

Deputy Commissioner's Consultative Forum - Tasmania
Meeting Number 40 - Summary
24 November 2021

Present

Luke Brown	Deputy Commissioner TAS – Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) (Chair)
Nick Atkins (proxy)	Tasmanian State Government
Deb Coulson (proxy)	Royal Australian Air Force Association – Tasmania
Elaine Devlin	Open Arms
Brian Ellis	Naval Association of Australia – Tasmania
Kevin Evorall	Launceston Legacy Inc
Rob Grey	Hobart Legacy Inc
LTCOL Paul O'Donnell CSM	Senior ADF Officer (SADFO) – Tasmania
Barry Quinn	Returned and Services League – Tasmania
Terry Roe	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Cathy Starling	Mates4Mates – Tasmania
David Waddle OAM	Advocacy, Training and Development Program
Ray Williams OAM	Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently
BRIG John Withers	Veterans Reference Group – Tasmania
Anne James	Executive Officer – Department of Veterans' Affairs
Rochelle Devlin	Executive Assistant, scribe – Department of Veterans' Affairs

Apologies

Graeme Barnett RFD	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association – Tasmania
Jenell Latham	Soldier On
Jacinta Leahy	Partners of Veterans Association – Tasmania
Rob Hill	Tasmanian State Government
Alan Robertson OAM, CSM, RFD	Royal Australian Air Force Association – Tasmania

Business Arising

Apologies noted. New members to the forum welcomed.

Members endorsed minutes from Meeting 39 held 25 August 2021.

Outstanding action items

- FOI issue as raised with Gwen Cherne; Luke confirmed the issue has been raised with General Counsel, and in collaboration with Legacy National, a *Requesting Deceased Information* form has been implemented. The forum recognised on-going difficulties linked to privacy laws and Luke reiterated his intention to keep following and progressing the issue. Gwen Cherne and Don Spinks had been copied into correspondence relating to this issue.

Deputy Commissioner Update

Chair Luke Brown updated the forum on the advancement of the *Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide* (RC) with notices to produce and notices to give incoming to DVA and Defence. With a ceremonial hearing and official opening held Friday 26 November, hearings proper will commence Monday 29 November and run for two weeks prior to a Christmas shut down, recommencing most likely February. Luke advised that on 15 September 2021, the interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, Dr Bernadette Boss CSC, handed a report to Government detailing the findings of her Independent Review of Past Defence and Veteran Suicides. The report outlines 41 recommendations, will be considered as part of the RC and is accessible [here](#).

The RC website can be accessed [here](#).

Luke noted the success of Veterans' Health Week (VHW) held 16-24 October 2021. With around 30 events held across the State, attended by 180-200 veterans and their families, the forum observed a favourable collaborative approach to activities this year, bringing organisations closer together and offering veterans greater choice.

Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grant recipients received notification in early November. Luke advised on the development of service standards for BEST grant recipients. The standards are being established in conjunction with Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) representatives and aim to ensure that veterans and their families receive high-quality advocacy services and that funding under the program is going where it needed most.

The 2022-23 round of BEST funding will open early 2022.

Luke reiterated the dissolution of the Advocacy, Training and Development Program's (ATDP) Strategic Governance Board (SGB) and Capability Framework Management Group (CFMG) and stipulated that the ATDP remains a collaboration between ESOs and DVA to provide and manage a nationally consistent training program for advocates. It was noted that a short-term working group has been formed to finalise the details around keeping ATDP assessment activities running and ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place between the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and volunteer ATDP facilitators and assessors.

Visit the ATDP [website](#) for further information.

The *Saluting Their Service* (STS) Commemorative Grants Program offers funding to assist local communities in honouring the service and sacrifice of Australia's service personnel. Applications close on 8 February 2022. For more information, visit the [Community Grants Hub](#) or [GrantConnect](#).

On 23 September 2021, DVA commissioned independent consultants, McKinsey & Co to examine the current claims system, identifying how to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the processing pathways. McKinsey & Co have been undertaking a diagnostic of the claims processing function across contemporary claims pathways to simplify processes and make claiming faster and more efficient. The consultancy, due in early December 2021, will be a high-level plan for implementation with milestones and deliverables.

Frustrations were noted around the delay in the release of the feasibility study into a Tasmanian Veteran Wellbeing Centre and lack of information about the disbursement of the \$5m announced in the 2021-22 Budget for veterans' wellbeing services within the State.

Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) Update

David Waddle updated members on current training statistics (as attached):

Visit the ATDP [website](#) for further information.



ESO Updates

Naval Association of Australia – Tas:

Brian Ellis advised that in 2020, the Naval Association (NAA) celebrated their 100th Anniversary with the occasion marked by the composition and performance of a commemorative march. The forum was advised that 1 December will mark Navy Day at Naval Memorial Park, Ulverstone. Alongside these celebrations, there will a rededication of Corvette's Corner and the Teddy Sheean memorial.

Launceston Legacy Inc:

Kevin Evorall reiterated frustrations at ongoing issues accessing DVA records relating to deceased veterans.

Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia – Tas:

Terry Roe updated members on the development of the Contemporary Veterans Retreat at Lake Sorell. The retreat is on track to officially open on 20 January 2022.

Mates4Mates -Tas:

Cathy Starling reported that despite ongoing renovations, M4M Psych Services, Social Connections and Residential Programs (3-4 day wellness programs) have been busy and an opportunity has arisen to appoint another liaison officer in the North.

Returned and Services League - Tas:

Barry Quinn conveyed that VHW (observed over the whole month of October, not just the week) was a great success with three large expo's held around the state and an aim to make it an annual event. RSL Tas are combining efforts with The Salvation Army to implement a dedicated Homeless Veterans Program.

Tasmanian State Government:

No update provided.

Royal Australian Air Force Association – Tas:

Proxy Deb Coulson advised members of a successful commemoration of the 81st Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women
- Tas:

Ray Williams OAM advised that TPI Tas have four well-being practitioners who are qualified until the July 2022 cycle. Their office will be shut Thursday 16 December until mid-January 2022.

Hobart Legacy Inc:

Rob Grey confirmed that 2023 will mark the 100th Anniversary of Legacy with hopes of a torch relay into France to honour the occasion.

Veterans Reference Group – Tas:

BRIG John Withers notified that VRG's next meeting will be 8 December with the Minister being highly engaged, particular focus on veterans' employment and welfare. Senior ADF Officer - Tas:

LTCOL Paul O'Donnell CSM advised that ADF members will soon be wrapping up COVID Assist, Tuesday 30 November in most states, a small event in conjunction with the Tasmanian Police Commissioner will mark the occasion. LTCOL O'Donnell informed members that a new Commanding Officer for both Air Force and Navy in Tasmania will commence in December.

Open Arms:

Elaine Devlin updated members on changes in the Peer Advisor space, with recruitment occurring to backfill two positions. As well, recruitment has been finalised for a new Community Engagement Officer, to commence in the New Year. Forum was reminded of OA's 24hr telephone service and its availability over Christmas and the New Year.

Partners of Veterans Association – Tasmania:

On behalf of late apology Jacinta Leahy, Anne James advised members that PVA held their AGM in August at which time the Association were unable to form a committee of management. They will remain as an incorporated body but in a scaled back form with a focus on social supports for members.

Next meeting:

Wednesday 2 March 2022 14:00