



Minutes

MEMBERS		VIA
Ms Vicki Rundle PSM (Chair)	Deputy Secretary, Veterans and Families Services	In person
Mr Mark Garrity (Deputy Chair)	Acting First Assistant Secretary, Client Engagement and Support Services Division	In person
Mr Shawn Bergquist	Legacy Australia Incorporated	In person
Ms Alison Bowman	Partners of Veterans Association	GovTeams
Ms Wendy Bateman	Returned and Services League of Australia	GovTeams
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia	In person
Mr Ward Gainey JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia	In person
Ms Jenny Gregory	Australian War Widows Inc. (AWWI)	In person
PRESENTERS		
Professor Jenny Firman	Chief Health Officer (Item 11)	In person
Mr Adam Boyton	National Skills Commissioner, Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Item 6)	GovTeams
Ms Jenny Cotton CSC	Assistant Secretary, Client Programs Branch (Item 8)	GovTeams
Ms Jennifer Veitch	Assistant National Manager, National Operations Section, Open Arms (Item 7)	In person
Ms Natasha Cole	First Assistant Secretary, Clients Benefits Division (Item 9)	In person
Ms Veronica Hancock	First Assistant Secretary Veteran and Family Policy (Item 4)	GovTeams
OBSERVERS		
Ms Moira Campbell	Assistant Secretary, Wellbeing Policy Branch (Item 4)	In person
Ms Kylie Crane	First Assistant Secretary Care Workforce Study Taskforce, National Skills Commission (Item 5)	In person
SECRETARIAT		
Ms Tiki Stephens	Assistant Director, Governance and Ministerial Events Section	In person
Mr James Caulfield	Secretariat Support Officer, Governance and Ministerial Events Section – Tech support	In person



APOLOGIES	
Mr Kevin Davidson MVO OAM	Australasian Services Care Network
Mr James Benson	Acting Assistant Secretary, Health Aged Care, Department of Health
Mr Michael Benyk	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Agenda Item 1 Welcome and Meeting Administration

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apology from the **Australasian Services Care Network** representative, Mr Kevin Davidson. Mr Davidson has advised that he will be retiring shortly and his representative has yet to be named. The Chair thanked Mr Davidson for his contribution to this forum.

The Chair welcomed Mr Shawn Bergquist, who has replaced Mr Peter Lawley as the representative for **Legacy**. The Chair thanked Mr Lawley for his contribution to this forum and his wider work on behalf of Legacy.

The Chair also noted late apologies from Mr Michael Benyk from the **Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia** and Mr James Benson from the **Department of Health**.

Agenda item 2 Minutes and Action Items

The Minutes of the previous meeting held 4 March 2021 were **ENDORSED**.

Members agreed to close all Actions Items as listed in the paper, with the exception of N2021/002. Members asked that this remain open until the information on how to access COVID vaccination certificates is distributed.

Members discussed provision of DVA hearing services, noting tht the Review of Hearing Services Program (HSP Review) being undertaken by the Department of Health has not yet been completed. Deputy Chair, Mr Mark Garrity provided a brief update on the status of the HSP Review.

Members requested that any further updates on the HSP Review be provided Out of Session.

Item	Action	Assigned to
N2021/007	Secretariat circulate updates on Review of Hearing Service Program to members out of session.	Secretariat



Agenda Item 3 Strategic Update – DVA Priorities and Budget Summary

The Chair provided members a summary of the DVA related Budget measures and the subsequent priority areas for the Department in the next 12 months. Noting the continued focus on reducing the Claims backlog and streamlining departmental processes.

Members noted the Budget measures and discussed the direct impact of several, including the increased services available to DVA clients in Services Australia shopfronts and the increased outreach by VAN offices in helping to manage the claims backlog.

Agenda Item 4 Budget Outcomes – Aged Care Specific Cross Portfolio Budget Measures, including response to Royal Commission

First Assistant Secretary Veteran and Family Policy Division, Ms Veronica Hancock, addressed this item. Ms Hancock advised members of the increased investment, through the 2021-22 Budget, to improve the care delivered to all Australians through mainstream in-home and residential aged care, with particular reference to information about measures specific to veterans and their families.

