



## MINUTES

### **Agenda Item 1. Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting of the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) and noted apologies from Ms Coralee Goedhart, LT Natalie Huntsman, Mr Phillip Thompson, Mr Mat Jones, Mr Troy Watson and Mr James Dallas.

The Chair welcomed Mr Don Spinks AM, who has joined the Department as a member of the Repatriation Commission. Mr Spinks is a recently retired member of the Australian Defence Force and has almost 40 years' experience in the Australian Army and was the Australian Army's most senior soldier in his final appointment.

The Chair acknowledged the participation of the YVF members who attended the Prime Minister's Employment Program Awards and how the Awards recognise the significant contributors to the employment of veterans.

### **Agenda Item 2. Minutes & Actions Arising**

The minutes of the 28 November 2018 YVF meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Members agreed to close all action items, noting action item 104 would be discussed during the Open Arms update.

### **Agenda Item 3. Productivity Commission Inquiry Draft Report**

Members were briefed on the release of the [Productivity Commission Inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans](#) draft report, noting a high interest in the report was shown on social media and traditional media outlets. DVA is actively engaging with the Productivity Commission, with the Secretary meeting with the Commissioners and attending recent public hearings. Members were updated on the Defence-DVA cooperation on the Report and its findings, and fact that both Departments were jointly working on a response.

The draft report reinforces a commitment to putting the wellbeing of veterans and their families first, outlines the importance of a whole-of-life focus and acknowledges the key role families play. A strong theme from the public submissions received, indicated a consensus from the ex-service organisation (ESO) community to oppose the abolishment of DVA.

Members also noted the release of the Rob Cornall Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study Report. The Productivity Commission report will be considered in alignment with this report. Feedback about the report is due to [advocacy.study@dva.gov.au](mailto:advocacy.study@dva.gov.au) by 30 April 2019.

Members noted the draft report of the Productivity Commission Inquiry released on 14 December 2018; that the key recommendations are far-reaching, proposing major changes to the current system; and that the final report will be provided to Government at the end of June 2019.



**Agenda Item 4. Open Arms Update**

Members received updates on [key research and collaboration initiatives](#) being undertaken by Open Arms including the National Intake Service, [InnoWell Platform – Project Synergy](#), [Group Program Redevelopment](#), [Survive to Thrive](#), and [Community and Peer Pilot](#).

A Client Assist Contact Centre now enables Open Arms to build the National Intake Service as a separate call centre, with a team of 35 people, completing clinical intake interviews on the day the client calls the Centre, lessening waiting times for clients to access services. A suggestion from a member indicated the introduction of biographies of clinicians for each location would be valuable to clients seeking to connect with clinicians in the early stages of treatment.

Project Synergy is a new online technology that can be tailored to an individual's needs and connects them to a range of complementary apps and web-based interventions to support mental health and wellbeing. The trial will consider if this technology could be useful in supporting clients in their recovery by accessing useful, tailored online support that they can use with their Open Arms counsellor as part of their treatment.

The Community and Peer Pilot has seen significant success with positive results for veterans and their families. The Pilot has new capability of one social worker supporting four lived experience peers, who encourage a new pathway for clients who were previously unlikely to consider accessing or being referred to Open Arms services. Members noted the update.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
112	Provide members with the map of locations of Open Arms offices.	Dr Hodson
113	Members to provide feedback on the suggested Open Arms satellite offices to Dr Hodson / Open Arms.	Members
114	Provide national delivery of group programs and locations to members.	Dr Hodson
115	Provide the Community and Peer Pilot report to members.	Dr Hodson
116	Change VVCS to Open Arms on Google Maps.	Dr Hodson
117	Introduction of biographies of clinicians for each Open Arms location.	Dr Hodson

**Secretary Address**

Ms Liz Cosson AM CSC, DVA Secretary, welcomed members to the YVF and briefed them on current departmental activities, including: streamlining 40 conditions; better use of data; provisional access to medical treatment while processing claims; the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant, veteran pin and veteran card; the preference of a wellness model; and the Holsworthy Special Forces Pilot and registering claims before veterans transition out of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). It is important to recognise the unique nature of ADF service, and DVA requires the assistance of the ESO community to help shape how the department communicates.



