Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

REVIEW OF DVA-FUNDED

ESO ADVOCACY AND WELFARE SERVICES

Final Report

December 2010

Contents

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
AATTVA	Australian Army Training Team Vietnam Association
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGR	Above General Rate
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFRP	Australian Defence Force Rehabilitation Program
AFI	Application for Increase
AGS	Australian Government Solicitor
APPVA	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
AVADSC	Australian Veterans and Defence Service Council
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BEST	Building Excellence in Support and Training
CAGS	Claims Assistance Grants Scheme
C&ACP	Community and Aged Care Policy Group
CBT	Competency Based Training
CDF	Chief of Defence Force
CGGs	Commonwealth Grant Guidelines
DoFD	Department of Finance and Deregulation
DFWA	Defence Force Welfare Association
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
EDWVA	Extremely Disabled War Veterans Association
EMG	DVA's Executive Management Group
ESO	Ex-Service Organisation
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FMA Act	*Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*
GARP	Guide to the Assessment of Rates of Veterans' Pension
GIA	Grants-In-Aid
KIP	Key Issues Paper
ICTS	Information, Communications and Technology Services Group
IPSS	Integrated People Support Services
LGA	Local Government Area
MRCA	*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*
NGDB	National Grants Database
OWP	Operational Working Party
PMAC	Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters
PVA	The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia
RAAFA	Royal Australian Airforce Association
RAEA	Royal Australian Engineers' Association
RAR	Royal Australian Regiment
RC&IP	Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group
RG&CC	Research, Grants and Consultation Co-ordination Group
RSL	Returned and Services League of Australia
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RTO	Registered Training Organisations
SRCA	*Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
SMS	Short Message Service
SOP	Statements of Principles

TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TCG	Training Consultative Group
TIP	Training and Information Program
TMS	Transition Management Service
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPI	Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women
VAN	Veterans' Affairs Network
V&C	Veteran and Community
V&CG	Veteran and Community Grants
VEA	*Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*
VHC	Veterans' Home Care
VITA	Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association
VPAD	Veterans' Practitioner Activity Database
VRB	Veterans' Review Board
VVAA	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
VVFA	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
VVPPA	Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association
V&WVSA	Vietnam and War Veterans SA Inc
WWG	War Widows' Guild of Australia

1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report gives an account of the work undertaken by the Review team in response to the request from the former Minister for Veterans' Affairs that the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) review advocacy and welfare services available to the veteran community through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Program and the Training and Information Program (TIP). The report also provides comments from key stakeholders, namely the Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) and the Department.

While the primary focus of the Review was on the BEST and TIP programs, the Review team was also asked to address issues of alignment with the Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program. In addition, the Review considered relevant aspects of the Government's 2007 Election Commitments and recommendations made by Professor Dunt in his *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community.*

Consultations on the Review were held from October 2009 to September 2010 and are now complete. Discussions occurred at National ESO fora and at the State level, along with targeted consultation through Focus Groups at the local level. This, along with consideration of submissions provided by ESOs, formed the basis of several papers:

- an "Emerging Themes" document which, at the request of the former Minister, was circulated to the ESO community for information and further comment; and
- a Key Issues Paper which was developed following consideration of the issues raised in the submissions and in discussions at the various fora.

Given demographic changes in the veteran population and challenges presented by the number of ageing advocates, welfare and pension officers available to assist DVA beneficiaries and claimants and the wider veteran and defence communities, the Review focussed on how available resources could be used to best effect, particularly the potential for collaboration and co-operation between ESOs. The Review also considered ways to strengthen each program to ensure there is appropriate governance, policy and procedural support.

Generally, stakeholders agree that broad support is shown for the following concepts:
- there should be sound policies and procedures in place to support the administration of the programs;
- the level of administrative rigour that applies to the BEST, TIP and V&CG programs needs to be strengthened;
- that 'volunteerism' remains fundamental to BEST service delivery; and
- advocacy and welfare service models need to be sustainable and scalable over time.

There is also strong belief that the current practice within Australia, whereby ex-serving members voluntarily take on a role to assist in claims preparation, is one that to date has worked very well, and should continue to be supported through funding mechanisms such as the BEST program. The very nature of this voluntary work should be valued, not understated.

