



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Ex-Service Organisation Round Table

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

Date: Wednesday 10 August 2016

Time: 9.00am – 3.50pm

Meeting No: 34

Attendees

Attendees	
Mr Simon Lewis PSM	Chair; Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs; President, Repatriation Commission; Chairman, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission
Mr Craig Orme DSC AM CSC	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
RADM Brett Wolski AM RAN	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Defence
Ms Jennifer Taylor	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Comcare
Mr Terry Nolan AM	Australian Special Air Service Association
Ms Robyn Ritchie	Defence Families Australia
Colonel David Jamison AM (Ret'd)	Defence Force Welfare Association
Mr Tony Ralph OAM	Legacy Australia Inc.
Mrs Narelle Bromhead OAM	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
Air Vice-Marshal Brent Espeland AM (Ret'd)	Royal Australian Air Force Association
Mr Michael von Berg MC OAM	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Mr Ken Foster OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Mr James Wain	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia



Mrs Meg Green	War Widows' Guild of Australia
Mr Rod White AM RFD	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Russell Pettis FAIM	Naval Association of Australia
Ms Liz Cosson AM CSC	Chief Operating Officer

Apologies	
Mr Michael Quinn	A/g National President, Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
AVM Tracy Smart AM	Member, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Defence

Proxies	
Mr John McNeill	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemaker Veterans' Association

DVA Participants	
MAJGEN Dave Chalmers AO CSC	First Assistant Secretary, Commemorations and War Graves Division
Dr Ian Gardner	Principal Medical Adviser
Mr John Fely	Assistant Secretary, Health and Community Services, Procurement and Contract Management
Ms Sue Campion	First Assistant Secretary, Health and Community Services
Ms Kate Pope PSM	First Assistant Secretary, Transformation Taskforce
Mr Neil Bayles	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Rehabilitation and Support Division
Mr Doug Humphreys	Veterans Review Board Principal Member
Ms Katrina Harry	National Registrar, Veterans Review Board
Mr Roger Siversen	Assistant Director, Psychosocial Assessment, Rehabilitation and Compensation.
Ms Amber Vardos	A/g Assistant Secretary, Income Supports and Grants, Rehabilitation and Support Division
Mr Mark Harrigan	Assistant Secretary, Policy Support, Rehabilitation and Support Division
Mr Leo Flynn	Director, Procurement Implementation, Health and Community Services

Other Presenters/Guests	
The Hon Dan Tehan MP	Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Cyber Security, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Centenary of Anzac



Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC	Chief of the Defence Force
Mr Bill O'Chee	RSL Queensland
Mr Bruce Armstrong	Aspen Medical
Mr Andrew Condon CSC	Aspen Foundation
Ms Margot Kropinski-Myers	Director, Honour and Awards, Department of Defence

Observers	
FLTLT James Clements	Aide-de-Camp to Chief of the Defence Force
Mr Brett Mitchell	Department of Defence
Mr Paul Way	Director General, Defence Community Organisation
Ms Kerrie Martain	Executive Officer, Repatriation Commission
Ms Zainab Djawas-Armstrong	Graduate, Repatriation Commission

Secretariat	
Mr David Hollaway	Director, Commissions, Committees and Appointments
Mr Lindsey Cuthbertson	Senior Secretariat Officer, Commissions, Committees and Appointments
Ms Molly Caddey	Graduate, Commissions, Committees and Appointments

Agenda Item 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the 34th meeting of the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT).

The Chair introduced and welcomed Mr White, the newly-elected National President of Returned and Services League succeeding RADM Doolan, and RADM Wolski from the MRCC as new members to the ESORT.

The Chair advised that apologies were received from Mr Quinn, A/g National President of the APPVA and AVM Smart. The Chair welcomed Mr McNeill as proxy for Mr Quinn.

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 Chair welcomed Ms Cosson, the Department's new Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, as well as Ms Pope, First Assistant Secretary, Transformation Taskforce.

Mr Way was also welcomed to the ESORT as an observer.

Agenda Item 2. Minister's Address

The Minister addressed the forum. The Minister outlined the Coalition Government's election commitment to veterans, particularly in regards to \$6 million towards veterans' mental health and \$1 million for ESOs to be provided with training around suicide.



