



Ex-Service Organisations Round Table September 2025

Ex-Service Organisations Round Table Meeting

The Ex-Service Organisations Round Table (ESORT) met on Tuesday, 23 September 2025. Members of the ESORT made thoughtful and considered contributions throughout the meeting.

DVA Update – Secretary [Alison Frame, DVA]

The Secretary welcomed new Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, Annabelle Wilson, to ESORT. The Secretary also acknowledged the significant contributions of outgoing ESORT members Greg Melick representing RSL Australia and Wayne McNee representing Legacy Australia and thanked them for their work on the ESORT.

The Secretary provided an update on a number of DVA priorities and events including:

- work underway to progress the implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide
- measures to improve provider compliance
- work in the advocacy space and an update on the Institute of Veterans Advocacy
- the updated DVA website and new AI search tool

- the Making a Claim communications campaign
- the work of the taskforce on the new agency focussing on veteran wellbeing and the Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) Peak Body, and
- recent commemorations to mark the 80th anniversary of the Second World War and the 75th anniversary of Australian service in the Malayan Emergency.

ESORT Member Submissions

Provision of Critical Silver Wound Dressing Support for Veterans with Accepted Conditions (The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation)

In response to the member submission from the Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARC), DVA advised that silver wound care dressings, as well as other wound care items and pharmaceuticals, are available to Veteran Card holders under the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS). Should alternative wound care products not listed on the RPBS be required, the treating health provider can contact the Veterans Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC) on 1800 552 580 for an authority prescription approval. The RARC and ESORT accepted the advice from DVA.

Home Care – DVA Support (Defence Force Welfare Association)

In response to the member submission from the Defence Force Welfare Association, DVA informed members that the Veterans' Home Care (VHC) and Household Services (HHS) programs provide in-home care and support services to eligible people to maintain independence to live at home by providing practical help. Access to and provision of services vary between the 2 programs, however all services must be delivered in accordance with relevant Work Health & Safety Legislation, regulations and codes in their state or territory.

DVA Critical Initiatives

Overview of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Pilots and AI Use

DVA provided an update on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at DVA, including considerations related to a potential trial of an AI document reader within the secure GovAI environment operated by the Department of Finance, based on a voluntary opt-in/consent model.

Integrity and Compliance Activities

DVA advised members that it is proactively taking steps to ensure veterans and families can access safe, ethical and reliable support. While the majority of providers do the right thing, DVA has identified several concerning behaviours by advocates and health providers. DVA is therefore strengthening and clarifying its rules to help providers do the right thing and will take swift action when inappropriate behaviours are identified.

Progress Update on New Agency Focused on Wellbeing and ESO Peak Body

DVA advised members that following the consultation and co-design processes completed in April and May, work is progressing to define the key roles and functions of the new Agency focused on wellbeing. This work is being undertaken in close partnership with the Department of Defence to ensure alignment across Defence and DVA systems, particularly for separation, transition, and ongoing support for veterans and families. The Department is also continuing to work with the Commonwealth-led Implementation Taskforce in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to coordinate the sequencing of all the Royal Commission recommendations.

An update was also provided on the work to establish the ESO Peak Body. The Peak Body will be designed by and for the ex-service community to ensure trust and legitimacy, with government support provided to enable the process (as required). Building on the extensive consultation and co-design work undertaken to date, the next steps will focus on collaboration, consensus-building, and setting clear direction to avoid delays. While there is currently no

government-set timeframe for establishment, the Department reaffirmed its commitment to work alongside the ex-service community to progress this important initiative.

Advocacy and Recruitment of New Advocates for Training

Members were informed that DVA, the ESORT Advocacy Working Group and the Institute of Veterans' Advocacy (IVA) recognise the importance of re-invigorating awareness, interest and participation in volunteer and paid veteran advocacy through the ESO sector as a key element in increasing the availability of free advocacy services. Members were also provided with a brief update on the establishment of the IVA. DVA is partnering with ESORT and the wider ESO community to increase the number of available advocates, including increasing access to more female advocates.

ESORT was also updated on the progress of DVA's new 'Making a Claim' campaign, which provides the veteran community with clear, accurate information about how they can lodge claims and their advocacy options to support informed decision making. Members provided valuable feedback to inform messaging and tactics in the upcoming phases of the campaign.

Update on DVA Actions for mTBI and Blast Overpressure Exposure

DVA advised members that it is continuing to progress efforts with Defence to develop a brain injury program for serving and ex-serving members. To support this work:

- DVA is preparing with Defence for the next Defence and DVA Brain Injury Expert Advisory Panel meeting
- DVA has commissioned the University of New South Wales to deliver a rolling literature review on low-level blast overpressure exposure and mTBI. The first review is expected before the end of 2025.

Legislative Reform Update

Members were provided with a written update on legislation reform implementation.

Claims Processing Update

DVA provided members with a written update on recent claims processing data and advised that the most recent data can be accessed on the DVA 'Claim processing times' webpage: <https://www.dva.gov.au/claim-processing>, which encompasses all the key metrics relating to the claims process.

Veteran Employment Program – 2025 Prime Minister's National Veteran Employment Awards update

Members were briefed in writing on the Veteran Employment Program, including the growth in the Veteran Employment Commitment, including an update on the 2025 Prime Minister's National Veteran Employment Awards. They noted that the theme this year is 'Celebrating our growing community' to highlight the collective impact of the veteran employment community – inspiring continued engagement and leadership across Australia.

Update on DVA Grants

Members were provided with a written update on the grants programs offered by DVA, noting how important these are to the veteran community.

Update on the Redevelopment of the Western Australian and Hobart Gardens of Remembrance

The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) within DVA provided a written update to members on the program of major works currently in progress to redevelop and upgrade the Western Australian and Hobart Gardens of Remembrance. Updates on these works will be available via the OAWG website: [Current projects and announcements | Department of Veterans' Affairs](#).

Other Business

The following items were discussed under Other Business:

- The DVA Fee Schedule was raised as an ongoing concern impacting veterans. Members agreed the matter will be placed on a future ESORT agenda for further consideration before any submission to the Government is pursued. Members highlighted the importance of obtaining firsthand accounts from GPs and veterans to support a potential review within the medical fraternity. They supported additional evidence and further information being brought back to ESORT out-of-session.
- Members noted a submission from Legacy Australia will be considered calling for an increase to the War Widow(er)'s Pension and Wholly Dependent Partner Payment.
- ESORT members supported the Chair's recommendation that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans' Association and Women Veterans Australia be admitted to full membership of the ESORT.

ESORT Members in attendance:
Chair, Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs, President, Repatriation Commission and Chair, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC)
Deputy President, Repatriation Commission and MRCC Member
Repatriation Commissioner and MRCC Member
Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, MRCC Member
Air Force Association (<i>proxy</i>)
Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (<i>proxy</i>)
Australian Special Air Service Association
Australian War Widows Inc
Defence Families Australia
Defence Force Welfare Association
Defence People Group
Defence Reserves Association (<i>proxy</i>)
Legacy Australia Inc
MRCC Member, Department of Defence
Naval Association of Australia
Returned and Services League of Australia
Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Soldier On
The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc
TPI Federation Australia
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia