



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging country, veterans, current serving Australian Defence Force Personnel and welcomed observers. Members **NOTED** apologies as listed at Annexure A

A conflict of interest was declared by Kelly Jackson relating the topic of veteran advocacy.

Agenda Item 2 Action items

Members **NOTED** that the minutes from the previous meeting on 18 November 2025 were endorsed out-of-session and published on the DVA Website.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2025/A19 and A21.

Members **NOTED** that the action items 2024YVF/A05, 2025YVF/A04, A05, A15, A20, A22, A23 remain in progress.

Action Item 2025/A15 had a letter provided to members for endorsement during the meeting. Members required more time to review the letter and agreed to seek endorsement out of session.

Agenda Item 3 Lifting and Weight Bearing Reports – Member Submission ASASA

Members **NOTED** the update provided by Luke Brown, Policy and Research Division, and the circumstances in which a lifting and weight bearing questionnaire is sought. Members **DISCUSSED** the instances in which a questionnaire has been provided where a veteran's days of service are not reached in their current role, but had been in previous service, such as personnel that were formerly full-time serving members that are now reservists. Some examples of these questionnaires being requested when seemingly not required were **AGREED** to be provided through the Chair, to provide to the Policy and Research Division if process change is required on the issuing of these questionnaires. It was also **AGREED** that the timeframes for automatic acceptance of requirements met be made publicly available (DVA website) and distributed to YFV members for sharing through networks.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026YVF/A01	Members to provide examples to the Chair where issuing of lifting questionnaires (and other questionnaires if applicable) were requested where circumstances suggest they are not required. The Chair to share this with Policy and Research Division for review.	YVF Members
2026YVF/A02	YVF members to receive a copy of the required serving record that automatically qualify as meeting the Statement of Principles (SOP) factor in lifting and weight bearing. YVF members to also receive notice of these SOPs being made publicly available.	Policy and Research Division

Agenda Item 4 Advocacy update

Members **NOTED** the update provided on YFV 2025-26 measures, and the senate Inquiry into veteran Advocacy. Members **DISCUSSED** the communication relating to the new changes to the Building Excellence in Support and Training Grant, particularly the confusion around the headline and that the newly appointed funds are spread across the new three-year length of the grants. Members **NOTED** the information provided, and this feedback will be shared with DVA's Grants team.

Agenda Item 5

Case Management -

Members **NOTED** the presentation provided by Donna Thomas, Assistant Secretary, Coordinated Client Support Branch, on Case Management processes and operating procedures. Members **DISCUSSED** the link between case management and rehabilitation, and the extreme circumstances that a veteran may be placed on contact restrictions for. It was **NOTED** that DVA offers monthly training to case managers on various topics related to contacting and appropriately managing contact with veterans.

Agenda Item 6 Translation of Transition

Members **DISCUSSED** the research that DVA has undertaken over the last five years, and how they research is aligned to different DVA objectives, including the recent Royal Commission. DVA is beginning to publish more of its research, of which the majority can be found on the DVA website.

Agenda Item 7 Planning for the 25th Anniversary of the Australian service in the Afghanistan War

Members were briefed on the early stages of preparation for the commemoration activities being planned for the 25th anniversary of Australian service in the Afghanistan War, occurring in the 2nd half of 2026. A consultative committee is being established and members with interest in planning were encouraged to nominate someone from their organisation to be considered to join the consultative committee.

Agenda Item 8 Key changes to the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grants

Members **DISCUSSED** the recent changes to the BEST grants, including the changes in length of grant, funding for the grant, and the related media releases. Members provided feedback that some stakeholders are misconstruing the remark on double the funding, thinking that it is less per year since the grant now lasts three years. Members **AGREED** to collate and return comments on the new BEST grant processes to DVA at a future meeting of YVF.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2026YVF/A03	At a future YVF meeting, members to provide feedback on key changes of the BEST program, and whether the current program is meeting the royal commission recommendation. Feedback will be collated by the member for Australian veterans Allaicne	Australian Veterans Alliance

Agenda Item 9 Update on the Agency for veteran and family wellbeing

Members **NOTED** the update provided by Kerry Neall, Taskforce on Wellbeing Agency and Peak Body. Members discussed the nuances of ensuring the agency is established as separate from DVA, such as having its own dedicated phone number, that does not operate through DVA's existing network.

Agenda Item 10 Repatriation Commissioner Update

Members **NOTED** the update provided by the chair on his recent trip to the United States, meeting with stakeholders for consultation on mild traumatic brain injuries (MTBI). Members **NOTED** the US has further developed study on MTBI than Australia.

Members **DISCUSSED** the DVA's recently commissioned research of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) on Neurocognitive effects of repetitive low-level blast overpressure in humans. The Chair **AGREED** to seek a presenter to attend a future meeting of YVF.

No.	Action	Assigned to
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2026YVF/A04	Seek to have the findings of the UNSW study on <i>Neurocognitive Effects of Repetitive Low-Level Blast (rLLB) Overpressure Exposure in Humans</i> at a future YVF meeting.	Chair and YVF Secretariat
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Agenda Item 11 ESO Peak Body

Nicholas Booth, Special Advisor, National Peak Body Project, provided an update on current and planned engagement with the ESO community and other stakeholders to develop a preferred model for the proposed peak body.

Members **DISCUSSED** the ESO peak body is a recommendation agreed in principle by government but is for the ESO community to determine if the value of a peak body is there for establishment. The purpose of the proposed peak body is still being consulted on, and further consultation will help provide more direction and consensus from the ESO community.

Meeting closed: 1:01 pm



Members	
Kahlil Fegan DSC AM	Chair, Repatriation Commissioner
COL James Burns CSM and Bar	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence
Nick Russon	Australian Special Air Service Association
Kelliagh Jackson	Australian Veterans Alliance (Proxy)
Charlotte Webb	Defence Families Australia
Barbara Boyer	Legacy Australia Inc
Georgia Ash	Mates4Mates
Andrew Jeynes	Naval Association of Australia
Chris Tilley	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
James Milliss	Soldier On
Scott Harris	The Warrior's Return
James Dallas	Returned and Services League of Australia
Presenters	
Nick Booth	Special Advisor, National Peak Body Project
Luke Brown	First Assistant Secretary, Policy and Research Division
Tara Hatzismalis	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits Division
Donna Thomas	Assistant Secretary, Coordinated Client Support Branch
Sarah Kennedy	Assistant Secretary, Commemorations Branch
Alicja Mosbauer	Assistant Secretary, Chief Data Officer Branch
Jennifer Buckler	A/g Assistant Secretary, Home and Community Care Branch
Kerry Neall	Assistant Secretary Taskforce on Wellbeing Agency and Peak Body
Maisi Ahuja	Director, Grants Operations
Observers	
Cath Haffner	Assistant Secretary, Health and Wellbeing Policy Branch
Sarah Watson	Assistant Director, National Commemorative Service
Secretariat	
Brad Clarke	Assistant Director, International and Stakeholder Relations
Brendan Corbett	Senior Secretariat Officer, International and Stakeholder Relations
Apologies	
Mike von Berg MC OAM	Ex-Service Organisation Round Table member
Matthew Bondarzucuk RAN Rtd	Australian Veterans Alliance
Rod Henderson	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association

Next Meeting – 25 June 2026