The Minister also expressed a commitment to further work around transition, especially in relation to the complex points in the process.

Agenda Item 3. Chief of the Defence Force's Address

Following the Minister's address, the Chief of the Defence Force addressed the ESORT.

The CDF outlined several key focus areas in his role, such as the health and wellbeing of ADF members and their families. Integral to that focus is the ADF's mental health strategy, the Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme, annual mental health checks for serving members and working with DVA on suicide data matching.

The CDF provided members with an understanding of a typical day in the ADF.

The Minister and CDF held a joint open discussion with the ESORT, with the key issues of employment, education and awareness raised, which all ultimately fed into the overarching theme of transition for former serving ADF members.

Members agreed on the need for the corporate sector to be educated in the value of employing former serving members. A critical factor to succeeding in this area is promoting positive stories of veteran employment to the media.

The Minister expressed the importance of working with veterans towards employment. The Minister informed the ESORT of the Prime Minister's employment initiatives and the potential for the MP network to play a role by engaging with their local Chamber of Commerce. The Minister also spoke about his desire to see more leadership from the APS in this area.

The CDF advised members how the new early engagement and transition strategy assists in ADF members' transition, however, acknowledged it does not capture former members who have already been discharged for several years.

Many members expressed views on ways to improve transition, such as:

- Non-Liability Healthcare for psychiatric conditions at the point of transition;
- changing the perception of transition to beginning the day of enlistment; and
- the possibility of DVA accepting conditions already on a transitioning member's medical record.

In response to the latter, the Chair, CDF and Mr Orme felt there was a need for some level of assessment to still occur, with the process to further improve once ICT systems issues are addressed.

Another initiative raised regarding transition is a tri-service business hub in Adelaide, in cooperation between state-based business areas of Defence and DVA, to assist with transitioning members.

The ESORT acknowledged the effect poor transition can have on veterans' mental health.

Agenda Item 4. Minutes and Action Items from 12 April 2016 Meeting

The members endorsed the draft minutes from the 12 April 2016 meeting as a reflection of



proceedings.

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

- Agenda Item 29/15 – a new communication strategy for the ESORT has been developed and circulated to members for comment, which addresses this item;
- Agenda Item 32/13 – included as part of the August 2016 ESORT agenda;
- Agenda Item 32/16 – addressed at PI Working Party on 12 July 2016;
- Agenda Item 32/17 – addressed at PI Working Party on 12 July 2016;
- Agenda Item 33/1 – first PI Working Party held on 12 July 2016;
- Agenda Item 33/2 – implemented as part of the ESORT Secretariat processes for the distribution of members' meeting packs;
- Agenda Item 33/3 – article drafted; and
- Agenda Item 33/4 – included as part of the August 2016 ESORT agenda.

The Chair requested agenda item 29/16 remain open until the November ESORT meeting.

Regarding agenda item 33/3, members requested Dr Gardner revise the *Vetaffairs* article on Mefloquine, if possible, and augment it to address the concerns of people in the ex-service community affected by Mefloquine.

The Chair advised members the recent budget measure to extend the eligibility for Non-Liability Health Care can also assist the aforementioned group within the ex-service community. While some feedback received from members was around the lack of awareness amongst General Practitioners of this issue, others expressed a contrasting view.

The Chair informed the ESORT he would raise the issue during an upcoming meeting with the head of the Australian Medical Association and Defence.

Further Action

Action Item 34/1 – Mr Geary to address the November ESORT meeting on the Permanent Impairment Working Party [Mr Geary].

Action Item 34/2 – Dr Gardner to augment *Vetaffairs* article on Mefloquine to further address concerns of people in the ex-service community affected by Mefloquine [Dr Gardner].

Action Item 34/3 – The portion of meeting packs relating to minutes, agendas and summaries of the National Consultation Framework Fora to be separated into a separate electronic document for dissemination to members [Secretariat].

Action Item 34/4 – Information on Non-Liability Health Care and related services such as Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) to be provided to members [Secretariat].



Agenda Item 5. Transformation

Ms Cosson and Ms Pope updated the ESORT on the Department's work on transformation. Members were given a tour of the Department's Veteran Centric Reform Lighthouse Project. Ms Pope agreed to provide members with photographs of the Lighthouse Boards.

