



# Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum March 2025

## Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum Meeting

The Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) met on Friday, 07 March 2025.

### DVA Strategic Update

The Secretary provided a Strategic Update, including on the work DVA is doing to enact the Australian Government's response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and the recent passing by the Australian Parliament of legislation to simplify and harmonise the veterans' legislation framework.

## DVA Critical Initiatives

### Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner Status Update

Members noted the update from the Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner on her priorities for 2025, reflections over the past four years as Commissioner and the advocacy work she is currently undertaking.

### Repatriation Commissioners 2025 Priorities

Members noted the update from the Repatriation Commissioner including the following 2025 priorities:

- Continue to integrate and establish credibility and trust in the veteran community
- Seek opportunity to support and empower Commissions to aid the Department

- In consultation with stakeholders develop a position on ‘wellness vs compensation’
- Investigate an option for DVA to invest in Timor via a contribution towards an initiative that promotes and enables commemoration, presents opportunity for local enterprises, and does not have ongoing operational costs for DVA
- Investigate options to provide veteran centric soft power support to Ukraine for Government consideration

### **JP2060 Ph4 Health Knowledge Management System Project Update**

The Forum was provided an update by Defence on Joint Project 2060 Phase 4 Health Knowledge Management (HKM) System. The HKM system is a modern clinical health information system that will replace the current Defence electronic Health System. The capability will better support health outcomes for ADF members and enable a more complete view of health information for the ADF. The HKM system will include portals to support improved data exchanges with DVA and CSC; and for members, will enable easier access to medical records and other aspects of their health care planning.

### **Transitioning Members access to Medical Professionals**

Members engaged in discussions on how to better support veterans who are transitioning and ensure continuity of care.

### **Open Arms Model of Care**

Open Arms provides mental health and wellbeing support to anyone who has served at least one day of continuous fulltime service in the ADF and their immediate families and Reservists who have rendered border protection or disaster relief service or been involved in or witnessed a serious training accident, and their immediate families.

The Open Arms Model of Care is an overarching framework for the provision of mental health services to the Australian veteran community, shaped by clinical best practice and trauma-informed care, incorporating new and emerging

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evidence-based approaches. The Model of Care defines the remit of Open Arms as a specialist service, focusing on delivery of military aware and trauma informed care rather than replicating more generalist services.

The Open Arms Model of Care is accessible from [Open Arms Model of Care - September 2024.pdf](#). Open Arms can be contacted on 1800 011 046, to discuss individual and/or family needs additionally, further information is available at [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au).

### **Environment trends impacting future transition experiences**

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) continues to explore cross-cutting national and global trends, environmental shifts and emerging health and social research that will continue to shape veteran and family transition experiences. It important that we take a foresight approach to enable us to develop adaptive and resilient policies and support services now, and into the future.

### **Advocacy Update**

Members noted the update on the public consultation for the Institute of Veteran's Advocates; and the motion passed in the Parliament for referral of matters regarding veteran advocacy to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 5 August 2025.

### **Legislative Reform Update**

The Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum was provided with an update on the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024. Since the last update, the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee has released its report on the Bill and Parliament has passed the Bill. DVA is now working towards implementation, including through communicating with the veteran community. Members were advised of Government amendments made to the Bill that were proposed in the Senate, including changes that allow for the apportionment of payments under s80 of the MRCA based on shared care arrangements.

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## **Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Update**

Members noted the update on the joint Defence and Veteran Mental Health and wellbeing Strategy, and the current public consultation process.

## **Proposed amendments to Chapters 23 and 25 of GARP M**

DVA provided an update to the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum on 7 March 2025 on the new *Guide to Determining Impairment and Compensation Amendment Instrument 2025* which amends Chapter 23 and Chapter 25 of the *Guide to Determining Impairment and Compensation 2016* (GARP M).

