



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees and introducing the new Repatriation Commissioner, Mr Kahlil Fegan DSC AM. The Chair thanked Mr Glen Ferrarotto for acting as Repatriation Commissioner and acknowledged the exemplary service of Mr Don Spinks AM. The Ode was recited and members acknowledged the service and sacrifice of all veterans and families. The Chair acknowledged the resignation of Ms Sandi Laaksonen-Sherrin from Defence Families of Australia.

No conflicts of interest were raised. Attendance and apologies are listed at **Annexure A**.

Agenda Item 2.1 Action Items

Members **NOTED** the 9 May 2023 ESORT Minutes were endorsed out of session and published on DVA's website.

Members **AGREED** to close action items E2021/019, 2022ESORT/A24, A27, A34, A37, A38, A39, A41, A45, A48, 2023ESORT/A01, A02, A03, A04, A05, A06, A07, A08, A09, A10, A11, A12, A13, A14, A15, A16, A17, A18, A19, A20, A21, A22, A24 and **NOTED** action items E2020/27, 2022ESORT/A26, A36 and 2023ESORT/A23 remain in progress.

Members **NOTED** that Action Item 2022ESORT/A34 will be updated to include reference to the Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.

Members **NOTED** Attachments A1 (2023ESORT/A11), A2 (2023ESORT/A21) and A3 (2022ESORT/A48) and 2.1.1A (2022ESORT/A45) related to Action Items recommended to close.

Agenda Item 2.1.1 2022ESORT/A45 Open Arms 2023-24 Model of Care

Members received an update on the Model and **NOTED** current work underway.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A25	Open Arms to provide a breakdown of demographics, services and waiting times and report back to ESORT at the next meeting for further discussion on how cohorts are determined.	Open Arms
2023ESORT/A26	Australian War Widows representative to liaise with Open Arms, Program Delivery and Policy & Research Divisions to discuss what can be done to strengthen DVA's offerings in Aged Care.	Open Arms, Program Delivery and Policy & Research Divisions
2023ESORT/A27	Advice to be provided to members on how to contact DVA out-of-hours, when dealing with a significant emergency for a DVA client.	Ministerial, Engagement & Communications Division

Agenda Item 3 Secretary's Update

Members were updated on departmental priorities. Members were assured that DVA and Defence are doing everything possible to provide information to the Royal Commission. Members **NOTED** that the Department is fully cooperating with the Royal Commission.

Members **NOTED** the Initial Liability backlog is lower than the Permanent Impairment backlog for the first time in three years, due to a significant increase in claims delegates. Members **NOTED** the Legislative Reform process continues to progress, with the Department currently working through issues as part of an Exposure Draft.

Members **NOTED** the Housing Australia Future Fund legislation had passed through Parliament, that DVA is moving forward with housing proposals to increase the number of dwellings available for veterans.

(Kate Pope, Acting Deputy Secretary, Veteran, Family & Stakeholder Experience took over responsibility for chairing the meeting as the Chair was called to attend a Ministerial meeting).

Agenda Item 4.1 Royal Commission Update

Members **NOTED** the update provided under agenda items 4.2 and 5.

Agenda Item 4.2 Legislative Reform

Members **NOTED** the Government is considering feedback on the pathway to simplify veterans’ legislation. Members **DISCUSSED** the financial impacts of reform and **NOTED** that if it proceeds, draft legislation would be released for public comment by early 2024.

Members **DISCUSSED** the grandparenting (a gender neutral way to reference) of the *Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and **NOTED** implications. Members **NOTED** the differences in compensation payments under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) and VEA. Members **NOTED** that auto grants under VEA would continue to operate, and that reference to ‘Wholly Dependent Partners’ under MRCA requires further consideration.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A28	Consider the use of ‘Wholly Dependent Partner’ when referring to War Widows in MRCA, and the Government’s appetite to change the terminology.	Legislative Reform

Agenda Item 5 Claims Processing

Members **NOTED** that DVA is on track to clear the Initial Liability backlog by the end of 2023. Reducing the backlog and wait times remains a top priority. It was **NOTED** DVA continues to receive a high number of new claims.

