



## 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 LT Natalie Huntsman, Ms Talissa Papamau, Squadron Leader Dee Cherry, Commander Mark Fullick RAN, Mr Bradley Campbell and welcomed new members Chris Tilley, John Hardgrave and Jason Donoghue.

The Chair welcomed Mr Don Spinks AM, who began his role as Repatriation Commissioner from 1 July 2019. 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.

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

The minutes of the 15 March 2019 YVF meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Members noted that the minutes of meetings will now be placed on the [DVA website](#). Members agreed to close all action items.

### **Agenda Item 3. Treatment Cycle**

Dr Jenny Firman briefed members on the Treatment Cycle, which aims to support a more collaborative, team-based approach to the care of DVA clients through coordination and better communication between GPs, allied health professionals and patients. Under the 2018-19 Budget measure *Improved Dental and Allied Health*, referrals from GPs to allied health services will be valid for up to 12 sessions or a year, whichever occurs sooner. The treatment cycle will reinforce the role of the DVA client being at the centre of care and the General Practitioner as the care coordinator, resulting in a better quality of care.

### **Agenda Item 4. Client Satisfaction Survey**

The Client Satisfaction Survey has been conducted periodically since 1995. The survey has most recently been conducted in 2014, 2016 and 2018. Since 2010, the Client Satisfaction Survey has been a key activity in assisting the Department to measure the experiences of clients engaging with it and track their satisfaction over time. The last Client Satisfaction Survey was conducted in 2018, with results released to the public in December 2018.

The 2019 Client Satisfaction Survey has recently commenced, with invitation letters being sent in May 2019 to a random selection of approximately 12,000 clients. Of those who agree to participate, a representative sample of about 3,000 will be asked to complete the survey. Members noted a summary of the 2018 results for DVA's younger veterans – aged from 18 to 55 years. The results of the survey will be available later in the year and will be used to further inform the work we are doing to improve services for veterans and their families.



<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
125	Provide the 2018 Satisfaction Survey Summary link to the members.	Secretariat
126	2019 survey results to be provided to members when available in September/ October 2019.	Secretariat
127	Satisfaction Survey results to form part of a regular yearly update provided to members.	Secretariat

**Agenda Item 5. Open Arms Update**

Dr Stephanie Hodson, National Manager of Open Arms and Nicole Pollick, Director of National Operations presented this item. Open Arms is currently engaged with developing new initiatives, research projects and program pilots.

New Initiatives include the National Community and Peer Program which aims to provide better support to veterans with complex needs, particularly those at risk of suicide. Open Arms worked with a range of organisations to improve access to services for veterans and their families, and to establish a Peer Network. Rolling out the Community and Peer Program across Australia will provide a new pathway for veterans who were previously unlikely to consider accessing or being referred to Open Arms services. Open Arms is now recruiting to build the national and regional Community Engagement Teams over the next six months.

A range of research projects are in place, Open Arms is seeking participants for some of these research trials. The Project Synergy Trial in the Sydney area has veterans and their families able to self-refer for counselling services using an online platform that offers resources to help them manage their own mental health with support from a clinician.

Stepping Out: Attention Reset (SOAR) Trial is designed to test whether a brief attention training computer task improves wellbeing and adjustment to civilian life for transitioning military personnel. Participant recruitment into the trial is currently underway nationally. We are seeking 1800 participants to undertake the trial.

Rapid Exposure Supporting Trauma Recovery (RESTORE) trial is testing whether a shorter form of therapy (10 sessions over a two-week period) is as effective as the current, gold standard 10 week posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment. The RESTORE Trial is being delivered in Canberra, SA, NQLD, QLD, VIC, WA and NT. Participant recruitment will continue until November 2019 with the aim of reaching 120 therapy completers in total. Data will then be analysed with outcomes to be reported in mid-2020.

Moral Injury Outcomes Scale (MIOS) research project is interviewing people who have been exposed to a morally injurious event during their military service. There is increasing international interest in the area of moral injury in military personnel, yet to date there is no measure of the outcomes of the exposure to potentially morally injurious events. This study is part of an international collaboration of Australian, United States, United Kingdom and Canadian researchers, to develop a moral injury outcomes scale.