Further Action

Action Item 34/5 – Ms Pope to provide members with photographs of the Lighthouse Boards [Ms Pope].

Agenda Item 6. Evaluation of Alternate Dispute Resolution Trial

Mr Bayles and Mr Humphreys updated members on the evaluation of the Alternate 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.

Mr Bayles provided members with a summary of the Stephen Skehill report. The evaluation by Mr Skehill, former Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department, has concluded, with Mr Skehill declaring the trial a resounding success and supported a national rollout of ADR.

A highlight of the trial outcomes was 85 percent of cases that completed the ADR process being resolved without the need for a VRB hearing.

The ESORT were informed the national roll-out of ADR will occur in a staged manner starting in 2016-17, which will include some refinements to the process identified in the trial.

Several members expressed strong support for the ADR method.

Agenda Item 7. Principal Medical Adviser Update

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

Dr Gardner outlined six major activities since the last ESORT meeting, one of which being a review of nearly 100 randomly selected files in Brisbane for Permanent Impairment Assessments to determine any evidence of unnecessary referrals to outside specialists. The ESORT were advised there were no findings of inappropriate referrals.

Dr Gardner also informed the ESORT of his meeting with AVM Smart to discuss a forum on the issues surrounding Mefloquine.

The ESORT were also advised of work on the SRCA Hearing Aid Working Party, and delays to the Transition and Wellbeing Research Program.

Members sought information on figures for suicide in the serving and ex-service community.



Dr Gardner and RADM Wolski informed members of the figures captured in the ADF's suicide database for members in service, as determined by Coroners' findings. The ESORT was advised by the Chair both DVA and Defence were providing this information to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

An issue was raised regarding 'thin prep' pap smears not being covered by Medicare. The Chair advised this issue can and will be referred to the upcoming Female Veterans Forum.

Agenda Item 8. Implementation of Gender Guidelines

Mr Harrigan updated the ESORT on the Department's implementation of the Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender (the Guidelines).

These Guidelines were developed by the Attorney-General's Department to recognise that individuals, including veterans, may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than what they were assigned at birth or during infancy, or as an indeterminate gender. This is commonly referred to as 'Gender X'.

DVA is working to implement these Guidelines by collaborating with other Government agencies and reviewing relevant policies, training staff, and, where necessary, updating systems and client information products, such as factsheets.

These changes will have a minimal effect on the veteran community; for those who identify as male or female, it will have no impact at all.

Mr Harrigan advised DVA will refer any complex policy issues relating to the Guidelines to the Commissions.

Agenda Item 9. Advocacy Training and Development Program

Ms Vardos updated the ESORT on the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

As at 1 July 2016, the ATDP commenced managing advocacy training previously provided through the Training and Information Program (TIP). TIP courses will continue to operate while they are progressively replaced with the ATDP courses over the next six to 12 months.

Ms Vardos informed members of two courses for the ATDP in development, focusing on mentoring and assessing. ESOs can nominate interest in both as part of the Program's pilot.

A Registered Training Organisation, Major Training Services, has been appointed and is working with the ATDP's Capability Framework Management Group in evaluating the recognition of prior learning (RPL) for TIP-registered advocates. The evaluation for RPL is a requirement for all advocates. Working Books for assessment of advocates in ATDP have also been finalised, and will be sent to ESOs in the coming weeks. Ms Vardos confirmed RPL is part of the assessment course.

The ESORT was advised both TIP and ATDP are covered by insurance (VITA) while the transition to ATDP occurs. The Chair requested this point is highlighted in information



provided to ESOs on the ATDP.

Further Action

Action Item 34/6 – Ms Vardos to send ATDP report to members [Ms Vardos]

Agenda Item 10. BEST Funding Formula

Mr Bayles and Ms Vardos discussed the BEST Funding Formula.

Ms Vardos expressed to members a number of environmental factors where changing the BEST grant calculation formula would be advantageous, namely:

- Introduction of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Case Conferencing;
- Increasing aged care demands on Ex-service Organisations (ESOs); and
- Introduction of the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

Mr Orme informed the ESORT the aged care factor had been discussed in detail at the National Aged and Community Care Forum.

