DVA Secretary Liz Cosson and staff hear from representatives from the Female Veterans and Veterans’ Families Policy Forum, June 2018. Members worked with DVA on a variety of challenges, including how to develop better communication products and channels.
Corporate governance

DVA’s governance and management framework is based on the principles of performance assurance and accountability within a risk management framework.

DVA’s governance framework is outlined in Figure 3. The framework supports the Secretary in implementing government and departmental priorities and ensures that appropriate decisions are made, consistent with Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act) obligations.

Figure 3  DVA governance framework at 30 June 2018
Risk management

Risk management is an integral part of delivering services to veterans and their families and being accountable to the Government. The Department’s focus on risk management is reflected in the *DVA Towards 2020* Strategic Plan and the Risk Management Framework 2016–2020.

The risk management framework provides the necessary foundations and organisational arrangements for managing risk across the Department. It complies with the PGPA Act and aligns with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and the international standard ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management—Guidelines. Business risks and fraud risks receive oversight from internal governance committees and the Audit and Risk Committee.

During 2017–18, DVA continued to embed a strong risk culture and behaviours across all levels of the organisation. DVA reviewed its existing enterprise risks under the oversight of the independent Audit and Risk Committee. The Risk Management Framework 2016–2020 and related policies were reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the Department’s environment.

Benchmarking

The annual Comcover Risk Management Benchmarking Survey provides DVA with an opportunity to benchmark its risk management maturity and review and measure the extent to which risk management has been integrated into business operations. The survey also assists DVA in identifying areas for improvement and prioritising its risk management activities.

In the 2018 survey, DVA achieved an overall maturity level of ‘Advanced’. This was the same as DVA’s level in 2017 and one level above the average maturity of all 2018 survey participants, which was assessed as ‘Integrated’.

Business continuity

DVA’s Business Continuity Plan provides assurance that essential services will continue to be provided in the event of a major disaster or significant interruption to services. It is an integral part of DVA’s risk management framework.

In 2017–18, the Business Continuity Plan was activated twice.

Internal audit

In 2017–18, DVA’s internal audit services were provided by KPMG contractors based in Canberra. KPMG carried out independent and objective assurance activities in accordance with DVA’s internal audit and assurance strategy and the Institute of Internal Auditors standards. Activities included performance, financial and program reviews; ICT audits; and assistance and advice relating to fraud control, risk management and corporate governance.

Fraud and noncompliance

DVA has an obligation under the Commonwealth Fraud Control Framework to prevent, detect, investigate and report fraud-related activities and outcomes. DVA ensures compliance through the community compliance model. This model allows those who want to comply to easily do so, while those who choose not to comply will have appropriate action taken against them, including prosecution where necessary.
During 2017–18, DVA:

- established the Risk and Fraud Management Committee to strengthen DVA’s corporate governance structure
- updated the Fraud Control Plan and fraud policies
- undertook a stocktake and review of all fraud and noncompliance activities across DVA and conducted an enterprise-level fraud risk assessment
- provided continuing education for staff to inform them of their obligations in relation to fraud control through two mandatory e-learning courses
- conducted a fraud awareness campaign during International Fraud Awareness Week in November 2017.

DVA identifies potential fraud matters through activities such as post-payment monitoring, data matching and internal audits, and allegations from members of the public. The Department received 333 allegations of fraud in 2017–18, an increase from 299 allegations in 2016–17. The allegations predominantly referred to client and service provider matters.

DVA undertakes fraud investigations and, where appropriate, refers matters to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. As a result of fraud investigations undertaken in 2017–18, $896,247 in ineligible payments was identified and referred to the relevant business areas for debt recovery.

**Privacy**

Business areas are obliged to notify the Legal Services and Assurance Branch of any potential privacy breaches.

In 2017–18, the branch received 75 notifications of potential breaches. Following investigation, 49 matters were determined to be privacy breaches and 16 were found not to breach privacy. The remaining cases were still under investigation at the end of 2017–18.

In cases where a privacy breach did occur, staff involved in the breach were counselled and the importance of all staff exercising care and caution when processing matters dealing with personal information was reiterated. In applicable cases, recommendations and changes were made to relevant practices and procedures in an effort to minimise the risk of future breaches.

DVA is required to report significant privacy breaches to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. In 2017–18, no significant breaches were reported to the Australian Information Commissioner, and the Commissioner made no reports to the Minister under section 30 of the *Privacy Act 1988* about any act or practice of DVA.
External scrutiny

External scrutiny provides independent assurance that DVA’s systems, processes and controls are effective.

The annual report must provide information on the most significant developments in external scrutiny of the Department and the Department’s response, including particulars of:

- judicial decisions and decisions of administrative tribunals that have had, or may have, a significant impact on the operations of the Department
- reports on the operations of the Department by the Auditor-General (other than the report on financial statements), a parliamentary committee or the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

External decisions and reports related to the operations of DVA in 2017–18 are described in this section.

Decisions by courts and the tribunals

Where a claimant disagrees with a decision of the Repatriation Commission or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC), it is open to them to appeal the decision under the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA), Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA) (until 11 October 2017), Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA) (from 12 October 2017) or Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) as set out below.

Appeals relating to compensation matters under the VEA are lodged first with the Veterans’ Review Board (VRB). If the appellant is dissatisfied with the VRB decision, they can lodge an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

If a person is dissatisfied with an income support decision under the VEA, it is first subject to an internal review by a different decision-maker and then subject to review by the AAT.

An appeal under the SRCA/DRCA is first subject to internal review by a reconsideration delegate and then subject to review by the AAT.

An appeal of a decision under the MRCA made prior to 1 January 2017 may proceed down one of two pathways: appeal to the VRB, then to the AAT; or appeal for internal review by a reconsideration delegate, then to the AAT. The appellant must nominate one pathway to the exclusion of the other.

An appeal of a decision under the MRCA made on or after 1 January 2017 is subject to review by the VRB only and then subject to review by the AAT.

AAT applications and outcomes are set out in Table 6. These figures include cases that were remitted by the Federal Court to be considered again by the AAT.

While the number of AAT decisions affirmed at hearing may seem low compared to the number decided, this is because not all were decided following AAT hearing. For example, some were withdrawn and others were resolved without the need for a hearing.
Table 6  VEA, DRCA and MRCA matters considered by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal 2017–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Applications decided by AAT</th>
<th>Decisions affirmed, withdrawn, dismissed by the AAT</th>
<th>Decisions settled by consent of the AAT</th>
<th>Decisions set aside at hearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VEA</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Not available¹</td>
<td>Not available¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRCA</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRCA</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ These figures are currently not captured.

In accordance with the Legal Services Directions 2017, the Repatriation Commission or the MRCC may lodge an appeal in order to clarify a legal issue or protect the integrity of legislation.

In 2017–18, 12 applications were lodged with the Federal Court. Of those, 11 were lodged by a veteran or widow. The MRCC lodged one application to the Federal Court.

In the same period, the Federal Court made six decisions, three of which were favourable to the veteran or widow.

No appeals involving the Repatriation Commission or the MRCC were lodged in the Full Court of the Federal Court or the High Court.

Neither the Full Court of the Federal Court nor the High Court delivered any decisions involving the Repatriation Commission or the MRCC.

Decisions by the Australian Information Commissioner

The Australian Information Commissioner handed down two decisions in relation to the Department in 2017–18 under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI Act). There was one determination made under the Privacy Act 1988.

On 26 July 2017, in ‘MA’ and Department of Veterans’ Affairs (Freedom of information) [2017] AICmr 72, the Commissioner varied a decision by DVA, under the FOI Act, for documents relating to a complaint investigation undertaken by DVA in relation to the VRB. DVA relied on the legal professional privilege exemption (section 42), the deliberative processes exemption (section 47C), the certain operations of agencies exemption (subsection 47e(d)), and the personal privacy exemption (section 47f) of the FOI Act. The Commissioner decided some or parts of the documents were not exempt.

On 13 September 2017, in David Kalman and Department of Veterans’ Affairs (Freedom of information) [2017] AICmr 86, the Commissioner affirmed a decision by DVA, under the FOI Act, for documents relating to a medical practitioner. The issue was whether DVA had taken all reasonable steps to find documents within the scope of the request, under section 24A of the FOI Act. The Commissioner was satisfied that no documents existed or could be found.

On 23 March 2018, in ‘PA’ and Department of Veterans’ Affairs (Privacy) [2018] AICmr 50, the Commissioner determined DVA did not interfere with the complainant’s privacy, as defined in the Privacy Act 1988, by disclosing the complainant’s personal information to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The complainant alleged an improper disclosure of his personal
information by DVA to the AIHW, which was provided with a Military and Veteran Research Study Roll, being a database established to assist in recruiting current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members for approved health research. Section 95 of the Privacy Act provides that acts done in the course of medical research and in accordance with approved guidelines will not breach privacy. The Commissioner found DVA’s Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme, made up of three studies, was medical research. Further, the DVA Human Research Ethics Committee’s approval of the medical research, including the use of the Military and Veteran Research Study Roll for that research, was open to it and decided as such. Therefore, DVA was able to rely on that approval in order to lawfully disclose the complainant’s personal information to the AIHW.

Copies of the decisions are available at www.oaic.gov.au.

**Reports by the Auditor-General**

Reports tabled in Parliament by the Auditor-General were reviewed by senior management and relevant DVA business areas.

In 2017–18, the Auditor-General published:

- one cross-entity report involving DVA—*Efficiency through Contestability Programme*
- one report involving DVA only—*Efficiency of veterans service delivery by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs*.

**Reports by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit**

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit examines reports of the Auditor-General that are tabled in Parliament. DVA’s Audit and Risk Committee monitors all reports of the committee.


**Deregulation Agenda**

DVA supports the Government’s Deregulation Agenda and is committed to improving the quality of its regulation, including minimising the burden of regulation on individuals, businesses and community organisations. This is achieved through continuous review of the regulatory requirements established in DVA legislation, by identifying policy options which allow for regulatory requirements to be minimised wherever possible, and by investigating opportunities to make interaction easier for veterans and their families, service providers and the ex-service community. This activity occurs in the context of ensuring that important consumer and other safeguards are maintained. Further information on the Government’s Deregulation Agenda is available at www.jobs.gov.au/deregulation-agenda.
Legal services

DVA provides a range of legal and assurance services to the Minister, the Repatriation Commission, the MRCC and other areas of the Veterans’ Affairs portfolio.

Legislation program

During 2017–18, the Minister’s legislation program included a number of important veteran-centric reform measures enacted via amendments to the Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986, the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 and other portfolio legislation. Significantly, these included:

- **Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment (Defence Force) Act 2017**
  This Act created the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA). The DRCA is a re-enacted version of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA), modified to apply only to members of the Australian Defence Force and their dependants. The Act received royal Assent on 14 September 2017 and commenced on 12 October 2017.

- **Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Omnibus) Act 2017**
  This Act, introduced in the previous financial year, implemented several small but necessary amendments to veterans’ affairs legislation to clarify, improve or streamline the operation of the law. The Act received Royal Assent on 30 November 2017.

- **Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Veteran-centric Reforms No. 1) Act 2018**
  This reform Act established the legislative framework for a number of new initiatives, including the family support payment, the veteran payment, the Coordinated Veterans’ Care (CVC) Mental Health Pilot, and the provision of household and attendant care services for veterans with catastrophic injuries or disease. The Act received royal Assent on 28 March 2018.

- **Veterans’ Affairs Legislation Amendment (Veteran-centric Reforms No. 2) Act 2018**
  This second reform Act laid the legislative groundwork for further veteran-centric measures, including the Veteran Suicide Prevention pilot; an extension of eligibility for the Long Tan Bursary Scheme to include grandchildren of a veteran with operational service in Vietnam; and a measure to provide former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) with incapacity payments at 100 per cent of their normal weekly earnings where they are studying full time as part of their approved rehabilitation plan. It received Royal Assent on 28 June 2018.

The Minister’s legislation program for 2017–18 also included the following regulations made by the Federal Executive Council:

- Veterans’ Entitlements Amendment (Travel Expenses) Regulations 2017
In addition, a number of important veteran-centric reform measures were implemented by legislative instrument. These included the following instruments made by the Repatriation Commission or the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission:

- Veterans’ Entitlements (Provisional Access to Medical Treatment) Determination 2017
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation (Accelerated Access to Rehabilitation) Determination 2017
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation (Family Support) Instrument 2018
- Veterans’ Entitlements (Veteran Payment) Instrument 2018

To assist with the legislative reform agenda, DVA hosted two legislation workshops during the year. The legislation workshops provide a mechanism for the Department to consult, discuss and prioritise future legislation with ex-service organisations and stakeholders with the aim of better understanding their priorities and the issues of concern in developing veteran legislation.

The first workshop, held on 9 November 2017, focused on the successful transition of veterans into civilian life and better promoting the full range of services to encourage the wellbeing of veterans. The second workshop, held on 7 March 2018, was designed to build on, refine and identify specific legislative reform proposals based on the key themes and issues that emerged from the first workshop.

**Legal services expenditure**

The following information about legal services expenditure is required to be published under paragraph 11.1(ba) of the Legal services Directions 2017 issued by the Attorney-General under section 55ZF of the *Judiciary Act 1903*.

In 2017–18, DVA spent a total of $13.26 million on legal services, compared to $10.27 million in 2016–17. Expenditure included external and internal legal services.

**External legal services**

In 2017–18, DVA spent $9.44 million on external legal services, compared to $7.24 million in 2016–17. Included were disbursements and the engagement of counsel who advised on litigation, procurement, contracting and management issues.

In accordance with Guidance note 8 to the Legal Services Directions, Table 7 shows expenditure on total external legal services and details the number of male and female counsel briefed and the value of this work in 2017–18.
Table 7  **External legal services expenditure (GST exclusive) and number of male and female counsel briefed 2017–18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Value ($m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solicitors</td>
<td>7.820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (27)</td>
<td>0.172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male (45)</td>
<td>0.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (72)</td>
<td>0.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other disbursements(^1)</td>
<td>1.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.438</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Costs incurred for goods and services that are not counsel or professional fees (e.g. filing fees, costs for expert witnesses and costs of administrative tasks such as photocopying).

**Internal legal services**

DVA provides internal legal services in areas such as:

- legislation administered by the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs
- management of the Minister’s legislation program
- drafting of legislative instruments and related documentation
- legal advice on DVA’s portfolio legislation
- the conduct of all non-military compensation litigation at superior courts for matters involving claims under the VEA.

The VRB also has internal staff who provide services of a legal nature.

In 2017–18, the total direct salary and overhead cost for DVA internal legal services was $3.82 million, compared to $3.03 million in 2016–17.

**People management**

DVA supports managers and staff with a full range of people management services to achieve DVA’s purpose.

**Workforce planning**

Since 2017, the Department has been implementing an ambitious agenda of veteran-centric reform to transform the delivery of services to the veteran community and the way in which we operate. In recognition of this transformation, significant work was undertaken to create the DVA Workforce Strategy 2018–2023.

The strategy is updated biannually to ensure that DVA is continually working towards attracting, retaining and developing a workforce that is capable of delivering high-quality and connected services to all generations of veterans and their families and the wider veteran community.

To effectively support the Department’s long-term operational objectives, the Workforce Strategy summarises what we are doing now, what our next priorities are, and how we measure our progress.
The strategy defines five key themes:

• Our people, our processes
• Building our future
• High performing DVA
• Inclusive, valued and innovative
• Capable and empowered.

All workforce-related initiatives, policies, strategies and actions are reflected under one of the key themes.

The Department’s effectiveness in attracting, retaining and developing our workforce is measured in the annual performance statements.

Staff feedback

The Department listens to feedback provided by its people through the Australian Public Service (APS) State of the Service employee census, organisational health checks and cultural assessments. The contextual feedback is linked with other workforce data to build a robust picture of DVA’s current state, identify priorities and actions, and measure our progress over time.

The results of the employee census are shared with staff and used in developing branch action plans. Staff are encouraged to elaborate on the results, and to partner with their senior management teams to find ways to further improve positive findings or to address concerns.

In 2018, DVA staff members’ participation in the employee census increased by 5 percentage points to 74 per cent, and for the first time included our contracted workforce.

Workforce profile

At 30 June 2018, DVA had a total of 1,885 employees, a decrease compared with 1,938 at 30 June 2017. Non-ongoing employees made up 10.8 per cent of DVA’s total workforce at 30 June 2018, an increase from 8.3 per cent at 30 June 2017. Detailed staffing statistics are in Appendix A.

In 2017–18, the turnover rate of ongoing employees was 7.6 per cent, a decrease from 10.5 per cent in 2016–17. Table 8 shows the reasons for commencements and cessations among ongoing and non-ongoing employees in 2017–18.
Table 8  Employee commencements and cessations 2017–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment type</th>
<th>Commencements</th>
<th>Cessations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoted within APS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Promoted or transferred within APS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred within APS</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed from non-ongoing to ongoing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dismissed/annulled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined APS</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Accepted voluntary redundancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed as statutory office holder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Accepted involuntary redundancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ongoing</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APS = Australian Public Service

**Employment arrangements**

All employee remuneration and benefits are provided under the DVA Enterprise Agreement 2015–18, individual flexibility agreements, or determinations under section 24(1) of the Public Service Act 1999. DVA does not have any Australian workplace agreements in place.

The DVA Enterprise Agreement 2015–18 came into effect on 13 January 2016. The nominal date of expiry is three years from the commencement date.

The enterprise agreement contains provisions allowing the Secretary and an employee to make an individual flexibility agreement varying the effect of the terms of the enterprise agreement. At 30 June 2018, DVA had in place 25 individual flexibility agreements providing enhanced individual remuneration or benefits.

DVA also had in place 31 determinations made under section 24(1) of the Public Service Act delivering remuneration and conditions for Senior Executive Service (SES) employees.

Information on the salaries available to staff is in Appendix A. Performance pay is not available to DVA employees.

Non-salary benefits provided to SES employees and a small number of high-performing employees may include parking facilities at the workplace or an allowance in lieu of $1,550 per year, and airline lounge membership. Medical Officers have access to up to five days paid leave per year to undertake professional development activities, and are able to claim up to $4,500 per year reimbursement for costs associated with their professional development.
Learning and development

The Department is committed to developing its workforce to be capable and empowered to deliver on DVA’s objectives, now and in the future. The Department’s approach is defined in the Learning and Development Strategy, which focuses on four key learning and development areas:

- Leadership—DVA’s leaders are focused on the wellbeing of veterans and their families, value people, promote a culture of respect and positivity, have shared and common goals, and demonstrate inspiring and brave leadership
- Experience—70 per cent of capability building happens in the workplace through the experience of day-to-day tasks, challenges and opportunities
- Social—20 per cent of capability building happens in social settings through coaching, mentoring, networks and collaboration
- Education—10 per cent of capability building happens through attending structured courses and programs, and reading or listening to online lectures, podcasts or other educational sources.

Leadership is targeted through the Leadership Pathways Program and the Leadership Talent Management Program. Pilot programs undertaken in 2017–18 included the Talent Management Program pilot (and subsequent Executive Level 2 Talent Management Program), and the Leading Transformation pilot.

Experience is targeted through on-the-job tasks and problem solving, appropriate delegations, stretch assignments, opportunities to supervise, participation in transformation groups and activities, and our Intra-Agency Network Program.

Social learning is targeted through the Performance Feedback Scheme, job shadowing, opportunities to work with role models (including our formal Mentoring Program and one-on-one coaching initiatives), and our updated Induction Program that aims to build trust and a sense of belonging in our new starters. In 2018, we are trialling a new program that uses neuroscience to help improve engagement and motivation through meaningful conversations between managers and staff.

Education is targeted through structured activities. The DVA Enterprise Agreement 2015–18 allows employees access to at least five days of structured education activities per year. New courses in 2017–18 included the client induction program (Serve), and workshops on building and leading high-performance teams, mental health first aid, digital transformation, and raising awareness of domestic and family violence. Other key courses were delivered on understanding and applying legislation; systems and processes; claims and case management; health policies and frameworks; and professional development.

The Department evaluates the effectiveness of our learning and development strategies through evaluation surveys, the APS employee census, and the Performance Feedback Scheme. These evaluation methods help DVA to target its strategies to secure the skills and knowledge required and ensure that learnings are applied in the workplace.

Figure 4 summarises the Department’s expenditure on learning and development over the past five years.
The Department’s Graduate Program is a structured, 11-month development program designed to give graduates exposure to the broad range of important work that the Department undertakes. The program prepares graduates for successful careers within the APS.

The program is based in Canberra and provides networking opportunities to encourage collaboration and excellence within the Department and across government. Those activities are complemented by training and on-the-job development which ensures that graduates acquire practical skills in a supportive and challenging environment.

**Diversity**

The Department is committed to reflecting the diversity of the Australian community in its workforce and building an inclusive culture in which employee backgrounds, skills and views enrich our working environment and quality of work.

**Strategy**

The DVA Diversity Strategy 2018–23 was developed in 2017–18 and will be updated biannually to ensure that DVA is a workplace that is inclusive, values diversity and innovates.

The strategy identifies five key areas of focus:

- Gender equality
- Disability and carers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and allies.

A dedicated Diversity Officer drives diversity initiatives, with the support of the Diversity Champion, the Indigenous Champion, and the Cultural and Linguistic Champion. The Diversity and Inclusion Staff Network was established in early 2018 to support the implementation of the Diversity Strategy.
Activities

The Department’s activities to promote diversity in the workplace in 2017–18 included:

- offering an annual program of cultural awareness training for all staff
- participating in government initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, such as
  - the APSC’s Indigenous Graduate Recruitment Program, the Indigenous Mentoring Program, the Indigenous Apprenticeships Program, Jawun, and excElerate
- attracting, supporting and developing staff with disability, through the application of the APS RecruitAbility scheme to all advertised positions, provision of accessible workplaces and membership of the Australian Network on Disability
- hosting events to promote awareness and understanding of the importance of diversity within the workplace, on occasions such as International Women’s Day, Harmony Day, Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, the International Day of People with Disability, White Ribbon Day, Wear It Purple Day, and the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia
- maintaining corporate memberships of Diversity Council Australia and Pride in Diversity.