Stepping Out initiatives are piloting some existing psycho-educational programs to determine their acceptability for the veteran community.

- Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MSBR) Program Pilot.
- The Resilient Mind Program Pilot.
- Post War Survive to Thrive Nation Online Coaching Program (Survive to Thrive) Pilot.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
128	Provide members with an annual update on the progress of the above Pilots and Initiatives.	Dr Hodson

#### **Agenda Item 6. Website Improvement Project**

Members were provided with an update on the website improvement project. The primary objective of the project is to provide future and current DVA clients with access to relevant, accurate and easily understood information through a new DVA website, with:

- a cleaner, simpler look;
- simpler navigation and improved search tools;
- focus on user centred design (ie, engaging with veterans, families and providers);
- new and revised content; and
- an improved channel experience for veterans and their families.

The Beta website experience is being shaped with veterans and their families at the centre of the design process. Changes to the website will occur over the coming months as engagement and feedback flows into the process.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
129	Provide members with the link to the Beta website once it is in place to enable feedback on it.	Monita Lal

#### **Agenda Item 7. Mental Health Update**

Members were provided with an overview of current work being undertaken in the Mental Health space in the Department.

The Government response to the Senate Inquiry into the use of Quinoline anti-malarial drugs Mefloquine and Tafenoquine in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was tabled in parliament on 15 March 2019. The Government supported the view of the Senate Inquiry Committee and the recommendations. The Government response is available on the Senate Inquiry website [www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade/Mefloquine](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Mefloquine)).

On 7 May 2019, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Darren Chester MP, announced that DVA will be providing psychiatric assistance dogs to eligible veterans in addition to the treatment and management of PTSD under the Rehabilitation Appliances Program (RAP). The introduction of assistance dogs will allow the Department to respond to the needs of veterans, while continuing to



accumulate evidence and understand the opportunity that assistance dogs can provide in supporting the treatment of PTSD, through the work with La Trobe University.

DVA currently has two strategies that guide veteran mental and social health policy and service delivery. The first, Veterans' Mental Health Strategy is a ten year framework 2013-2023 and the Social Health Strategy 2015-2023 for the veteran and ex-service community. Mental & Social Health is a core priority of Government and DVA intends to undertake a progress review in 2019.

**Agenda Item 8. GP Health Assessment**

At the 15 March 2019 Younger Veterans Forum members were provided with a presentation on the Annual Veteran Health Check seeking their input on the communications plan and social media posts. As a result of feedback from this meeting a range of communication channels has been put in place and has ensured that communication of this initiative is fit for purpose.

The Annual Veteran Health Check builds on the one-off Veteran Health Check (which was formally known as the ADF Post-discharge GP Health Assessment) and is an opportunity for veterans to access a fully-funded comprehensive health check with a General Practitioner (GP). This encourages early intervention to promote better health outcomes for veterans.

**Agenda Item 9. Presentation: Phoenix Australia**

Professor David Forbes presented on the progress of the work being undertaken by [Phoenix Australia. Treatment Research Collaboration](#) which 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.

Members were encouraged to contact Phoenix Australia to engage with them in developing strategies for advocates and ex-service organisations 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>
130	Provide members with the slidedeck which Dr Forbes spoke to.	Secretariat
131	Members asked for the Action Paper which outlines Phoenix deliverables against each research item.	Dr Forbes Secretariat
132	Evidence compass and Phoenix Australia website links to be provided to members.	Dr Forbes Secretariat

**Agenda item 10. Transformation Update**

Members were provided with an update on the DVA Transformation program. The next two years will focus on staff and their access to easy to use modern tools and skills to deliver services. The following will be a focus:

- Single view of client;



- Improvements to face-to-face channel;
- Establish content Management capability, strategy and program view; and
- Enhancing case management.

**Agenda item 11. Minister’s Address**

The Minister provided members with the opportunity to ask questions about issues of importance to them. Issues covered included:

- The Productivity Commission final report;
- South East Queensland Veterans Expo in October 2019 organised by Scott Harris;
- Media coverage and calls for a Royal Commission into Suicide;
- Ombudsman inquiry into the DFRDB commutation issue; and
- The Treatment cycle and changes to referrals from GPs to allied health providers.