**Agenda Item 5. Presentation: Phoenix Australia**

Professor David Forbes presented on the progress of the work being undertaken by [Phoenix Australia](#):

- [Treatment Research Collaboration](#) aims to improve mental health outcomes in veterans by conducting and facilitating innovative clinical intervention research into PTSD and other complex military mental health issues.
- The [Practitioner Support Services](#) is a free, nation-wide service providing expert multidisciplinary support and guidance to health practitioners, support organisations, and others working with Australian veterans with mental health problems.

Members were encouraged to contact Phoenix Australia to engage with them in developing strategies for advocates and ESOs assisting veterans, especially with mental health support. Members noted the issues discussed in the presentation.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
118	Provide Anzac Centre Training Day flyer to members.	Secretariat

**Agenda Item 6. Better support for veterans and their families**

Members received an update on the diverse range of internal support programs available for the management of clients with complex needs. The Client Support Framework is one of several new initiatives which are focused on putting clients and their families at the centre. The Framework actively works to identify those clients at-risk, refer clients to targeted support services, monitor progress, and case manage certain clients who require additional assistance due to their circumstances.

**Agenda Item 7. Mental and Social Health Program Improvements**

Members were asked to provide feedback on how to inform veterans of undertaking an [annual GP health assessment](#). From 1 July 2019, all those leaving the ADF will be able to access an annual comprehensive health assessment by a GP for the first five years after they transition from the ADF.

The annual health assessments will support the early detection and intervention of mental and physical health concerns during transition to civilian life. Former ADF members can use their DVA Health Card to access these assessments. The one-off GP Health Assessment will continue to be available to all former ADF members who transition before and after 1 July 2019. Members suggested this service be incorporated into a Defence Community Organisation Transition Seminar and advertised through the internal Department of Defence web portal – ForceNet.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
119	Provide via Secretariat suggestions on possible platforms to circulate information on the annual GP health assessment.	Members



120	Annual GP health assessment to be incorporated into a Defence Community Organisation Transition Seminar and uploaded onto the internal Department of Defence FORCENET site.	Department of Defence
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**Agenda Item 8. Transformation Showcase**

The Showcase highlighted achievements to date, the ongoing development of [MyService](#) and the latest release which continues to improve the functionality of the online claims platform. Members were also briefed on the announcement of the [Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant](#), which encourages Australia to recognise and acknowledge the unique nature of military service, and support veterans and their families. The Covenant comprises of a veteran card, the oath and veteran/reservist lapel pin. War Widows will receive a veteran card. Members noted that a needs assessment can now be completed online and from June 2019, clients will have the ability to nominate advocates in MyService, who are approved to discuss their claims.

Item	Action	Assigned to
121	Provide the transformation video to members.	Secretariat
122	Provide members with the list of conditions which are now determined via a streamlined decision-making process.	Secretariat

**Agenda Item 9. Defence Force Ombudsman and Defence Response Unit (formerly DART)**

The Air Force Association briefed members on the [Defence Force Ombudsman](#) (DFO), which was established on 1 December 2016 to offer an independent complaint-handling mechanism for serving and former Defence members. The Defence Response Unit within the DFO responds to all [Defence abuse claims](#), the [National Redress Scheme](#) (1 July 18 – 2028) and those members litigating against Defence.

DFO engages through [Restorative Engagement](#), as this enables individual complainants to participate in facilitated restorative conferences with senior Defence representatives. Survivors have the opportunity to have their story of abuse heard, the impact it has had on their life, to have it acknowledged and responded to by the representative in the form of an apology. Members noted the briefing.

**Agenda Item 10. Member submission: Taxation and DVA Clients**

The Australian Special Air Service Association stated that DVA clients need a detailed breakdown of what is being taken out by DVA with regards to pre-tax/post tax payments for taxation purposes. Clients are experiencing significant delays in obtaining tax information from DVA. There is a need for transparency of any agreement between DVA and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) in relation to tax breakdown for previous year payments.

Members noted the interaction between a veteran's incapacity payments, their superannuation payments and taxation on these payments is complex, particularly in circumstances where re-assessment and recalculation of entitlement is required. DVA continues to work with the



Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) and the ATO to identify and resolve issues as they arise and to ensure agreed protocols between the agencies continue to operate appropriately.

