



# Younger Veterans-Contemporary Needs Forum

## March 2026

### Younger Veterans-Contemporary Needs Forum Meeting

The Younger Veterans-Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) met on 31 March 2026.

### YVF Member Submissions

#### Lifting and Weight Bearing Tables (ASASA)

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has existing policy approaches that utilise information about known exposures in Australian Defence Force (ADF) service to simplify and streamline claims processes. These policies are intended to use known evidence about common exposures in service to reduce the investigative and evidentiary burden on veterans. Some outlier cases, or conditions not covered under these arrangements will still require additional evidence. The conditions and criteria for 'decision-ready' conditions will be incorporated into presumptive liability arrangements from 1 July 2026. Members engaged in discussion on how these policies could better capture instances of service.

### DVA Critical Initiatives

#### Advocacy Update

Members noted the Australian Government has announced new funding to support the operations of the Institute of Veterans' Advocacy and increase the funding for free-to-the-veteran advocacy services through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grants program.

Members also noted that the Government has responded to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Report into issues relating to advocacy services for veterans accessing compensation and income support; and is undertaking a public consultation on reform options to better protect veterans while not over-regulating a largely volunteer service.

### **Case management – Supporting positive outcomes for veterans’ and their families**

The Coordinated Client Support Branch in DVA provides case management to veterans and family members of veterans, who are having trouble navigating and accessing DVA and community services, due to mental, physical and psychosocial vulnerabilities. Members discussed the mechanisms DVA engages in when contacting veterans and the safeguards in place to ensure veterans and case management workers are protected and supported when seeking further information about a case.

### **Translation of Transition Research (2021-25)**

Members noted a synthesis of DVA-funded research conducted between 2021 and 2025 on the transition of ADF members and their families to civilian life. The synthesis highlighted that current transition services are broadly aligned with the available evidence and identified opportunities to strengthen existing supports and to shape further Australian-specific research to support continuous improvement and inform the implementation of relevant Royal Commission recommendations.

### **Planning for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Australian Service in the Afghanistan war**

DVA is preparing a national commemorative service for 11 October 2026 to mark the 25th anniversary of Australian service in the Afghanistan War.

This first national commemoration will honour all who served across the Middle East Area of Operations for the Afghanistan War and reflect the values of professionalism, commitment and integrity shown throughout the conflict.

Planning aligns with DVA’s Commemorative Strategy and will ensure a dignified, accessible service informed by veteran lived experience. A Consultative Committee will support this work with nominations invited, from organisations representing Afghanistan veterans and their families.

## **Key changes to the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grants 2026-29**

Members noted the information provided by DVA regarding the changes to the BEST Grants Program addressing Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS) recommendation 99 and the Senate Standing Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee Inquiry.

## **Update on the agency for veteran and family wellbeing**

Members noted the update on the establishment of the agency for veteran and family wellbeing. Commencing 1 July 2026, the agency will empower veterans and families of veterans by improving access to wellbeing services, community connections, and information to help them thrive after leaving the ADF.

## **Repatriation Commissioner Update**

The Repatriation Commissioner provided an update on recent activity and travel with Defence personnel to the United States, engaging in consultation on the effects to blast induced Mild Traumatic Brain Disorder. Members engaged in discussion on how the forum can continue to provide value and influence better outcomes for younger veterans.

## **ESO Peak Body**

Members were provided an update on the work undertaken by the National Peak Body Project team to consult with ESOs across Australia on the proposal of a ESO Peak Body. The proposal for establishing an ESO Peak Body comes from recommendation 89 of the RCDVS.

**YVF Members in attendance:**

Repatriation Commissioner

Australian Veteran Alliance

Legacy Australia

Department of Defence

Air Force Association

Returned and Services League of Australia

The Warrior's Return

Soldier On

Australian Special Air Service Association

Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association

Defence Families of Australia

Naval Association of Australia

The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation

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