



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
Ex-Service Organisation Round Table

**Venue:** Level 8 Bridge Conference Room, Gnabra Building,  
Canberra

**Date:** Tuesday 12 April 2016

**Time:** 9.00am – 3.50pm

**Meeting No: 33**

**Attendees**

<b>Attendees</b>	
Mr Simon Lewis PSM	Chair; Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs; President, Repatriation Commission; Chairman, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Mr John Geary	A/g 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 Tracy Smart AM	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Defence
Mrs Narelle Bromhead	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
Mr Ken Foster OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Air Vice-Marshal Brent Espeland AM (Ret'd)	Royal Australian Air Force Association
Mr Tony Ralph OAM	Legacy Australia Inc.
Mrs Meg Green	War Widows' Guild of Australia
Colonel David Jamison AM (Ret'd)	Defence Force Welfare Association
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Mr Terry Nolan AM	Australian Special Air Service Association
Ms Robyn Ritchie	Defence Families Australia
Mr Allan Thomas JP	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Mr Michael von Berg MC OAM	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Mr James Wain	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia



<b>Apologies</b>	
Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Ret'd)	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Russell Pettis FAIM	Naval Association Australia
Ms Jennifer Taylor	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Comcare
Rear Admiral Brett Wolski AM RAN	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Defence

<b>Proxies</b>	
Mr Robert Dick	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Brian Warren	Naval Association Australia

<b>DVA Participants</b>	
Mr Craig Orme DSC AM CSC	A/g Chief Operating Officer
Dr Ian Gardner	Principal Medical Adviser
Ms Sue Campion	First Assistant Secretary, Health and Community Services
MAJGEN Dave Chalmers AO CSC	First Assistant Secretary, Commemorations and War Graves Division
Ms Lisa Foreman	First Assistant Secretary, Rehabilitation and Support
Mr Neil Bayles	Assistant Secretary, Rehabilitation, Case Escalation and MRCA Review
Mr Ken Corke	Director, Office of Australian War Graves
Mr John Fely	Assistant Secretary, Procurement and Contract Management
Mr Alex Gerrick	Assistant Secretary, Business Reform and Defence Relations
Ms Veronica Hancock	Assistant Secretary, Mental and Social Health
Mr Wayne Penniall	National Manager, VVCS
Mr John Sadeik	Assistant Secretary, Programme Support
Dr Stephanie Hodson	Mental Health Adviser

<b>Other Presenters/Guests</b>	
The Hon. Dan Tehan MP	Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Materiel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac
Mr Phil Connole	Chief of Staff, Office of the Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Mr David Roberts	Senior Adviser, Office of the Hon. Dan Tehan MP
Mr Bruce Armstrong	Aspen Foundation
Mr Stewart Cameron CSC	President, RSL Queensland
Mr Andrew Condon CSC	Aspen Foundation
Mr Bill O'Chee	RSL Queensland

<b>Observers</b>	
Ms Narelle Dotta	First Assistant Secretary, Corporate



Ms Molly Caddey	Graduate, Community and Aged Care Policy
Mr Leo Flynn	Director, Procurement Implementation
Ms Alison Hale	A/g Assistant Secretary, Policy
Ms Jane Henderson	Business Manager, Repatriation Commission
Ms Joy Russo	Director, Community and Aged Care Policy
Ms Renee Wilson	A/g Director, Defence Relations Section

Secretariat	
Ms Jeanette D'Souza	A/g Director, Commissions, Committees and Appointments Section
Mr Lindsey Cuthbertson	Senior Secretariat Officer, Commissions, Committees and Appointments Section

### Agenda Item 1. Opening Address

The Chair welcomed members to the 33rd meeting of the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT).

The Chair introduced and welcomed Mr Ralph, the newly-elected National Chairman of Legacy. Mr Ralph succeeds Mr Gray.

The Chair also welcomed AVM Smart as a new MRCC member. Members were advised RADM Wolski is also a new MRCC member but was an apology for the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Mr Dick and Mr Warren as proxies for the RSL and NAA respectively.

Members were advised Mr Geary's attendance in his capacity as Deputy President while Mr Orme acts as the Department's Chief Operating Officer.

The ESORT congratulated Mr Orme and Ms McCabe for their Australia Day honours earlier in the year.