**Secretary’s Address**

The Secretary spoke to the members and discussed the following issues:

- Recent social media and media reporting on the issues around Veteran suicides;
- The Productivity Commission report and the number and range of reviews that have been undertaken over recent years;

**Agenda Item 12. Member submission: MyService Online Claims**

The concern of RSL DefenceCare and members stems from the lack of a provision for oversight for a claim submitted by a member online, currently there is no mechanism for a claim’s advisor from an ex-service organisation to lodge and monitor a claim on behalf of a veteran. The existing paper-based forms for claims under VEA and MRCA prominently informs each applicant that they are “strongly encouraged to seek assistance from a service or ex-service organisation of your choice in lodging this claim”. A number of problems stem from the MyService inadvertent shutout of claims advisors.

Members were advised that MyService is being built in an iterative way and new features are being released as they are built. A full nominated representative function is currently being developed in MyService. A prototype has been tested with some ex-service organisations. This will be beneficial for those who support only a few clients such as a partner and/or adult child.

In parallel a new 3rd party portal is being developed for organisations, such as (Ex-Service Organisations) ESOs, who handle multiple clients. This portal will use (Provider Digital Access) PRODA as its authentication source (whereas the current ESO portal uses Auskey). PRODA has been developed by DHS and is currently in use with other organisations.

This new portal will allow ESO’s to lodge claims on behalf of their clients using MyService. Both of these features are expected to be released later in 2019.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
133	Provide members with a screenshot of the new Third Party portal.	Secretariat



**Agenda item 13. Member Submission: Life After Service**

The Life After Service Pilot was presented to members. This pilot established and evaluated the use of a social media closed group through the online veteran support page 'Modern Soldier' which delivered improved Transition-related education, communication and engagement outcomes for military families of the Australian Defence Force Community. The pilot ran from June 2018 to January 2019.

Key findings from the pilot were that over half of the participants indicated that involvement in the pilot had increased their awareness of entitlements and support services available to ADF members and their families. Further to this were changes in behaviour which resulted in survey participants submitting claims to the Department as a direct result of their participation in the pilot.

Future project development opportunities include modules/information on:

- an employment and career service;
- assistance with DVA claims and services;
- social connectedness and networking events; and
- community based information sessions.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
134	Next meeting agenda to include item on Life After Service pilot further discussion.	Secretariat

**Agenda item 14. Supporting Younger Veterans Grants**

Members were provided with an update on the Supporting Younger Veterans Grants which is in place to help younger veterans as they transition out of the Australian Defence Force and integrate back into civilian life.

The grant program directly assists the mental, physical and social wellbeing of younger veterans and also raises community awareness of the important issues faced by younger veterans. The program funds projects delivering services to younger veterans that are innovative, sustainable and build community capacity for the future, so they will be able to help younger veterans over a number of years.

Projects that previously received funding have provided a range of services including: personal coaching and peer support to disengaged and unemployed veterans, training of young veterans as Disaster Response Instructors and the implementation of innovative support strategies for mental health challenges.

Just over a million dollars is allocated for the 2019-20 grants round. For this round, the emphasis will be on projects that develop well-researched and tailored services for younger veterans. The 2019-20 round of the grant program will open for on line applications on the Community Grants Hub in July 2019. Applications will be open for approximately 5 weeks.

If members require assistance with an application, please contact the Hub on 1800 020 283 or email them at [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au)



<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
135	Members to be informed when the 2019 Supporting Younger Veterans Grant opens for submissions.	Mr Bill Bowe

**Agenda item 15. Other business**

The Chair raised the upcoming review into the National Consultation Framework which will be managed by the Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks. Members were asked to consider the current framework, how the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum fits within it and provide any thoughts on future opportunities or innovations in collaboration between the Department, ex-service organisations and the broader Defence community.

**Meeting close**

The Chair thanked all members for their attendance and participation.

The meeting closed at 4.30pm

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 17 October 2019.