



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging country, veterans, families, current serving Australian Defence Force Personnel and 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 18 February 2026 were endorsed out-of-session and published on the DVA Website.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2026OWP/A02.

Members **NOTED** that the action items 2026OWP/A01 remain in progress.

Agenda Item 3 Legislative Reform Update

Members **NOTED** the technical amendments relating to the *Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 1) ACT 2025 (the VALA Act No. 1)*, *The Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No. 2) ACT 2026*, and the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025 (VETS Act)*.

Members **DISCUSSED** the impacts the new *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)* will have in relation to different circumstances veterans may face, particularly in relation to Section 80 payments. Members also **DISCUSSED** how soon CLICK will be updated with the new information of the VETS Act. This roll out of updating over 15,000 pages will occur progressively, with the department prioritising pages with large changes or that are frequently accessed.

Members **NOTED** the 13 existing training videos available to advocates through the Course in Military Advocacy (CiMA) or The Advocate Training and Development Program (ATDP).

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026OWP/A03	DVA to return advice to OWP on the conditions in which section 80 payments are distributed to veteran families with split custody of dependants. DVA also proposed to raise this matter with the Veteran Family Advocate.	Policy and Research Division

Agenda Item 4 Claims Processing Update

Members **DISCUSSED** the April update of claims data available via the DVA website. DVA provided an update on the various impacts the upcoming changes in legislation are having on veteran behaviour for submitting claims, and how the department is responding to the needs of veterans.

Members **AGREED** that this forum would prefer to receive more specific data relating to claims with the longest processing times. Members **AGREED** to discuss at a future meeting how claims data could be better presented to meet needs of the consumers of this data and the veteran community.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026OWP/A04	DVA to distribute to members the figure of how many of the existing claims (per April 2026 update) are DVA waiting on for medical evidence.	Client Benefits Division
2026OWP/A05	OWP to invite a representative of DVA's data team to discuss changes in the presentation of the claims processing data available on DVA's website.	Client Benefits Division

Agenda Item 5 Advocacy Update

Members **NOTED** the update provided by DVA on the progress of public consultation on further veteran advocacy reform. Consultation closed on Friday 8 May. A brief will shortly progress to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs for approval of applicant outcomes. Any future reform, including new legislation, will be subject to a government decision.

Agenda Item 6 BEST Grants Update

Members **NOTED** the update provided by DVA on the BEST Grant applications for 2026-29. Applications closed on 15 April and are currently under consideration by the department.

Agenda Item 7 Claims Lodgement Channels and Independent Medical Examinations (VVAA)

Members **DISCUSSED** that the MyService portal remains the most effective way for veterans to lodge a claim, although several methods are still supported. Members recognised that DVA's preference is always to receive medical advice and reports from a veteran's treating doctor where possible. Members **NOTED** the limited circumstances in which the department may request a veteran undergo an independent medical examination (IME), which occurs in less than 6% of cases. Members **DISCUSSED** the communication standards with veterans where an IME is requested to be adjusted to provide a better understanding to the veteran of why the IME is being requested.

Members **DISCUSSED** the access an advocate or delegate has to veteran MyService profiles. It was **NOTED** that a veteran must provide explicit consent and authorisation for advocates, and that advocates are only granted controlled access to act on the veteran's behalf for specific matters. Members also **PROPOSED** a change in terminology on veteran claims forms from 'treating practitioner' to 'treating practice'. The broadening of this term will allow veterans to see different medical practitioners within the same medical practice. As a part of the same practice the medical practitioner would have access to the relevant medical records of a veteran for the purposes of submitting a claim.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026OWP/A06	DVA to review the use of the term 'treating practitioner' in medical forms, and if it can be amended to a 'treating practice'.	Client Benefits Division

Agenda Item 8 Delays of the Processing of Incapacity Payment Claims (ASASA)

Members **NOTED** statistics provided on processing times relating to incapacity payments, and the primary causes for delays in payment. Members provided feedback on difficulties veterans are facing when seeking interim compensation whilst having an outstanding claim. DVA **AGREED** to provide further information to OWP on eligibility of interim compensation.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026OWP/A07	DVA to provide further information to OWP members relating to veterans receiving interim compensation with an incapacity claim that is yet to be resolved.	Client Benefits Division / Policy and Research Division

Agenda Item 9 March Member Submissions – Discussion by Exception

Members **DISCUSSED** ways the advocate hotline could be improved.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2026OWP/A08	Member for ASASA to provide DVA with further information relating to veterans facing issues accessing international assistance.	Client Benefits Division

Agenda Item 10 Other Business

The Chair and Members thanked Jenny Gregory, Australian War Widows Inc (AWW), for her dedication and significant contribution to the OWP forum, recognising this as AWW’s final OWP.

Meeting closed: 1:01pm

MEMBERS/ATTENDEES	
Tara Cavanagh	A/g Chair, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Programs
FLTLT Rod Hutchings	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Vanessa Cheng	Air Force Association
Michael Carlon JP	Australian Special Air Services Association
John McNeill	Australian Veterans Alliance
Jenny Gregory OAM	Australian War Widows Inc
Narelle Bromhead OAM	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc
Scott Jeffrey	TPI Federation of Australia
Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
Bill Roberts OAM	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Presenters	
Luke Brown	First Assistant Secretary, Policy & Research Division
Tara Hatzismalis	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits Division
Maisi Ahuja	Director, Grants Operations
Secretariat	
Tristan Rallings	A/g Director, International & Stakeholder Relations Section
Brendan Corbett	Senior Secretariat Officer, International & Stakeholder Relations Section
Freya Doherty	Secretariat Officer, International & Stakeholder Relations Section
Apologies	
Clem Russell	The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Bob Connor	Legacy Canberra
Keely Dreghorn	Returned and Services League of Australia
Andrew Kefford PSM	Chair, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Programs