



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees and noting apologies. Members acknowledged the contributions of Mr Kel Ryan, recently retired National President, Defence Force Welfare Association and Ms Rhondda Vanzella, recently retired National President, Australian War Widows Inc. Ms Jenny Gregory, National President, Australian War Widows Inc was welcomed to ESORT. Condolences were given on the passing of Mrs Heather Evans, Former National President, Partners of Veterans Association of Australia. As a new ESORT protocol, the meeting observed a minutes silence to acknowledge all veterans who have died during or since their service. Apologies are listed at Annexure A.

The Chair advised Members of the conclusion of her tenure as Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, President of the Repatriation Commission and Chair of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, then advised members of the incoming Secretary Ms Alison Frame and reflected on the Department's achievements over the past five years.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes & actions of previous meeting

Members requested several amendments to the 14 June 2022 Minutes and for these to be endorsed out of session.

Members **AGREED** to close action items E2021/020, 021, 023, 2022A/ESORT1, ESORT2, ESORT5, ESORT7, ESORT8, ESORT10, ESORT11, ESORT12, ESORT14, ESORT16, ESORT17, ESORT19, 2022ESORT/A21, A22,A23, A26, A28, A29, A30, A31, A32 and A33, **NOTING** that action items E2021/27, E2020/19, E2021/025, 2022ESORT/A24, 2022ESORT/A27 remain open and continue to progress.

2022ESORT/A34	DVA currently provides personal information to peak Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) when a veteran or war widow dies. ESOs may use the details to reach out the partner to offer support during the bereavement period. (E2021/020). ESORT members advised that the TPI Association, Australian War Widows Inc and possibly Legacy are not receiving deceased client's Next-of-Kin/relatives contact details. To be reviewed and report back at the first meeting of 2023.	Client Benefits Division

Agenda Item 3 DVA Strategic Direction and DVA's Wellbeing Whole of Life Framework 2.0

Members were provided with a copy of the draft DVA Strategic Direction 2022, and were advised on the conceptual and practical application of a wellbeing approach to supporting better outcomes for veterans and their families.

Members **DISCUSSED** the Ecosystem recognising the importance of collaborating with all levels of Government, the objectives towards the future state, resources that may be required and the Department's data capability.

Members **DISCUSSED** the need for the development of a portal that will advise veterans and family members of services available within their communities. The Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL) launched the "[Veterans' Catalogue](#)" App, developed with a vision of empowering veterans and their families to more easily find and access services and support when needed, however; the discussion focussed on there being a need for only one portal that serviced all ESOs and services providers.

2022ESORT/A35	Send members the link to the DVA Strategic Direction information once loaded onto the DVA website. Members to then forward to their constituents for information.	Secretariat
2022A/ESORT36	Form a working group to investigate the potential for a Veterans' Services Portal to be developed. The working group is to include a representative from: Australian War Widows Inc, Department of Defence, The Returned & Services League of Australia, Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association, Partners of Veterans Association of Australia, The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation and the DVA Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner.	President Australian War Widows Inc to lead and report back to the next ESORT meeting
2022ESORT/A37	DVA will provide a representative to join Defence in the Portal Working Group to facilitate consideration of the outcomes across Defence, DVA and ADF/veteran transition.	President Australian War Widows Inc to lead and report back to the next ESORT meeting

Members were provided with an update on the Wellbeing Journey and new Wellbeing Framework. The implementation of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs was discussed, along with recruitment into the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the utilisation of ADF personnel in disaster support and incarceration rates of veterans.

2022ESORT/A38	Approach the Commonwealth States and Territories Committee (CSTC) Secretariat to request the provision of statistics of veterans incarcerated in jurisdictional Correctional Services.	Secretariat
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Members **NOTED** the DVA Strategic Direction and the Veteran and Families Wellbeing Framework provided.

Agenda Item 4 Update on the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Members were advised that the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP, will begin consultations in February 2023, to address the Royal Commission's (RC) Interim report Recommendation 1 – Simplification of Legislation. The next hearing block of the Royal Commission is scheduled for May 2023 as the Commissioners will be travelling and convening policy working groups to explore items/issues that have been raised/realised through this process in the first quarter. The Commissioners are also conducting a number of closed hearings regarding suicide.

Members sought advice on the proposed consultations on the legislation. Outcomes of the external consultation may be referred to a Parliamentary Legislative Committee in 2023. The RC Interim report clearly outlines the milestones it expects the Government to meet.

Members **NOTED** the verbal update provided and were notified that the Attorney-General's Department is leading Recommendations 6-8 and will be contacting ESOs participating in the National Consultation Framework in the coming weeks, to consult.