In relation to TIP, the program has evolved into a well-respected training provider for members of the ex-service community wishing to become involved in the provision of services to fellow veterans and members of the ADF, and their families. The program is taking a positive move from a set of training modules maintained by each state Training Consultative Group to a

national program, allowing for the inclusion of state specific information. The program is also embracing eLearning technology which will provide efficiencies for those potential attendees who would normally be unable to attend because of the distances required to travel.

The Review considers that a complete approach to ensuring all practitioners are provided with appropriate support includes TIP training, mentoring, on-the-job training. There are already mentoring programs in place in some ESOs and the Review recommends that this become mandatory. The issue of an official identification will provide the veteran community with an assurance that the person who is assisting them is appropriately qualified.

The development of an information pack to advise practitioners about the various roles, expectations, behaviours and potential time commitments prior to the commencement of any TIP training is considered a useful tool.

The Review also acknowledges that the development of a single register for recording practitioner training and accreditation information will assist ESOs, TIP and DVA in ensuring that the right services are provided for every person seeking assistance in a timely manner.

In addition, the movement towards the adoption of a level of certification under a Competency Based Training (CBT) framework that is merit based, encompassing eLearning and exercise based assessment is recommended. There should be minimum course standards, nationally consistent levels and streams, and ESO mentoring, which need to be strengthened. The DVA quality assurance framework should be enhanced to ensure provision of feedback to practitioners, ESOs and TIP Chairs. TIP governance arrangements require alignment nationally with best practice structures, including agreed and documented principles.

In considering BEST service delivery models it was concluded that ESOs have a very clear understanding of the need to move to an integrated approach to the delivery of services. There is evidence that this is already happening with the emergence of Veteran Support Centres across the country. Current practice can be represented as conforming to three models, characterised as "stand alone", "hub and spoke" or "co-ordinated services". Irrespective of whether a hub and spoke or co-ordinated approach is adopted in the future, the Report proposes a set of "First Principles" to guide governance, administration and management.

The Review concluded that the basic premise that should apply for grant funding is that monies are provided to assist ESOs to provide services and that ESOs be required to contribute to the overall cost of these services. Secondly, the funds should in large part be provided where there is an integrated approach to service delivery in areas of high veteran numbers and need. Support for existing and prospective Veteran Support Centres leads logically to "Funding Principles" and application of a "Funding Formula". In the move to achieving integration, it is proposed that grant funding is provided for demonstration projects in regional NSW and Queensland, other sites be identified for targeted support by Deputy commissioners, and that there is investment in IT system development to better support ESO and DVA processes and practices.

There is clear ESO support for the view that the BEST program needs to be transparent and better informed, with evidence based processes for grants assessment. In line with this, all grant guidelines (TIP, BEST and V&CG) should be revised and the BEST application form reviewed to reflect funding streams for National ESOs (the old Grants-in-Aid [GIA] Program) and for welfare activities. It is also recognised that some ESOs are better placed financially to be able to contribute to activities and services.

There is general agreement that a limit of 80% of the quantum of BEST funds available should represent the maximum provided for salary assistance, and that this could be provided over a three year funding cycle with an annual reassessment. The Review also considers there is a need to implement a salary assistance policy that gives clear guidance to ESOs on what assistance is eligible.

In looking at V&CG, there is support for a move from three to two funding rounds, commencing 2011/2012 and the work undertaken by the DVA Adelaide team on guidelines and documentation should be adopted.

It is argued that roles within DVA administration and policy for BEST, TIP and V&CG should be better aligned and, while assessment of grants at a national level is endorsed, there is a need to clarify roles and responsibilities for DVA positions relating to grants administration. This extends to State based support where it is important that Deputy Commissioners both consider and provide comment on grant applications.

The availability and use of data is fundamental to effective service delivery and efficient deployment of grant funds. This is an area of significant weakness found by the Review team. The current Veteran Practitioner Activity Database (VPAD) and National Grants Database (NGDB) systems do not deliver the necessary data to assist the Department or ESOs in future planning for grant activities and for positioning of services. VPAD should be enhanced as a matter of priority and, in the longer term, the Department should consider developing a new IT system that would deliver greater functionality.

