

Defence/DVA Executive Committee (DDEC) - Meeting Summary – 17 December 2020

The eighth Defence/DVA Executive Committee meeting was held on 17 December 2020.

The meeting was held at Russell Offices (Defence).

Meeting Attendees:

Members	
Mr Greg Moriarty	Secretary, Department of Defence
General Angus Campbell	Chief of the Defence Force
Ms Liz Cosson	Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs
Ms Justine Greig	Deputy Secretary Defence People Department of Defence
Ms Vicki Rundle	Deputy Secretary Veterans and Families Department of Veterans' Affairs
Ms Kate Pope	Deputy President Repatriation Commission Department of Veterans' Affairs
Observers	
Mr Stuart Smith	Defence Engagement Commissioner Department of Veterans' Affairs
MAJGEN Natasha Fox AM CSC	Head, People Capability Department of Defence
Secretariat	
Commodore Kinghorne	Director General Veterans' Support Department of Defence

Agenda Item 1 - Opening Remarks and Introductions

Mr Moriarty welcomed members to the 2020 DDEC meeting and noted the continuing strong relationship between DVA and Defence. Ms Cosson thanked Defence and the ADF for the tremendous work undertaken this year in support of the Nation. Mr Moriarty and Ms Cosson noted that the cooperation has been particularly important during the black summer bushfires, the COVID19 pandemic and in providing support to those impacted by the Afghanistan Inquiry report.

Members noted that the 2019 DDEC meeting summary had been agreed out of session and that it was available on the DVA website.

Agenda Item 2 – Strategic Partnerships

Members agreed on the importance of collaborating on the implementation of the Government's priorities, particularly given the unique challenges of 2020.

- **2A National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention** There was a general discussion on the significant work being undertaken in both Departments to support the work of the Interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention. The Committee noted the uncertainty around the Commission and agreed that despite this uncertainty that there needed to be a continued focus on suicide prevention. The two Departments had responded to information requests from the Interim Commissioner after seeking legal clarification on the basis for providing the information.
- **2B Veterans Wellbeing Taskforce.** Ms Cosson updated the Committee on the Veterans' Wellbeing Taskforce. She noted that this is one of six national reform taskforces and this

particular taskforce was focused on Veteran Wellbeing and Mental Health. It was noted that Minister Chester was engaging his State and Territory Ministerial colleagues on cross jurisdictional issues.

- **2C Veteran Wellbeing Centres.** Ms Pope updated the Committee on the roll out of the Wellbeing Centres in each State and Territory. The meeting noted the importance of engagement with all elements of the Veterans Support System as these Centres mature.
- **2D - Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program.** Ms Pope provided an update on the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program, including the recent focus of self-employment and entrepreneurship in order to provide another stream of support to transitioning members. The Committee noted that there was a record number of entries for the PM's Veterans' Employment Awards and MAJGEN Fox noted the link to the work in both Departments on improving the transition experience and the involvement of the Industry Advisory Committee. Ms Greig advised the Committee that the Minister for Defence has expressed a keen interest in the transition experience for Reserves. It was noted that a great deal of effort had been expended in ensuring Reservists involved in Op Bushfire Assist and Op COVID-19 Assist received transition support as they returned to the civilian workforce.

Agenda Item 3 – Afghanistan Inquiry

The committee discussed a number of initiatives implemented to support those impacted by the release of the Brereton Report.

- **3A – Open Arms/Safe Zone.** Ms Rundle provided the Committee with details of this DVA initiative, including the most recent daily statistics. Those impacted by the report are receiving priority access to service offerings and it was noted that many personnel accessing these services are existing clients of DVA. The meeting noted the significance of this initiative to veterans and their families.
- **3B – Coordinated Client Support.** Ms Rundle updated the committee on this initiative and the Committee noted the importance of this program to veterans.
- **3C – On Base Veteran Support Officers (VSOs).** Ms Rundle updated the Committee on progress made since the last meeting on national rollout of the VSO program. The Committee noted the progress and the increased focus of face to face support in bases and the importance of having Ex Service/ other support organisations and the families of the fallen involved in these centres. The meeting noted the 'Check 5' initiative as an example of a community initiated and Government supported program for suicide prevention.
- **3D – Trends.** The Committee was provided with an update on the DVA trends on requests for assistance and provision of support following the release of the report.

Agenda Item 4 – Budget 2021/22

The committee noted the complexity of the likely budget submissions and the interlinked nature of the various elements that will cover the DVA Portfolio Budget Statement, the response to the 2019 Productivity Commission Report (A Better Way to Support Our Veterans), the Veteran Advocacy Scoping Study, the report into Transition by the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and the DVA Budget and Efficiency Review recently undertaken by Mr David Tune.

- **4A – Productivity Commission.** The Committee noted that the interim response to the 2019 Productivity Commission report was tabled in October and that there is a requirement for advice for Government on the remaining recommendations. Many of these outstanding recommendations would be complex to implement. The Committee noted the Legislative complexity as one example. The Committee agreed that the two Departments would continue to work closely to prepare the documentation for Government consideration.
- **4B – Data Sharing.** The Committee discussed the joint efforts on the Defence DVA Data Sharing and Analytics Solution (DSAS) which is the Government agreed approach to the Productivity Commission Recommendation number 11.2 (Defence Premium) . The use of Defence and DVA data in this solution will enable a wellbeing approach to the support of personnel and their families.

- **4C – Joint Transition Authority.** MAJGEN Fox updated the Committee on the progress towards implementation of the JTA. The Committee noted the close involvement of DVA in the continuing design and rollout of the JTA. GEN Campbell expressed an interest in exploring the continuation of the service mindset after transition. He noted that the current paradigm involves a sense of service to country while in the ADF but at transition many move to a self-focus, rather than a continuation of service or a more community focussed mindset. Ms Cosson noted that the United Kingdom had undertaken some research which will be of interest and undertook to further investigate.

Agenda Item 5 - Defence/DVA Links Steering Committee Report

Ms Rundle and Ms Greig provided a report on Defence/DVA Links Steering Committee (DLSC) and the progress made since the last DDEC including a more enhanced and broader strategic focus for Links meetings including use of and access to data, DVA Veteran Centric Reform, risk management, claims and transition. MAJGEN Fox updated the Committee on the Defence DVA Electronic Information Exchange project and the Single Access Mechanism project. The Committee noted that the DLSC would have a particular focus on 'wellbeing' in 2021.

Agenda Item 6 – Other Business

The Committee agreed an update to the membership of the Committee and the Defence Links Steering Committee to reflect recent organisational changes in DVA. These changes will be made in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperative Delivery of Care and Support.

In closing the meeting, Mr Moriarty noted the effort undertaken across the board in 2020 and thanked members for their valuable contribution to the strategic discussion and the combined efforts to support Veterans and their families. Ms Cosson noted that the ongoing close partnership between the Departments is key to continued improvement in the Veteran Support System.