



## Minutes

### Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging country, veterans, their families and current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. No conflicts of interest were raised.

The Chair welcomed the incoming representative (rep) for the Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA) and thanked the outgoing rep. The proxy for the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) was welcomed to the forum. Apologies are listed at Annexure A.

### Agenda Item 2 DVA Secretary's Introduction

Members were introduced to the DVA Secretary and provided with an overview of her key priorities to deliver on the Government's election commitments and the recommendations identified by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in its Interim Report.

Members were advised that the Department of Defence has established an Information Access Unit that will streamline all requests for information. The commencement of outcomes from the Legislative Reform will take some time to implement.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023YVF/A1	Provide members with advice about the implementation of the Information Access Unit recently established within the Department of Defence.	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence

Members **NOTED** the update.

### Agenda Item 3 Previous Minutes and Action Items

Members **ENDORSED** the previous minutes from 25 November 2022.

Members **AGREED** to close action items Y2020/0166, 167, 2022YVF/A11, A12, A13, A14, A15, A16, A17, A18, A19 and **NOTED** Y2021/018 remains in progress.

### Agenda Item 4 Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms) Services Provided

Members were provided with an update on Open Arms services. Open Arms is a nationally accredited mental health service that provides 24 hour free counselling and support for any Australian Defence Force member with one day full time service. Safe Zone Support is an anonymous counselling line 1800 142 072 providing veterans and their families access to counselling without having to identify themselves.

The model of care adopted by the organisation is based on a private practice model and is currently under review. Open Arms is working to define exactly what services can and can't be provided, to assist veterans and families when requesting services.

Members **DISCUSSED** how Open Arms will connect with Veteran Hubs. The National Manager, Open Arms will meet with the Mates4Mates representative who is involved with the Darwin Hub for further discussions.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023YVF/A3	Report back to members on outcomes of discussions held with Open Arms Intake Team regarding the acceptance of third party referrals.	National Manager, Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling

Members **NOTED** the information provided.

#### Agenda Item 5 Report Back – Change to Mode of Discharge

Members held a robust discussion around the challenges, difficulties and complexities of the current superannuation scheme. The rep for the Australian Veterans Alliance advised members of his lived experience managing the complexities of the scheme and the input he has had in dealings with regards to the Douglas decision. He would like to be involved in any working groups that may be established to investigate improvements to the scheme.

The Department is working with ComSuper to develop a fact sheet for veterans considering making changes to the Mode of Discharge. The Department is unable to advocate on behalf of veterans, however, veterans are recommended to seek independent financial advice. Money Smart, Defence Financial Support Services and Centrelink all provide access to some free financial services.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023YVF/A2	The draft factsheet will be presented to Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum for feedback once completed.	Director, Benefits and Payments, Client Benefits Division

Members **NOTED** the update provided.

#### Agenda Item 6 Legislation Reform Consultation

Members were provided with an overview of the proposed veterans' entitlements legislation reform pathway – creating a simpler, easier, to use system for the veteran community.

On 16 February 2023, the Government announced further public consultation on a Pathway to simplify veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation. Submissions are encouraged and close on 12 May 2023. Further information can be found here <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/veterans-legislation-reform-consultation-pathway-commences>.

Members were provided with sample case studies comparing claims today and in the future under the new structure. The date of claim, household services and eligibility for a gold card was discussed. Statements of Principles (SOP) will continue to apply under this proposal.

Members **NOTED** the presentation provided.

#### Agenda Item 7 Claims Backlog Update

Members were advised that Incapacity Payment claims are continuing to decline and some of the oldest cases are being addressed. A new round of recruits will be on boarded in late March - early April strengthening the work force.

Members **NOTED** the presentation provided.

**Agenda Item 8 Other Business**

No other business was raised. The next meeting for YVF is scheduled in Canberra for 19 July 2023 from 9.00 am – 5.00pm. Members are encouraged to send agenda items through to the Secretariat so the agenda can focus on matters of importance to members. Subject matter experts will be invited to present to members.

Members **NOTED** the update.

**FOR INFORMATION ONLY****Agenda Item 9 Update – Veteran Family Advocate**

Members **NOTED** the information provided.

**Agenda Item 10 Members Request for Information – Data Claims Backlog**

Members **NOTED** the information provided.

The meeting closed at 2.10pm.

Annexure A

<b>MEMBERS/ATTENDEES</b>	
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner
COL James Burns CSM and Bar	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence
SQNLDR Dee Cherry	Air Force Association
Mr John Newton JP	Australian Special Air Service Association ( <i>Outgoing rep</i> )
Mr Nick Russon	Australian Special Air Service Association ( <i>Incoming rep</i> )
Ms Emma Whitehead	Mates4Mates
CMDR Mark Fullick FEAust, CPEng, APEC, RAN	Naval Association of Australia
Mr Angus Cameron	Returned and Services League of Australia (PROXY)
Mr Doug Sheridan	Soldier On
Mr Scott Harris	The Warrior's Return (WR)
Mr Chris Tilley	Royal Australian Regiment Association
Ms Barbara Boyer	Legacy Australia Inc
Mr Tom Hanley	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association
Mr Bradley Campbell	Australian Veterans Alliance
<b>Apologies</b>	
Mr James Dallas	Returned and Services League of Australia
Ms Talissa Papamau	Modern Soldier
Ms Chantel Williams	Defence Families Australia