Members discussed the complexity of the aged care factor, particularly in regards to ESOs that have a dedicated focus within their organisation on aged care.

Mr Bayles and Ms Vardos sought the ESORT's support on four recommendations regarding the BEST Funding Formula for Round 19 (2017-18). Members supported recommendations one, three and four, while expressing the need for further work and discussion relating to recommendation two. The Chair requested Aged Care become an agenda item at the November ESORT meeting to address the second recommendation.

Outcomes

For the BEST Funding Round 19 (2017-18), members SUPPORTED:

1. an ADR workload rating of 15 points is applied and will be subject to a review in 12 months following the national rollout of the ADR;
2. in principle, that the BEST formula provide a higher points rating for ATDP advocates and a lower points rating for TIP advocates from BEST Round 19 (2017-18) to encourage ESOs to move their advocates across to the new program; and
3. the revised opening dates proposed for applications under BEST Round 19 (2017-18 FY) and that late applications will no longer be accepted.

Further Action

Action Item 34/7 – Aged Care to become an agenda item at the November 2016 ESORT meeting [Secretariat].

Action Item 34/8 – Mr Bayles and Ms Vardos return to the November 2016 ESORT meeting with a proposition on how the aged care factor could be built into the BEST funding formula [Mr Bayles and Ms Vardos].



Agenda Item 11. Guest Presentation: Overview – Defence Honours and Awards

Ms Kropinski-Myers delivered a presentation to the ESORT on Defence Honours and Awards.

A key focus of the address was promoting the Australian Defence Medal (ADM), which recognises all members of the ADF who have demonstrated their commitment and contribution to the nation since 3 September 1945. It is estimated 143,000 members and former members of the ADF have not applied for the ADM.

To qualify, members must have:

- Completed their initial enlistment period;
- Completed 4 years' service;
- Been medically discharged;
- Died in service;
- Left the service due to a defence workplace policy at the time; or
- Any period of service that is determined to be efficient service, by the CDF or his delegate.

A key point expressed by members related to education within the ADF, particularly for junior Officers, regarding Defence Honours and Awards. In response, RADM Wolski advised the ADF is working on addressing this issue, expressing the need for leadership positions to lead the way.

Agenda Item 12. Guest Presentation: Veteran Homelessness

Mr O'Chee from RSL Queensland delivered a presentation to the ESORT regarding veteran homelessness as a follow-up to his address at the April 2015 ESORT meeting.

Mr O'Chee informed members since the last meeting, the report into veteran homelessness has been completed and is now available on the RSL Queensland website. The report's 20 recommendations were all accepted by RSL Queensland.

Mr O'Chee reaffirmed his view 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 O'Chee emphasized that veteran homelessness is not just an issue of housing availability but the ability to maintain stable accommodation.

Mr O'Chee advised RSL Queensland is developing strategic partnerships with two organisations, one of which is the Salvation Army. This is due to their ability to provide holistic assistance beyond the realms of the homelessness issue.

The ESORT agreed on the importance of employment being a key component of addressing veteran homelessness.



Agenda Item 13. Guest Presentation: ESO Mapping Project

Mr Armstrong and Mr Condon briefed the ESORT on the Aspen Foundation's ESO Mapping Project, having been finalised and released since their presentation at the April ESORT meeting.

Mr Armstrong advised members the need to identify the overlap in services provided by ESOs was an important factor in the ESO Mapping Project. However, the next steps following the completion of the project required leadership.

Mr Armstrong expressed two potential options moving forward: one being a greater opportunity for self-regulation by ESOs, and the other being engagement with the Government to ensure ESOs are not so easily established.

While members advised there were no issues with ESOs being established to provide services as they saw fit, there was much support for opportunities in self-regulation arising from the ESO Mapping Project. The Chair requested members have an out-of-session conversation regarding a potential working group to further determine how self-regulation could work, suggesting the use of the members' pre-meeting the day before ESORT meetings as a forum, and to provide a report to the ESORT at the November meeting.

The Chair advised DVA would approach the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to seek clarity about regulation on criteria for establishing organisations providing services for veterans.

