



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, Ms Vicki Rundle, welcomed members to the meeting and advised that Ms Leanne Yannopoulos, First Assistant Secretary, Client Engagement & Support Services, has taken over as Deputy Chair of the forum, due to the impending retirement of Mr Mark Garrity.

The Chair also noted the last minute apology from the **Department of Health** and that DVA's Chief Health Officer, Professor Jenny Firman, would provide a COVID update. Attendees list is at Annexure A.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes & actions of previous meeting

Members **ENDORSED** the minutes from the previous meeting held 12 October 2021 with no comments.

Members **AGREED** to close action items N2021/010 and N2021/011 and **NOTED** that the action items N2021/009 and N2021/012 continue to progress. The Chair advised that under item N2021/009, DVA is looking to publish claims data online at some future point during this year; however, given some of the complexities with the data a little more refinement will be undertaken to render it more useable. Members will be advised when the claims data is available.

Agenda Item 3 Strategic Update

The Chair provided members a summary of the priorities for the year: COVID; The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide; reducing the claims backlog; the upcoming March budget; the impending Federal election; streamlining transitions with Defence; and Anzac Day preparations. The Chair noted a decrease in claims productivity with the disruptions of COVID and Christmas. The Chair also noted the new reporting lines with the appointment of Mr Stuart Smith as Deputy Secretary, Enabling Services and Commemorations Group.

Discussion was held around the COVID impacts on commemorations for 2022, in particular Anzac Day commemorations. Inquiry was made by Ms Jenny Gregory, **Australian War Widows Inc.** into the data from deaths in aged care facilities and how many of those are veterans or war widows.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/NACCF1	Commemorations Branch to contact Ms Pat McCabe of the TPI Federation, to provide an update on arrangements for the domestic National Anzac Day commemoration.	Secretariat
2022A/NACCF2	Secretariat to seek data from the Department of Health on how many veterans or war widows in aged care have died of/with COVID and distribute advice to members.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 4 Open Arms Update

The Chair introduced Dr Grant Pegg, National Manager of Open Arms. Dr Pegg explained his background as a clinical physician in Rockhampton, with specialisation in mental health, before working with the Therapeutic Goods Association and Department of Health. He noted the dedication of Open Arms staff and the rapid expansion of the service. He acknowledged the importance of taking stock to consolidate the gains made, and the hybrid telehealth model that will continue to be used in the future.

Agenda Item 5 Member Submissions – MyAgedCare – Alignment of Regulation across the Care and Support Sectors and Veterans’ Home Care Review

The Chair invited Ms Jenny Gregory, **Australian War Widows Inc.**, and Ms Pat McCabe, **TPI Federation**, to summarise their Member Submissions. Issues raised in discussion included: the lack of monitoring of homecare; confusion around provided services (gardening); the need for quality assurance; and that client needs have not changed. It was concluded that allowances must be made in the current COVID situation. Mr Dylan Kurtz, Assistant Secretary, Wellbeing Policy, acknowledged that there are different legislative frameworks surrounding Veterans’ Home Care (VHC) and Household Services and there are different objectives to these supports which can lead to confusion for clients.

Ms McCabe sought clarification on the purpose of the VHC review. Mr Kurtz confirmed that the NOUS Group is undertaking a review of VHC and community services, noting concurrent reform occurring across the broader aged and home care services sector. That review is looking to report around September 2022 for consideration by Government, with consultation having just finished. Mr Kurtz also explained the work being undertaken to explore better alignment of regulatory arrangements between veterans, aged and disability care and reassured members that this work is not intended to impact entitlements or services delivered to the veteran community. The Chair agreed, noting that reviewing the frameworks and looking at accountability will lead to more positive impacts for clients.

Ms Gregory asked if there was any correlation between DVA’s review of VHC services and a review being completed by EY, on behalf of the Department of Health. Mr Kurtz did not believe so. Ms Gregory also sought clarification on the criteria for DVA home care services and standards for providers; asking if ESOs have any input or consultation, and if the provider criteria is publically available. Mr Kurtz suggested that NOUS could meet with NACCF and test the views of members on the options emerging from the the review as it progresses. The Chair confirmed that engagement would be beneficial.

