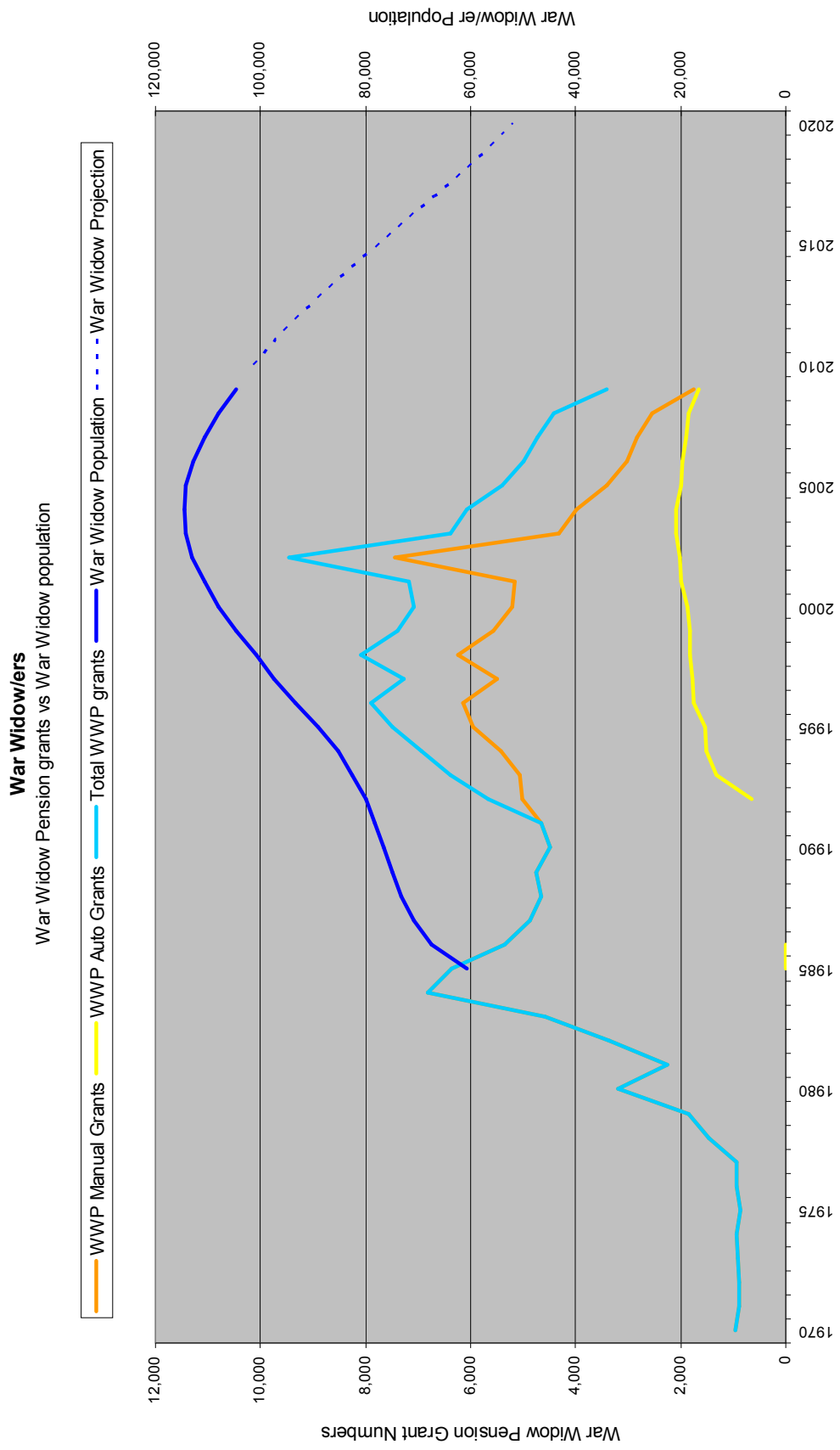
For the purposes of this exercise the net beneficiaries is based on the 26 September 2009 extract of the client database and represents all persons receiving a VEA pension/allowance or holding a treatment or pharmaceutical card issued by DVA. It should be noted that this number will not include the following groups of clients:

- clients only on SRCA, or
- clients only on MRCA without a treatment card.

Of interest is Chart 14 of Attachment F which shows the granting of War Widow/er Pension since 1970. In 1992 the granting of a War Widow/er Pension was provided automatically under certain circumstances. The chart below shows a spike in 2002 which was a result of changes in eligibility to enable those war widows who lost eligibility to their WW Pension prior to 1984 due to remarriage. This cohort was able to reapply for the WW Pension. The Chart also shows the reduction in manual grants, indicating a reduction in workload for ESOs assisting partners of deceased veterans with their claims.

