



## **SHOAMP SERUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORT 2024**

### **Background**

The Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (SHOAMP) Serum Management Committee (SMC) reports to the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (the Commissions) about its operational activities, including the continued storage of serum samples and associated matters, any research proposals received by the SMC, and any requests from individual study participants.

### **Summary of 2024 Activities**

The following activities were undertaken by, and/or in consultation with, the SHOAMP SMC in 2024 and are discussed in more detail below:

- Human Research Ethics Committee approvals;
- Committee meeting;
- Received and processed data-access requests from study participants (in accordance with both the AIFS Data-Access Protocol and AIHW Data-Management Plan); and
- Contracted the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) to reconcile the serum samples held in bio-banking storage facilities at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

### **Human Research Ethics Committee Approvals**

1. Approval was received from the AIHW Ethics Committee in December 2024 for an amendment to the Data-Management Plan to include reference to:
  - the need to reference obtaining Defence Organisational Support in the data re-use scenarios; and
  - legal advice to not action requests to destroy data whilst National Archives of Australia (NAA) retention notices and disposal freezes in relation to Commonwealth records are in place.
2. Approval was received from the Defence and DVA Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) in March 2024 to add further clarifying detail to the processes outlined in the AIFS Data-Access Protocol.



## Committee Meeting

The SMC met once in 2024 on 14 November, via online video conference.

## Committee Members

The members listed below remained unchanged in 2024.

Chair	
<b>Mr Kahlil FEGAN (DSC, AM)</b>	Repatriation Commissioner
<b>Mr John CLARKSON</b>	Victorian President, Air Force Association
<b>Ms Nadine CLODE</b>	Assistant Secretary, Research Branch, DVA
<b>Dr Anna COLWELL</b>	Deputy Chief Health Officer, DVA
<b>Mr Geoff CURL</b>	Veteran advocate, SHOAMP Deseal—Reseal Support Group
<b>Dr Victoria ROSS</b>	Senior Medical Advisor, Military Population Health, Joint Health Command, Department of Defence
<b>Dr Blesson Varghese</b>	Senior Data & Information Analyst, Defence and Veteran Insight Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>Dr Paul Pham</b>	Unit Head, Defence and Veteran Insight Unit, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>Ms Susan LIST-ARMITAGE</b>	Sample Processing Manager, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
<b>Ms Melissa SUARES</b>	Project Lead, Data Management and Linkage, Australian Institute of Family Studies

## Access and Withdrawal Requests

Following the December 2023 SHOAMP communique, AIFS received seven data-access requests (six in December 2023 and one in March 2024). An eighth person also contacted DVA directly in early 2024. However, it was established that they did not take part in the study.

All requests were managed in accordance with the AIFS Data-Access Protocol and AIHW Data-Management Plan, both endorsed by the SMC and DDVA Human Research Ethics Committee.

Of the seven requests received, AIFS were able to match one participant to the data-linkage key and verify their identity, which resulted in them receiving a copy of their survey data.



A second matched to the data-linkage key, but did not proceed to the identity-verification stage. The remaining five participants were unable to be matched to the data-linkage key. In these instances, and in accordance with the Data-Access Protocol, the requestor was asked to provide further information to AIFS. If this was not provided, they were sent key contact information should they wish to re-engage with the process in the future.

AIFS and AIHW (both accredited data integrators) followed the required processes to progress these requests, ensuring the relevant data-transfer process was secure, robust, and included necessary protections to the participants' information and privacy.

During 2024, AIFS or the Secretariat did not receive any requests from:

- participants to withdraw their data or serum sample; or
- researchers to use the de-identified SHOAMP study data or serum samples for research purposes.

AIFS continues to monitor for requests from study participants.

### **Serum-Sample Reconciliation**

In 2024, AIFS commenced a project to reconcile serum samples held in long-term storage at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute (QIMR). The project is due to complete in Quarter 2 of 2025. Findings from the final report will be reported in the 2025 SHOAMP SMC Activity Report.

### **Contact**

For inquiries about this Activity Report, please email the SHOAMP SMC Secretariat at [research.partnerships@dva.gov.au](mailto:research.partnerships@dva.gov.au).