



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Ex-Service Organisation Round Table

Venue: Level 9 Conference Room, Lovett Tower, Canberra

Date: Thursday, 13 November 2014

Time: 9.00am – 4.30pm

Meeting No: 28

Attendees

Attendees	
Mr Simon Lewis PSM	Chair; Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs; President, Repatriation Commission; Chairman, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Mr John Geary	Acting Deputy President, Repatriation Commission; Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC	Commissioner, Repatriation Commission; Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Air Vice-Marshal Tony Needham AM	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Mrs Narelle Bromhead	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Retd)	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Ken Foster OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Mr David Gray	Legacy Australia Council
Mrs Meg Green	War Widows' Guild of Australia
Colonel David Jamison AM (Retd)	Defence Force Welfare Association
Mr Tim McCombe OAM	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Mr Anthony Mogridge	TPI Federation Australia
Mr Terry Nolan AM	Australian Special Air Service Association
Mr Russell Pettis FAIM	Naval Association Australia
Ms Robyn Ritchie	Defence Families Australia
Mr Allan Thomas JP	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Mr Michael von Berg MC	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation

Apologies	
Ms Kylie Emery	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Air Vice-Marshal Brent Espeland AM (Retd)	Royal Australian Air Force Association
Rear Admiral Robyn Walker AM RAN	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Major General Dave Chalmers AO CSC	First Assistant Secretary, Client and Commemorations

Proxies / Guest	
Group Captain Richard Kelloway OBE(M), MID, RAAF (Retd)	Royal Australian Air Force Association



Honoured Guest(s)	
Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC	Chief of the Defence Force (CDF)
Colonel Craig Furini	Chief of Staff CDF

DVA Participants	
Mr Neil Bayles	Assistant Secretary, Case Escalation and MRCA Review
Mr Shane Carmody	Chief Operating Officer
Ms Kym Connolly	Acting Assistant Secretary, Mental and Social Health
Ms Judy Daniel	First Assistant Secretary, Health and Community Services
Ms Narelle Dotta	First Assistant Secretary, Corporate
Mr Jeff Fairweather	Assistant Director, Health Promotion and Early Intervention
Ms Lisa Foreman	First Assistant Secretary, Rehabilitation and Support
Mr Mark Harrigan	Assistant Secretary, Policy Support
Dr Graeme Killer AO	Principal Medical Advisor
Ms Leonie Mack	Assistant Secretary, Anzac Centenary and Communications
Mr Richard Magor	Assistant Secretary, Income and Support Grants

Observers	
Brigadier Chris Appleton CSC (Retd)	Director, Office of Australian War Graves
Ms Sandy Bell	Assistant Secretary, Transport, Research and Development
Mr Tim Evans	Assistant Secretary, Commemorations
Ms Kyleigh Heggie	Director, Research Development and Coordination
Commander John M Hodges RAN (Rtd)	National Veterans' Affairs Advisor, Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Dylan Kurtz	Director, Aged Care
Ms Joy Russo	Executive Director, Client Strategy and Defence Relations
Mr Scott Weston	Director, Communication and Support
Ms Lisa Sampson	Executive Officer, Repatriation Commission
Mr Rommel Varghese	Graduate, Repatriation Commission

Secretariat	
Ms Fiona McCurdy-Cash	Director, Commissions and Senior Committees Secretariat
Mrs Leesa Holyland	Senior Secretariat Officer, Commissions and Senior Committees Secretariat



Agenda Item 1. Opening remarks and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the 28th meeting of the Ex-service Organisation Round Table (ESORT). He welcomed and congratulated Mrs Green on her appointment to the committee, as the new National President of the War Widows' Guild of Australia.

The Chair advised that apologies were received from MAJGEN Chalmers, Ms Emery, AVM Espeland and RADM Walker and that GPCAPT Kelloway was in attendance as proxy for AVM Espeland.

The Chair noted that the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) Air Chief Marshal Mark Binksin AC would be meeting with the members that morning and it was a unique opportunity to engage with the CDF in a consultative forum of this nature.

