

Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

Apologies were noted as at Annexure A. The Chair welcomed new and existing members to the forum and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Members **AGREED** to review previous minutes and action items out of session.

Agenda Item 2 Departmental Strategic Update

The Acting Secretary for the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provided members with an update on the new Ministers and Government Commitments, access to DVA supports and services, the claims backlog, processes for case escalations and the invoice backlog for household services.

An update on the Department's participation in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide was provided as well as an update on the National Consultation Framework Review.

No.	Action	Assigned to
Y2021/019	Members requested the opportunity to present to ESORT at the next available meeting and nominated Mr Scott Harris (Warriors Return) and Mr James Dallas (RSL LifeCare) to attend.	Secretariat to discuss with the ESORT Chair.
2022YVF/A1	Send to YVF members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - biographies of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Assitant Minister for Veterans' Affairs - the web link to the Australian Labour Party government commitments for veterans. 	Secretariat
2022YVF/A2	Send YVF members talking points addressing how veterans can access assistance if impacted by the recent changes to incapacity payments for studying veterans.	Secretariat

Members **NOTED** the update provided by the Acting Secretary, DVA.

Agenda Item 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Analytical Article on the Census 2021 ADF Service Question.

The Assistant Secretary, Community Policy advised members that the ABS will release 2021 Census data in three phases from June 2022 until mid-2023. The first release of data took place on 28 June 2022 and coincided with the publication of an ABS Analytical Article on 29 June 2022. The article covered the following three priority topics, agreed upon between DVA, Defence and the ABS;

- the top 15-20 geographical locations for serving and ex-serving members,
- variables to give an insight into family composition, and
- long term health conditions and wellbeing domains (broken down by age and gender).

The second release is expected to provide detailed data on veteran education and employment, and the third release providing data on more complex topics such as distance to work and socio-economic indexes.

Members **DISCUSSED** data matching between other government departments specifically Defence and Medicare and what benefits this could provide in the identification of veterans.

Members **NOTED** that the ABS has released the first set of Census 2021 data and an article on the Australian Defence Force Service question.

Agenda Item 4 The Provision of Household Services in Rural and Remote Communities

The Assistant Secretary, Client Programs addressed an out of session question raised by a YVF member around the backlog of invoice payments for household services and what the Department is doing to engage with service providers to ensure household and garden services continue to be provided, particularly in rural and remote areas.

DVA has recently re-directed resources to assist with managing the outstanding invoices workload, and system improvements are being investigated to help speed up processing. The timeliness in reviewing and paying outstanding invoices has significantly improved with these targeted efforts.

DVA has no direct contact or relationship with individual service providers other than the processing of invoices. This is because the program is based on a self-directed service provider model, where the veteran chooses their preferred provider. DVA reimburses clients or pays the service provider directly.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022YVF/A3	Provide members with an overview of how the Department will build relationships with service providers affected by the invoicing backlog	Client Engagement and Support Services

Agenda Item 5 Update on Measures to Address Claims Backlog

The Acting First Assistant Secretary, Clients Benefits Division informed members of the work being undertaken to address the claims backlog issues. The update covered the measures being used to address the claims backlog, the claims triaging process, information gathering activities, the increased outbound communications to clients and the claims prioritisation tool currently being used by the Department.

Members were advised that the outcomes of the McKinsey review are assisting to address the future state of claims processing. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim report due for release by 11 August 2022 may also address this issue.

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022YVF/A4	YVF members requested an update on the work being undertaken to expand the number of conditions eligible for Straight Through Processing.	Veteran Family Policy Group

Agenda Item 6 Veteran Employment Pathway Program

Acting Assistant Secretary, People Services provided members with details of the Veteran Employment Pathway implementation progress to date and next steps.

The Australian Public Service (APS) Veteran Employment Pathway (VetPaths) is a pilot career pathway administered by DVA in collaboration with the Department of Defence. The purpose of the Program is to aid transitioning and recently transitioned veterans to establish an ongoing, meaningful career in the APS. The Program is made possible through section 22 (6) of the *Public Service Act* which states engagement is contingent on recognised skills and qualifications.

VetPaths is the first of its kind in the APS to create ongoing employment for Veterans. The program aims to bridge the gap between ADF and civilian life, while providing certainty of employment and stability for veterans and their families, and also increasing the representation of veteran staff at DVA (target is 7 per cent).

Members were advised that state governments have their own pathways in place, but these are not linked to the Federal program.

Members **NOTED** the Veteran Employment Pathway program implementation progress to date and planned next steps.

