



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome and apologies

Attendees list is at Annexure A.

The Chair welcomed members and noted apologies from Mr Max Ball, *Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia*, and Mr John King, *Returned & Services League of Australia*.

The Chair noted that this was the final meeting for founding member Mr John Burrows, *Australian Special Air Service Association* and thanked him for his extensive contribution over the years. Mr Michael Carlon was introduced as the new representative for the Australian Special Air Service Association.

Agenda Item 2.A Minutes & actions of previous meeting

Members **ENDORSED** the minutes from the meetings held on 24 August 2021 and 9 December 2021.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2021/19, 021,022,023,024,025,026,027 & 030 and **NOTED** that action items 2020/090, 2021/010 and 02021/028 remain open. Members were advised that in relation to item 2021/010, there has been no decision to change the National Consultation Forum at this point, and the Ex Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT) is continuing to review a variety of positions. In relation to 2021/028, medicinal cannabis, despite having been considered by National Aged & Community Care Forum, it remains a discussion point for ESORT and any decisions will be held over until this occurs.

Mr Burrows raised concerns that the 1800 VETERAN number does not work effectively for Western Australian veterans due to the time difference. Members were **ADVISED** of the adjustments that have been made to the Advocate number. Mr John McNeill, *Australian Veterans Alliance*, noted concerns regarding the lack of research in relation to the use of medicinal cannabis to treat PTSD, as compared to opioids and other pain medications.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/OWP1	Provide feedback to the 1800 VETERAN telephony team regarding issues for Western Australian callers and provide outcome to members at the next OWP meeting.	Chair
2022A/OWP2	Approach the DVA research team to investigate the possibility of commissioning a study into the effects of medicinal cannabis versus the effects of opioids for mental health management. Outcomes to be provided at the next meeting.	Chair
2022A/OWP3	Circulate to members, the paper regarding the use of medicinal cannabis that was presented to the National Aged & Community Care Forum in February 2022.	Secretariat
2022A/OWP4	Secretariat to review the schedule of Telehealth consultations for pain management.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 2.A.1 Joint Transition Authority Update

AIRCDRE Kaarin Kooij, Director General, Joint Transition Authority (JTA) presented an update on the JTA progress to date, and plans for the future. Mr Burrows, noted perceived communication barriers between the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC), with each not accepting reports prepared by the other. AIRCDRE Kooij acknowledged that communication issues between DVA and Defence and CSC

and Defence had been considered, but as the issue had not been raised previously, it had not been recognised as a concern between DVA and CSC. AIRCDRE Kooij advised members that the JTA has deferred further consideration of service delivery options pending consideration of any findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission.

Discussion between members acknowledged the need for better systems to be implemented to support those undergoing medical or administrative transitions. The Chair confirmed that the Veteran Support Officer (VSO) framework has expanded in the last 12 months to address this need. Members discussed the need for financial advisors and VSOs that understand offsetting and the mixing of entitlements to provide the best outcome. Both the Chair and AIRCDRE Kooij acknowledged this.

Agenda Item 3 Department Response to addressing claims backlog include Tri-Act training for delegates (Action Item 2021/027)

The Chair introduced Mr Michael Harper, Assistant Secretary VEA Compensation and Support to provide an update. Mr Harper acknowledged the incremental increase in tri-act claims over the last 18 months, and the associated complexities of training delegates.

Mr Michael Carlon, *Australian Special Air Service Association*, raised concerns regarding the useability of the MyService interface and recommended an additional prompt to promote talking to an advocate be implemented. Mr Harper advised members that a new screening process had been implemented in May 2021 and confirmed that service upgrades had been planned for ease of access. The Chair advised that departmental IT services are contracted through Services Australia (SA), and while the service upgrades are a high priority for the department, they are subject to Services Australia prioritisation processes and have been queued for SA to address.