Agenda Item 2. Minutes and Actions from Meeting 27 (12 August 2014)

The minutes from the 12 August 2014 ESORT meeting were accepted as a true and accurate reflection of discussions.

The following action items status updates were reported:

- Action Item 25/2 -** CONTINUING – an announcement will be made later this year regarding these arrangements, with a view to providing an update at the March 2015 meeting.
- Action Item 27/1 -** CLOSED - Mr Harrigan advised that Patricia Campbell and Meg Green have kindly offered to draft an appropriate paragraph. DVA has provided Mrs Campbell with the current standard letter for her reference.
- Action Item 27/6 -** CONTINUING – it was agreed that a demonstration would be made available at the March 2015 meeting.
- Action Item 27/7 -** CONTINUING – examinations are continuing.
- Action Item 27/8 -** CONTINUING – feedback is continuing to be sought and will be reported at a future meeting.

Members agreed to closing the following Action Items: 27/2, 27/3, 27/4, 27/5, 27/9, 27/10.

Agenda Item 3. Streamlined Proof of Identity (POI) Requirements for Current Serving Members and Reservists

Ms Foreman provided members with an update on the introduction of the streamlined POI policy for current serving members and reservists, which was introduced on 1 September 2014. This process replaces the 100 point POI check for serving members and reservists with authentication of identity now based on the photograph and information provided on their ADF ID card.

Early statistics shows that approximately 150 claims were made in one fortnight utilising the new streamlined policy. Although this process has been widely publicised, Ms Foreman requested that members pass on the information regarding the new arrangements within their respective organisations.

Following questions, Ms Foreman advised that the cards needed to be physically sighted. Mr Foster sought clarification as to whether the arrangements would apply at Centrelink offices in instances where they have replaced Veterans' Access Network (VAN) offices. He



was advised that yes, this will be the case. Mr Thomas asked whether or not a factsheet regarding the new arrangements would be made available. Ms Foreman will seek clarification and advise Mr Thomas out-of-session.

The members noted the introduction of this policy and agreed to inform members of represented organisations as appropriate.

Action Item

Item 28/1 Ms Foreman to advise Mr Thomas, out-of-session, as to whether or not a Factsheet will be made available.

Agenda Item 4. Draft Social Health Strategy 2014 for Veteran and Ex-Service Community

Ms Connolly provided a progress update on the draft *Social Health Strategy 2014 for the Veteran and Ex-service Community (Strategy)*. At the 12 August 2014 meeting of the ESORT, members were advised that a public consultation period seeking comment on the Strategy was open from 30 June to 30 September 2014.

Ms Connolly advised members that a total of 21 submissions were received during the consultation period – 13 from individuals and 8 from an organisation or group. Overall the Strategy has been well received, with the majority of submissions providing positive feedback. In broad terms, feedback indicated:

- suggestions to further clarify DVA's approach and the challenges the Department faces;
- suggestions to further clarify definitions used to describe social health factors; and
- more emphasis on how to communicate with post-Vietnam era clients.

The Strategy is scheduled for release in the first quarter of 2015.

Members expressed concern as they have not seen any of the submissions and did not feel they could note or comment on changes to the Strategy without viewing these documents. Ms Daniel will check which, if any, submissions can be released and provide copies to members.

At this point in the conversation, Mr Foster noted that ESORT members frequently fielded questions from external people, about why they are approving certain items or programmes. He requested that it be clearly reflected in future ESORT minutes that members are not approving or recommending actions as part of their remit. They provide advice and endorsement to courses of action.

Action Item

Item 28/2 Ms Daniel to review and advise members which, if any, submissions can be released for the information of ESORT members only. Submissions to be released to members accordingly.



Agenda Item 5. Chair to welcome Chief of Defence Force

The Chair welcomed ACM Mark Binskin, Chief of Defence Force (CDF) to the meeting and explained the ESORT meeting processes.

