



## Minutes

### Agenda Item 1 Welcome, Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging country, all who are currently serving and those who have served in our Australian Defence Force, including families who support them. The Chair also welcomed observers. Members **NOTED** apologies as listed at Annexure A and no conflicts of interest were raised.

### Agenda Item 2 Action Items

Members **NOTED** that the minutes from the previous meeting on 24 November 2025 were endorsed out-of-session on 18 December 2025 and published on the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) website on 23 December 2025.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2025OWP/A29, 32, 33, 34.

Members **NOTED** that no action items remain open or in progress.

### Agenda Item 3 Legislative Reform Update

Members **NOTED** the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 1) Bill 2025 was introduced into Parliament, and passed by both houses in November 2025.

Members **NOTED** the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 2) Bill 2025 was introduced to Parliament. Members **DISCUSSED** the technical amendments to veterans' legislation that this Bill contains are intended to ensure the smooth implementation of the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* and the transition to a single ongoing Act.

Members **NOTED** that new Legislative Instruments are in development to support the transition of the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) on 1 July 2026, and the merging of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission and Repatriation Commission.

### Agenda Item 4 Legislative Reform Training Modules

Members **NOTED** that 13 out of 14 training modules have been provided to OWP to test and provide feedback. Members **NOTED** the contents of each of the modules, and that previous consultation material was used to inform the modules. Members **NOTED** that scripts have been added to each module.

Members **NOTED** that DVA will deliver advocacy training to a group of key advocates nominated by each state and territory for face to face training in March.

Members **DISCUSSED** the minimal number of Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) trainers qualified at level 3 and 4. Members **NOTED** funding has been approved for a four year period to contribute to ADTP and training.

### Agenda Item 5 Claim Processing Update

**OFFICIAL**

Members **NOTED** that up to date claims data can be accessed on the DVA website. A recent increase in *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-Related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) claims is attributed to veterans wishing to have their claims lodged prior to the commencement of new legislation on 1 July 2026.

Members **NOTED** the composition of claims processing delegates is now 90% ongoing public servants.

Members **NOTED** the current focus of claims processing is the age of a claim, rather than a claims volume.

**Agenda Item 6            Claims Process Change – Nomination of Treating Practitioner**

Members **NOTED** the update provided by the Chair. Members **DISCUSSED** the difficulty advocates face when attempting to obtain a copy of a treating practitioners report on behalf of one of their clients. The Chair **NOTED** a streamlined process could be considered for trusted institutions

The Chair **AGREED** to separate discussion with the representative from the Australian Special Air Services Association (ASASA) on this matter.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
<b>OWP2026/A01</b>	Chair and Deputy Chair to discuss with ASASA an improved approach for advocates to obtain reports from treating practitioners on behalf of their clients.	Chair and ASASA

**Agenda Item 7            What OWP Could look like (Member Submission – Royal Australian Regiment Corporation)**

Members **NOTED** the submission and **DISCUSSED** the current priorities of the OWP. Members **OBSERVED** meetings are often focused solely on claims processing, limiting opportunities for discussions on welfare matters. Members **DISCUSSED** establishing a separate forum for welfare matters, allowing OWP to maintain its focus on claims processing. The Chair **NOTED** that welfare issues should continue to be raised through OWP in the absence of an alternative forum.

Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** that the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide recommendations may influence future consultation arrangements, including the Institute of Veterans’ Advocacy (IVA).

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
<b>OWP2026/A02</b>	Chair to discuss the priorities of OWP, and advocacy issues with Deputy Secretary Veteran, Family, and Stakeholder Experience (VFSE).	Chair

**Agenda Item 8            Advocacy**

Members **NOTED** in the 2025-26 MYEFO the Government announced advocacy reform measures including providing funding to the IVA and increased funding to the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program.

Members **NOTED** the Government agreed in principle to six of the seven recommendations in relation to the Senate Inquiry into *Issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support*.

Members **NOTED** the Government has commenced public consultation on reform opportunities to better protect veterans while not over-regulating a largely volunteer service. Members **NOTED** a paper outlining reform opportunities is available on the DVA website.

**Agenda Item 9      Communique**

Members **NOTED** the OWP Communique will be endorsed by members out-of-session.

**Agenda Item 10      Other Business**

The Chair **ACKNOWLEDGED** a concern raised by the member representing ASASA and **AGREED** to discuss offline.

**Meeting closed: 2:45pm**

<b>Members</b>	
Andrew Kefford PSM	Chair, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Programs
Tara Hatzismalis	Deputy Chair, A/g First Assistant Secretary Client Benefits Division
Michael Harper	Assistant Secretary, Initial Liability
Vanesa Cheng	Air Force Association
Michael Carlon JP	Australian Special Air Services Association
Jenny Gregory OAM	Australian War Widows
Rob Connor	Legacy Canberra
Narelle Bromhead OAM	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
Keely Dreghorn	Returned and Services League of Australia
Clem Russell OAM	The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
Bill Roberts OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Rod Hutchings	Australians Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association
<b>Apologies</b>	
Scott Jeffrey	TPI Federation of Australia
<b>Presenters</b>	
Luke Brown	First Assistant Secretary, Policy and Research Division
Tara Hatzismalis	A/g First Assistant Secretary Client Benefits Division
<b>Secretariat</b>	
James Caulfield	A/g Assistant Director, International and Stakeholder Relations
Kaitlyn Godfrey	Secretariat Officer, International and Stakeholder Relations

**Next Meeting – 26 March 2026**