The Review team believes that this, along with the overall decrease in the projected war widow/er population, is likely to have a significant impact on the claims workload for the War Widow's Guild and Legacy. This will not negate the ongoing, and increasing, welfare workload that those organisations undertake.

Chart 14 of Attachment F



Source: DVA DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

General Observations

General observations made during the analysis of data include:

- the number of claims processed by States is broadly proportional to the number of clients within that State;
- V&C Grant distribution differs greatly across the country, this could be due to the one-off nature of the grants together with a relatively short sampling period of two (2) years;
- the level of BEST grant funding is broadly proportional to client numbers, with an average funding per client between \$25 to \$31 (with the exception being the ACT at \$51). However, when this figure is broken down to an ABS Statistical District level there are a number of areas where this does not hold true. For example the Rockhampton LGA (\$64 per net beneficiary) has proportionally more funding than that of the Townsville LGA (\$18 per net beneficiary);
- within Victoria considerably more grant funding is provided outside the metropolitan area. This is in contrast to NSW where the majority of funds go to the metropolitan area;
- the level of representational assistance is overall much higher in Victoria (84.7%) compared to other States:
 - 90% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas of Victoria compared to 80.3% in the metropolitan area,
 - in South Australia, 28.6% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas compared to 90.8% in the metropolitan area, and
 - in NSW, 39.6% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas compared to 49% in the metropolitan area.

Claims

Claims data in regard to disability pension under the VEA and permanent impairment under MRCA or SRCA for financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09 is provided below:

Table 7: Claims data

	Total Claims	Total Claims with a Rep.	Total Clients	Total Clients with a Rep.
VEA	90,644	29,750	65,907	23,230
MRCA	9,591	2,056	4,301	1,764
SRCA	6,944	4,263	3,632	1,855

Note: a client who claims under multiple Acts will be counted under each Act.

Source: Table constructed from data available from DVA

Veterans Review Board

VRB applications lodged and finalised are shown below:

Table 8: VRB Applications Lodged

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA lodged	4,674	4,486	3,986	3,359	3,792
MRCA lodged	2	11	36	68	137

Source: Table constructed from data available from VRB Annual reports

Table 9: VRB Applications Finalised

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA finalised	5,165	4,532	4,324	4,268	3,928
MRCA finalised	-	4	12	35	58

Source: Table constructed from data available through VRB Annual reports

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

AAT applications lodged and finalised are shown below:

Table 10: AAT Applications Lodged

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA	986	909	842	642	589
MRCA	0	1	16	32	27
SRCA	357	346	274	189	207

Source: Table constructed from data available through AAT Annual reports

Table 11: AAT Applications Finalised

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA	1027	1038	849	785	671
MRCA	0	0	3	26	17
SRCA	460	361	305	256	237

Source: Table constructed from data available through AAT Annual reports

Mapping clients

In order to map clients the following approach was taken.

1. All data was mapped according to postcode:
 - a. clients – against their residential postcode;
 - b. claims data – against clients' residential postcode;
 - c. claims assisted by a representative – against the representative's postcode;
 - d. ESOs – against the ESO postcode;
 - e. BEST and V&C Grants – based on the grant recipient's postcode.
2. Postcodes were then assigned to LGAs. Where postcodes crossed LGA boundaries, a proportional attribution was used based on the current distribution of clients.
3. LGAs were then assigned to ABS Statistical Districts.

The mapping exercise included mapping ESOs across the country, beneficiaries, locations where BEST and V&CG funding has occurred, locations of Day Clubs (through V&CG funding) and Men's Sheds (again through V&CG funding). Due to the size of this exercise not all these maps are provided. Those maps that are considered relevant have been provided at [Attachment E](#).

