



Royal Commission Implementation Committee

Meeting Overview

20 January 2026

Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Royal Commission Implementation Committee (RCIC) met on 20 January 2026 to discuss activities under way to support the delivery of DVA led or joint- led Recommendations.

Progress Report

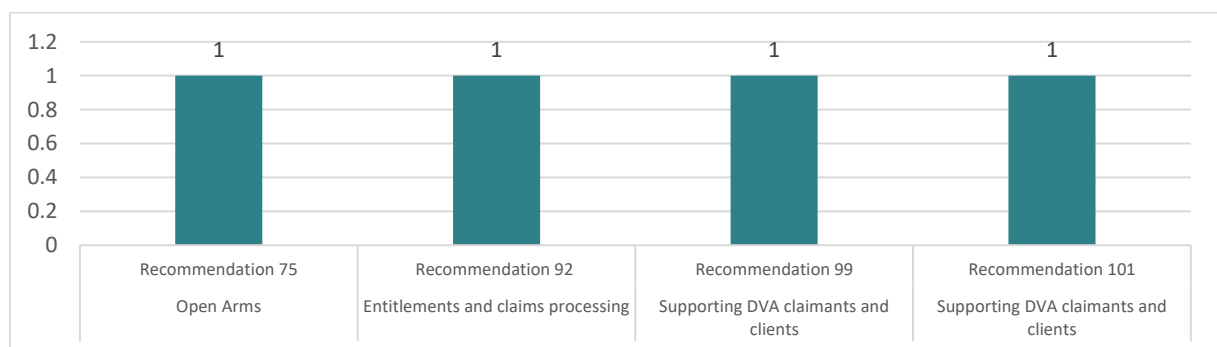
The RCIC noted 30 Project Plans that are DVA-led or joint-led recommendations (out of 40) have been considered by the RCIC. Of those outstanding, seven are scheduled for review in March 2026, with the remaining three to be progressed through an out-of-session process.

The RCIC noted there are four recommendations that have been implemented (pending closure), representing an increase of three since the previous meeting.

Forward Work Plan

RCIC members discussed the proposed Forward Work Plan for 2026. The 2026 Forward Work Plan reflects feedback from DVA Senior Responsible Officers and is broadly aligned with the Defence Program Board schedule.

Recommendations for discussion by theme



Veterans' Ministerial Council Priorities

The RCIC noted an update on engagement with States and Territories, supporting coordinated implementation across jurisdictions.

Update from Defence

The RCIC noted the update from the Chief of Personnel, Department of Defence and Deputy Secretary, Defence People, including progress on work to support Recommendation 25 and confirmation that the lead for Recommendation 93 will transition to DVA.

Update on recommendations

The following recommendations were considered and discussed, with updates provided on progress to date and agreed next steps:

Recommendation 75: conduct an independent review of Open Arms and publish the report

- The RCIC noted the update on key deliverables outlined for Recommendation 75:
 - Review of current state of Open Arms
 - The review analysed data and stakeholder insights to consider how Open Arms delivers its functions; including actions currently planned, commenced and/or undertaken to address matters raised in the Royal Commission report.
 - The Needs-based Mental Health Service Planning and Design Project
 - The Project team have been undertaking data analysis in the context of emerging mental health and wellbeing needs of the veteran community to identify Needs-based Cohorts. This will inform the ongoing improvement and updating of the Model of Care. There will be focus on those services which the community expect Open Arms to provide.
 - Case Management System (CMS) Development Project
 - The new Open Arms Case Management System (OA-CMS) is due to be implemented in March 2026 and aims to enhance efficiency, data security, user experience, and automation of key processes.
 - Accreditation
 - Open Arms has been successful in maintaining mental health accreditation against the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS). This assessment was undertaken by Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) in 2025.
 - The Open Arms Model of Care is continuously informed by the work outlined above.

The RCIC **NOTED** the Project Plan for Recommendation 75 and requested minor updates.

Recommendation 92: review claims to the Department of Veterans' Affairs associated with physical and sexual abuse

- The RCIC noted the update on Recommendation 92, including:
 - DVA will continue to review the systems and processes built around supporting these claims to determine improvements and will engage an independent review of the systemic processes and systems available.
 - DVA will define the scope of abuse claims systems and process review and develop a statement of requirements for independent review.
 - A Specialised Case Team was established following the 2011 DLA Piper review into abuse within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to manage compensation claims within DVA.
 - The SCT is a multidisciplinary team comprising of Delegates, Senior Delegates, clinical case managers and an intake clinician.

The RCIC **NOTED** the update provided and requested minor updates to Project Plan for Recommendation 92

Recommendation 99: improve compensation advocacy by funding professional, paid advocates

- The RCIC noted the update on work completed for Recommendation 99, including:
 - The Government announced an increase and restructure for funding available to ex-service organisations (ESOs) through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grants program.
 - This investment will more than double the funding available to ESOs to provide free, professional advocacy services to veterans and families. BEST will be restructured from 1 July 2026 to provide 3 year grants.

The RCIC **ENDORSED** the Project Plan for Recommendation 99 and noted that the recommendation is considered implemented (pending closure)

Recommendation 101: provide Department of Veterans' Affairs clients with greater choice and autonomy

- The RCIC noted an update on Recommendation 101, including:
 - Substantial progress has been made on this recommendation through amendments in the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (VETS Act) for travel reimbursement costs and contracted rehabilitation providers.

- Issues with household services centred around the delay in DVA paying invoices to providers has now been rectified with over 70% of invoices being paid within 2-5 business days.
- RCIC members noted that the closure of this recommendation should focus on key projects and to requested for the Project Plan to be updated to reflect this.

The **RCIC NOTED** the update and requested minor updates to the Project Plan for Recommendation 101

Any other business

RCIC members considered and ENDORSED an out-of-session request circulated on 19 December 2025, seeking review and endorsement of a paper on closure criteria and joint recommendations.

The next meeting of the RCIC is scheduled for 23 February 2026.