Agenda Item 5 Claims Processing Update

Members were advised that DVA is committed to meeting the recommendation of the Royal Commission, to eliminate the claims backlog by March 2024. As at 30 June 2022, DVA's Client Benefits Division had 390 full time equivalent (FTE) staff in compensation claims processing roles and this has increased to 623 FTE as at 30 November 2022. This is an increase of 60 percent in five months. 60 percent of the Liability claims backlog are for current

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serving ADF personnel. The claims statistics published on the DVA website are updated on the 15th of each month. December statistics will be updated on 15 January 2023.

Members **DISCUSSED** the role of user testing when making any changes to MyService. DVA agreed with the importance of undertaking testing when a significant design change is made, however; testing is not required when improvements are made to the back end of the system.

Members **NOTED** to update provided.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022ESORT/A39	Develop a webinar and/or potentially a DVA TV video, advising advocates about complex topics which may include: DVA's claims statistics; knowledge and understanding of claims; how to use MyService; and informing veterans of the services or support they may be entitled to whilst waiting for a claim to be processed.	Client Benefits Division

Agenda Item 6 Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum Update

Members of the Younger Veteran Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) presented to ESORT, requesting closer collaboration between the two forum and that a YVF member become a member of ESORT and vice versa.

ESORT members requested sufficient time to consider and consult on papers before ESORT Meetings and requested the timely issue and resolution of Minutes of ESORT Meetings.

Members **NOTED** the presentation provided.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022ESORT/A40	ESORT and YVF to meet to discuss membership and provide suggestions for a revision of the Terms of Reference for both forums.	Secretariat to facilitate a Govteams meeting in early 2023.
2022ESORT/A41	Secretariat to facilitate nominations from YVF and ESORT members to attend each other's respective forum as an observer.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 7 BEST Grants Update

Members **NOTED** the update provided and advised they needed more time to consider the paper and therefore did not have any questions at this time.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022ESORT/A42	ESORT members are to provide any questions/feedback directly to the Assistant Secretary, Provider Engagement Management Branch, by 6 January 2023.	All members

Agenda Item 8 Chief Health Officer Update – Engagement with medical and allied health professionals

Due to time constraints, members were advised the PowerPoint presentation will be sent via email following the meeting.

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2022ESORT/A43	Send the Chief Health Officer's presentation – Engagement with medical and allied health professionals to ESORT members.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 9 Coordinated Veterans' Care Program

Members **NOTED** that the Coordinated Veterans' Care Program proactively manages Veteran Gold Card holders with chronic conditions and Veteran White Card holders with DVA accepted mental health conditions. Providers and participants work as a team to improve the veteran's health care in a General Practice setting.

2022ESORT/A44	Send the Coordinated Veterans' Care Program presentation to ESORT members.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 10 Mental Health & Wellbeing Services Division Service Review and Transformation Program

Members **NOTED** the Current State Review project is researching, analysing and mapping the Division's services and users; including the needs and experiences of veterans, families and support organisations.

Members **DISCUSSED** the review of governance within Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling and requested an update. The Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Thistlethwaite MP, is currently considering the recommendations for the National Advisory Committee (NAC) provided by the Department. Psychologist fees and the shortage of counsellors was raised and it expected this will be addressed once the Future State Phase of the project is reached. Open Arms has engaged a peer with a special operations background to assist in providing support for this cohort.

2022ESORT/A45	The New Model of Care, currently being developed, is to be presented to ESORT in 2023.	Mental Health & Wellbeing Services
2022ESORT/A46	Provide members with a calendar of Open Arms Regional Consultative forums for 2023.	Mental Health & Wellbeing Services

Agenda Item 11 Other Business

○ **11.1 Member Submissions**

The TPI Federation submitted seven questions for DVA response, with the following outcomes:

- 11.1 A - Honours & Awards Appeals Tribunal Inquiry into recognition for members and families of members who are wounded or killed in or as a result of service. Members **NOTED** the departmental response.
- 11.1.B - 2019 National Consultative Forum Review - Members were provided with a copy of the Draft Summary of Survey Outcomes developed by ORIMA Research for the 2019 National Consultative Framework Review.
- 11.1.C - Veteran's Home Care (VHC) – Lawn Mowing and Tender Process - Members **NOTED** the departmental response.
- 11.1.D - PBS & RPBS Update – 1 Jan 2023 - Members **NOTED** the departmental response provided to **NOTING** that the TPI Federation advised that it considers TPI veterans should be receiving services under a compensation model.

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- 11.1.E - Access to White Card Treatment for Cancer Treatment – Discharge due to Government policy – e.g. marriage/pregnancy - Service falling outside the commencement period for VEA – 7 December 1972 - Members **NOTED** that any amendments to an existing policy requires a proposal to Government.
- 11.1.F - 12-week Treatment Cycle Review Update was addressed under Action Items 2. Att C.1. Members were **ADVISED** that DVA is aligned with the Department of Health and any amendments to an existing policy requires a proposal to Government.
- 11.1.G - To advise why, without a DVA policy, DVA clients are being denied their compensable entitlements for the issue of the necessary hearing aid appliances - members were **ADVISED** that any amendments to an existing policy requires a proposal to Government (11.1.G).