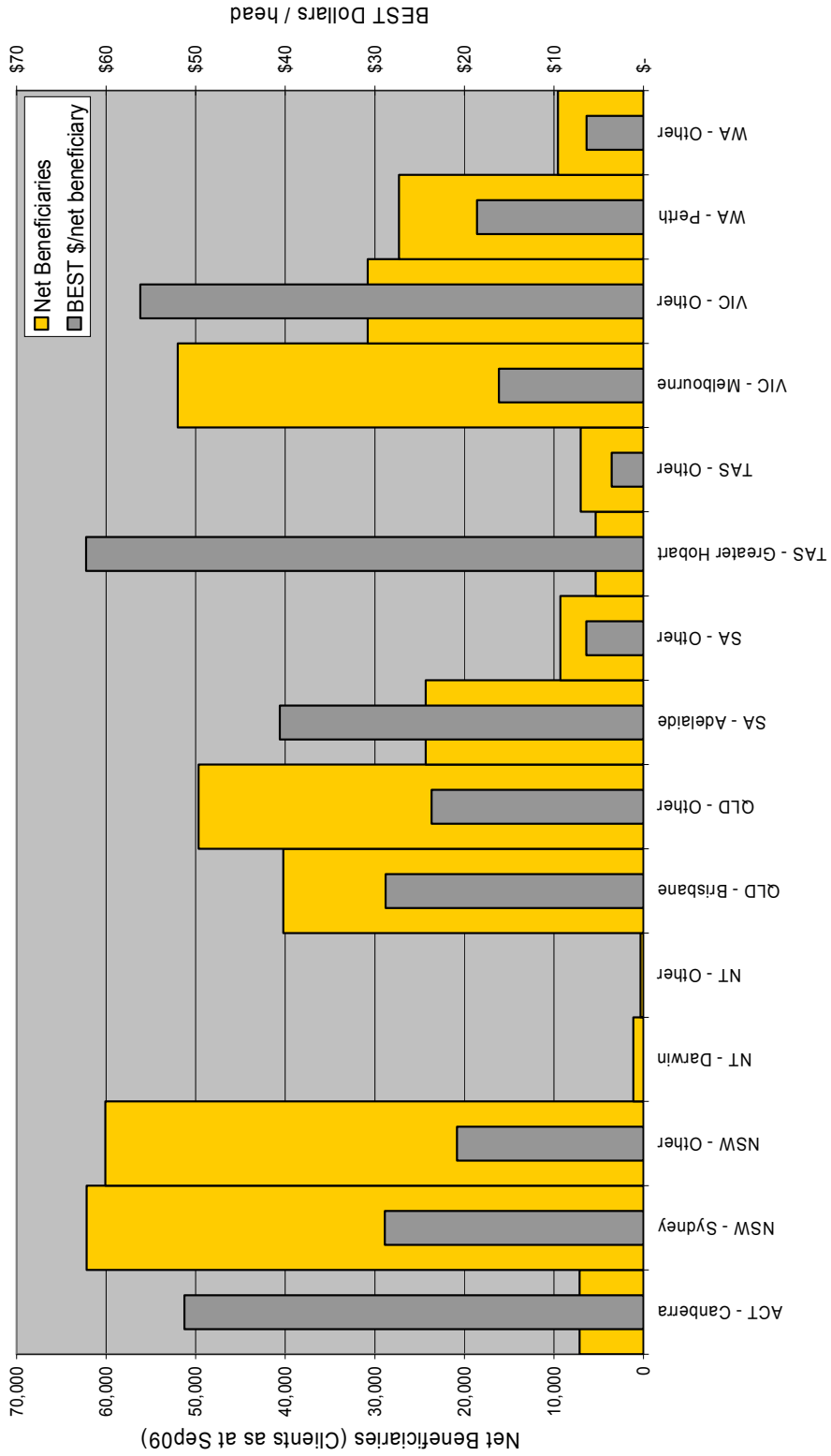
Graphs and charts derived from raw data and requested by the Review team to assist in the analysis are provided at [Attachment F](#).

BEST Grants

Apart from gaining an appreciation of the administration processes and grants distribution across the country the Review team was interested in looking at the unit cost derived over the past few years. While this is not necessarily a good indication of the "value" of a grant, or whether grant funds are put to good use, it has highlighted the inequity of funds distribution. Chart 12c of [Attachment F](#) shown over refers:

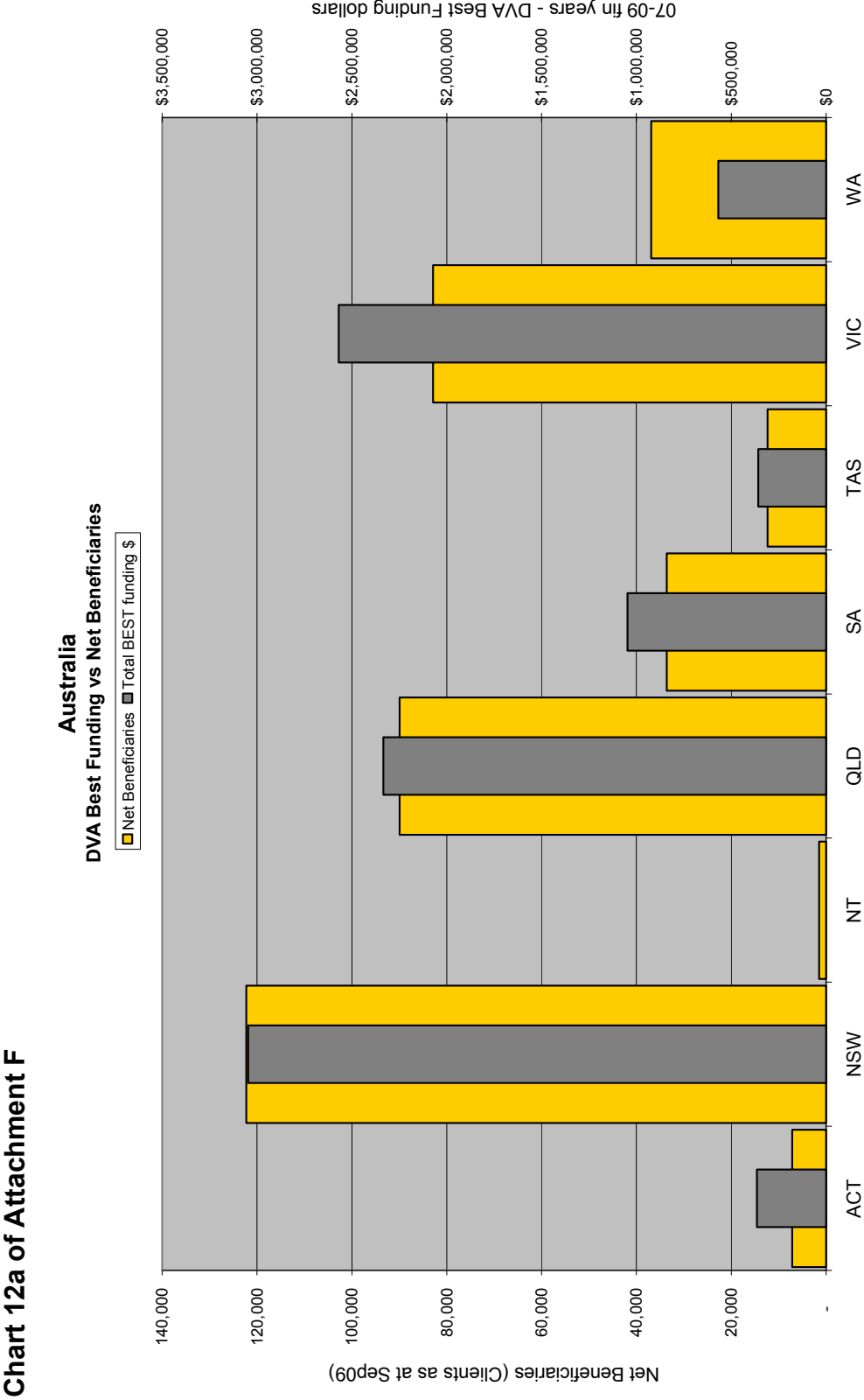
Chart 12c of Attachment F

**BEST dollars per Net Beneficiary
2007-09 fin years**



Source: Statistical Services and Analysis

Chart 12a of Attachment F (provided below) also shows this inequitable distribution, with Victoria, SA and the ACT receiving a higher proportion per capita than the other States.