The *Streamlining Administration of Transitioning and Former ADF members* Protocol is an agreement between DVA, the CSC and the ATO. It was put in place in December 2014 to manage situations where a medically discharged veteran receives both incapacity payments and a superannuation invalidity pension for the same period.

Item	Action	Assigned to
123	Provide the <i>Streamlining Administration of Transitioning and Former ADF members</i> Protocol to members and make publically available.	Edel Kairouz

**Agenda item 11. Mental Health Update**

Members noted recent mental health initiatives including the [Senate Inquiry into the use of Quinoline anti-malarial drugs Mefloquine and Tafenoquine in the Australian Defence Force](#); the [Veterans Suicide Prevention Pilot](#); and [assistance dogs trial](#).

The Senate Inquiry report was published on 4 December 2018 and includes 14 recommendations addressing a range of issues including DVA anti-malarial claims, the DVA Mefloquine and Tafenoquine Consultation Forums held during 2018, engagement with general practitioners, future research and the Open Arms' Neurocognitive Health Program Pilot. The Mefloquine and Tafenoquine Consultation Forums across Australia gave current and former serving members the opportunity to share their health concerns, and for DVA to outline the treatment, services and supports available. A summary of the key themes from these forums is now available on the DVA website.

DVA has partnered with Beyond Blue to deliver its [The Way Back Support Service](#) as part of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Pilot. The pilot is initially being rolled out in a range of public and private hospitals in the Brisbane metropolitan region. The service went live on 31 July 2018 and will conclude in mid-2020.

The four-year trial of psychiatric assistance dogs for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with La Trobe University is progressing well. The trial is being evaluated by Evolution Research. The identification of participants for the first cohort has commenced and it is expected that up to 20 participants will take part in the trial. Members noted the update.

**Agenda item 11. Improved Dental and Allied Health**

Dr Firman updated members on the Government package of reforms to improve Dental and Allied Health arrangements announced in the 2018-19 Budget. One of the components of the budget measure is the [treatment cycle](#) which will commence on 1 July 2019 and is being introduced to strengthen the communication and coordination between GPs and allied health services.

From July 2019, under the new model, the GP may refer a client for up to 12 sessions of allied health services if it's clinically required. This new referral method will apply to all DVA allied health services, excluding dental and optical services. The client may undertake treatment for up to 12 sessions and at



the end of the treatment cycle, the allied health provider will report back to the GP. A client may have as many treatment cycles as are clinically required. Members noted the update.

**Agenda item 12. Support for Transition to Civilian Employment Project**

Members were advised that as part of the Prime Minister’s Veterans’ Employment Program, from July 2020, the [Support for Civilian Employment](#) (SCE) Initiative will deliver additional support to eligible veterans who are finding the transition to the civilian workforce challenging. Support will include assistance with resume and interview preparation, translation of ADF skills into civilian language, interview coaching and mentoring pre and post-employment.

SCE services will be designed to complement the transition support delivered by the Department of Defence and will target veterans who have been out of the ADF for more than 12 months. A draft Service Delivery Model has been developed and DVA will be seeking feedback from key stakeholders. Members noted the update.

**Agenda item 12. 2019 Prime Minister’s Veterans’ Employment Awards**

The [Awards](#) were held on 5 March 2019 in the Great Hall of Parliament House in Canberra. Approximately 300 people were in attendance, including finalists, senior Government leaders, business leaders, senior ADF members and some members of the Ex-service Organisation Round Table and the YVF. The [winners](#) included businesses that are supporting veteran employees and serving ADF spouses, organisations that support veteran jobseekers, individual veterans who have excelled in their civilian careers and veterans who have established a business.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
124	Provide Prime Minister’s Veterans’ Employment Program vignettes to members.	Secretariat

**Agenda item 13. Chief Health Officer Update**

Dr Firman was welcomed by the Chair to the YVF, having started with the Department on 25 February 2019. The Chair acknowledged the great work undertaken by Dr Ian Gardner in his role as the previous Chief Health Officer. Dr Firman thanked the Chair for the introduction and provided an update on the Mefloquine and Tafenoquine full report, which was tabled on 15 March 2019. Members also noted the recent work being undertaken on [per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substance](#) environmental chemical contamination issues. Members noted the update.

**Agenda item 14. Other business**

Nil.

**Meeting close**

The Chair thanked all members for their attendance and participation. The meeting closed at 4.30pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 25 June 2019.