

## **GULF WAR SERUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORT 2019 AND 2020**

The Gulf War Serum Management Committee (GWSMC) is responsible to the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (the Commissions) for providing annual reporting on operational activities around the continued management and storage of the Gulf War Study serum samples and any research proposals that seek access to the serum samples or study data.

The following activities were undertaken by the GWSMC during 2019 and 2020:

### **Committee meetings**

The Committee met in Canberra and via videoconference/teleconference on 8 December 2020.

### **Committee membership**

Mr Les Dwyer, former Naval Association of Australia representative passed away in 2018 and we would like to acknowledge his contribution to the work of the Committee.

In December 2020, the Naval Association of Australia nominated Mr Mark Stewart-Jones as their new representative on the Committee. The formal appointment process has commenced.

### **Committee governance**

At the 2020 meeting, the Committee agreed that the Terms of Reference will be reviewed and/or updated in 2021, to ensure they remain consistent with the nature of its current business.

### **Serum samples**

#### ***Requests for access to samples***

No requests for access to the serum samples were received in 2019 or 2020.

#### ***Requests for destruction of samples***

In 2019 and 2020 no requests were received from any study participants, for the destruction of their individual samples.

#### ***Inspection of samples***

An inspection was due to be undertaken in 2020. However this proved impractical as it required interstate travel at time when restrictions were in place because of COVID-19. It is now anticipated that the next inspection will be conducted in 2021.

#### ***Storage of samples***

The Committee is satisfied with the current storage conditions and arrangements. Storing samples in liquid nitrogen at a lower temperature was investigated, but insufficient benefits were identified and the Committee agreed to maintain the current storage arrangements in -80C freezers.

### **Data requests**

A request was received from Monash University for DVA approval to provide de-identified data from the 2011-12 Gulf War Veterans follow-up Health Study to the DEPRES-sion Screening Data (DEPRESSD) international collaborative study of specific depression screening tools.

The Committee provided initial comments on the proposal at the 2020 meeting and requested some further information. A summary of the Committee's feedback will be provided through the Chair to the DVA Chief Data Officer. If approved by the DVA Chief Data Officer, the research proposal will also be submitted to the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).