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

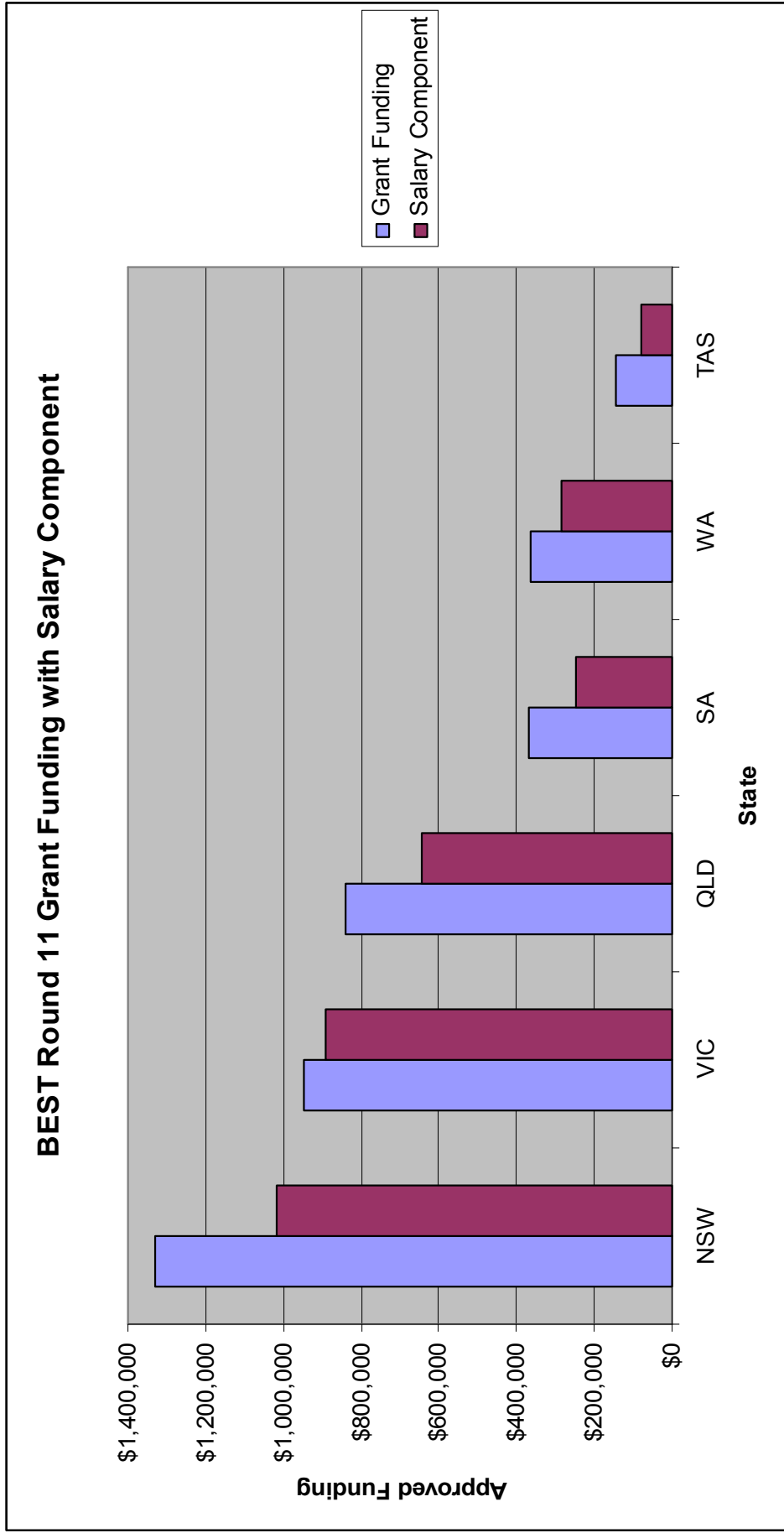
The Review team also looked at the purpose for which grant funding was provided and noted the large percentage (80% overall) that was provided for salary or wages. Provided below is an overview by State from the recent BEST Round 11 (and prior to any appeals being lodged):

Table 12: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary

State	Grant Funding \$	Salary Component \$	Salary %
NSW	1,329,260	1,019,384	76.69
VIC	948,193	892,864	94.16
QLD	838,528	645,089	76.93
SA	366,432	249,167	68.00
WA	362,384	284,632	78.54
TAS	145,992	78,925	54.06
TOTAL	3,990,789	3,170,061	79.43

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 5 of Attachment F



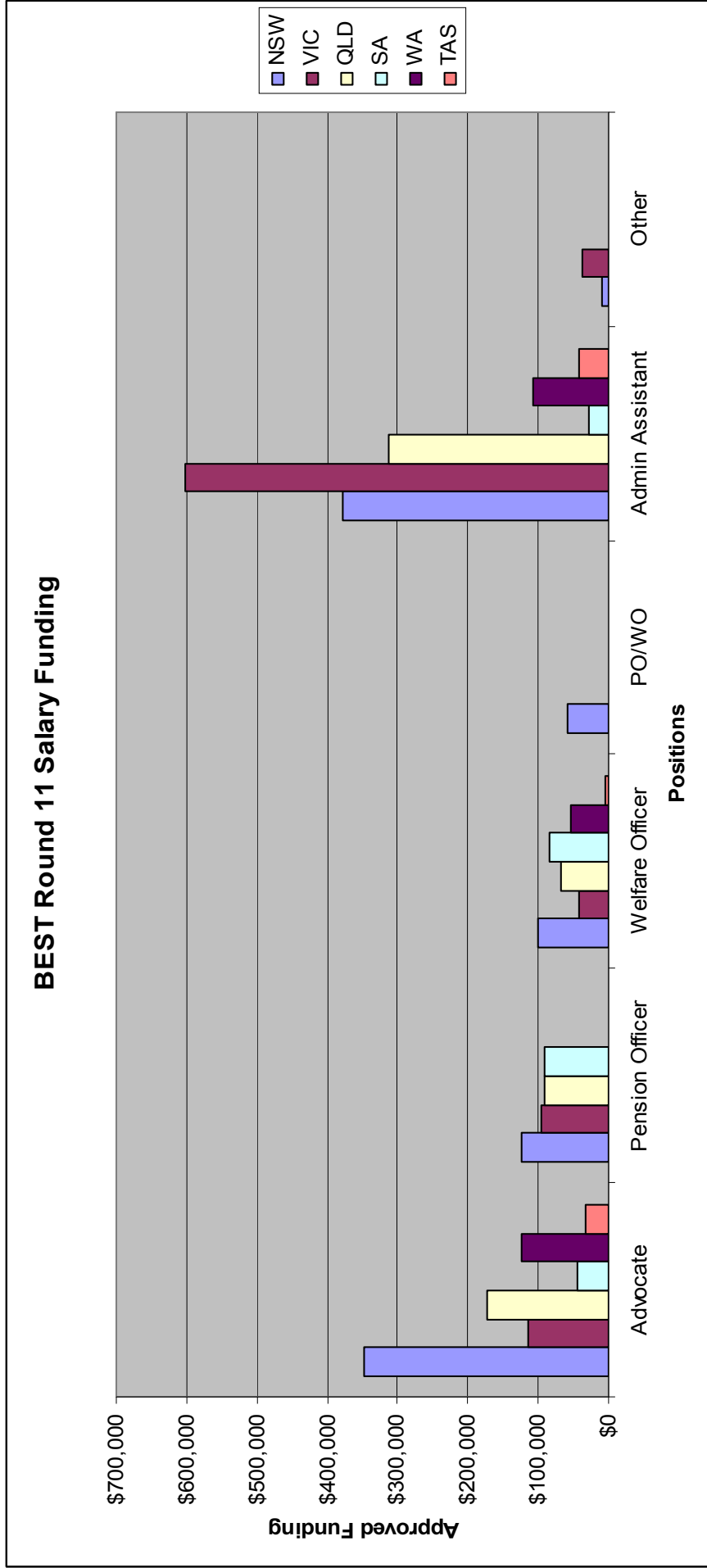
Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Table 13: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary by Position

