**Terms of Reference – Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF)**

**Background**

The YVF comprises one element of the National Consultation Framework (NCF). The NCF is a comprehensive consultative structure designed to facilitate communication between the veteran and ex-service community, the Repatriation and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commissions, and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA).

**Objectives**

This forum is intended to:

* assist in identifying priority emerging issues for veterans across the age and conflict spectrum particularly in the areas of mental and social health;
* assist in identifying emerging issues for veterans’ families and support networks;
* identify and analyse trends across veteran cohorts and geography and raise awareness of these increasing and common issues with subject-matter experts from the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) and other state or Commonwealth government departments and agencies as appropriate;
* assist in identifying opportunities for increased engagement with younger veterans who are geographically dislocated or not affiliated with ex-service organisations, through the appropriate media and internet technology;
* enhance the ex-service community’s understanding of DVA’s service delivery performance through information sharing and improved communication between DVA and the ex-service community; and
* identify and provide recommendations for improvements in DVA’s operational policy to promote quality and accountability in service delivery.

**Chair**

The Chair of the YVF will be the Repatriation Commissioner.

**Membership**

Members of the YVF will be drawn from the following organisations:

* Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
* Australian Special Air Service Association;
* Australian Veterans Alliance;
* Defence Force Welfare Association;
* Defence Families Australia;
* Legacy Australia;
* Mates4Mates;
* Modern Soldier;
* Naval Association of Australia;
* Returned and Services League of Australia;
* Royal Australian Air Force Association;
* Royal Australian Regiment Corporation;
* Soldier On;
* Warriors Return; and
* A representative from the Australian Defence Force.

**By Invitation**

Young Diggers; and Assistance Trusts.

**Member roles and responsibilities**

* Members are expected to be available for face-to-face or videoconference meetings; however if this is not possible, a proxy can be appointed. If a member or their proxy is unable to attend three consecutive meetings, the YVF Chair may exercise the right to review that organisation’s membership on the forum.
* Members or their proxies are expected to prepare for meetings by ensuring familiarity with the agenda topics and background papers if available.
* Members or their proxies will ensure qualified representation of the organisational position, policies and programs to enable informed and non‑speculative discourse.
* Members or their proxies are encouraged to raise any matter of concern, no matter how controversial the particular matter may be, and for it to be addressed at the forum. Members may also take the opportunity, where appropriate, to consult directly with the DVA Executive on sensitive matters.
* Where a forum member becomes aware of behaviour of another member that is contrary to that expected of members, the member may raise the matter at the next meeting to be discussed by the entire membership and the most appropriate course of action will be determined by the forum membership.
* Members or their proxies are expected to observe ‘Chatham House’ rules and the confidentiality of sensitive discussions during a forum meeting.
* Members or their proxies must disclose or take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with their appointment to or attendance at YVF meetings.
* There is a mutual obligation on forum members, their proxies and the organisations they represent to make every effort to disseminate outcomes and relevant information arising from YVF meetings to their membership and the broader
ex-service community in a timely manner.

**Departmental roles and responsibilities**

* In accordance with the NCF National Communication Protocol, DVA will provide communication products which capture meeting outcomes and related information and make these available to forum members and the broader ex-service community through appropriately accessible communication channels in a timely manner.
* Where appropriate, VYF members with subject matter expertise will continue to be invited by DVA to be part of specific working groups.
* DVA will arrange and finance the travel and accommodation costs associated with the attendance of members or their proxies to YVF meetings. These entitlements, as well as travel and meal allowances, will be provided in accordance with the departmental travel policy for non-Senior Executive Service level staff.
* The payment of meal and travel allowances will be paid, along with any authorised reimbursements within 30 days of the conclusion of the meeting. DVA will not reimburse surface travel costs or parking for individuals who reside in the same city as the meeting.
* DVA will cover taxi costs from home to the closest airport for departure to the meeting location; from the arrival airport to a member’s (or their proxy’s) accommodation (as applicable); from the accommodation to the meeting location and return. DVA will consider payment of a motor vehicle allowance upon application. Receipts for taxis or airport parking must be provided to DVA within 14 days of the scheduled meeting to enable a single payment into the member’s or proxy’s nominated account.
* DVA will ensure timely notification of scheduled meetings.
* DVA will provide meeting papers electronically and no less than five days prior to the scheduled meeting and distribute minutes and publicly available meeting summaries within four weeks of a meeting.
* DVA will provide a safe working environment in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) provisions.

It is preferred that representatives have broad knowledge of their organisations’ roles and activities. Organisations are encouraged to nominate a younger veteran with contemporary experience.

**Recognition of other key stakeholders**

The YVF will have the flexibility to invite additional participants to the areas of focus or specific agenda items. This can include (but is not limited to) representation from the following recognised stakeholder groups, which are important contributors to and influencers of the provision of support and services to the veteran and ex-service community landscape now and have an anticipated role in the future.

* *Commonwealth government:* Department of Health; Department of Defence; Department of Social Services; Australian Tax Office; Comsuper; Centrelink; Department of Education and Training; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations; Australian Federal Police; and the Australian War Memorial.
* *State and territory*: Health departments.
* *Emerging veteran support organisations*, such as the respective Welfare Trusts.
* *Industry:* Health service providers, and tertiary institutions.

**Referrals**

The YVF can refer any matter to another national forum and/or state-based forums for consideration. Subordinate state-based forums can equally refer issues to the YVF for consultation.

As deemed appropriate by the Chair and assessed on a case-by-case basis, matters may also be referred from the YVF to other consultative bodies to which DVA contributes and that exist outside the National Consultation Framework.

**Review**

The organisational membership and terms of reference for this forum will be reviewed in January every third year.