MRCA Rehabilitation Long-Term Study – Quick Facts

- **Aim:** To study the effectiveness of rehabilitation arrangements under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) within both the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA), over the long term.

- **Specific objectives:**
  1. To define what constitutes effective rehabilitation based on current evidence-based research, literature, and existing studies.
  2. To document trends in client needs over time which will include the nature and severity of the injury.
  3. To evaluate the long-term effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and services for serving and ex-serving ADF members taking into account all aspects of rehabilitation (medical management/psychosocial/vocational and impact on families).
  4. To evaluate the cost effectiveness and return on investment (in terms of outcomes for clients and their families) of rehabilitation programs and services for serving and ex-serving ADF members.
  5. To document trends in client outcomes over time which will include the types and severity of the injury.
  6. To determine what factors are associated with better or worse rehabilitation outcomes in serving and ex-serving ADF members, with particular reference to the impact of receipt (or prospect) of incapacity payments, MRCA Special Rate Disability Pension, compensation and non-liability health care, the impact of *Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA)/*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) conditions, and the role of families.
  7. To identify critical handover points between agencies during the rehabilitation process and opportunities to improve communication at these points.

- **Origins of the study:** The study arose from Recommendation 6.8 of the *Review of Military Compensation Arrangements*, which stated that:
  
  ‘a long-term study of the effectiveness of MRCA rehabilitation arrangements within both the ADF and DVA, with respect to the level of rehabilitation services needed and the importance of the nexus with incapacity payments, should be undertaken’.

- **DVA-Defence collaboration:** The MRCA Rehabilitation Long-Term Study is a joint project of DVA and the Department of Defence (Defence), involving funding from both agencies. The project is led by DVA but with shared governance oversight by both agencies.

- **Phased approach:** A research team has been contracted to produce a proposed Study Design Framework (Phase 1). This framework will specify alternative models for the study, involving different study lengths. A DVA-Defence Project Board will then select the preferred model. There will be a second procurement exercise for the study itself (Phase 2).

- **Researchers:** After an open tender process, a consortium has been contracted to conduct Phase 1. The consortium is led by the Sax Institute and also includes researchers from the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC – University of New South Wales) and Époque Consulting. The two Joint Principal Researchers are from the Sax Institute and the SPRC. The research team for Phase 2 will be determined by a separate procurement exercise after Phase 1 is complete.

- **Timeline:** The exact timing of this study will depend on the study model that is selected after the Study Design Framework has been produced and reviewed. In any case, this is a long-term research project and findings are not expected to be available before 2018 at the earliest.

- **Impact:** The study will provide DVA and Defence with a clear understanding of the effectiveness of current rehabilitation programs and services and an improved understanding of the client group. There will not be a reduction in benefits based on study outcomes. The study is directed towards gathering data over the long term for improvement of the rehabilitation programs.