Agenda Item 6. CDF to address meeting

The CDF thanked the ESORT for inviting him to speak to the group. He discussed a number of issues facing the Defence Forces today and how this may impact on veterans' advocacy and support services. In particular he noted that his main concern is for the welfare of people and their families, both while in-service and in the transition to the DVA space. He noted that the ESORT is a powerful group, representational wise, for the ex-service community and that they were well placed to carefully consider how we can provide the best support, and ensure that we best use all resources available, to help those who require it. The CDF then raised the issue of losing the current skilled advocate base and asked how this may be addressed. The CDF opened the floor for comment.

Mr von Berg noted that the current issue of retaining and increasing the number of skilled advocates, is reflective of the Vietnam era, where it took some time to get people involved. He noted that in today's environment, where many ADF members, upon transition, are still very young and have many work and family responsibilities, that it is difficult for them to have the time to volunteer for ex-service organisations (ESO) and to become advocates. This view was shared by the ESORT. The CDF welcomed the members of the ESORT to provide him with any words he may use when speaking with ADF members in regards to advocacy. Mr Thomas noted the need for ADF members to be made aware of what organisations exist and the work that is carried out by these organisations. AVM Needham noted that a tool is currently being developed for the Defence Forcenet portal to provide up-to-date details of ESOs. Ms Ritchie also noted the importance of families being aware of the ESOs that exist and noted that ESOs should be invited on to bases to talk with members and families. The CDF was supportive of the idea.

Dr Killer noted that organisations needed to be mindful of the grey area between support and therapy. Mr Jamison noted that the key is getting people access to help, with the issue being how to coordinate services between ESOs, Defence and DVA. He noted that within the ESO space, they should consider a cooperative structure to work together to raise professionalism and the quality of work, citing the example of the coordinated centre in Victoria. RADM Doolan noted that there had been vast improvements in the past five years in regards to bringing groups together, however there was still a long way to go.

The CDF noted the current pay issues within the ADF and the work he has undertaken to find offsets and productivity gains in order to fund a pay increase. Mr Jamison expressed his appreciation of the CDF and his work through this process. Mr Jamison noted that he believes the government has made mistakes that impact on veterans and service people and ESOs need to work hard to ensure that the government understands the impacts. RADM Doolan noted that the former Defence Remuneration Tribunal set-up should be revisited.

Agenda Item 7. BEST Round 17

Ms Foreman advised that the Minister had endorsed the grants team's approach to introducing an Audit programme for BEST grants. The programme will review both applicants' understanding of the workload definitions was correct and the accuracy of the workload data provided, to ensure that the calculation of grant amounts was correct. It is anticipated that approximately 15 organisations will be approached to provide data regarding their Round 16 BEST applications. The process will begin shortly.



It was noted that at the last ESORT meeting, discussion was held regarding possible changes to the formula and that there had been agreement for an out-of-session discussion. The ESORT Secretariat emailed members on 17 October to gain agreement on a time and date for the meeting. It was noted that not all members had yet replied to the email, but it was likely to be held on 18 November at 3pm AESDST.

Agenda Item 8. Review of Veterans' Advocacy Training

Ms Foreman provided apologies from Brigadier Bill Rolfe for his absence. Ms Foreman noted that a paper will be provided to ESORT members, before Christmas, outlining the draft findings of the Review and seeking comments over the remainder of 2014, before recommendations are finalised. Following a range of questions from members regarding timings and impacts, Ms Foreman noted that the formula used for Round 17 will not reflect the Review's findings. She noted that the Review, rather than being focused on the formula, is more focused on how training is provided to advocates.

Action Item

Item 28/3	Ms Foreman to circulate a paper outlining the draft findings of the Review, for comment.
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Agenda Item 9. Options for Extending Long Tan Bursary (LTB) Eligibility

Ms Foreman advised members that the Minister had been briefed on the Options paper for extending the eligibility of the LTB scheme and agreed to the paper being presented to the ESORT for discussion and comment. The paper was provided to members at the meeting. Ms Foreman noted that there were four options being presented, with option four being the preferred choice, as it would ensure a marked increase in applications, helping to ensure the long time viability of the bursaries, while maintaining the original intention of the program.