With regard to the two-tiered approach recommended by Professor Dunt, DVA has a different view. DVA believes that rather than the paid/unpaid status of the practitioner being the determinant for the allocation of complex/non-complex work, the level of training and expertise should be the key criterion for allocating pensions/advocacy/welfare work. However, it is acknowledged that as the volunteer workforce declines, more paid practitioners will be required to take on the complex work.

In considering the provision of welfare services, it is important to recognise that volunteerism, by its very nature, involves people offering services without expectation of payment. There is recognition that there should be some scope to recompense volunteers for some out of pocket expenses. It is important to understand that there are organisations other than ESOs that play a key role in the delivery of welfare services, and alignment and networking with these organisations is critical. Defining welfare services was identified as a threshold issue which requires further needs analysis.

It is proposed that a project team continue to have responsibility for oversight and implementation of the recommendations of this Review, should they be accepted. The project team would progress the implementation and transition phases, and in particular governance structures, timelines, demonstration projects and necessary changes to guidelines and funding arrangements. How implementation and transition will work in tandem with business as usual arrangements needs to be assessed.

During implementation, future interaction with the veteran community was seen as very important. The effective deployment of existing ESO Reference Group arrangements, both at the National and State levels would allow ESO input to a range of critical issues including development of TIP governance structures, the TIP CBT framework, monitoring and evaluating demonstration projects, and monitoring of shifts in demand for veteran services.

In essence, this Report advances that BEST monies should be, in the main, directed to service delivery approaches that reflect integration and co-operation. Support for Veterans Support Centres will be:

- underpinned by Funding Principles and a Funding Formula;
- transparent, with evidence based processes for grants assessment and reporting; and
- advanced through demonstration projects, targeted support, and investment in IT system development.

However, funds should continue to be made available to support ESOs where integrated service provision is not possible or practicable.

Finally, a TIP program built on the principles of best practice governance, national consistency, demonstrated competency and merit which encompasses eLearning and exercise based training, better mentoring and quality assurance based feedback, is endorsed.

Review team suggestions, summaries of ESO responses to the recommendations and DVA's responses to the suggestions can be found progressively throughout the Report. Final DVA recommendations are provided at Part 4.

PART 1 - CONTEXT

2 INTRODUCTION

Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), through their practitioners, advocates and welfare officers, provide an invaluable service in assisting members of the serving and ex-service communities, which in the main is provided through volunteers. However, the nature of the DVA beneficiary population is undergoing change, both in terms of the ageing of the veteran population, with an increasing need for effective referral to aged care/community and welfare services, and the increasing number of younger veterans and serving members needing assistance.

In 2009, the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs requested the Department to review advocacy and welfare services available to the veteran community through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) and Training Information Program (TIP) programs that support this changing demographic.

There was a clear need for the Review to address the sustainability and scalability of Government-funded programs that support ESO activities in relation to claim and appeal work, and information services on broader welfare issues. Shifts in demographic trends and increasing significance of more recent legislation will underpin the need to ensure that finite government and ESO support are strategically directed into the future.

While the primary focus of the Review was on the BEST program and TIP, the Review team was also asked to address issues of alignment with the Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program.

Some ESOs have reported difficulty in attracting, training and retaining a sufficient number of advocates, welfare and pension officers to act on behalf of DVA beneficiaries and claimants and to deal with increasingly complex legislation. Accordingly, the Review needed to ensure that resources available are used to best effect. To this end, the Review considered the potential for collaboration and co-operation between ESOs including the sharing of facilities and resources. The Review was mindful of issues around location e.g. rural and remote, veteran-specific groups, and the relative size of ESOs. The question of what other forms of support available to ESOs beyond Government funding was also a consideration.

It is very important to ensure that the links between ESO advocacy services and TIP are such that current and informed advice and support are available to all DVA beneficiaries and claimants.

The level of administrative rigour that applies to the BEST, TIP and V&CG programs has also been considered. Grant policies and eligibility criteria were considered in order to enhance grant application lodgement processes and supporting systems including the Veteran Practitioner Activity Database (VPAD) and other local arrangements. Opportunities to enhance DVA grant assessment and notification processes and systems were explored. Overall, attention was given to quality assurance, better performance measurement, accountability and reporting. The intent was not to make monitoring and reporting processes so onerous that they become a disincentive to applying for program funds. Rather, it was important in proposing changes to the existing programs, that the Department could ensure that the objectives of the Review can continue to be met in future years.