GARP M is used for determining the amount of permanent impairment (PI) compensation payable under the *Military, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA). The proposed amendments include instructions to guide decision makers in the correct application of the formulas in Chapters 23 and Chapter 25. This ensures the correct application of the formulas for consistent outcomes for veterans.

DVA will seek approval of additional changes to GARP M relating to the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2024* (VETS Act) which will be required prior to the new arrangements from 1 July 2026. DVA will engage with the ex-service community where appropriate to ensure community views are taken into account.

## **Expansion To Who Can Diagnose Depression and Anxiety for Initial Liability Claims**

There has long been advocacy to expand who can diagnose mental health conditions for initial liability claims. Now, in addition to diagnoses from psychiatrists, DVA+ will also accept a diagnosis of anxiety and depressive disorders from a treating Clinical Psychologist and be able to utilise clinical psychologist reports obtained during and immediately after service for anxiety and depressive disorders. This will help reduce the workload for psychiatrists,

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improve access to a broader range of providers to assist with claims and help simplify the liability process.

### **Handling of Personal Information (HOPI) Project**

The Handling of Personal Information (HOPI) Project was initiated to ensure DVA's handling of personal information (collection, use and disclosure) is best practice and compliant with relevant requirements such as:

- The Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) – a set of 13 rules within the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) that regulate handling of personal information; and
- The Australian Government Agencies Privacy Code – a binding legislative instrument applied to all Australian Government agencies subject to the Privacy Act, including adherence to the APPs.

The HOPI Project also aims to ensure that DVA stakeholders, including veterans and families, researchers and other government agencies, have confidence in DVA's handling of personal information.

Phase 1 of the project ran from April 2024 to November 2024, focusing on work including to update internal guidance documents:

- Establishing a comprehensive draft blueprint to guide DVA's activities in best practice in privacy management;
- Conducting a stocktake and analysis of personal information collection processes that includes collection method, storage, use and disclosure;
- Developing capability development plans for both privacy and data to provide consistent, systematic and tailored training and support; and
- Developing a Communication, Change and Culture Management Strategy

Phase 2 of the HOPI Project commenced on 2 December 2024 and is expected to be completed in late 2025. Phase 2 will continue to progress the Department towards:

- Implementing and embedding a comprehensive compliance framework regarding the collection, consent management, use, sharing, storage and retention of personal information.

- Continuing to strengthen trust with veterans, families, researchers, and other stakeholders by demonstrating transparency, ethical data use, and robust privacy protections.
- Establishment of a privacy-by-design approach, embedding data literacy and privacy capabilities for all staff.

### **Women Veterans' Strategy**

An update was provided on the development of the Women Veterans' Strategy and requested those interested in engaging further in this policy space reach out to [Women@dva.gov.au](mailto:Women@dva.gov.au).

### **Veteran Experience & Transition Division Update**

The Department of Veterans' Affairs continues to delivery and support a range of policy, program and service delivery activities to support the wellbeing of veterans and families as they transition from an Australian Defence Force service-centred life to a predominantly civilian life.

Information on the Veteran Transition Strategy and Action Plan is available here: <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-and-veteran-family-wellbeing-strategy-2025-2030>

Information on the Veteran Employment Program is available here: <https://www.veteranemployment.gov.au>

Information on DVA's Veteran Support Office is available here: <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/transitioning-civilian-life/veteran-support-office>

### **Compensation Claims Processing Update**

The most recent claims reporting data can be accessed through the DVA Claims Processing Webpage: <https://www.dva.gov.au/claim-processing>, which encompasses all key metrics relating to the claims process. Should you encounter any difficulties in viewing or downloading the data, please do not hesitate to reach out to us for assistance.

### **Other Business**

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The following items were discussed under Other Business:

- Ex-Service Organisation Round Table Update
- Members agreed to reschedule the November YVF meeting
- Restricted access to the DVA Healthy Heart Program
- Update on Fitness Passport to added for discussion at the next meeting