

# Department of Defence / Department of Veterans' Affairs Links Steering Committee

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## Summary of Meeting – 15 March 2023

The 64th meeting of the Department of Defence/Department of Veterans' Affairs Links Steering Committee (DLSC) was held on Wednesday 15 March 2023. The following Policy, Programs and Initiatives were discussed at the meeting.

### Strategy

The Committee was updated on closure of the Transition Taskforce. The Transition Taskforce was established in 2016 to improve transition outcomes for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families, and to ensure that current and future veterans and their families have the support they need to transition effectively. The Department of Defence (Defence) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) are working collaboratively to finalise the response prior to submission to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel.

The Committee was updated on activities with the Joint Transition Authority (JTA) which was announced by the Australian Government in October 2020, based on a recommendation in the Productivity Commission report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*. The JTA's purpose is to better prepare and support ADF members and their families as they transition from military to civilian life. A Joint Oversight Committee has been established and is looking at different models of transition following visits to the United Kingdom and Canada. One critical difference is that Australia is taking a whole of life approach to deliver transition services for members.

The Committee was updated on progress relating to Recommendation 3 of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide which states that 'The Australian Government should improve the administration of the DVA's claims system by 1 July 2024'. The intended benefits of implementing Recommendation 3 are to reduce administrative burden, improve the claims process and share health records between Defence and DVA. DVA has established a Modernisation Program to improve the experience of veterans when interacting with MyService to submit claims online. Defence and DVA are working on co-designing JP2060 – Health Knowledge management System to transform how healthcare is delivered to members and veterans.

The Committee was updated on development of the Veterans' and Defence Family Strategy which is being circulate for feedback. The draft is informed by the January 2023 survey of defence and veteran families which received 2,700 responses. The consultation process will continue with a series of ministerial-led round table talks commencing in April 2023.

The Committee was also updated on progress in developing the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. A workshop with DVA and Defence held in February 2023 identified a range of options and approaches for future development. The Report will include the three stages of military life: service, transition and post service. The Committee noted the ongoing interest in development of the Strategy by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and the expected delivery date of December 2023.

### Governance

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Defence and DVA for the Cooperative Delivery of Care and Support is being fully reviewed and updated. The Committee agreed to the proposal to extend, Schedule 23 for the Joint Research Agenda to June 2024 to address legal issues such as information sharing between DVA and Defence. A paper is to be circulated out-of-session to Members of the Committee for endorsement of the proposal.

The Committee also received papers on:

- a proposal to expand the product lines being underwritten by the Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme which will benefit all ADF members and assist with recruitment and retention in Defence; and
- sustainable funding support for the Australian Partners of Defence (APOD) component of the Veteran Recognition Program.

### **Performance**

The Committee was provided with a paper on the strategic future of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs Program. The Committee heard that the Hubs need to demonstrate their ability to be sustainable in the future which includes looking at ways for the program to become self-funded in the future.

### **Other Business**

The Committee noted that Defence and DVA are working together to review mandatory attendance at transition courses, including how transitioning members and veterans engage with voluntary organisations. The aim is to provide them with information and understanding about life after service.

The next DLSC meeting is scheduled for 15 June 2023.