The Review was also asked to consider:
- relevant aspects of the Government's 2007 Election Commitments (<u>Attachment A</u> outlines the relevant aspects); and
- recommendations made by Professor Dunt in his *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* in relation to advocacy and advice services (<u>Attachment B</u>).

In relation to the Dunt Report, the Review team noted his recommendation to move towards a two-tier system for the delivery of ESO advocacy and support services. He suggested the first tier would comprise largely of volunteers undertaking straightforward cases and the second tier would be a new group of paid advocates with Technical and Further Education (TAFE) accreditation. The Review team consideration of this recommendation is further developed in <u>Section 9.3</u>.

3   STRUCTURE OF THE REVIEW

3.1   Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Review (<u>Attachment C</u>) outline its objectives, the approach taken and the scope.

In developing the ToR for the Review, the following factors were taken into consideration:
- ensure the veteran community receives the support they need through appropriate advocacy and advice services;
- the value placed on the support ESOs provide to the veteran community in helping them access entitlements and services;
- ensure that the concept of 'volunteerism' remains a key theme;
- develop an ESO advocacy and welfare service model(s) that is sustainable, scalable and meets the needs of the veteran community, the ESOs and the Minister;
- ensure relevant data collection by grant recipients, supported by a sound performance information system, to enable outcome measurement for both the department and grant recipients;
- ensure an outcomes orientation is attained in providing grants to the veteran community;
- effective grants management and 'value for public money' is achieved; and
- consultation with ex-service organisations and other stakeholders to ensure the needs of the veteran community are being effectively met.

3.2   Objectives

The objectives of the Review, as stated in the ToR, were to recommend a program that ensures:
- funding levels enable efficient and effective service delivery;
- the range of items eligible for funding are distinct;
- appropriate services are provided for younger veterans;
- the distribution of available funds is transparent and fair;
- there is no duplication of ESO advocacy and welfare services funded by the Government in individual locations; and
- harmonious working relationships are established and maintained.

3.3   Establishment of an Independent Review Team

An independent Review team comprising David Batchelor and Olivia Witkowski was established. Both officers had extensive experience in the Australian Public Service, Ms Witkowski having managed the Veteran and Community Grants Program in her time in DVA.

The Review team undertook all phases of the Review from the development of the initial Discussion Paper to the production of the Key Issues Paper (see Section 5.8).

The Review team formally concluded their work on the Review when the Key Issues Paper was distributed to the ESO community seeking comments on a range or observations and suggestions proposed by the Review team.

Since then, the Department has taken responsibility for writing the final Review report.

4   REVIEW GOVERNANCE

The Review team developed a project plan initially to identify the major products to be produced, activities to be performed and an estimate of the effort needed and time-scales achievable; and assessed the high level risks of the project and mitigation strategies for those risks. Objectives and benefits were identified and have been discussed in Section 3.1 in relation to the Terms of Reference and in Section 5 on Consultation.

Related interfaces were identified, in particular those relating to the response to the Dunt Report, and to previous work undertaken, including a paper developed by the Department in relation to the "Sustainability of TIP and BEST". The scope of and approach to the project were determined. Milestones moving through Ministerial briefings, consultation phases, reporting and post project requirements were also specified.

The Secretary, Mr Ian Campbell, Deputy President, Mr Shane Carmody, the then Repatriation Commissioner Brigadier Bill Rolfe (Retd), Mr Barry Telford, General Manager Support Division and Ms Peta Stevenson, National Manager Research, Grants and Consultation Co-ordination Group, provided guidance and support to the Review team.

5   CONSULTATION

5.1   Scope of Consultation

A Consultation Framework was developed and progressed through the governance structure prior to being provided to the then Minister.

The underlying goal of the external consultation process was to:
- encourage ESO leaders and past grant applicants to provide input into the Review through targeted forums; and
- reinforce the Australian Government's commitment to supporting the defence and ex-service community where needed.

Given the timeframes for the Review, discussions with the veteran and defence communities were carefully targeted to ensure that an appropriate level of consultation occurred. Feedback was sought around a Discussion Paper (Attachment D) which included a number of key focus points. ESOs were also advised that they should not feel bound to address only the points in the Discussion Paper as the Review was interested in obtaining the widest possible views.