State	Advocate	Pension Officer	Welfare Officer	PO/WO	Admin Assistant	Other
NSW	\$348,545	\$123,334	\$101,490	\$59,090	\$377,925	\$9,000
VIC	\$113,487	\$96,257	\$42,000	\$0	\$603,090	\$38,030
QLD	\$173,283	\$91,090	\$68,026	\$0	\$312,690	\$0
SA	\$45,450	\$90,900	\$84,061	\$0	\$28,756	\$0
WA	\$123,459	\$0	\$54,185	\$0	\$106,988	\$0
TAS	\$32,223	\$0	\$5,100	\$0	\$41,602	\$0
TOTALS	\$836,447	\$401,581	\$354,862	\$59,090	\$1,471,051	\$47,030

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 6 of Attachment F: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary by Position



Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Specific information on BEST funding that has been extracted from the raw data is provided in the discussion on BEST at Section 5, with further information discussed at other stages of the Key Issues Paper. Charts and Graphs to support the discussion and conclusions of the Review team can be found at Attachment F.

GIA GRANTS

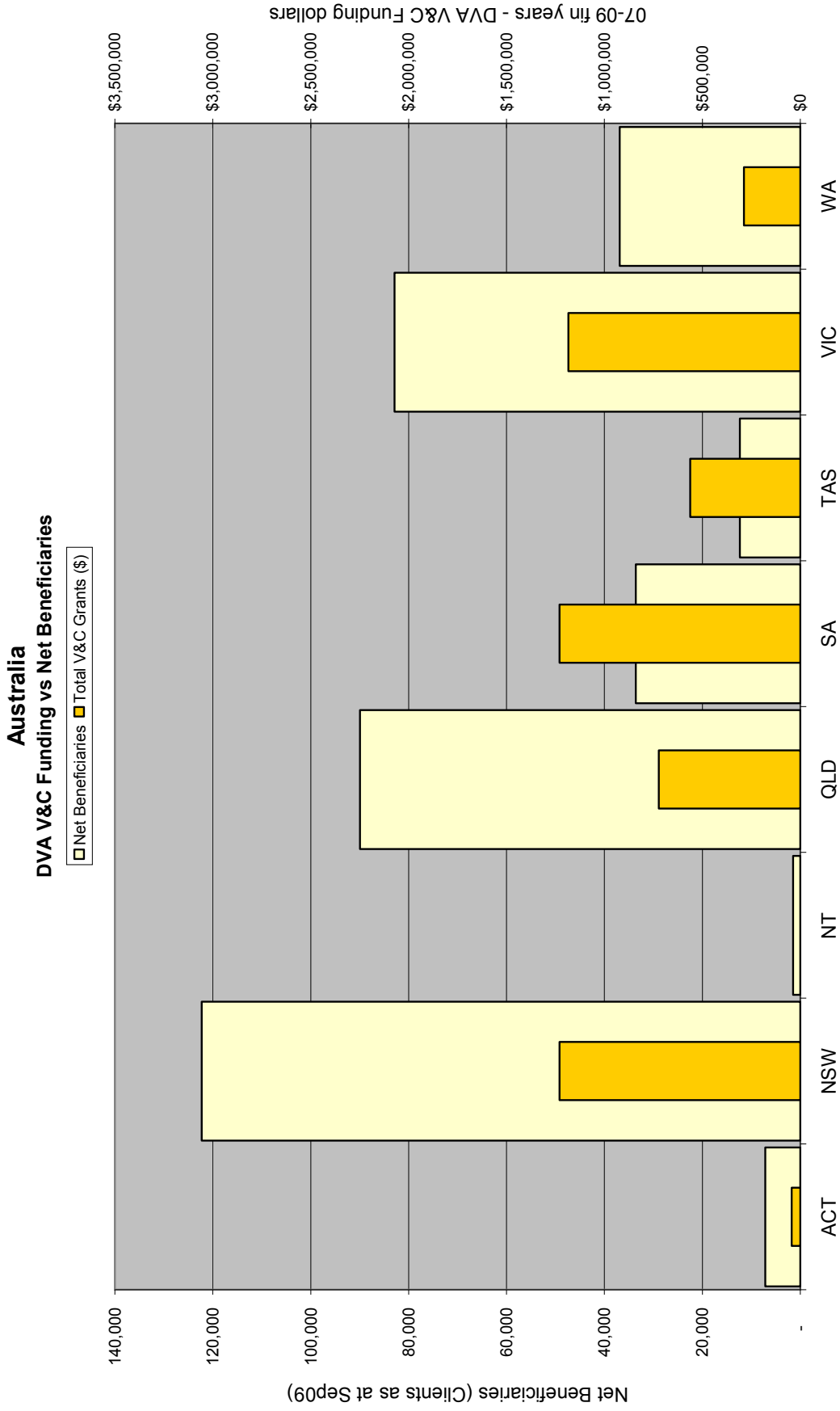
An overview of the GIA funding to National ESOs provided over the past four (4) financial years has been listed at Section 6 in the Key Issues Paper.

