



MINUTES

Agenda Item 1. Opening Remarks

The Chair opened the meeting with the welcome to country and acknowledged all who are serving and those who have served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The Chair, Ms Vicki Rundle welcomed Members to the first National Aged and Community Care Forum (NACCF) meeting of the year.

The Chair noted apologies from Mr Kevin Davidson MVO OAM, Australasian Care Network.

The Chair welcomed Ms Jenny Gregory representing the Australian War Widows Inc. as she has replaced Ms Shirley Drysdale. The Chair thanked Ms Drysdale for her contribution to NACCF and her wider work on behalf of War Widows.

The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Garrity as Deputy Chair.

Agenda Item 2. Minutes and Actions Arising

The Minutes of the 13 August 2020 NACCF meeting were endorsed. Members agreed to close all action items.

Agenda Item 3. Strategic Update – Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Priorities for 2021

The Chair advised Members of the Departmental priorities for 2021, noting that DVA will continue to evolve in line with the Veteran Centric Reform agenda, as well as in response to the Productivity Commission Report and other reviews and inquiries. The Chair advised that the lessons learnt over the last 12 months would also inform the continued evolution of the delivery of DVA's ongoing programs and services.

Members were advised of the re-alignment of DVA business areas recently announced by the DVA Secretary, and the Chair undertook to provide Members a copy of the updated Organisational Chart once available.

The Chair reiterated that processing of claims remains a priority for the Department, noting the continued increase in MRCA Initial Liability. Members noted that the Secretary has sought supplementary funding to engage more staff to assist in claims processing. In response to increase in complex and multi-Act eligibility claims, the Chair advised that a special team has been established to assess these

Members were also advised that, under the Chief Health Officer Operating Model, a new contract has been signed with Bupa to provide Medical and Health Clinical Advice Services, the changes are administrative and there will be no impact on clients, they will continue to access services from their choice of provider.



Item	Action	Assigned to
N23021/001	Secretariat to provide Members with the link to the DVA Organisational Chart.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 4. National Consultative Framework (NCF) Review

The Chair welcomed Repatriation Commissioner, Mr Don Spinks, to address this item.

Mr Spinks summarised the work done so far on the NCF Review, noting that an ESORT Working Group has been established and has met several times to discuss proposed changes to the existing framework for consultation with ex-service organisations. The working group have been asked to present three options for discussion at the next ESORT meeting, with the proposals to be forwarded to the Minister for final decision of the new model.

Ms Pat McCabe (**TPI Federation**) raised concerns that NACCF might be disbanded and expressed how valuable this forum was to the older veterans. Most Members agreed with Ms McCabe's comments, noting that a lot of focus seems to be on the younger cohort of veterans. Members agreed that the update received at NACCF by the Department of Health (DoH) is very informative and valuable.

Mr Spinks confirmed that a decision on the final framework was some way off, noting that the voice of the NACCF was important and would continue to be heard however it fitted into the new framework.

Agenda Item 5. Changes to Veterans Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC)

The Deputy Chair Mr Mark Garrity, A/g First Assistant Secretary Client Engagement and Support Services, addressed this item.

The Deputy Chair referred Members to the paper provided noting that misleading information around the changes had been shared on social media. The paper provided Members a high level of detail explaining the context of the changes. The Deputy Chair noted that the change was not advertised broadly as there no changes the services client receive, the changes are only to administration/staff.

Ms McCabe (**TPI Federation**) asked about the 24/7 access being removed, Mr Garrity advised this was not the case and that VAPAC services will continue to be available 24/7.

Agenda Item 6. Department of Health (DoH) Update:

- a) Summary of DoH COVID-19 actions and communications to aged care providers and residential facilities
- b) Review of Hearing Service Program

Mr James Benson, A/g Assistant Secretary Health Aged Care, Department of Health, provided Members with a verbal update.

Mr Benson advised that Minister Colbeck had recently announced a \$12.4 million COVID Grief and Trauma Support package to aged care providers and residents. This package is available to aged care residents, staff and families. This is in line with Grief and Loss packages across other departments.