The Chair advised that apologies were received from RADM Doolan, Mr Pettis, Ms Taylor and RADM Wolski.

The Chair acknowledged the passing of BRIG Bill Rolfe and asked members to stand and observe a moment's silence.

The Chair welcomed and introduced the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Dan Tehan MP, as a special guest for the morning's session.

The Minister also acknowledged the passing of BRIG Rolfe. He advised members that, after nine weeks in the role, he was aiming to meet as many veterans as possible and expressed the importance of the ESORT.

The Minister outlined the key priorities of upgrading the Department's ICT system, mental health and support for transitioning members of the Australian Defence Force. He also acknowledged general feedback that the Department needed to continue to focus on claims and times taken to process claims.

The Minister held a question and answer with the members. Topics raised included:

- commemorative grants for Vietnam veterans;
- the Department's antiquated ICT system;



- the advocacy training framework;
- the challenge of traditional ex-service organisations capturing the contemporary veteran cohort in their memberships; and
- employment support for transitioning veterans and their partners.

Responding to concerns raised regarding conflicting permanent impairment reports between a client's regular specialist and a Department-commissioned specialist, it was agreed Mr Geary will establish a working group to address the issue. The working group will include members of the ESORT.

#### Further Action

**Action Item 33/1** - Mr Geary to establish a working party to address Permanent Impairment medical assessment processes. [Mr Geary].

#### Agenda Item 2. Minutes and Action Items from 12 November 2015 Meeting

The members endorsed the draft minutes from the 12 November 2015 meeting as a reflection of proceedings.

Members requested the draft minutes from previous meetings be separated from members' meeting packs and distributed as a separate document.

The members were advised of the status of the following action items recommended to be closed:

- Item 31/14: This issue is scheduled to be presented to the Commission sub-committee on 14 April 2016. CLOSED
- Item 31/16: included in the agenda of the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting. CLOSED
- Item 32/1: the working group has been established and the first meeting was held in March. CLOSED
- Item 32/2: included as an ongoing agenda item for future meetings. CLOSED.
- Item 32/3: sent to members in December 2015. CLOSED
- Item 32/4: letter sent to members in December 2015 noted the national chapter contact details/websites for ESOs could be included as a by-line to contributions to the ESO News Section of Vet affairs. CLOSED
- Item 32/5: included in the agenda of the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting. CLOSED
- Item 32/6: time has now expired for the provision of feedback. CLOSED
- Item 32/8: time has now expired for the provision of feedback. CLOSED
- Item 32/9: sent to members on 5 April 2016. CLOSED
- Item 32/10: included in the agenda of the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting. CLOSED
- Item 32/11: included in the agenda of the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting. CLOSED
- Item 32/12: sent to members in December 2015. CLOSED
- Item 32/14: to be addressed during the 12 April 2016 meeting as other business. CLOSED.
- Item 32/15: distributed to members in December 2015. CLOSED
- Item 32/18: distributed in members' 12 April 2016 meeting packs as an addendum to the action item register. CLOSED
- Item 32/19: information provided to Secretariat. CLOSED
- Item 32/20: included in the agenda of the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting. CLOSED



The members were also advised of the action items that currently remain open:

Item 29/15: Consider options for a structured awareness strategy in the dissemination of information to GPs and provide to Deputy President. ONGOING

Item 29/16: Provide information regarding the number of homeless (or at risk of) veterans provided with assistance by their organisations, and the types of services offered.

Item 32/7: A Ministerial submission was put forward in March providing an update on the ESORT consultation process and the final feedback paper, and seeking the Minister's agreement to draft a Government response to the VVFS. ONGOING

Item 32/13: to be discussed at the August 2016 ESORT meeting.

Item 32/16: Mr von Berg to refer issue regarding transition time between GP referral and specialist treatment to Health and Community Services Division.

Item 32/17: Mr von Berg to refer correspondence from constituents regarding transition time between GP referral and specialist treatment to Chair. ONGOING

#### **Further Action**

**Action Item 33/2** - draft minutes from previous meetings to be separated from members' meeting packs and distributed as a separate document prior to ESORT meetings [Secretariat]

#### **Agenda Item 3. Terendak Repatriation**

Mr Corke updated members on the progress of the Terendak Repatriation.