All actions of Galumbany 2017–18, the Reconciliation Action Plan, were implemented. On 30 June 2018, the Department had 22 ongoing staff members and one non-ongoing staff member (1.2 per cent of total staff) who identified as indigenous, which was similar to the 2016–17 result of 29 ongoing staff members and two non-ongoing Indigenous staff members (1.6 per cent of total staff).

The Department also continued to implement its Gender Equality Action Plan 2017–19. On 30 June 2018, 63 per cent of staff identified as female and 37 per cent as male, similar to the 2016–17 result of 62 per cent female and 38 per cent male.

Resource management

DVA’s financial accountability responsibilities are set out in the Commonwealth Resource Management Framework, which governs how officials in the Commonwealth public sector use and manage public resources.

Asset management and accommodation

DVA runs an effective asset management program, registering assets on receipt in the financial management system and conducting an annual stocktake. Asset accounting functions and the management of intangible assets are centrally controlled, while day-to-day management of physical assets is decentralised to regional locations.

In 2017–18, DVA continued to review its accommodation requirements across Australia, aiming to minimise the expense and extent of lease accommodation while maintaining quality and service delivery capability. As part of a whole-of-government initiative, DVA became the first Commonwealth agency to outsource the management of its property portfolio. Jones Lang LaSalle will provide property management services to DVA. This arrangement is designed to maximise savings to the Department by reducing the number of contracts and by delivering further efficiencies in leasing arrangements.
Compliance report for financial year 2017–18

There were no significant instances of non-compliance with the finance law in 2017–18.

Purchasing

The Contract Advisory Unit provides services in support of procurement and contracting activities in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Framework. The unit provides specialist business advice to the Repatriation Commission, the MRCC and all areas of the Department engaged in procurement. Its services include developing contract templates, providing better practice guides on all aspects of the procurement cycle, providing contract management advice, and ensuring compliance with mandatory reporting requirements.

The Department is subject to internal and external (Australian National Audit Office) audits of compliance with the Commonwealth Procurement Framework. The Contract Advisory Unit works with the auditors to improve the Department’s performance against the core principles of Commonwealth procurement.

Consultants

The Department engages consultants when it requires specialist expertise or when independent research or short-term projects are undertaken. DVA’s selection processes:

• observe government and departmental procurement policies
• are publicly defensible, promoting fair competition and effective service
• are based on predetermined selection criteria
• realise best value for money.

During 2017–18, 50 new consultancy contracts were entered into involving total actual expenditure of $25.10 million. In addition, 29 ongoing consultancy contracts were active during 2017–18, involving total actual expenditure of $6.40 million.

Table 9 shows the total expenditure on consultancies over the past three years.

Table 9  Expenditure on consultancies 2015–16 to 2017–18 ($m)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>31.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total comprises expenditure paid in departmental and administered programs during the reporting period, inclusive of applicable GST.

AusTender

Annual reports contain information about actual expenditure on contracts for consultancies. Information on the estimated value of contracts and consultancies is available on the AusTender website: www.tenders.gov.au.

Exempt contracts

DVA did not seek any exemptions from gazettal under the FOI Act in 2017–18.
Access clauses
All DVA contractual arrangements have in place a facility for the Auditor-General and accountability personnel to access contractual material, including at the contractor’s premises.

All DVA contracts are based on either the DVA template or the Commonwealth Contracting Suite, both of which contain access clauses.

Procurement initiatives to support small business

Health and wellbeing services are provided to veterans through the Department’s arrangements with over 60,000 providers, the majority of whom are SMEs.

The Department recognises the importance of ensuring that small businesses are paid on time. The results of the Survey of Australian Government Payments to Small Business are available on the Treasury’s website: www.treasury.gov.au/.

The Indigenous Procurement Policy requires agencies to direct a percentage of business to Indigenous suppliers. The target for DVA in 2016–17 was four contracts, which it exceeded by letting seven contracts in the period.

DVA’s procurement practices support SMEs, consistent with paragraph 5.4 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. DVA:

• uses the Commonwealth Contracting Suite for low-risk procurements valued under $200,000
• strives to communicate in clear, simple language and presents information in an accessible format in all documents
• uses electronic systems to facilitate on-time payment performance, including the use of payment cards.

Support services
DVA provides services to clients, their nominated representatives, ex-service organisations and service providers via a number of channels, including face-to-face, telephone and online.

Access to DVA
In September 2017, DVA provided access to free calls nationally by extending the coverage of the advertised general enquiry contact number, 1800 555 254, which connects with the Veterans’ Access Network (VAN).

In addition to phone contact, DVA offers a range of access points to accommodate individual preferences when interacting with the Department. In the 2017–18 financial year, the VAN responded to over 500,000 calls, 34,000 emails, 30,000 counter visits and 7,000 call back requests received online.
DVA operates services out of 15 DVA offices and six co-located arrangements with the Department of Human Services. The most recent co-located arrangement is in Woden, Canberra.

In addition to the VAN, DVA handles more than a million calls for other services, such as transport bookings, provision of pharmaceutical advice and health provider enquiries.

DVA offers services to more than 40 ADF bases through the On Base Advisory Service (OBAS). Demand for the service continued during 2017–18. In total, On Base Advisers conducted over 10,170 interviews, delivered 226 presentations and liaised with more than 930 ADF personnel.