Ms McCabe (**TPI Federation**) asked how DVA clients can obtain a COVID vaccine certificate, noting that many Veterans do not have a Medicare Card which is required to download a certificate from the online system.

The Chair advised that there are a couple of different way to access a vaccine certificate without a Medicare Card, by registering on the immunisation website, MyGov or by calling 1800 653 809. The Chair advised that a media release outlining this information is imminent and undertook to provide this to members when available. Mr Benson added that there is 'How to Access Guide' on the Department of Health website if additional information is required.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
N2021/002	Secretariat to distribute DVA media Release - How to obtain a COVID Vaccine Certificate, when available.	Secretariat

Mr Benson provided Members with an update on the COVID-19 Vaccine rollout to aged care residents so far 240 residential aged care homes have received the vaccine, including 180,000 residents and staff. Mr Benson advised that the rollout is currently prioritising metropolitan and region areas.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
N2021/003	The Chair asked Mr Benson to send through COVID-19 Vaccine information/statistics for circulation to Members Out-of-Session.	Secretariat

Mr Benson advised Members that the Hearing Services subject matter expert was unavailable to attend this meeting to provide an update on the Hearing Services Program Review. Mr Benson did provide a brief update, noting that a draft report will be available in May 2021 with the final report to be completed in July 2021.

Mr Benson asked Members to send in any questions to the Secretariat. The Chair invited Mr Benson to send through an update so these could be forwarded to Members Out-of-Session, and undertook to extend a further invitation to a representative from the Panel undertaking the review.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
N2021/004	Invite Hearing Services Program representative from the Department of Health to the next meeting.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 7. Member Submission (Australian War Widows Inc.) – Treatment Principles – Extend Eligibility for Allied Health Treatment to Residential Aged Care Recipients

Ms Chris Reed, Director Health Policy, Wellbeing Policy Branch responded to the Member Submission received from Ms Jenny Gregory (**Australian War Widows Inc**).



Ms Reed summarised the information provided in the paper to Members, explaining that the new temporary measures implemented by the Department of Health and DVA are in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission's (Commission) recommendations on COVID-19. The Commission recommended that the Australian Government urgently create Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to increase the provision of allied health services, including allied mental health services to residents of aged care facilities during the pandemic. The increased services available per year include 20 mental health services from general practitioners (GPs) or allied mental providers and 10 mental allied health services under a MBS chronic disease management plan. These new services will be available until 30 June 2022.

Ms McCabe (**TPI Federation**) queried the maximum number of treatments available, noting that DVA clients are eligible for unlimited services. Ms Reed advised that while most clients are able to access unlimited services, DVA clients who are high care residents do not. Ms Reed advised that provisions have been made to enable DVA clients to access additional services where required.

A few Members voiced concerns that they would have liked to receive communications about this when the providers were notified as Members some only found accidentally. The Chair advised Members that it was advertised as a news article on the DVA website and Department of Health advised GPs to inform their patients, though acknowledged that the communication strategy could have been strengthened.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
N2021/005	Secretariat to remind DVA business areas to circulate information to NCF members as part of communication strategy for new programs, and changes to existing programs.	Secretariat Secretariat Secretariat

Agenda item 8. Other Business

Ms McCabe (**TPI Federation**) expressed concern that the time allowed for the meeting was insufficient, particularly given that meetings had previously been held over a full day. The Chair encouraged Members to make submissions or suggest topics to be covered in meetings. The Chair also offered to schedule further meeting if Members had issues they would like addressed.

Ms Wendy Bateman (**RSL Australia**) suggested the Royal Commission into Aged Care be added to the next agenda. The Chair agreed and also suggested a possible briefing from Defence.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
N2021/006	Secretariat to investigate adding Royal Commission into Aged Care and update from Defence on agenda for next meeting.	Secretariat

Meeting close

The Chair thanked all Members for their attendance and participation. The meeting closed at 3.15pm. The next meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, 16 June 2021** and the format is yet to be confirmed, though the Chair is hopeful that it can be held face to face.