V&C GRANTS

While there is some concern about the quality of data on V&C Grants, there was still a lot for the Review team to work with.

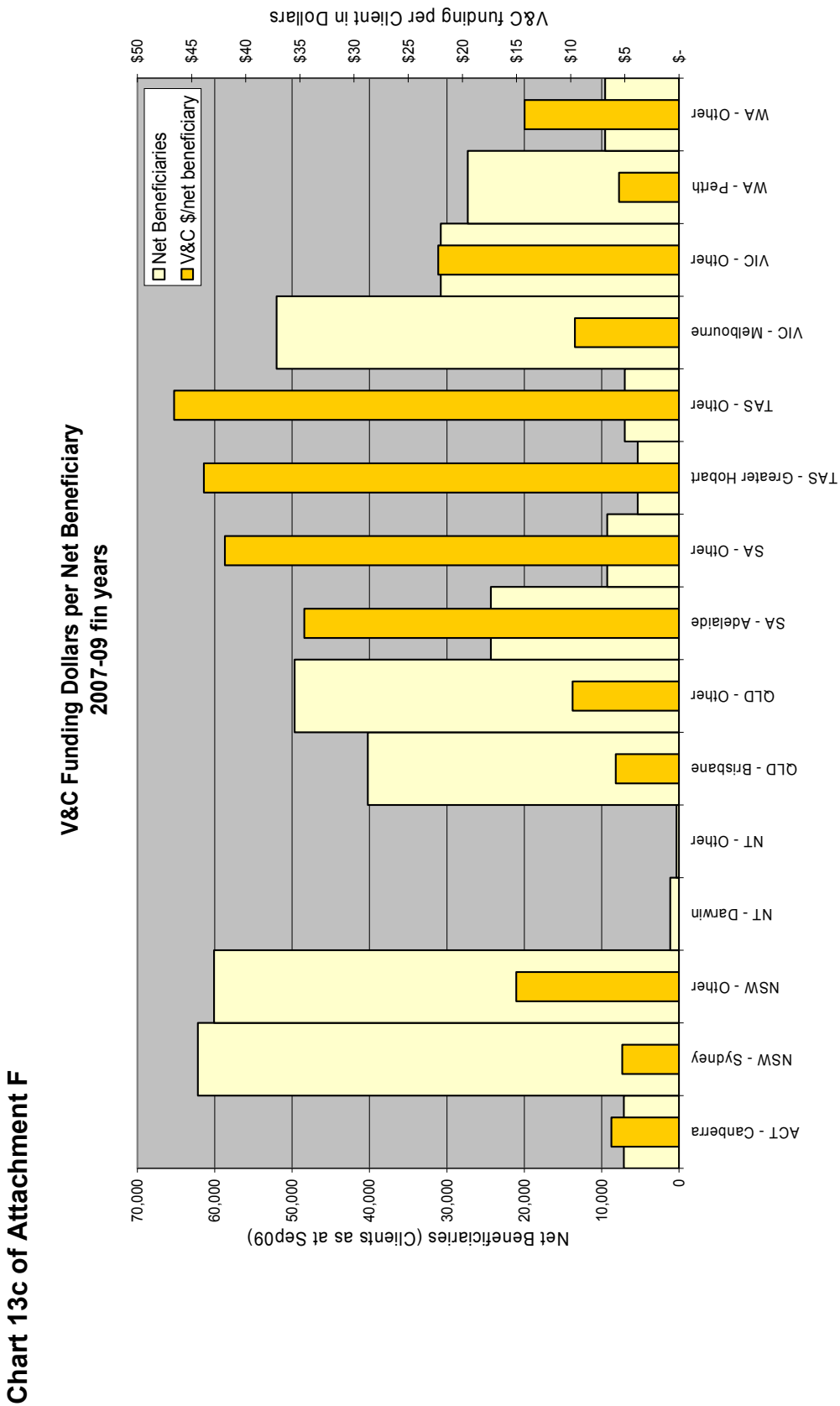
Similar to the discussion above on BEST grants, the Review team undertook to determine the unit cost for V&C Grants and Chart 13a of Attachment F (provided over) shows that a significant amount of funding over the past two (2) years has been provided to SA and Tasmania.

