

Deputy Commissioner's Consultative Forum - Tasmania
Meeting Number 39 - Summary
25 August 2021

Present:

Luke Brown	Deputy Commissioner TAS – Department of Veterans' Affairs (Chair)
Catherine Starling	Mates4Mates – Tasmania
Ray Williams OAM	Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women Ltd – Tasmania
LTCOL Paul O'Donnell CSM	Senior ADF Officer (SADFO) – Tasmania
Charles Hill (proxy)	Royal Australian Air Force Association – Tasmania
Rob Grey	Hobart Legacy Inc
Elaine Devlin	Open Arms
Jenell Latham	Soldier On – Tasmania
Alex Dick (proxy)	Returned and Services League – Tasmania
Joanna Chauncy (guest)	Open Arms
Nick Atkins (proxy)	Tasmania State Government
Graeme Barnett RFD	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemakers Veterans Association – Tasmania
Kevin Evorall	Launceston Legacy Inc
Alec McNeill OAM (proxy)	Naval Association of Australia – Tasmania
Kevin Humphries (presenter)	<i>Cor Infinitus</i>
Anne James	Executive Officer – Department of Veterans' Affairs
Rochelle Devlin	Scribe – Department of Veterans' Affairs

Apologies:

Terry Roe	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia - Tasmania
BRIG John Withers	Veterans Reference Group – Tasmania
David Waddle OAM	Advocacy, Training and Development Program
Jacinta Leahy	Partners of Veterans Association – Tasmania

Business Arising:

Apologies noted.

Deputy Commissioner Update:

Chair Luke Brown advised on the 2 July 2021 appointment of the Hon Andrew Gee MP to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel.

Luke reported on a visit recent by Veteran Family Commissioner Gwen Cherne, noting valuable engagement by many in our forum, particular discussion around changes in how veteran death notifications are received by Legacy.

Luke reiterated DVA's concern around the wellbeing of Afghanistan veterans and their families following the return to Government by the Taliban and withdrawal of all Australian troops from the country. Determining how to best prioritise claims from this cohort and heightening awareness of increased vulnerabilities is central to the Department's objective. The forum discussed the receipt and impact of SMS texts sent by the Secretary on behalf of the Department to veterans, offering support and advice on DVA services, and members reported varying responses.

COVID continued to lockdown Victorian and NSW offices, with particular focus on maintaining productivity. Luke highlighted the difficulties around on boarding and training staff to decrease the claims backlog in that environment.

Members were advised about progress with the Royal Commission (RC) Terms of Reference and Commissioners announced, the RC are required to provide an interim report by 11 August 2022 and a final report by 15 June 2023. Visit [website](#) for details.

16-24 October is Veterans Health Week, funding applications close 10 September 2021. Luke reminded members of Vietnam Veterans Day (18 August) marking the 55th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan this year; to coincide with this, the new round of Long Tan bursary applications are now open, visit [website](#) for details. Saluting Their Service grants are also now open, see details [here](#).

Kevin Humphries, founder Cor Infinitus:

Presentation – “*Cor Infinitus* - Infinite Courage”



Cor Infinitus.pdf

Agenda item(s):

Nil

ESO Updates:

Senior ADF Officer:

LTCOL Paul O'Donnell CSM reported no change to the directive for COVID support and reiterated the desire for more community engagement that is lacking due to the current COVID situation.

Open Arms:

Elaine Devlin informed members that Open Arms clients received reach out texts from the Secretary with follow up being done by individual clinicians as necessary. Elaine reiterated the importance of keeping eyes and ears open to vulnerabilities that may be displayed by veterans and their family members. The forum was reminded of OA's Safe Zone and regular support lines.

OA Community Engagement Coordinator Joanna Chauncy updated members on Peer Advisor response – informing community messaging on social media and resources to schools etc. Visit [website](#) for details.

OA recruiting for a Peer Advisor in the North of the State.

Soldier On:

Jenell Latham advised members of a change of focus, now extending services beyond ADF and their families. Visit [website](#) for details.

They are eager to recruit psychologists and counsellors.

Returned and Services League - Tas:

Proxy Alex Dick informed members of a focus on infrastructure upgrades with a view to standardising advocacy and wellbeing services across the state.

Tasmanian State Government:

Proxy Nick Atkins advised on State Budget being handed down Thursday 26 August.

Naval Association of Australia – Tasmania:

Nil update.

Launceston Legacy Inc:

Kevin Evorall reported on attendance at Christmas in July celebrations with the Legacy Junior Public Speaking competition to go ahead with Tasmanian participants only. Teddy Sheean VC grant funds will be utilised to provide a seat at the Cenotaph in coming weeks. A scaled down Badge Week will proceed.

Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association:

Graeme Barnett confirmed the separation of APPVA Victoria from the national organisation and updated forum on new Tasmanian members. Discussion around figures for advocate assisted claims vs self-claimants, claims via ESO portal vs MyService.

Mates4Mates -Tas:

Cathy Starling reported that social connection programs are faring well with expansion on the horizon. Growth will see recruitment of numerous roles with a new psychologist starting soon. Plenty of Veterans Health week activities happening.

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

Ray Williams OAM updated members on the installation of hand sanitiser units purchased via a Teddy Sheean VC grant and a successful bus trip taken last quarter with another in the planning. Ray reports membership as steady and that all active TPI Tasmania wellbeing practitioners have completed the first of the three year ATDP training cycle.

Royal Australian Air Force Association:

Proxy Charles Hill advised RAAF-A will host national commemoration of the Battle of Britain, albeit scaled down due to COVID. In excess of 40 members statewide took part in a recent wellbeing bus trip and Charles relayed the sad news of the passing of the last Tasmanian Bomber Command Veteran, Les Burn.

Hobart Legacy Inc:

Rob Grey reflected on the change in their membership demographic and advised on recruitment for a bookkeeper and treasurer. Scaled down Badge Week to go ahead.

Next meeting:

Wednesday 24 November 2021.