



Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum

Wednesday, 23 June 2021
Level 8 Millen Room / GovTeams
10:30am – 4:00pm AEST

Minutes

Members	
Mr Don Spinks AM (Chair)	Repatriation Commissioner
COL James Burns	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence
Mr Kris Milne	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Ms Michelle Hoare	Defence Families of Australia
Ms Laura Duckworth (Proxy)	Mates4Mates
Mr James Dallas	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr John Hardgrave	Soldier On
SQNLDR Dee Cherry	Air Force Association
Mr John Newton	Australian Special Air Service Association
CMDR Mark Fullick RAN	Naval Association of Australia
Mr Chris Tilley	Royal Australian Regiment Association
Mr Scott Harris	The Warrior's Return
Ms Barbara Boyer	Legacy Australia Inc

Apologies	
Mr Bradley Campbell	Australian Veterans Alliance
Mr John McNeil (Proxy)	Australian Veterans Alliance
Mr Marc Diplock	Mates4Mates
Ms Talissa Papamau	Modern Soldier
TBC	Defence Force Welfare Association

Agenda Item 1 Welcome and Meeting Administration

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and noted apologies from Mr Bradley Campbell and his proxy, Mr John McNeil, **Australian Veterans Alliance**. The Chair also noted apologies from Mr Mark Diplock, **Mates4Mates**, Ms Talissa Papamau, **Modern Soldier**, and noted that the **Defence Force Welfare Association** representative is yet to be announced

Agenda item 2 Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the previous meeting held 17 March 2021 were **ENDORSED**.

Members **AGREED** to close the following Actions Items as listed in the paper, **Y149, Y2020/160, Y2021/002, Y2021/003, Y2021/007, Y2021/011, Y2021/012, Y2021/013, Y2021/014, Y 2021/015, Y2021/016 and Y2021/017**.

Members **NOTED** that Action Items **Y2020/0166, Y2020/0167, Y2020/0169, Y2021/001, Y2021/004, Y2021/005, Y2021/006, Y2021/008, Y2021/009 and Y2021/018** will remain open.



Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum

Wednesday, 23 June 2021
Level 8 Millen Room / GovTeams
10:30am – 4:00pm AEST

No.	Action / Decision	Assigned to
Y2021/019	Scott Harris and James Dallas volunteered to represent YVF at ESORT. Secretariat to liaise with both to see who will represent YVF.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 3 Royal Commission Update and Next Steps

The Chair summarised the progress of establishing the Royal Commission to date. Members noted the finalisation of the public consultation process to inform the Terms of Reference. The Chair advised that around 1400 responses to the consultation process were received, plus an additional 1800 responses received by the Attorney General's Department. Members noted that DVA has published written feedback on its website, where consent has been granted to do so.

Members **NOTED** the update provided on the Status and Next Steps of Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Agenda Item 4 Claims Processing Improvements

First Assistant Secretary Client Benefits Division, Ms Natasha Cole addressed this item, outlining the priority actions being undertaken by DVA to address the growing number of applications for compensation claims and reduce the claims processing backlog.

Members noted the recent Budget Measure includes an additional \$98.55 million over two years to provide DVA with a significant increase to staffing and additional resources to address the backlog of claims and increased workload.

Members also noted additional measures being implemented, including; active outreach from DVA to clients, re-examination and simplification of forms and, expanding combined benefits processing.

In discussing measures to address the time to process claims, Ms Barbara Boyer, **Legacy**, asked if Clinical Psychologists could submit Assessment Reports, noting they had previously been able to. Ms Cole noted that this sits with Claims Policy, but undertook to seek advice and report back.

Mr Scott Harris, **The Warrior's Return**, asked how many of the additional staffing are ex-ADF. Ms Cole undertook to provide advice once all staff had been onboarded.

No.	Action / Decision	Assigned to
Y2021/020	DVA to respond to Ms Boyer's query, asking if clinical psychologists could submit Assessment Reports, noting they had previously been able to.	FAS Veteran & Family Policy
Y2021/021	Ms Cole to provide stats to Mr Scott Harris regarding - how many new staff are ex serving ADF Members.	FAS CBD



Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum

Wednesday, 23 June 2021
Level 8 Millen Room / GovTeams
10:30am – 4:00pm AEST

Members **NOTED** the priority activities being undertaken by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to improve claims processing and reduce the backlog.