Members were advised the arrival in Australia of those repatriated from Terendak and Kranji Cemetery was currently planned for 2 June 2016 at RAAF Richmond. There would be a single ceremony conducted in line with contemporary ADF practices, and further details would be announced in May 2016. Mr Corke told the ESORT that the repatriation would not be effected by any potential uncertainty regarding caretaker mode.

It was requested the Department release a statement close to the repatriation date stating those who remain in Terendak Cemetery do so at the request of their families.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Principal Medical Adviser Update**

Dr Gardner updated the ESORT as part of his standing agenda item as Principal Medical Adviser.

Dr Gardner informed members that, contrary to reports, there had recently been no overwhelming number of claims submitted to the Department regarding mental health. Members were also advised of actions emanating from the Senate Enquiry into Mental Health of Australian Defence Force Members and veterans.

Members were also updated on recent health-related meetings and research currently being conducted.

#### **Agenda Item 5. Private Hospital Procurement**

Mr Fely updated members on the Department's private hospital procurement process.

A key focus for the Department is the quality of care provided to DVA clients, particularly in regards to the provision of private rooms.



Mr Fely also advised members of the need for the Department to set market-based benchmarks for future contracts with private hospitals.

Members agreed with the Department's approach to ensure the availability of private rooms for DVA clients as part of the Private Hospital Procurement process.

#### **Agenda Item 6. Review of Dental and Allied Health Arrangements**

Ms Campion provided a further update on the review of dental and allied health arrangements.

Members received correspondence from the Department seeking an indication of their desired nature and level of engagement with the review. This invitation closed on 21 January 2016. The Department received three nominations, one each from the War Widows' Guild of Australia (Ms Green), RSL (Mr John Hodges) and the VVFA (Mr Bill Roberts).

Ms Green sits on the musculoskeletal and dental working groups, Mr Hodges sits on the mental health and other working groups and Mr Roberts sits on the optical working group.

The first meetings of the working groups were held in March 2016. Ongoing updates will be provided to ESORT on the progress of the review.

#### **Agenda Item 7. Updated Factsheet HSV80 – Local Medical Officer and Medical Specialist Services for the Veteran Community**

Ms Campion advised members of the updates to Factsheet *HSV80 – Local Medical Officer and Medical Specialist Services for the Veteran Community*.

The update ensures veterans are aware of the assistance DVA can provide if they are experiencing difficulty locating a Local Medical Officer, medical specialist or allied health provider in their local area who accepts DVA arrangements.

#### **Agenda Item 8. DVA Support for My Health Record Opt-out Pilot**

Ms Campion gave an update on the DVA Support for the *My Health Record* opt-out pilot being conducted by the Department of Health (Health).

The pilot program involves two trial sites in North Queensland and the Blue Mountains/Nepean, New South Wales. In March 2016, all consumers in the trial sites, including veterans, should have received a letter from Health advising a *My Health Record* will be created automatically for them and their dependents unless they choose to opt-out.

DVA is supporting this initiative by providing information through existing veteran and provider channels, such as *Vetaffairs*, advice through Deputy Commissioner fora and DVA's website.

#### **Agenda Item 9. Business Transformation**

Mr Gerrick updated the ESORT on the Department's business transformation agenda.

DVA is progressing a number of major change initiatives which support the Department's strategic direction and will enable DVA to be more a client-focused, responsive and



connected organisation.

These initiatives include a functional efficiency review, shared services and working with the Digital Transformation Office as part of the Government's Digital Transformation Agenda.

#### **Agenda Item 10. Functional Efficiency Review**

Mr Gerrick expanded further on the Department's Functional Efficiency Review, being conducted by the Independent Review Leader Mr David Tune AO PSM, former Secretary of the Department of Finance.

#### **Agenda Item 11. Mefloquine**

AVM Smart delivered a presentation to the ESORT on Mefloquine use in the ADF and the Defence response to date.

The presentation also highlighted to members Mefloquine's place in the Repatriation Medical Authority's Statements of Principles.

The Chair advised the ESORT that an article on Mefloquine would be published in Vetaffairs to raise further awareness in the veteran community.