Mr von Berg noted that the program should be as broad and as inclusive as possible, hence preferred option 4. Mr Foster noted issues in keeping the bursaries as is and that due to the age of Vietnam veterans children and grandchildren, limiting eligibility to only this cohort, would impact on the continued viability of the bursaries.

Noting these comments, members agreed to support option 4.

Agenda Item 10. R&C Operating Model

Ms Foreman advised the ESORT that DVA has considered several options to change the way it carries out R&C business, including claims processing, by moving to a capability based structure. A proposed R&C Operating Model was outlined to the veteran community and affected staff during the consultation phase that began on 22 July and concluded on 5 September 2014. Over 70 feedback submissions were received from staff and stakeholders. An analysis of the feedback has contributed to a remodelling exercise and the development of an alternative improved option. Ms Foreman noted that the preferred model will now be presented to the DVA Executive and Minister. Once a decision is made, the model will be announced to staff and other stakeholders.

Members noted the update.



Agenda Item 11. Veterans Employment Assistance Initiative

Ms Foreman advised members that the Veterans' Employment Assistance Initiative was launched by the Minister in Brisbane on 12 September 2014. The launch involved a veteran who had undertaken a DVA vocational rehabilitation program, including a twelve week work trial, and is now employed full-time. Ms Foreman noted the impact of this veterans story and how the trial had positively impacted on his life. The initiative is now underway in Brisbane with more than 50 clients, who meet the criteria for participation, currently undertaking a vocational assessment. Ms Foreman noted that an evaluation of the initiative will be undertaken in the first half of 2015.

AVM Needham noted that DVA has remained in close contact with Defence to ensure information sharing in relation to vocational rehabilitation and that, within Defence, discussions were being held regarding how to engage more Defence bases with DVA. Mr Gray raised the possibility of rolling this out to State Governments, with the Chair noting that he would take this on Board.

Agenda Item 12. MRCA Education Campaign

Ms Foreman and Mr Bayles advised members that a communication strategy has been developed by DVA, Defence and ComSuper representatives. The strategy implements the three recommendations from the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements concerning education of current and former ADF members, their families and ESOs about the MRCA, the claims process and certain transitional issues. The strategy is based around key messages for identified audiences.

Ms Foreman noted that communication will mainly be via the existing communication channels of DVA and Defence, such as portals, newspapers and briefings. A social media campaign will also be undertaken using Twitter, Facebook and a YouTube video. Ms Foreman advised that they are currently waiting on a launch date for the campaign, but would send out the YouTube link to ESORT members.

Members noted the update and that Ms Foreman would provide them with a YouTube link.

Action Item

Item 28/4	Ms Foreman to circulate to members, the YouTube link to MRCA Education campaign video.
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Agenda Item 13. Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Trial at the VRB

Ms Foreman and Mr Bayles updated members on the implementation of recommendation 17.3 of the MRCA Review, which noted that there should be access to case conferencing at the VRB. Members noted that legislation was passed in June 2014 that enabled Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR), including case conferencing to be carried out at the VRB. This had followed consultation with ESOs over a number of years.

A 12 month trial of ADR is to be undertaken in the NSW VRB Registry from January 2015. All new applications to the VRB, relevant to the NSW Registry, from that date will be subject to ADR processes. Mr Bayles noted that this will apply to VEA and MRCA claims and that applications in other VRB registries will not be part of the trial. The trial will provide detailed



data on the impact of ADR on the Department and the VRB, with a view to ascertaining whether or not it will be rolled out on a national scale. RADM Doolan expressed thanks for Mr Bayles and the VRB for the very detailed response provided to the RSL, which satisfies questions they had raised.

The members noted the ADR trial to take place in the NSW VRB Registry.