Mr Ray Kemp, *Naval Association of Australia*, noted issues regarding the complexity and volume of paperwork that doctors are required to complete which is resulting in doctors beginning to refuse DVA clients on grounds of extensive time and resource impositions. The Deputy Chair confirmed that DVA has implemented a Combined Benefits Processing Policy which is a two-step medical process to assist with MRCA claims and reduce paperwork for doctors. Medically transitioning clients are being addressed through the Client Benefits team.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/OWP5	Implementation and adherence to the Combined Benefits Processing policy will be confirmed and advice provided to members.	Mr Michael Harper
2022A/OWP6	Under MRCA, provide advice to members of the payment process for clients accepting a lump sum payment as a pension, and then passing away. Do payments continue to the family, or are they discontinued?	CBD

Agenda Item 4 Claims Triaging

Mr Burrows raised the issue of the new Triage & Connect form to escalate claims. Many OWP members noted their lack of awareness of this form.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/OWP7	Send a copy of the Triage & Connect form to members for their information.	Secretariat

Mr Bill Roberts, *Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia*, sought clarification regarding the requirement for a psychologist or medical professional report to escalate serious mental health claims? The Deputy Chair confirmed that Triage & Connect continue to evaluate and update their processes to ensure the right supports are provided to clients in need. Several members noted the work being undertaken by Triage & Connect and commended the department for this service.

Agenda Item 5 ADF Firefighter Support Scheme Package.

Members agreed to carry over this agenda item for discussion at an OWP meeting yet to be scheduled.

Agenda Item 6 ATDP and AAR Website

Members **NOTED** the paper provided and **AGREED** the issue had been resolved.

Agenda Item 7 Forms

Authority to Act

Ms Natasha Cole, First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits Division addressed the member submission from the Australian Special Air Service Association. It was acknowledged that changes to processing had caused significant confusion for clients and as a result, the department had designed a new form with the aim being to resolve those concerns. Ms Cole asked for members to submit comments on the proposed draft before the end of March 2022 and confirmed that the existing Authority to Act forms will not need to be re-submitted on the new form once it is implemented.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/OWP8	Ms Natasha Cole asked members to submit comments on the proposed amended D9325 Form <i>Appointing a third party to represent a DVA client</i> before the end of March 2022.	All Members

Impairment Assessment Pro-Forma

Members **AGREED** to carry over this agenda item for discussion at an OWP meeting yet to be scheduled.

Agenda Item 8 Other Business

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/OWP9	Secretariat to circulate an OWP contact list to members.	Secretariat
2022A/OWP10	Ms Natasha Cole to contact Mr John McNeil of the Australian Veterans Alliance directly to address his question on listing advocate claims on the website portal.	Ms Natasha Cole

Meeting closed: 3.32pm.

OWP members then entered into a discussion on the OWP Terms of Reference, facilitated by DVA's Transform, Engage, Design (TED) team until 4:36pm.

Members/Attendees	
Ms Vicki Rundle PSM (Chair)	Deputy Secretary, Veterans & Families Services Group
Ms Natasha Cole (Deputy Chair)	First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits Division
Mr Graeme Bland	Air Force Association
Mr John Burrows	Australian Special Air Service Association
Mr Michael Carlon	Australian Special Air Service Association
Mr John McNeill	Australian Veterans Alliance
Mr Robert Connor	Legacy Australia Inc
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Ms Rona Lunney	Partners of Veterans Association
Mr Ray Kemp OAM	Naval Association of Australia
Mr Bill Roberts OAM	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Presenters	
AIRCDRE Kaarin Kooij	Director General, Joint Transition Authority (Item 2)
Mr Michael Harper	Assistant Secretary, VEA Compensation and Support (Item 3, 4 &5)
Mr Brock Phyland	A/g Executive Director, Transform, Engage, Design (TED) Team (Item 8)
Secretariat	
Belinda Bastiaans	A/g Director, Governance & Ministerial Events
Kylie Robinson	Assistant Director, Governance & Ministerial Events
Melinda Kershaw	Assistant Director, Governance & Ministerial Events
Tahl Kean	Graduate, Governance & Ministerial Events
Apologies	
Mr John King	Returned & Services League of Australia
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Ms Rhondda Vanzella OAM	Australian War Widows Inc