

# DEFENCE DVA EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

## SUMMARY OF MEETING – 28 August 2015

The third Defence DVA Executive Committee meeting was held on 28 August 2015 in the DVA offices, Lovett Tower.

The meeting was attended by:

Mr Dennis Richardson	Secretary, Department of Defence
Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC	CDF
Mr Simon Lewis	Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs
Mr Shane Carmody	Chief Operating Officer, Department of Veterans' Affairs
Ms Rebecca Skinner	Deputy Secretary, Defence People Group

Also in attendance from DVA were Ms Lisa Foreman, First Assistant Secretary Rehabilitation and Support, Ms Sue Champion, First Assistant Secretary Health and Community Services and Mr Alex Gerrick Assistant Secretary, Business Reform and Defence Relations; and from Defence, Rear Admiral Robyn Walker, Commander, Joint Health Command, Air Vice Marshal Tony Needham, Head People Capability; Air Commodore Steve Martin, Joint Program Manager, Support for Wounded, Injured or Ill Program, Military Support and Compensation Directorate and Brigadier Peter Daniel, Director General Personnel, Army.

### Agenda Item 1 – Opening Remarks and Introductions

Mr Richardson welcomed members and attendees.

### Agenda Item 2 – Actions Arising

It was noted that all actions arising from 30 May 2014 meeting were completed.

### Agenda Item 3 – Update on Defence and DVA Mental Health Strategies

RADM Walker reported on the achievements under the current *ADF Mental Health Strategy 2011-2015* which included investment of over \$152 million (since 2009) in mental health services and support, updated and improved screening continuums and an increase in the total mental health workforce by 91 positions. Initiatives not completed under this strategy will continue to be addressed under the *ADF Mental Health Strategy 2016-2020* which is expected to be finalised in early 2016 following the release of the outcomes of the *Senate Inquiry into the Mental Health of ADF Personnel who have returned from combat, peacekeeping or other deployment*.

Ms Sue Champion of DVA reported that the *Veterans' Mental Health Strategy – A Ten Year Framework 2013-2033* was developed to align with the *ADF Mental Health Strategy 2011-2015*. Achievements include the establishment of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health, greater access to mental health treatment for eligible veterans and peacetime members, whatever the cause, expanded resources and support for health providers and improved focus on early intervention. Complementing and supporting this strategy is the

development of *A Social Health Strategy 2015-2023 for the Veteran and Ex-Service Community* which is awaiting release by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Alignment of Health and Rehabilitation Tenders**

Mr Shane Carmody reported that DVA is interested in canvassing opportunities for future cooperation with Defence in tendering health services. Such cooperation could leverage increased purchasing power that comes from combining requirements and help improve the continuity of care for members transitioning from Defence to DVA.

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Incapacity Payments Cross-Agency Working Group – update on recommendations**

Ms Lisa Foreman of DVA reported that the Group have developed a package of 10 recommendations related to the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*. An agreed position has been reached between DVA and the Department of Defence on eight of these recommendations and consultation continues on the remaining two. The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission will consider each of the Groups' recommendations in due course.

#### **Agenda Item 6 – Changes to the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988***

The *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Improving the Comcare Scheme) Act 2015* (SRCA Bill) was introduced to Parliament on 25 March 2015. The Bill is the result of a review of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) that was commissioned by the Department of Employment in 2012. The SRCA Bill is yet to be passed by both Houses of Parliament.

The SRCA Bill was referred to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee for inquiry and report which recommended, by majority decision, that the Bill be passed by the Senate.

As part of the preliminary work on the Bill, the Government had agreed to the removal of Part XI from the SRCA into a standalone Act, which will separate compensation coverage for current and former ADF members from other Commonwealth (civilian) employees. Work to implement this standalone Act has now commenced.

#### **Agenda Item 7 – Employment Initiatives**

Ms Lisa Foreman of DVA provided an update on the Veterans' Employment Assistance Initiative (VEAI) Program. Phase One concluded in February 2015 resulting in 58 out of 100 participants being successfully placed in civilian employment. Phase Two of the program will build on recommendations from Phase One and will be six months in duration.

There are similarities between the Army-led Defence initiative *Transition for Employment (T4E)* and VEA. DVA and Defence will continue to work closely during the development of both programs to ensure proper alignment and prevent overlap.

#### **Agenda Item 8 – Early Engagement Model**

Mr Gerrick of DVA introduced the Early Engagement Model which will establish a relationship between DVA and current ADF members as early as practical during the member's career through evidence and event based triggers. Such engagement will allow DVA to make contact at appropriate times during a member's career to ensure they are fully aware of the care, support and services available to them now and into the future.

Basic information will be collected and stored automatically in a prospective client shell and updated during service to ensure data integrity. The shell will be converted into a DVA client in the event of a claim. By introducing new information flows and streamlining and automating old ones, the Model will benefit client contact, OBAS and the DVA claims processes.

### **Agenda Item 9 – Joint Information Exchange Strategy**

AIRCDRE Martin provided the Committee with an update on the Strategy. Now named the Defence / DVA Information Exchange Strategy, it aims to establish a cost-effective electronic information sharing and exchange environment between the two Departments. An initial scoping study has been completed and preferred solutions identified. Progression remains subject to resourcing.

DVA's Early Engagement Model is seen as a key enabler to the success of the Strategy.

### **Agenda Item 10 – Update on Communication with Separating and Former ADF Members**

In October 2014 the Secretary of DVA commenced writing to all members transitioning from the ADF. This process has continued to evolve and Defence Community Organisation (DCO) now provides DVA with the details of all members who are commencing the transition process, unless the member formally opts out of that information transfer. The Secretary DVA now writes directly to members whose details are transferred to DVA, with DCO providing a letter on the Secretary's behalf to members who 'opt out'. Both letters introduce DVA to the member and outline the DVA services available to transitioning members.

### **Agenda Item 11 – The development of processes and procedures that could be implemented to identify and assist 'at risk' members as they transition from the ADF**

The Committee discussed the need to be more proactive at identifying 'at risk' members as they transition from Defence. Cooperative work in this area continues.

### **Agenda Item 12 – Other Business**

There were no new items of business.