Agenda Item 14. Dr Killer Farewell

The Chair advised members that Dr Killer will be retiring from the Department at the end of the year. He noted that Dr Killer has been the Principal Medical Adviser to the Repatriation Commission and the Department since 1991. Prior to this he trained as an Occupational Physician and served in the Royal Australian Air Force for 23 years. The Chair noted that Dr Killer has been the driving force behind some truly pioneering initiatives and that his impressive list of qualifications and achievements have been enhanced by the medical support and advice he has provided to a multitude of DVA missions and commemorative activities. The Chair noted that Dr Killer is widely known and respected in the ex-service community as someone who has directly improved the lives of serving members, veterans, widows and their families, and whose legacy will continue to do so.

Speaking on behalf of the ESORT members, RADM Doolan noted that Dr Killer will leave hard shoes to fill. His input and empathy is something to be admired and his efforts are truly appreciated. He wished Dr Killer the best of luck in retirement and noted that he will find retirement completely enjoyable.

Dr Killer responded with his thanks and noted that he is not retiring, but looking forward to a third career. He noted the many changes throughout his time with the Department and he had greatly enjoyed the work he has undertaken.

Agenda Item 15. Review of Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP)

Ms Foreman and Mr Bayles updated members on the status of the Review of the Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP). It was noted that the MRCC has approved: the formation of a steering committee to oversee the Review; a subset of the terms of reference for the Review; the formation of an ESO consultation group, which will contribute to formulating the remainder of the terms of reference of the Review; and approaching a rehabilitation expert to examine SRDP data.

Mr Bayles noted that members of ESORT have received a letter asking for nominations in forming the ESO consultation group. Nine nominations have been received so far. RADM Doolan noted that Mr John Hodges is the RSL representative. Mr von Berg was unaware of receiving the letter and asked if it could be resent.

Mr Bayles went on to advise that he anticipates that a meeting will be held in either January or February 2015, to focus on the discussion paper and to discuss suggestions about what may be covered by the Review. He stressed that the MRCC are seeking ESO input into the Terms of Reference, which are not locked down at this point in time.

Mr Bayles noted that the Review is not being rushed and it is anticipated to be finalised in the second half of 2015.

The members noted the commencement of the SRDP and the request to nominate representatives to participate in a consultation group.



Action Item

Item 28/5 ESORT Secretariat to recirculate letter requesting nominations.

Agenda Item 16. Health and Community Services Briefing – Release of the Vietnam Veterans Family Study, the Peacekeepers Health Study and the Rwanda Deployment Health Study

Ms Daniel advised members that on 28 October 2014, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs launched three key health related studies: the Vietnam Veterans Family Study (VVFS); the Peacekeepers Health Study; and the Rwanda Deployment Health Study. Members were provided with a pack containing factsheets on the three studies, a ministerial statement and a hardcopy of the VVFS Volume One.

Ms Daniel provided a PowerPoint explaining the focus and key findings of the three studies and advised members that the findings were also available on the DVA website. Ms Daniel offered to provide a version of the PowerPoint to ESOs if required. Ms Daniel then advised members that the Minister wishes to conduct a consultative process on the findings of the VVFS, utilising the ESORT forum. Ms Daniel advised that Mr Wayne Delahoy, Assistant Director, Transport, Research and Development, would be in touch with ESORT members to commence the consultation process. Feedback from the consultation will be provided in a paper to the March ESORT meeting.

Mr Thomas noted that there had been no final discussions with ESOs prior to the studies being submitted to the Minister. Mr Foster also noted that there seems to be criticisms regarding Victoria. Ms Kylie Heggie advised members that criticisms were mostly in relation to technical issues and that it should be noted that the studies overall highlighted mental health concerns that need to be carefully considered and addressed.

The members noted the release of the three health studies and that Mr Wayne Delahoy would contact them regarding a consultation process for the VVFS.

Action Item

Item 28/6 Mr Delahoy to contact ESORT members to commence consultation process regarding the VVFS.

Item 28/7 Mr Delahoy to provide a paper on the outcome of the VVFS consultation feedback to the March ESORT meeting.

Agenda Item 17. ICT Update

Mr Weston provided members with an overview and demonstration of the redeveloped DVA website. ESORT members were also provided with a hard copy of the intended new 'front page'.