The service ensures that serving members can access information about DVA support, entitlements and services directly from DVA staff. As part of the service, On Base Advisers also assist ADF members to access DVA’s online services.

The OBAS provided a supporting service to the Veteran Suicide Prevention pilot program trialled at Holsworthy Barracks. In 2018–19, the OBAS aims to provide an enhanced service as a result of the trials.

DVA has a strong digital footprint and uses Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. The importance of DVA’s digital services continues to grow: there were 6,190,747 hits on DVA’s website (dva.gov.au) during 2017–18.

**Coordinated Client Support**

The Coordinated Client Support (CCS) program is a specialised, time-limited program aimed at streamlining communication between veterans and members of veterans’ families and DVA. The CCS program provides veterans and their families with a single point of contact for the whole of DVA, and offers three levels of support, according to their needs.

Level 1 encompasses two types of clients:

- Level 1 with support—people who do not require ongoing support but are allocated an intake coordinator to provide short-term support to ensure that their needs are met
- Level 1 business as usual—people who can navigate services within the primary business areas with minimal assistance.

Where required, comprehensive support is provided to the referring business area in its ongoing management of ‘Level 1 with support’ cases.

Level 2 support is provided to people who have been assessed as having complex and multiple needs but require a less intensive level of support than those assessed at Level 3. The individual has a primary point of contact within CCS. This level of support provides short-term intervention with a view to building capacity to transition to a business-as-usual environment.

Level 3 support is provided to people who have been assessed as having complex and multiple needs. These people often have mental health concerns or physical injuries resulting from service, and have been identified as requiring intensive support to access multiple services across the Department and from other agencies and organisations. The individual has a primary point of contact within CCS. This level of support provides intervention with a view to building capacity to transition to Level 2. However, it is recognised that some individuals may remain within the program for the long term.
Veterans and members of veterans’ families can be referred to the program by DVA staff, ex-service organisations, the ADF, or nominated representatives.

Feedback

As part of the Department’s focus on being connected and responsive to veterans and their families, DVA uses feedback to guide improvements to the delivery of services by the Department and by contracted service providers.

DVA’s commitment to record and respond to feedback from people who use its services continued in 2017–18. The Department continues to liaise with the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s office through regular meetings to discuss updates and exchanges of information on common complaint matters. DVA also consults with the Commonwealth Ombudsman’s office to ensure that its complaint-handling processes remain relevant and compliant.

At the end of 2017–18, DVA liaised with Department of Human Services ICT staff to develop a new case management feedback system. The system was developed through Veteran Centric Reform funding, and will enable DVA to more accurately record, manage and analyse the range of feedback received from various sources. It is expected that the system will be integrated within DVA’s ICT platform and then deployed for use in 2018–19.

Table 10 shows the numbers of complaints and compliments received over the past five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>2,021</td>
<td>3,013</td>
<td>2,288</td>
<td>2,845</td>
<td>2,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>1,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2017–18, the three most common areas of complaints related to:

- the service and performance of contractors or providers
- the accessibility and responsiveness of DVA’s service
- administrative matters, including issues around ‘red tape’.

The three most common areas of compliments related to:

- the attitude of staff, including their empathy, knowledge and behaviour
- the accessibility and responsiveness of DVA’s service
- commemorative events or services.

DVA recorded 332 suggestions for improvement in 2017–18, a slight increase compared to 321 in 2016–17. The majority of suggestions related to MyAccount, DVA’s online portal.

In 2017–18, the average time taken to resolve a complaint was 14 days, which is well within the expected time frame of 28 days as stated in the DVA Service Charter. In 2016–17, the average time taken to resolve a complaint was 11 days.

Levels of satisfaction with the feedback process and its outcomes are shown in Table 11.
Table 11  Proportion of people satisfied with the Department’s response to their feedback in 2017–18 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conduct of the feedback process</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome of the feedback process</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indigenous Veterans’ Strategy

In 2017–18, DVA continued to provide services and programs under the Indigenous Veterans’ Strategy, to improve its service delivery to the Indigenous veteran community and to improve the cultural knowledge of DVA staff.

Forum and network

The Department hosted the inaugural Indigenous Veterans Forum in March 2017. The meeting provided Indigenous serving and former ADF members with an opportunity to meet with DVA staff and share their stories and experiences, and provided the Department with a platform for co-designing solutions to improve services and ensure that services for the Indigenous veteran community are being delivered in a culturally appropriate, sensitive and safe manner. The Department plans to host a second forum in 2018–19.

As a result of the roundtable, the Indigenous veterans network was established in 2017–18. The network currently has 31 members, including 15 who attended the inaugural roundtable. It utilises the combined professional and personal networks of the individual members to promote DVA benefits and entitlements among Indigenous veterans and local communities.

The network is part of the Department’s contribution to the Australian Government’s commitment to Closing the Gap, and an avenue for promoting government initiatives that may benefit Indigenous veterans, such as the 2017–18 Budget measure providing Gold Cards to people who were affected by British nuclear tests conducted in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s.

During 2017–18, the network:

- explored opportunities to connect with Indigenous veterans living in the Torres Strait islands
- highlighted issues around utilising an Indigenous interpreter service
- started discussions about suicide in the Indigenous veteran community
- promoted Indigenous commemorative events hosted by RSL branches around Australia
- explained to local communities the role of the Office of Australian War Graves in relation to the upkeep of war graves in remote locations.