Agenda Item 7 Veteran Family Hubs Update

The Director, Veteran and Family Hubs advised members that the Department continues to work on the development of a network of Veteran and Family Hubs across Australia, in partnership with ex-service organisations (ESOs) and state and territory governments. On 24 April 2022, the Australian Government announced \$42.9 million to develop ten Veteran and Family Hubs across Australia in areas of significant Defence and veteran communities.

This investment will complement the six hubs previously established which are currently delivering supports to veterans and their families and includes eight new hubs, as well as the expansion to southeast Queensland and Tasmania. The eight new hubs will be located in Southwest Perth, Northern Adelaide, Ipswich, Queanbeyan, the Hawkesbury region, the Hunter, the Tweed and North Coast region and the Surf Coast and Geelong region.

Current priorities include the implementation of the Tasmanian and Southeast Queensland locations and commencement of implementation for the eight new locations.

The Mates4Mates representative provided members with an update on the status of the Northern Territory Hub in Darwin, explaining that Mates4Mates is delivering a two site strategy. The Returned and Services League of Australia representative provided an update on the Nowra Hub as construction is continuing.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2022YVF/A5	Members were encouraged to provide any feedback with regards to Veteran and Family Hubs to veteranandfamilyhubs@dva.gov.au	YVF Members
2022YVF/A6	To address queries from YVF members about how lead organisations are selected, the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GoG) will be circulated to YVF members.	Veteran Family Policy Group YVF Secretariat
2022YVF/A7	Include an update on Veteran and Family Hubs on the next agenda for the meeting scheduled for 9 November 2022 and all meetings scheduled for 2023.	YVF Secretariat

Members **NOTED** the update as provided by the Veteran Family Hubs team.

Agenda Item 8 Disaster Support Update

The Executive Director of the Disaster Management Team provided members with a verbal update on the steps undertaken to support DVA clients and DVA staff during times of environmental challenges.

Members **NOTED** the verbal update provided.

Agenda Item 9 Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division Service Review and Transformation Program

Executive Director, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services informed members of the work being undertaken to review and improve the current services provided by the division.

The Program consists of four sequential projects being the Current State Review, Future Trends Analysis, Solutions Design and Change Implementation.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
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2022YVF/A8	YVF Members were encouraged to participate in the Horizon Scan survey run by the University of Newcastle which closes 25 July 2022. Secretariat to forward the link to members.	Secretariat
2022YVF/A9	The Royal Australian Regiment Association representative to consult with the Executive Director, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services on the linkages to incarcerated veterans and crisis care in South Australia.	MHWSD

Members **NOTED** that Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division is conducting a Service Review and Transformation Program.

Agenda Item 10 Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services (Veterans' MATES) Program

The Assistant Secretary, Client Programs Branch provided a presentation on the purpose, approach and achievements of Veterans' MATES - a data driven, quality use of medicines (health promotion) program which, seeks to improve health outcomes for veterans through an improved understanding and utilisation of medicines and health services. The program which has been in operation since 2004, supports the veteran community to improve their wellbeing through better use of medicines, health services and taking an active role in their health.

Members were encouraged to share the presentation with members of their organisations and were advised that the MATES program will monitor outcomes from COVID-19 and outcomes from the release of anti-virals and analyse the data once available.

Members NOTED the presentation, which highlighted the program's achievements in providing positive health outcomes and improved understanding and utilisation of medicines and health services to the veteran community.

Agenda Item 11 Joint Transition Authority Presentation, Department of Defence

The Director General, Joint Transition Authority (JTA) presented an update on the JTA progress to date, and plans for the future.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022YVF/A10	Provide members with a copy of the Joint Transition Authority presentation to share with their cohorts.	Secretariat

Meeting closed: 1.47pm.

MEMBERS/ATTENDEES	
Ms Kate Pope PSM	Deputy President, Repatriation Commission
CDRE Paul Kinghorne (Proxy)	Director General Veterans' Support, Defence People Group
SQNLDR Dee Cherry	Air Force Association
Mr John Newton	Australian Special Air Service Association
Ms Chantel Williams	Defence Families Australia
Mr Marc Diplock	Mates4Mates
CMDR Mark Fullick RAN	Naval Association of Australia
Mr James Dallas	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Doug Sheridan	Soldier On
Mr Scott Harris	The Warrior's Return (WR)
Mr Chris Tilley	Royal Australian Regiment Association
Ms Kaitlyn Godfrey	Secretariat Officer, Governance and Ministerial Events
Apologies	
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner
Mr Bradley Campbell	Australian Veterans Alliance
COL James Burns	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence
Ms Talissa Papamau	Modern Soldier
Ms Barbara Boyer	Legacy Australia Inc