The consultation phase took place from October 2009 to September 2010 and included:
- broad distribution of the Discussion Paper;
- face-to-face consultation nationally through Focus Groups held by the Review team, the then Repatriation Commissioner, Brigadier Bill Rolfe and Deputy Commissioners;
- face-to-face consultation at the State level through State Consultative Fora managed by Deputy Commissioners;
- attendance/discussion at National Fora with ESO leaders;
- consideration of submissions provided by ESOs;
- visits to a small number of ESOs to see the range of welfare and information provision by volunteers and through salaried claims and advocacy officers;
- provision of information about the Review on the DVA website which was regularly updated and included a Questions and Answers section;
- issue of an Emerging Themes summary to allow for further comment (Attachment E);
- provision of an Interim Report to the Repatriation Commission; and
- issue of a Key Issues Paper to all stakeholders to allow for comment on a range of suggestions that were under consideration by the Review team.

A timetable containing the Review team's schedule for Focus Groups, discussions at National fora and visits to ESOs is at Attachment F.

5.2   Related Regulatory Frameworks and Initiatives

The Review team considered the following government initiatives, guidelines and regulations when forming their conclusions:
- Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) – Commonwealth Grant Guidelines (CGGs);
- DoFD – *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (FMA Act) and relevant Finance Circulars;
- DoFD – Financial Management and Accountability Regulations (FMA Regulations);
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) – streamlining grant reporting requirements and reducing the administrative burden;
- Australian Tax Office (ATO) – clarification of potential tax consequences for Commonwealth grants programs;
- Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) – legal briefings on grants and funding programs;
- FaHCSIA and NEC Australia – "Broadband for Seniors" funding initiative;
- FaHCSIA – Volunteer Grants 2009;
- FaHCSIA – National Compact between the Australian Government and the Third Sector – Consultation Report (2009);
- Veterans Council Grants Program – managed through the Victorian Veterans Council (formerly the Patriotic Funds Council but now charged with a different range of responsibilities); and the
- Volunteering Australia website for general information relating to supporting volunteers in the Australian community.

5.3 Letters of Advice

At the national level, the Secretary wrote to the national ESOs and members of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-service Matters (PMAC) in September 2009 advising them of the Review and inviting them to contribute to the Review by making a written submission. The Terms of Reference for the Review (Attachment C), the Consultation Framework (Attachment G) and the Discussion Paper providing key focus points that could be used to frame responses (Attachment D) were enclosed.

At the same time, the Repatriation Commissioner wrote in similar terms to members of the ESO Round Table, members of the Operational Working Party (OWP), State TIP Chairs and BEST Round 11 applicants advising them of the Review and of the consultation process. At the state level, Deputy Commissioners wrote to key state ESOs and arranged consultation through State Focus Groups.

Deputy Commissioners also discussed the Review at State Consultative Fora and any other opportunity that was presented in meetings with the veteran community.

5.4 Focus Groups

The Review team held discussions with the National Fora listed above and at Focus Groups which were held in capital cities and in regional locations. The participants were provided the ToR for the Review, the discussion paper and key focus points as a basis for the discussion.

5.5 Submissions

Notification about the Review was provided on the Department's website along with the ToR and the discussion paper. That notification, together with letters sent directly to ESOs as mentioned above, invited individuals or organisations to make submissions electronically or in writing to the Review Team.

There were 133 submissions received with representation by a broad cross section of organisations and individuals. A statistical breakdown is shown on the following page.

Table 1: Submission Statistics

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	IND	STATE	NAT	TOTAL	
RSL	16		14	1	3	1		8		1	**44**	33.1%
VVAA	2		6					2	1	1	**12**	9.0%
VVFA	1		2						2		**5**	3.8%
WWG									1	1	**2**	1.5%
LEGACY	4		1	1	1				1	1	**9**	6.8%
PVA									5	1	**6**	4.5%
TPI	1				1			3	1	1	**7**	5.3%
EDWVA	3										**3**	2.3%
NAVAL	1		1		1			1		1	**5**	3.8%
DFWA									1	1	**2**	1.5%
Support Centres	3	7	3		1	1					**15**	11.3%
RAR									2		**2**	1.5%
RAAFA					1				3		**4**	3.0%
AVADSC										1	**1**	0.8%
APPVA			1							1	**2**	1.5%
Korean Assoc										1	**1**	0.8%
Water Transport										1	**1**	0.8%
AATTVA									1		**1**	0.8%
RAEA									1		**1**	0.8%
VVPPA	1										**1**	0.8%
V&WVSA									1		**1**	0.8%
OTHER	3	1						4			**8**	6.0%
TOTAL	**35**	**8**	**28**	**2**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**18**	**20**	**12**	**133**	100.0%
	26.3%	6.0%	21.1%	1.5%	6.0%	1.5%	0.0%	13.5 %	15.0%	9.0%	100.0%	