Chart 13a of Attachment F



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

When drilling down further into the data it can be seen that there is a fairly equivalent distribution across the metropolitan and regional areas of those States. Chart 13c of Attachment F below refers.



Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

Comment at Focus Groups indicated that some ESOs felt that a high distribution of V&CG funding was provided to community organisations. The following table actually shows that a large percentage is directed towards ESOs.

Table 14: V&CG Funding to ESOs and Community Organisations – 2005-06 to 2008-08

Grants Approved	Financial Year				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Total
Community	\$1.4m	\$0.6m	\$0.6m	\$0.9m	\$3.5m
ESO	\$1.7m	\$2.4m	\$1.8m	\$2.6m	\$8.5m
Totals	\$3.1m	\$3.0m	\$2.4m	\$3.5m	\$12.0m

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Over the last four years, a total of \$12m has been provided under the V&C Grants Program to the veteran and wider community. Of this, approximately 70% (\$8.5m) has been provided directly to ESOs and approximately 30% (\$3.5m) to community organisations.

In total over the four (4) year period, 969 grants were provided, 790 of those grants went to ESOs and 179 grants to community organisations. These included:

Table 15: V&C Grants to ESOs vs Community Organisations

Grant Amount	ESOs	Community Organisations	Total
Up to \$5,000	391	50	441
\$5,001 to \$10,000	161	40	201
\$10,001 to \$50,000	217	74	291
\$50,001 to \$100,000	21	11	32
Over \$100,000	0	4	4
TOTAL	790	179	969

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

The tables below show broadly the purposes for which grants were used and the distribution to major ESOs.

Table 16: V&C Grants – grant purpose

Purpose	Amount \$m
Facilities – Set-up costs and refurbish	4.18
Administration/Equipment	2.73
Training and other courses	1.72
Bus – Purchases	1.11
Bus – Trips	0.76
Men's Shed – Establish	0.62
Men's Shed – Equipment	0.46
Day Clubs – Establish	0.12
Day Clubs – Equipment	0.20
Other	0.14

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Table 17: V&C Grants – ESO distribution

ESO	Amount \$m
RSL	5.46
Legacy	0.54
VVAA	0.35
Naval Association	0.26
RAAF Association	0.26
VVFA	0.14
Regiment Associations	0.13
T&PI Association	0.11
War Widows Guild	0.11
Others	1.15

Source: DVA Grants Database

Community Organisations received approximately \$3.5m. The largest single grants and their purpose are listed below. Three (3) of these four (4) grants were made in 2005/06 and the fourth in 2007/08.

Table 18: V&C Grants – purpose for grants over \$100,000 to community organisations

Organisation	Purpose	Amount \$
Council on the Ageing	Training/Courses	110,000
Eat Well Tasmania	Admin/set-up costs	108,108
Nutrition Australia	Training/Courses	126,410
Shoal Bay Aged Care	Bus Purchase	126,100

Source: DVA Grants Database

In addition to the above four (4) grants over \$100,000 there were eleven (11) grants between \$50,001 and \$100,000. Eight (8) of these were for Training Courses, two (2) for the establishment of Men's Sheds and one (1) each for a bus purchase, to assist in building a facility and refurbishing a facility for use by veterans and spouses.

ATTACHMENT E – ABS Districts and Suggested Regions Mapped

ATTACHMENT F – Charts and Graphs