Members also discussed the opportunity to develop a database of ESOs. The Chair informed members of the need for a body of work with Defence on the database concept.

Further Action

Action Item 34/9 – DVA work with Defence on the concept of a database for ESOs [DVA].

Action Item 34/10 – DVA to approach the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to seek clarity about regulation on criteria for establishing organisations providing services for veterans [DVA].

Action Item 34/11 – Members to have an out-of-session discussion on self-regulation, and report back to the ESORT at the November meeting [Members].

Agenda Item 14. Overview: Initial Psychosocial Screening Program

Mr Siversen provided an overview on the Initial Psychosocial Screening Program.

This program was developed to assist up-front identification of clients with complex or high needs leading to early client access to support services. Clients are contacted by telephone and assessed by trained social workers. The program is voluntary and clients can opt out if they wish.

After a trial and evaluation of psychosocial assessments of Victorian initial liability claimants in 2014/15, the Executive Management Board endorsed a proposal to extend the program to



initial liability claims from all states in March 2016.

The ESORT was advised of the objectives and benefits of the screening, such as:

- Providing clients with ability to access health or other support prior to liability being assessed;
- Ensuring clients are supported to help manage needs;
- Providing delegates with support and advice; and
- Early identification of 'red flags'.

Mr Siversen highlighted all records were kept by the social workers and not used for the determination of claims.

The next steps of the program are to expand the capacity of the existing social work team.

Agenda Item 15. Private Hospitals Procurement

Mr Fely provided a further update on private hospitals procurement.

86 of 87 private hospitals providers have agreed to the Department's revised terms and conditions, with the exception of Ramsay Health Care.

Mr Fely addressed several claims alleged by Ramsay regarding the negotiation process.

DVA will recommence negotiations with Ramsay shortly with the aim of reaching a new contract agreement on or before 30 November 2016.

Agenda Item 16. Permanent Impairment Medical Assessment Working Party Progress Report

Mr Orme updated the ESORT on the progress of the Permanent Impairment Working Party.

The first meeting of the Working Party was held on 12 July 2016 to discuss concerns about medical impairment assessments raised at the 12 April 2016 ESORT meeting.

The meeting canvassed a range of topics and agreed on 15 main points that represent the Working Party's articulation of the issues around medical assessments. Mr Orme advised members the meeting was very positive with an open and respectful exchange of ideas.

DVA provided background information for the working party meeting, including that DVA's use of medico-legal medical assessments for claim decisions across all of the Rehabilitation and Compensation business was less than three percent over the past two financial years.

Mr Orme outlined the ongoing work of the Working Party, and informed members it will report to ESORT on actions taken in response to the working party's main points.

The Chair acknowledged the high level of representation involvement in the Working Party from ESORT members.



Agenda Item 17. Member Submission: Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Mr Foster submitted two agenda items on behalf of VVAA Hervey Bay regarding MRCA and SRDP inconsistencies, and service pension, Gold Card and SRDP TTI. Mr Foster requested the member submission regarding MRCA and SRDP inconsistencies be examined.

Mr Bayles informed the ESORT a response will be written for both member submissions and will be circulated to members out of session.

Further Action

Action Item 34/12 – Mr Bayles to provide a written response to the two VVAA member submission out of session [Mr Bayles].

Agenda Item 18. National Consultation Framework Fora Updates

Members received an update on the National Consultation Framework Fora (NCF).

Mr Orme advised the ESORT a key focus from the most recent meeting of the NACCF was healthy ageing and, in particular, are there veteran-specific issues related to ageing?

MAJGEN Kelly provided the ESORT with an outline of the NCF review due to be finalised later in the year.

Following feedback from the most recent meeting of the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum, the Chair requested an item on the National Disability Insurance Scheme be included on the November 2016 ESORT agenda.

Further Action

Action Item 34/13 – An item on the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be included on the November 2016 ESORT agenda [Secretariat].

Agenda Item 19. Other Business

The ESORT congratulated Mrs Bromhead on her Queen's Birthday honour.

A request was raised regarding an update on Long Tan Bursaries. The Chair advised a response will be provided out of session.

The next meeting of the ESORT is 10 November 2016.

The meeting closed at 3:50pm.