The network also congratulated Dianne Ryder, a proud Noongar woman with 21 years service in the Australian Army, who won the 2017 NAIDOC Week Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to the Indigenous veteran community in Western Australia.
Research project

In 2017–18, the Australian National University (ANU) completed the research project Serving our country: a history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the defence of Australia. DVA was a major partner in funding the project, contributing $400,000 in financial support as well as up to $100,000 worth of in-kind support.

In April 2018, the ANU published a book on the project’s findings, titled Serving our country: Indigenous Australians, war, defence and citizenship. The book contains a rich collection of photographs and over 200 interviews and stories from Indigenous veterans and their relatives.

Events

The Department is committed to supporting and promoting Australia’s reconciliation journey by building the cultural awareness of all staff and by enhancing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

During 2017–18, DVA staff attended a number of commemorations and community events held during Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. The events included local Indigenous community meetings, Indigenous community network meetings, cultural festivals and community days. Participating in such events gives DVA an opportunity to connect with Indigenous veterans and engage with their communities, while sharing information about DVA entitlements available to Indigenous veterans and their families. It also provides opportunities for DVA staff to share information and develop partnerships with representatives of other government entities and non-government agencies.

In line with Reconciliation Australia’s national theme, ‘Don’t keep history a mystery’, DVA hosted a Reconciliation Week event focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service in the ADF in Canberra on 29 May 2018. Other events supported by DVA included:

- a gathering of community elders
- a ceremony for Indigenous veterans held by the RSL Queensland
- a Torres Strait Islander event held on Mabo Day.

The Department also continued to support Australian and international ceremonies to honour the service and sacrifice of all veterans, including the contributions made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel in wars, conflicts and peacetime operations.
Other mandatory information

As a non-corporate Commonwealth entity, DVA reports on specific aspects of service delivery and management of people and resources, in line with the requirements of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 and other legislation.

Grants

Through DVA, the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs sets policy and approves successful applications for the grants programs described in Table 12.

DVA grants are administered through the Australian Government Community Grants Hub, except for grants under the Long Tan Bursary Scheme, the Armistice Centenary Grants Program and the Overseas Privately Constructed Memorial Restoration Program, which are administered directly by the Department.

Information on grants awarded by DVA during the period from 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2017 is available at www.dva.gov.au/consultation-and-grants/grants. Grants awarded from 1 January 2018 are listed on GrantConnect at www.grants.gov.au/.

Table 12  Grant programs administered by DVA 2017–18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant program</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program</td>
<td>Eligible people often receive advice on DVA entitlements from veterans’ pensions and welfare officers who work, in many cases voluntarily, for ex-service organisations. Those officers are generally themselves veterans or family members of veterans. The BEST program is designed to support ex-service organisations’ pension and welfare practitioners and advocates. It assists by offering grants to help the organisations and practitioners provide advice and assistance to the veteran and defence communities. A BEST grant is intended to be a contribution towards an organisation’s costs in providing services to the veteran and defence communities. It is not to offset all costs, and grant recipients are expected to provide in-kind or other support to their pension, welfare and advocacy officers. There is one BEST funding round each year. Funding is for the period of the next financial year. Payment of grants is subject to previous funding being acquitted as required. In the 2017–18 funding round, a total of $3.960 million (GST exclusive) was provided to 144 ex-service organisations under BEST.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compensation and support
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grant program</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and wellbeing</strong></td>
<td>The Grants-in-Aid program assists national ex-service organisations to cover administrative expenses such as provision of office equipment, travel for representational business, and advocacy undertaken on behalf of the veteran community. To be eligible, an organisation must be an effective national representative body, have direct links to the ex-service community and have objectives which aim to benefit the welfare of its members. The program has one funding round each financial year. The maximum annual grant to any national organisation is $10,000; depending on the demand for funding, smaller grants may be offered. The program has an annual allocation of $145,000 (GST exclusive). In 2017–18, a total of $137,973 was provided to 15 national ex-service organisations under the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Tan Bursary Scheme</strong></td>
<td>The Long Tan Bursary Scheme provides funding to children of Australians who served in the Vietnam War, to help them meet the cost of post-secondary education, so that they can obtain the formal qualifications and skills they need to pursue their chosen careers. In the 2018–19 Budget, the Australian Government announced that the eligibility criteria for the Long Tan Bursary have been extended to include grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. This change will take effect on 1 August 2019. Each financial year, DVA offers 37 bursaries of up to $12,000 over three years. In 2017–18, 37 bursaries were offered; however, only 34 students accepted the offer. The scheme is administered by the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust on behalf of DVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting Younger Veterans</strong></td>
<td>Supporting Younger Veterans offers grants to ex-service organisations that provide support to veterans who have military service post-1999. Other organisations may also be considered if they are in partnership with at least one such ex-service organisation. The program promotes partnerships that deliver innovative and sustainable services for younger veterans and build community capacity to meet their needs. It also supports projects to raise awareness of the important issues faced by younger veterans. The program has one funding round per year, with an annual allocation of $1 million (GST exclusive). In 2017–18, a total of $972,560 was provided to 12 applicants under the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Veteran and Community Grants</strong></td>
<td>Veteran and Community Grants are available to enable ex-service organisations, community-based organisations or private organisations to deliver projects that benefit the health and wellbeing of veterans, veterans’ family members, carers, dependants and other members of the ex-service community. The program provides seeding funds for projects that support a healthy, quality lifestyle for members of the veteran community and assist them to remain living independently in their own homes. It also provides funding for initiatives that reduce social isolation, support carers and improve access to community services. Applications can be submitted at any time and are assessed in batches throughout the year. In 2017–18, a total of $2.166 million (GST exclusive) was provided to 123 applicants under the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant program</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commemorations</strong></td>
<td>The program assists Australian veterans and other individuals in restoring and preserving military unit and battle memorials that were privately constructed overseas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overseas Privately Constructed Memorial Restoration Program</strong></td>
<td>To be eligible, memorials must be directly commemorative of Australia’s military involvement, including wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Memorials must be pre-existing and on public display. Preference is given to memorials constructed by Australian veterans and Australian veteran associations. Funding is available for restoration, not ongoing maintenance. In 2017–18, a total of $48,817.56 (GST exclusive) was provided for four restorations and commemorations under the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants Program</strong></td>
<td>Saluting Their Service grants are provided to ex-service organisations, local government authorities, museums, schools and other community organisations for projects that commemorate the military service of Australians in wars, conflicts and peace operations. Two categories of grants are available under the program: • Community Commemorative Grants of up to $4,000 for projects of community significance • Major Commemorative Grants for commemorative projects of national, state or territory significance. In 2017–18, nine Major Commemorative Grants were approved, totalling $460,689 (GST exclusive); and 166 Community Commemorative Grants were approved, totalling $401,706 (GST exclusive).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Armistice Centenary Grants Program</strong></td>
<td>The Armistice Centenary Grants Program supports the Australian Government’s commitment to acknowledging and commemorating those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations. The program provides grants of between $3,000 and $50,000 for community-based projects and activities that commemorate the end of the First World War, remember the service of Australian men and women in all conflicts, and celebrate a just and secure peace. Each federal electorate has a funding pool of $50,000 to support local commemorative projects. The program opened on 11 November 2017 and closed on 28 March 2018. A total of $1.978 million (GST exclusive) was awarded for 258 grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discretionary grants</strong></td>
<td>In 2017–18, seven discretionary commemorative grants to the value of $196,795 (GST exclusive) were approved by the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disability reporting mechanisms