Members **DISCUSSED** the need for clear messaging on the DVA website, to encourage veterans to engage with an advocate.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A29	Modernisation and MyService to be placed on the next ESORT meeting agenda.	Secretariat
2023ESORT/A30	Investigation into potential for messaging on advocates to be published on the DVA website.	Policy & Research

Agenda Item 6 Advocacy Working Group

Members were updated on progress and how advocacy services could be enhanced and supported in future. Members **DISCUSSED** the importance of leveraging information across the system and ensuring a proposed model is sustainable, including increases to grant funding to improve the capacity of Ex-Service Organisations to employ advocates. Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** good leadership and commitment is required to enhance and support advocacy, **NOTING** that further consultation and consideration of a range of issues is required. Members **NOTED** the challenging nature of advocacy and **ACKNOWLEDGED** the effort of the Working Group to date.

Members were provided a submission from Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Representative on ‘Employment by DVA of Advocates to Assist Veterans Lodge Claims for Compensation and to Reduce the Time Taken to Determine Claims’. Members **NOTED** the departmental response provided on this issue and **ACKNOWLEDGED** the importance of a steady and professional advocate workforce with enough capacity to provide high –quality services to veterans. Members **NOTED** that the submission would be considered in the context of the work underway in the Working Group.

Agenda Item 7 Aged Care

Members **NOTED** the complexities and challenges that exist in ensuring veterans are supported during their transition to aged care. Members raised concerns about being able to visit veterans in aged care facilities and the promotion of shared information products.

Members **NOTED** that DVA continues to advocate for veterans to be a priority group, with the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) and with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, Ms Janet Anderson. DVA continues to engage with the aged care sector to promote a greater understanding of the veteran community.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A31	Investigate if DVA is able to provide a list of veterans in aged care facilities so that support can be provided by the relevant ESO.	Program Delivery

OFFICIAL

2023ESORT/A32	The reported inability of some veterans to use their gold card in some aged care facilities is to be explored.	Program Delivery
2023ESORT/A33	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association representative to provide information on aged care access and experience for DVA to review if further support can be provided.	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
2023ESORT/A34	Advice to be provided on the use of gold cards across states. YVF Observer advised that since moving to Queensland from New South Wales, their gold card has been rejected as it was not originally issued in Queensland.	Client Benefits

Agenda Item 8 Transition Support

Given time constraints, after a brief discussion, members **AGREED** to defer further consideration of this item to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 9 Commonwealth Super Corporation Retirement Income Product for ADF Super members

Members **NOTED** the verbal advice provided and raised no concerns with the proposed changes. Defence advised it was a legislative requirement for Super schemes to have a Retirement Income strategy which can be to provision of a retirement income product. ADF Super does not have a product. The intent is to leverage the Retirement Income product from the APS superannuation scheme.

Agenda Item 10 Defence Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Office (SeMPRO)

Members **NOTED** the presentation and that promotional materials will be provided to members for distribution. The presentation noted SeMPRO support, advice and services are available for all veterans including ex-serving.

Agenda Item 11 United Nations & Overseas Policing Association of Australia (UNOPAA)

Members **NOTED** the UNOPAA presentation and that DVA would further consider the presentation.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A35	United Nations & Overseas Policing Association of Australia presentation to be considered further.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 12 Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum Update (YVF)

Members **NOTED** concerns about veteran travel expenses. Members **DISCUSSED** the increase in the cost of living and the potential to increase mileage allowances.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A36	Provide members a copy of the 'Veteran Travel Expenses' paper from the 19 July 2023 YVF meeting.	Secretariat
2023ESORT/A37	YVF Chair to consider inclusion of the Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc in YVF membership.	Repatriation Commissioner

Agenda Item 13 Other Business

Members **NOTED** the representative for Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc, Ms Narelle Bromhead OAM, will be retiring in November 2023 and thanked her for her contribution to ESORT.

Members **NOTED** the representative for Legacy Australia Inc, Mr Eric Easterbrook OAM, will be retiring following the next ESORT meeting and an observer from Legacy will attend the next meeting.

Members **AGREED** to the amended Terms of Reference at Item 2.2 as final, with the correction of titles for Legacy Australia Inc and Australian War Widows Inc and confirmation that all Acts are listed correctly.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A38	Update titles for Legacy Australia Inc and Australian War Widows Inc in the amended Terms of Reference, and confirm Acts are listed correctly.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 14 Member Submission – Hearing Services

Members **NOTED** the departmental response and TPI Federation Representative has sought further information from the Chair.

Agenda Item 15 **Member Submission - Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits (DFRDB) and Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme (MSBS) Invalidity Pension Definition**

Members **NOTED** the departmental response.