#### **Further Action**

**Action Item 33/3** - An article on Mefloquine to be published in Vetaffairs. [Dr Gardner]

#### **Agenda Item 12. Mental Health Services for Veterans in South Australia**

Ms Hancock, Mr Penniall and Dr Hodson provided an update on mental health services for veterans in South Australia to address an action item from the August 2015 ESORT meeting.

The ESORT was provided with a paper providing data on various allied and medical mental health care service usage by DVA clients in South Australia.

Mr Penniall emphasised the array of services the Department provides in the mental health space. MAJGEN Kelly highlighted the trial to be used with veterans in rural areas regarding the provision of mental health services via Skype.

The Chair acknowledged Mr Penniall's career in the public service, and the ESORT congratulated and wished him well for his impending retirement.

#### **Agenda Item 13. Guest Presentation: Homelessness Briefing**

Messrs. Cameron and O'Chee from RSL Queensland delivered a presentation to the ESORT regarding veteran homelessness.

Mr Cameron advised that his organisation was keen to understand what the facts of veteran homelessness are and engaged Mr O'Chee to do a pilot study.

The ESORT was told by Mr O'Chee that ESOs need to be careful in their approach to veteran homelessness as no ESO has the skills to deal with the complex issues surrounding it. Rather, ESOs have to work together, as well as with the Department, to tackle the issue.



Mr Cameron informed the ESORT that a draft paper by Mr O'Chee, with 20 recommendations, was currently being fine-tuned. The Chair requested further discussion to occur at future ESORT meetings.

#### **Further Action**

**Action Item 33/4** - RSL Queensland to deliver a further briefing on veteran homelessness at the August ESORT meeting [Secretariat].

#### **Agenda Item 14. Guest Presentation: ESO Mapping Project**

Mr Armstrong and Mr Condon briefed the ESORT on the Aspen Foundation's ESO Mapping Project.

Mr Condon provided an overview of the extensive work of the Project. The project is mapping where and what ESOs are doing, in order to assist in indicating where needs are. He highlighted that there are 3174 charities in Australia that list assistance to veterans within their scope. The project had received 606 responses from ESOs to their survey.

Both the Chair and MAJGEN Kelly highlighted the ability for ESOs to identify the complementary and duplicate services provided by organisations through the data from the project.

#### **Agenda Item 15. Update on the Veterans Employment Assistance Initiative (VEAI) and Timely Engagement with Defence**

Ms Foreman updated the ESORT on the VEAU.

After the conclusion of the first phase of the VEAU, 75 participants are now involved in some form of workforce participation. The second phase commenced in March 2016 and involved around 100 DVA clients.

Ms Foreman acknowledged that, for some participants, workforce participation is a goal but not a short-term reality.

Ms Foreman and Mr Foster also updated the ESORT on the progress of the advocacy training framework.

#### **Agenda Item 16. MRCA Single Appeal Pathway**

Mr Bayles informed the ESORT of the progress of the MRCA Single Appeal Pathway.

The Single Appeal Path Bill has been passed by the House of Representatives. It has been introduced to the Senate but has not yet been debated. Implementation date will be decided if, and when, the Bill is passed.

#### **Agenda Item 17. Updates to Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme**

Mr Bayles provided an update on the *Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme* (VVRS).

Mr Bayles advised members of updates to the Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme (VVRS). From 20 March 2016, the extension of psychosocial and medical management





rehabilitation to the VVRS will result in whole-of-person rehabilitation across all three Acts.

This reform was accompanied by a series of VEA changes that improve the pension adjustment arrangements under the VVRS to further support veterans participating in the scheme.

Mr Bayles informed members of a diverse range of rehabilitation success stories available on the DVA website. These stories document the rehabilitation journeys of real people who participated in DVA's rehabilitation programs.

### **Agenda Item 18. Evaluation of Alternative Dispute Resolution Trial**

Mr Bayles updated the ESORT on the evaluation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) trial.

In January 2015, the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) commenced a 12-month trial of ADR in the VRB's NSW/ACT Registry. Every new VEA and MRCA appeal received in that registry from 1 January 2015 was subject to the trial.

