



## FORUM SUMMARY

### **Agenda Item One – IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry Welfare Support presented by the Deputy Secretary, Veterans and Families Services**

DVA is conscious many members of the veteran and Defence community have been understandably concerned by the findings of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (IGADF) Afghanistan Inquiry.

Our priority is supporting the health and wellbeing of current and former members of the ADF and their families impacted by the release of the IGADF Inquiry report findings. DVA is not part of this investigation.

We've compiled a full list of welfare support services that are available on our website at [www.dva.gov.au/igadf-afghanistan-inquiry-welfare-support-services](http://www.dva.gov.au/igadf-afghanistan-inquiry-welfare-support-services). Please share this [link](#) with your members as it may be useful when assisting affected veterans and their families.

We would appreciate any support that you can give us as respected provider organisations, to help us communicate our message of support to the veteran community. If you know someone in need, please pass on this important message – DVA is here to help.

### **Agenda Item Two – Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling presented by the National Manager, Open Arms**

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms) is a nationally accredited community mental health service system that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling and support with a multidisciplinary workforce. Any ADF member with one day full-time service can access support through Open Arms, as can their partners and children.

Open Arms is committed to preserving and upholding our client's rights to privacy and confidentiality. Open Arms client records are quarantined from the rest of the Department and are stored in a secure, commonwealth cloud-based client management system that is separate to the DVA servers. Clinical information is only shared with client consent, or in exceptional circumstances in accordance with the law.

Providers who are worried about very vulnerable DVA clients can arrange for Open Arms to complete check-ins and welfare checks during high risk times such as prominent religious holidays or significant military dates.

Information about Open Arms support can be found here, <https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support>.

### **Agenda Item Three – Veterans MATES medicinal cannabis report findings presented by DVA's Chief Health Officer**

DVA considers funding medicinal cannabis on a case by case basis in accordance with DVA's medicinal cannabis policy framework. Further information on DVA's arrangements can be found at <https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/help-cover-healthcare-costs/manage-medicine-and-keep-costs-down/medicinal>.

Findings from a report by Veterans MATES on medicinal cannabis were shared with the Forum.



Forum participants were also invited to share feedback and experiences relating to Department of Health's PBS prescription changes for opioids.

#### **Agenda Item Four – The 2020-21 Budget presented by the Assistant Secretary, Wellbeing Policy**

The 2020-21 Budget focuses on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and their families. The Mental Health Support for Veterans and Their Families measure provides \$101.7 million to boost mental health support. The Government has committed to a one off increase to the fees paid to DVA mental health, social work and community nursing providers and a simplified fee structure for these services. The Budget measure also provides for a 10 specialist psychiatry training places over the next four years for psychiatric registrars to specialise in military and veteran mental health.

Forum participants were encouraged to provide feedback for the following:

- An independent evaluation of DVA's Allied Health Treatment cycle arrangements is being conducted. To participate or to find out more please go to <https://www.qut-dva-treatmentcycles-evaluation.com>.
- DVA's review of our dental program to consider the dental needs of current and future clients, and whether changes may be necessary. Public consultation was completed on the 18 December 2020. An update on the results will be provided at a HPPF meeting once results have been finalised.

#### **Agenda Item Five – Veteran Health Check presented by the Director (a/g), Mental and Social Health Programs**

A Veteran Health Check is a comprehensive health assessment with a General Practitioner (GP) to encourage early intervention to promote better health outcomes for veterans during their transition to civilian life. The Annual Veteran Health Check (VHC) was implemented on 1 July 2019 and there has been a range of avenues taken to raise awareness of the measure since its launch last year.

There has been a relatively low level of claiming for the VHC item and we are seeking your assistance to better understand any issues at the coal face regarding the health check, for example, a lack of awareness of the VHC, confusion over entitlements for the VHC or issues with claiming.

Information about [Veteran Health Check](https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/health-programs-and-services-our-clients/veterans-health-check-providers) can be found at <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/health-programs-and-services-our-clients/veterans-health-check-providers>.

Further feedback or questions on any of the topics from this meeting can be sent via the HPPF Secretariat at [providerengagement@dva.gov.au](mailto:providerengagement@dva.gov.au).