Ms Hancock also addressed a Member Submission from the **Australian War Widows** at this item, regarding the retention of DVA-funded aids and appliances in high level residential aged care facilities. Members noted that DVA has no authority to compel facilities to allow DVA supplied appliances, and acceptance of these items will be at the discretion of the facility.

Agenda Item 5 Care Workforce Labour Market Study

The Chair introduced National Skills Commissioner, Mr Adam Boyton, and First Assistant Secretary Care Workforce Study Taskforce, Ms Kylie Crane. Mr Boyton and Ms Crane led a discussion on the Care Workforce Labour Market Study, and sought members views on factors that will impact the workforce.

Members noted the discussion paper distributed in the meeting pack. Members noted that the study will not make recommendations; instead it will present findings on factors likely to impact the Care Workforce into the future.

Agenda Item 6 Department of Health Update

Acting Assistant Secretary, Health Aged Care, Department of Health, Mr James Benson, was a late apology and this item was not addressed.

Members agreed to receive Out of Session information in response to a Member Submission received from the **Australian War Widows** seeking advice on the future of the Commonwealth Home Support Program.

DVA Chief Health Officer, Professor Jenny Firman, attended at this item and provided members an update on the status of COVID infections in Australia and the progress of the vaccine roll out. Professor Firman also responded to a Member Submission from the **TPI Federation** seeking advice on how DVA clients can access COVID Vaccination Certificates.



Item	Action	Assigned to
N2021/008	Department of Health to provide a response to the Member Submission from Australian War Widows seeking information on the future of the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP).	Department of Health

Agenda Item 7 Open Arms Update

The Chair introduced Assistant National Manager Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling, Ms Jennifer Veitch to provide an update on supports and services available to veterans and their families, in response to a Member Submission from the **Australian War Widows** seeking advice on services and supports that focus on older veterans.

Members noted that there are a wide range of DVA services available to all DVA clients. Ms Veitch assured members that Open Arms has a full suite of programs to address the needs of older veterans and went on to outline some of the programs available.

Agenda Item 8 Veterans' Home Care – fees to providers

The Chair introduced Assistant Secretary Client Programs Branch, Ms Jenny Cotton CSC, to respond to a Member Submission from the **Australian War Widows**, seeking advice on the disparity of fees paid to Homecare providers by DVA when compared to those paid by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Ms Cotton acknowledged that fees paid to service providers do differ between DVA's Veterans Home Care (VHC) Program and NDIS however noted that although the service provisions appeared similar, a 'like for like' comparison was not appropriate given the different nature of the two programs. Ms Cotton also noted that the reasons given by service providers for withdrawal from the VHC program differ, and have not been limited to fee levels.

Agenda Item 9 Claims Processing Improvements

First Assistant Secretary Client Benefits Division, Ms Natasha Cole addressed this item, outlining the priority actions being undertaken by DVA to address the growing number of applications for compensation claims and reduce the claims processing backlog.

Members noted the recent Budget Measure includes an additional \$98.55 million over two years to provide DVA with a significant increase to staffing and additional resources to address the backlog of claims and increased workload.

Members also noted additional measures being implemented, including; active outreach from DVA to clients, re-examination and simplification of forms and, expanding combined benefits processing.



Agenda Item 10 Update on next steps of Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Deputy Chair, Mr Mark Garrity addressed this item on behalf of the Chair. Members noted that the public consultation period to inform the Terms of Reference closed on 21 May 2021. Mr Garrity advised that around 1400 responses to the consultation process were received, plus an additional 1800 responses received by the Attorney General's Department. Members noted that DVA has published written feedback on its website, where consent has been granted to do so.

Members also noted that the role of the Interim National Commissioner will be complementary to the Royal Commission.

Agenda Item 11 Access to COVID Vaccination Certificates

This was addressed by the Chief Health Officer at Agenda Item 6.

Agenda Item 12 Other Business

Nothing further was raised.

The meeting closed at 3:15 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 12 October 2021.