Ms McCabe sought further clarification as to why there was such a substantial difference in time allocations for gardening services under the different legislation. Mr Kurtz clarified the differing intents behind the provision of home care services, noting that while more hours of assistance are available for MRCA/DRCA clients, it is only available when linked to a compensable condition, as opposed to VEA clients. Ms McCabe indicated that she had further detailed questions around this matter and Ms Yannopoulos undertook to facilitate contact between Ms McCabe and the Veterans Home Care team for further discussion.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/NACCF3	Secretariat to schedule Out of Session meeting with NOUS regarding the VHC Review.	Secretariat
2022A/NACCF4	Secretariat to circulate publicly available information regarding DVA’s provider criteria for home care services.	Secretariat
2022A/NACCF5	Secretariat to circulate information to members on the differences between household services for MRCA/DRCA and VEA clients.	Secretariat
2022A/NACCF6	Deputy Chair to facilitate contact between Veterans Home Care team and Ms Pat McCabe of the TPI Federation, directly to clarify specific questions relating to household services.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 6 Telehealth Arrangements

The Chair invited Ms Pat McCabe, **TPI Federation**, to summarise her Member Submission. Ms McCabe queried if changes to telehealth arrangements would result in out of pocket expenses for DVA clients? Mr Kurtz clarified that a previous loading implemented in 2011 to encourage telehealth arrangements for regional and remote patients had been removed, given the broad uptake of telehealth services during the pandemic. Mr Kurtz also reiterated that services provided under DVA arrangements must not incur any out of pocket expenses.

Mr Kurtz advised members that DVA was reviewing telehealth measures for allied health services and undertook to advise members of the decision of the Repatriation Commission.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/NACCF7	Secretariat to distribute Commissions decision on changes to telehealth provision of allied health services to members.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 7 **Access to Medicinal Cannabis**

The Chair invited Ms Jenny Gregory, **Australian War Widows Inc.**, to summarise her Member Submission. Members discussed the complexities of accessing medicinal cannabis. Mr Kurtz acknowledged that DVA has a cautious approach that involves assessing a range of factors before approval to access medicinal cannabis under DVA arrangements is approved. Professor Jenny Firman, Chief Health Officer, noted that in response to the growing evidence base, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is moving to a two tier framework that would enable easier prescribing of low dose medicinal cannabis.

Discussion was also held around the use of medicinal cannabis for treatment of mental health, including PTSD, issues. Professor Firman supplied that there is not enough clinical evidence to support this use.

Members raised the prospect of micro-dosing LSD in conjunction with medicinal cannabis as treatment of mental health. Professor Firman advised that the TGA has not changed its stance on medical opioid use as there is limited clinical evidence.

Agenda Item 8 **Chief Health Officer Update**

Professor Jenny Firman, Chief Health Officer, provided an overview on the current COVID status, noting the disproportionate rate of death in the elderly, in particular in aged care. She explained the sensitivity and specificity of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT), adding that Veteran concession card holders can access free RATs. She also spoke of the importance of mask safety and use. Of particular note, Professor Firman undertook to describe the delicate balance residential care facilities faced when assessing the dangers of COVID exposure against the effects of lockdown on residents.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022A/NACCF8	Secretariat to distribute TGA published list of approved Rapid Antigen Tests to NACCF members.	Secretariat

Agenda Item 9 **Other Business**

Nothing further was raised. The Chair thanked members for their attendance and noted that the date for the next meeting will be advised.

Meeting closed: 12.05pm.

Attendees

Members/Attendees	
Ms Vicki Rundle PSM (Chair)	Deputy Secretary, Veterans & Family Services
Ms Leanne Yannopoulos (Deputy Chair)	First Assistant Secretary, Client Engagement & Support Services
Mr Michael Benyk	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Mr Shawn Bergquist	Legacy Australia Incorporated
Ms Alison Bowman	Partners of Veterans Association
Ms Wendy Bateman	Returned & Services League of Australia
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Mr Ward Gainey JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Ms Jenny Gregory	Australian War Widows Inc.
Presenters	
Dr Grant Pegg	National Manager Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling (Item 4)
Mr Dylan Kurtz	Assistant Secretary, Wellbeing Policy (Items 5, 6, 7)
Prof Jenny Firman AM	Chief Health Officer (Item 8)
Observers	
Ms Tahl Kean	Graduate, DVA
Secretariat	
Ms Tiki Stephens	Assistant Director, Governance & Ministerial Events Section
Apologies	
Ms Amanda Miller	Acting Director, Aged Care Fees, Department of Health
Ms Leonie Nowland	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health & Wellbeing Services