2022ESORT/A47	Members of ESORT and YVF to workshop and develop a proposed scope for the 2023 National Consultation Framework Review, for consideration by the ESORT Chair.	To be facilitated by Secretariat
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○ **11.2 Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association (APPVA)**

Members **DISCUSSED** the APPVA submission – Reducing the Barriers to Successful Claims Lodgement through MyService and Normalising Terms and Definitions. The Chair acknowledged the continued work of and ongoing need for advocates.

The Department has a webpage to assist veterans when making claims [Making a claim for a service-related condition | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#). The current wording on the DVA website is "If you are unsure about whether to claim a certain condition, many ex-service organisations ([Find an ex-service organisation | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)) have advocates who are trained to help. You can use the advocate register ([Find an advocate | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)) to find one near you."

2022ESORT/A48	DVA to meet with the Deputy President APPVA to outline claims processing improvements, and further discuss messaging regarding claims and links to advocates on MyService and the DVA website.	Deputy Secretary, Veteran & Family Services Group
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Meeting closed: 2.25pm.

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Annexure A

ESORT Members	
Ms Liz Cosson AM CSC	Chair, President, Repatriation Commission and Chair, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC)
Ms Kate Pope PSM	Deputy President, Repatriation Commission and MRCC Member
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner and MRCC Member
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, MRCC Member
MAJGEN Wade Stothart AM CSC RAN	MRCC Member, Department of Defence
Mr Bill Roberts OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia
Mr Michael Stuart-Watt	Defence Force Welfare Association (<i>proxy</i>)
MAJGEN Paul Irving AM PSM RFD (Retd)	Defence Reserves Association
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Ms Narelle Bromhead OAM	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
Ms Rhondda Vanzella OAM	Australian War Widows Inc (Outgoing National President)
Ms Jenny Gregory	Australian War Widows Inc (Incoming National President)
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
Mr David Manolas	Naval Association of Australia
Mr John King	The Returned & Services League of Australia (<i>proxy</i>)
The Hon Martin Hamilton-Smith	Australian Special Air Service Association
Mr Ian Lindgren	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (<i>proxy</i>)
GPCAPT Carl Schiller OAM CSM (Retd)	Air Force Association
Mr Mike von Berg MC OAM	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Other Attendees	
Mr Stuart Smith AO DSC	Deputy Secretary, Veteran & Family Services Group
Ms Rachel Goddard	A/g Deputy Secretary, Enabling Services & Commemorations Group
Presenters	
Ms Kate Pope PSM	Deputy President, Veteran & Family Policy Group (<i>Item 3</i>)
Mr Justin Mein	Executive Director, Strategic Planning Unit (<i>Item 3</i>)
Mr Mark Harrigan	First Assistant Secretary, Royal Commission Reviews & Inquiries Implementation (<i>Item 4</i>)
Mr Luke Brown	Assistant Secretary, Legislation Improvement (<i>Item 4</i>)
Ms Natasha Cole	First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits (<i>Item 6</i>)
Mr Wayne Perry	Assistant Secretary, Provider Engagement & Management (<i>Item 7</i>)
Ms Sarah Kennedy	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Client Engagement & Support Services (<i>Item 9</i>)
Mr Scott Harris (<i>GovTeams</i>)	The Warrior's Return and YVF Member (<i>Item 5</i>)
Mr James Dallas (<i>GovTeams</i>)	The Returned & Services League of Australia and YVF Member (<i>Item 5</i>)
Ms Leanne Cameron	First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health & Wellbeing Services (<i>Item 10</i>)
Observers	
Ms Liane Pettitt	Chief of Staff/Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary & Governance
Mr Glen Ferrarotto	DVA Veteran Engagement Advisor
LTCOL Chris Moss (ARes)	Director, Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA) Board

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Ms Jen Hamer	Director, Strategic Planning Unit (<i>Item 3</i>)
Mr Rod Swanswick	DVA Veteran and Family Engagement Advisor
AIRCDRE Kaarin Kooij (<i>GovTeams</i>)	Director General, Joint Transition Authority, Department of Defence
Apologies	
Ms Sandi Laaksonen-Sherrin	Defence Families Australia
RADM Sarah Sharkey RAN	MRCC Member, Department of Defence
Ms Del Gaudry	Defence Force Welfare Association
Mr Rob Woods JP	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Mr Eric Easterbrook OAM	Legacy Australia Inc
MAJGEN Greg Melick AO RFD SC	The Returned & Services League of Australia
Mr Aaron Hughes	MRCC Member, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation
Secretariat	
Ms Belinda Bastiaans	Director, Governance & Ministerial Events
Ms Kylie Robinson	Assistant Director, Governance & Ministerial Events
Ms Meredith Watson	Senior Secretariat Officer, Governance & Ministerial Events
Ms Kaitlyn Godfrey	Secretariat Officer, Governance & Ministerial Events