Agenda Item 16 **Boys v Repatriation Commission Systemic and Governance Issues**

Members **NOTED** the departmental response and were advised that a review of cases will be conducted to ensure any systemic issues are understood. Members **NOTED** an update will be provided to ESORT at its next meeting.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A39	Update to be provided at the next ESORT meeting on the review of cases, to ensure any systemic issues are understood.	Policy & Research

Agenda Item 17 **Grants Working Group Update**

Members **NOTED** the departmental response and **AGREED** it addressed the Member's submission.

Agenda Item 18 **Booked Car with Driver**

Members **NOTED** the departmental response and **AGREED** it addressed the Member's submission.

Meeting closed at 4:31pm.

ESORT Members	
Ms Alison Frame	Chair, President, Repatriation Commission and Chair, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC)
Mr Mark Brewer	A/g Deputy President, Repatriation Commission and MRCC Member
Mr Kahlil Fegan	Repatriation Commissioner and MRCC Member
Dr Mick Drew	MRCC, Department of Defence (<i>proxy</i>)
Ms Kaarin Kooij	MRCC, Department of Defence (<i>proxy</i>)
Mr Greg Vines	MRCC, Comcare
The Hon Martin Hamilton-Smith	Australian Special Air Service Association
Mr Bill Roberts OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
BRIG Michael Annett CSC	Defence Reserves Association
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Ms Narelle Bromhead OAM	The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc
Ms Jenny Gregory OAM	Australian War Widows Inc
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Ms Amy Cooper	Soldier On
Group Captain Carl Schiller OAM CSM	Air Force Association
Mr Mike von Berg MC OAM	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Mr Ian Lindgren	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Mr Eric Easterbrook OAM	Legacy Australia Inc
Mr John King	Returned and Services League of Australia (<i>proxy</i>)
Mr John Lewis	Defence Force Welfare Association (<i>proxy</i>)
Other Attendees	
Mr Andrew Kefford PSM	Deputy Secretary Policy & Programs
Ms Teena Blewitt PSM	Deputy Secretary Client Benefits and Chief Operating Officer
Ms Kate Pope PSM	A/g Deputy Secretary Veteran, Family & Stakeholder Experience
CMDR Mark Fullick FE Aust, CP Eng, APEC, RAN	Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) Representative
Presenters	
Ms Leanne Cameron	First Assistant Secretary, Program Delivery – <i>Item 7</i>
Ms Veronica Hancock	First Assistant Secretary, Policy & Research – <i>Items 6</i>
Mr David Pullen	First Assistant Secretary, Claims Process Improvement – <i>Item 5</i>
Mr Luke Brown	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Royal Commission Implementation – <i>Item 4</i>
Ms Leonie Nowland	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Open Arms – <i>Item 2.1.1</i>
Ms Sarah Kennedy	Assistant Secretary, Client Programs – <i>Item 7 & 14</i>
Mr Luke W	Director, Advocacy Policy - <i>Item 6</i>
Ms Daayna Breheny	Department of Defence – <i>Item 9</i>
GPCAPT Fleur James	Department of Defence – <i>Item 10</i>
Mr Peter McDonald APM	United Nations & Overseas Policing Association of Australia – <i>Item 11</i>
Mr Mick Travers APM	United Nations & Overseas Policing Association of Australia – <i>Item 11</i>
Observers	
Ms Liane Pettitt	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Ministerial, Engagement & Communication
Ms Nadine Clode	Assistant Secretary, Community Policy and Research – <i>Item 6</i>
Mr Adam Weiderman	Assistant Secretary, Benefits Policy Branch – <i>Item 16</i>
Ms Melissa J	Director, Transition Policy – <i>Item 8</i>
Mr Christopher M	Assistant Director, Advocacy Policy – <i>Item 6</i>
Ms Lucinda Casey	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc
Mr Chris Moss	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association Ltd
Apologies	
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, MRCC Member
Ms Sandi Laaksonen-Sherrin	Defence Families Australia (resigned with no replacement)
Ms Del Gaudry CSC	Defence Force Welfare Association
RADM Sarah Sharkey AM CSC RAN	MRCC, Department of Defence
MAJGEN Wade Stothart DSC AM CSC	MRCC, Department of Defence
MAJGEN Greg Melick AO RFD SC	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr David Manolas	Naval Association of Australia

OFFICIAL

Secretariat	
Ms Belinda B	Director, International & Stakeholder Relations (I&SR)
Ms Morgan S	A/g Assistant Director, I&SR
Ms Karen G	Senior Secretariat Officer, I&SR
Mr Jack M	Secretariat Officer, I&SR

FINAL