Mr Weston advised that the department's website currently received over one million page views per month and is one of the major ways client's access information about the Department. The website is over five years old and is beginning to show its age. It is difficult to navigate and content can be difficult to understand. As such, the website redevelopment



project has focused on ways to improve many aspects of the website, including the quality and amount of content and the way that users navigate to the information they need. In all, the improvements are aimed at making it easier for users to find what they are looking for. Mr Weston noted that it is expected that the website will be launched in mid-December. Members questioned whether or not contact information on key ESOs could be made public on the site. The Chair agreed that this would be possible.

Members noted the demonstration and were supportive of the new format.

Ms Anderson then advised members of a 6 month trial, to commence from 1 January 2015, to expand the use of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology for calls made to the VAN. Ms Anderson noted that throughout 2014 clients have experienced longer than usual wait times for calls to be answered on the DVA General Enquiry line during peak call periods, particularly in June and July. In looking at ways to improve wait times, it was noted that the training program for VAN staff is intensive, with staff being required to answer the full range of general enquiries from across all business areas in DVA. By training staff in specific areas of DVA business and improving call streaming options using IVR functionality, both training times and wait times could be considerably lessened.

Ms Anderson advised that the technology would not be used extensively. It would only be used during periods of high call traffic and in response to DVA initiated mail-outs. Ms Anderson noted that an interim report on the trial will be provided to ESORT in May 2015.

Members noted the expanded use of IVR and the trial to take place in 2015.

The Chair advised members that Ms Anderson would be finishing in her role in the Department at the end of the week, to take a position with the Department of Health. He thanked her for her considerable work and wished her well in her new role.

Action Item

Item 28/8	Mr Weston to add key ESO contact information to the design of the new website
Item 28/9	Mr Gerrick to provide an interim report on the IVR trial to be provided to the May ESORT meeting.

Agenda Item 18. Assessment of Income for Self Employed

A submission was received from COL David Jamieson, on behalf of the Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), seeking clarification of current DVA policy and practice in assessing capacity for work and personal income of incapacitated self-employed veterans.

The submission noted the case of a particular veteran. Ms Foreman noted that it is inappropriate to discuss the specifics of individual cases. She noted that DVA's policy for assessing income for self-employment under the SRCA and the MRCA has been developed as a result of relevant case law. Ms Foreman advised that she would provide the DFWA with the speaking notes and relevant case law, which is available on CLIK. She went on to advise that the Incapacity Payments Cross Agency Working Group, emanating from the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements, examined the issue of assessing earnings from self-employment. The working group has recommended that all cases of self-employment be assessed on the basis of the cost of employing a person to undertake similar work, to ensure consistency and fairness.



Members noted Ms Foreman's comments and that she would provide speaking notes and the relevant case law links from CLIK to the DFVA.

Action Item

Item 29/10 Ms Foreman to provide the DFVA with the speaking notes and the relevant case law available on CLIK

Agenda Item 19. Access to VVCS services for children of Contemporary Veterans – Removal of Age Restrictions

A submission was received from Ms Narelle Bromhead, on behalf of the Partners of Veterans Association of Australia, highlighting the inconsistency in VVCS client eligibility, with children of more recent conflicts only eligible to access service up to the age of 26, compared to children of Vietnam veterans and F111 participants who have a life entitlement to support.

MAJGEN Kelly responded by noting that this is not an ideal situation and is being continually monitored. He also noted that that VVCS does not turn members of the veteran and ex-service community in need or distress away, this applies to children of all veterans regardless of age.

RADM Doolan suggested a support paper and list of priorities be provided to the Minister and encouraged Mrs Bromhead to list this item as a high priority.

Members noted the discussion.

Agenda Item 20. Veterans' Affairs Consultation Framework - Forum Updates

The Chair advised this item covers three areas: Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF); State and Territory Forums; and the report on the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health (PMAC).