The initial results of the trial are very encouraging and at the end of December 2015 showed that, on average, applications were finalized in under two months from referral to the ADR trial, as well as 57 per cent of case being finalised without the need for a VRB hearing. Mr Bayles informed members DVA is in the process of conducting an independent evaluation of the trial. This evaluation will be undertaken by Mr Stephen Skehill, former Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department. The interim report of the independent evaluation is expected in late April 2016, with the final report expected in mid-May 2016.

### **Agenda Item 19. Appeals Against DVA Decisions – Reasons for Success**

The ESORT received an overview from Mr Sadeik regarding appeals against DVA decisions.

Mr Sadeik advised there were 48,711 primary compensation related determinations made under the three Acts in the 2014-15 calendar year.

Of those primary determinations, 64.6 per cent (31,466) were accepted and 35.4 per cent (17,245) were not accepted.

Of the 48,711 primary determinations, 11.5 per cent (5,593) went through some form of an appeal, and, of that number, only 4.1 per cent (1,992) were either set aside or varied across all three Acts. These figures are similar to previous financial years.

Mr Sadeik highlighted that this ongoing analysis shows that DVA is getting the vast majority of decisions correct at the primary level.

Members were also advised that new evidence being lodged is the main reason a different decision is being made upon appeal such as medical reports and further information to support the client's contention.

### **Agenda Item 20. Veteran Liaison Officers in DVA Hospitals**

Ms Champion updated the ESORT on Veteran Liaison Officers (VLOs) in public hospitals and Department-contracted private hospitals.



Ms Campion advised that under the new contracts with private hospitals commencing 1 July 2016 there will be no change to the current arrangements requiring every contract private hospital to have a VLO.

In public hospitals, there is currently no contractual requirement for a VLO, except in the former Repatriation General Hospitals.

**Agenda Item 21. Member Submission: DVA Liaison – Whole of Government**

The ESORT heard a joint member submission from the Partners of Veterans Association and TPI Federation Australia.

The submission requested the appointment of a DVA liaison officer (or a hotline for ESOs) to liaise on behalf of veterans and their families regarding Department of Health and Centrelink issues.

The Chair acknowledged the complexity of navigating the aged care system and expressed the need to work together with the ESORT to build a stronger capability in that area.

**Agenda Item 22. Member Submission: Female Veterans**

The ESORT heard a member submission from TPI Federation Australia.

Ms McCabe outlined to the ESORT the need for a consultative forum that deals specifically with the issues of female veterans and clients of DVA.

The Chair requested the submission be considered as part of the review of the Department's National Consultation Framework Fora to be conducted later in 2016.

**Agenda Item 23. Funeral Benefit Under VEA**

The ESORT heard a member submission from the Partners of Veterans Association requesting the Funeral Benefit under the VEA to be increased to \$4,000 to reduce the gap between the equivalent benefit under the MRCA and SRCA.

Ms Foreman confirmed the Funeral Benefit under the VEA is not designed as a grant to cover all funeral expenses, and while both the MRCA and SRCA funeral benefit is substantially higher, the eligibility criteria under those two Acts is much more restrictive than those under the VEA.

The ESORT was advised that if the desire was to increase the Funeral Benefit under the BEA to match the MRCA and SRCA rate, the eligibility criteria would need to become more restrictive.

**Agenda Item 24. Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum Update**

Members received an update on the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum.

**Agenda Item 25. National Aged and Community Care Forum**

Members received an update on the National Aged and Community Care Forum.

**Agenda Item 26. State and Territory Fora Update**



Members received an update on the State and territory Fora.

**Agenda Item 27. Coordinated Client Support Program**

Due to time constraints, information on the Coordinated Client Support Program will be distributed to the ESORT out of session.

**Agenda Item 28. Other Business**

The ESORT agreed with the proposal to reappoint Mr von Berg as the ESO representative on the Prime Minister's Advisory Council for Veterans' Mental Health.

There was a discussion amongst members regarding the professionalism, responsibility and collegiate nature of membership on the ESORT. It was strongly agreed that members should be prepared to raise their concerns among their colleagues and the Department during ESORT.

Members also agreed on the importance of members or their proxies to disclose or take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with their appointment to or attendance at ESORT meetings.

Members also reaffirmed the Terms of Reference that state that members or their proxies are expected to observe 'Chatham House' rules and the confidentiality of sensitive discussions during a forum meeting.