Agenda Item 5 Update on ESORT Multi-Act Working Group

Ms Cole provided an update to Members on the ESORT Multi-Act Working Group. Ms Cole advised that this Working Group has subsumed the work of the group looking at implementing a Tri-Act Initial Liability form. The Working Group is looking at the wider picture of Multi-Act Claims.

Members **NOTED** the update provided on the ESORT Multi Act Working Group.

Agenda Item 6 Transformation Showcase (AI Y149)

The Chair introduced First Assistant Secretary Commemoration and Transformation Division, Ms Rachel Goddard, to present the latest DVA Transformation Showcase – giving an update on the status of DVA's transformation program.

Ms Goddard summarised the transformation that has occurred, and Members noted the current projects including the work being undertaken to digitise records. Ms Barbara Boyer, **Legacy**, asked how DVA integrates personal records that clients may wish to have in their file. Ms Goddard undertook to seek further information and report back.

Members also noted the work being undertaken by the Veteran Support Officer network and the benefit of these Officer's liaising directly with serving Defence units.

Members **NOTED** the Transformation Showcase.

No.	Action / Decision	Assigned to
Y2021/022	Secretariat to circulate advise on how DVA integrates personal records to digitised client files.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 7 Address from Commissioner Defence Engagement (AI Y2020/0166)

The Chair introduced Mr Stuart Smith, Defence Engagement Commissioner (DEC).

Mr Smith summarized his role with DVA and Members noted his current priorities. Mr Smith noted his engagement with defence personnel has highlighted the thirst for further education and training evident in discharging personnel. Mr Smith also noted the high take up of MyService and the White Card among recently separated ADF members and the high regard that the Veteran Support Officers are held by this cohort.

Members noted Mr Smith's continuing role to provide advice to DVA on how best to capitalise on these sentiments.

Agenda Item 8 Presentation from Phoenix Australia: Submission of DVA Mental Health Advice Quarterly Report

The Chair introduced Dr Olivia Metcalf of Phoenix Australia. Dr Metcalf provided Members a summary of work conducted by Phoenix in the last 12 months, specifically related to veteran and military mental health.



Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum

Wednesday, 23 June 2021
Level 8 Millen Room / GovTeams
10:30am – 4:00pm AEST

Dr Metcalf outlined Phoenix expertise in trauma-related mental health and wellbeing, and Members noted the existing arrangement where Phoenix provides the Department with subject matter expertise, runs a support service for mental health clinicians, and supports DVA PTSD-Trauma Recovery Programs.

Agenda Item 9 Open Arms – Update

The Chair introduced Ms Jennifer Veitch, Assistant National Manager, Open Arms to provide Members an update on Open Arms activities.

Ms Veitch provided Members an update on the continued success of the Check 5 campaign, and thanked them for their continued support of the counselling service.

Members **NOTED** the update provided on Open Arms.

Agenda Item 10 Other Business

The Chair invited members to raise any other business.

Members noted the response to a query raised by Mr John Newton, **Australian Special Air Service Association**, clarifying a perceived discrepancy in Disability Pension figures cited in the April 2021 edition of VetAffairs.

Agenda Item 11 Budget and DVA Strategic Priorities

The Chair welcomed the DVA Secretary to provide Members an update on the DVA Budget.

The Secretary provided members a summary of the DVA related Budget measures and the subsequent priority areas for the Department in the next 12 months. Noting the continued focus on reducing the Claims backlog and streamlining departmental processes.

Members noted the Budget measures and discussed the direct impact of several, including the increased services available to DVA clients in Services Australia shopfronts and the increased outreach by VAN offices in helping to manage the claims backlog.

Members **NOTED** the Secretary's update on the Budget and DVA Strategic Priorities.

Agenda Item 12 Minister's Address to YVF

The Chair welcomed the Minister, the Hon Darren Chester MP, to address Members.

The Minister thanked Members for their continued support for the Department's transformation agenda and for him personally.

The meeting closed at 4pm. The next meeting is scheduled for 27 October 2021.