Before formally commencing the item, the Chair informed members of the refresh of the current DVA Service Charter (the charter) which was published in 2006. Since then changes have occurred which have made some of the content obsolete. Changes include some minor text amendments for consistency and a new introductory paragraph, to explain the purposes of the Charter. The Charter has also been updated to align with the Strategic Plan and to reflect the revised APS values, as legislated in 2013. He also noted that the Charter will be revisited in 2015, to ensure it remains relevant against the new PGPA Act and welcomed members to submit feedback if they wished.

Younger Veterans' Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) - MAJGEN Kelly advised that the YVF met last Wednesday, 5 November, in Canberra. He noted that the minutes from the meeting were yet to be finalised, but would be provided to the ESORT at the next meeting. MAJGEN Kelly noted that it had been a positive meeting with discussions covering a broad range of issues including the use of new technology, issues faced in post service life, as well as issues faced by younger veterans.

State and Territory Forums – Mr Geary provided an overview of the State and Territory based fora held between August and October 2014. It was noted that Deputy Commissioner Consultative Forums were held in all states, except Tasmania and Western Australia, who will be holding their forums shortly. Mr Geary noted that members were provided with a copy of all available meeting summaries in their packs, but may wish to note several common



items from the forums including the changes to VAN office arrangements; the expansion of VVCS services; the release of the draft social health strategy; and updates on the R&C operating model.

Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health -The Chair introduced Ms Daniel and advised members of her decision to retire next year. The Chair thanked Ms Daniel for her work and wished her and her family a happy and healthy retirement.

Ms Daniel advised the ESORT members that the Council met for the first time on 24-25 July 2015. The focus of the first meeting was to provide council members with a suite of background briefings on DVA and its programmes. The Council were briefed on veterans' mental health, including DVA's service delivery processes and legislation, treatment and management of mental health conditions, and mental health resources for veterans and their families.

Mr von Berg, the ESO representative on the Council, also advised ESORT on the proceedings. He noted that the Council is determined to reach key goals and, as a result, have decided to keep their focus refined to start with. They have identified three priority areas of focus, being: a national communication strategy; peer support; and vocational rehabilitation and transition management. Mr von Berg noted that a communication strategy sub-committee was formed and has already met and produced a paper for the next meeting, to be held on 25 November 2014.

Agenda Item 21. Other Business

Mr Mogridge, on behalf of the TPI Federation Australia, forwarded three submissions raised by Ms Pat McCabe at the TPI Federation Australia General Meeting held on 16 September 2014. The Chair noted that DVA would formally respond to the paper and the questions raised.

Action Item

Item 28/11 DVA to formally respond to submission from the TPI Federation Australia. (Rehabilitation and Support Division)

Mr Geary advised members that the Minister would soon be announcing the outcomes of the consultation regarding the provision of in-person services at the Parramatta VAN. Mr Geary noted that the current site will close on 5 December and be replaced with a DVA Greater Western Sydney VAN, which will be staffed by one DVA staff member, providing the full range of VAN services, support, and information. The VAN will be open three days a week - Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:00am – 12:00pm. He also noted that the arrangement will be augmented by regular outreach and information services, including visits to suburbs throughout Greater Western Sydney and surrounding suburbs.

The Chair thanked the ESORT and DVA staff for their work during the day and for making the time to attend the meeting. He noted that coming to the end of another calendar year presented an opportune time to reflect upon the performance of the ESORT. He requested that the Secretariat approach all members to gather their feedback. At this point, Mr Gray advised the Chair that members had already agreed that he would coordinate feedback on behalf of the group and provide a paper to be presented at the first meeting of the new year. The paper would reflect both on how the ESORT is tracking and how things may be done better in 2015.

The Chair advised members that a copy of the Repatriation Commission, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission and DVA Annual reports would be provided to



them at the close of the meeting. A copy of the proposed 2015 meeting dates were also provided to members.

Action Item

Item 28/12 Mr Gray to gather member feedback and provide a paper noting the progress of the ESORT for the meeting of 24 March 2015

The meeting closed at 3.40pm.