DVA strives to ensure that its policies and programs are inclusive of people with disability and their families and carers, including veterans and their families, employees and members of the public. Since 1994, non-corporate Commonwealth entities have reported on their performance as policy adviser, purchaser, employer, regulator and provider under the Commonwealth Disability Strategy. In 2007–08, reporting on the employer role was transferred to the APSC’s *State of the service report* and the *APS statistical bulletin*. These reports are available at www.apsc.gov.au. From 2010–11, entities have no longer been required to report on these functions.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy has been overtaken by the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020, which sets out a 10-year national policy framework to improve the lives of people with disability, promote participation and create a more inclusive society. A high-level, two-yearly report will track progress against each of the six outcome areas of the strategy and present a picture of how people with disability are faring. The first of these progress reports was published in 2014, and can be found at www.dss.gov.au.

Freedom of information

Agencies subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* are required to publish information to the public as part of the Information Publication Scheme. The scheme specifies categories of information that agencies must publish online and encourages agencies to proactively release information in a consistent way. Each agency must publish on its website a plan describing the information it publishes in accordance with the scheme’s requirements. DVA’s plan is available at www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/freedom-information/information-publication-scheme.

Other reporting requirements

In addition to the requirements of the enhanced Commonwealth performance framework, as set out in the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014, DVA has annual reporting responsibilities under other Commonwealth legislation.

The appendixes of this annual report provide detailed information on the Department’s:

- participation in the Data Matching Program, as required by the *Data-matching Program (Assistance and Tax) Act 1990* (Appendix D)
- expenditure on advertising and market research, as required by the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918* (Appendix E)
- policies with regard to the Statement for Australia’s Carers, as required by the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (Appendix F)
- work health and safety initiatives and outcomes, as required by the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Appendix G)
- contribution to ecologically sustainable development, as required by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Appendix H).
Pictured at the Australian War Memorial are By the Left campaign supporters Ledy Rowe, Lucy Wong, Allison Gillam, Kellie Dadds and Jan-Maree Ball.
Female veterans march together to be recognised

The Department’s Female Veterans and Veterans’ Families Policy Forum was established to build a strong network of representatives of female veterans and develop solutions to the complex challenges faced by female veterans and veterans’ families.

At the second meeting of the forum, in October 2017, topics included health issues, the impact of defence service on veterans’ families, and ways to support people in the veteran community experiencing domestic violence.

Forum participants also talked about the need for increased awareness to combat misconceptions about how female veterans wear their medals during commemorative events.

Forum participant Kellie Dadds, an Army veteran with 22 years of service, says that female veterans regularly find themselves accused of wearing their male relatives’ medals ‘on the wrong side’.

It is a painful example of a lack of recognition that causes some female veterans to stop participating in commemorative events and even distance themselves from the veteran community.

Ms Dadds and a number of other members of the Women Veterans Network Australia (WVNA) organised a campaign in 2018 to try to reverse that reaction and broaden the public perception of veterans in Australia.

The By the Left campaign urged female veterans to come out and march as a group on Anzac Day, to send a powerful message about women’s presence in the ADF and the veteran community.

On Anzac Day 2018, thousands of women turned out, and WVNA observed more female veterans participating in marches, and fewer incidents of female veterans being questioned about their medals.

Ledy Rowe, an Army veteran who marched in Canberra, said that the campaign had ‘changed so many thousands of lives for the positive’.

‘The most positive outcome is that women who have never valued their service came out and marched and were proud of what they had done in the past’, Ms Rowe said, ‘That was wonderful to see’.

Women comprise more than 16 per cent of the ADF, and the proportion of women is growing in all three services. DVA is working to ensure that female veterans are recognised and have a voice in the development of policy and the delivery of support to meet their needs.