Note 1: 100 electronic submissions (75%) and 33 hard copy submissions (25%) were received (if provided in both formats then counted as electronic).
Note2: 5 submissions were received from the ACT but they have been counted under either National or State due to the ESO category.
Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

5.6   Internal DVA Consultation

Within the Department, discussions were held with Deputy Commissioners, the Executive Management Group (EMG), BEST, TIP and V&CG National and General Managers (past and present) and relevant staff of these programs.

5.7   Emerging Themes Paper

Following the Focus Groups and an analysis of submissions, an Emerging Themes document was prepared (Attachment E). This document has been continually updated throughout the Review and used to support discussions held by the Review team at various national fora. At the request of the Minister, a copy was forwarded to the same group that received initial advice on the Review by the Secretary, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners, seeking both comment on the themes and any further input to the review.

The Review team undertook a thorough examination of submissions received together with all of the information provided at the Focus Groups and these are consolidated into a summary document at Attachment H.

5.8 Key Issues Paper

Discussion was held with the then Minister regarding the findings from the Review, the comments received from the ESOs and the views of the Review team. The Minister directed that, given the extensive scope of the Review and the complexity of matters to be considered, a further round of consultations with the ESOs be undertaken.

It was agreed that a Key Issues Paper providing principles, policies and models relating to future funding by DVA for ESO advocacy and welfare services would be made available for comment to all stakeholders from previous rounds of consultation. The paper drew on the observations of the Review team and provided a broad insight into their findings, including information on a proposed regional structure to be used as the basis for funding integrated service delivery into the future. The Key Issues Paper is also available on the Department's website.

A period of three months was allowed for consideration and comments on the issues discussed in the paper. Submissions closed on 30 September 2010. During this period opportunities were also provided to discuss the paper at National Fora and by Deputy Commissioners at the State and Territory level.

A total of 59 responses to the Key Issues Paper were received, 13 of which were from National ESOs. A statistical breakdown of responses to the Key Issues Paper is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Key Issues Paper Response Statistics

	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	NAT	TOTAL	
RSL		10		4		1		1	1	**17**	28.8%
VVAA		1		1					1	**3**	5.1%
VVF					1					**1**	1.7%
WWG									1	**1**	1.7%
LEGACY		3	2	3					1	**9**	15.3%
PVA		1			1				1	**3**	5.1%
TPI						1			1	**2**	3.4%
VV&VF	1									**1**	1.7%
NAVAL				1			1		1	**3**	5.1%
DFWA		1			1				1	**3**	5.1%
VET SUPP CENTRE			1							**1**	1.7%
RAAFA					1	1	1		1	**4**	6.8%
AVADSC									2	**2**	3.4%
APPVA									1	**1**	1.7%
BEST Joint Venture							1			**1**	1.7%
VVPPAA		2								**2**	3.4%
TIP National Chair									1	**1**	1.7%
NMBVAA							1			**1**	1.7%
Carry On			1							**1**	1.7%
VSASA				1						**1**	1.7%
individual					1					**1**	1.7%
TOTAL	**1**	**18**	**4**	**10**	**3**	**5**	**4**	**1**	**13**	**59**	100.0%
	1.7%	30.5%	6.8%	16.9%	5.1%	8.5%	6.8%	1.7%	22.0%	100.0%	

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

6 STATISTICAL SUPPORT FOR THE REVIEW

The Review team has drawn on a significant amount of DVA data holdings as described in Attachment I. This was a large undertaking due to the various DVA IT systems and databases that required interrogation. The data is time specific and is not necessarily valid over the longer term. Given the time and effort required to provide these reports, it became clear why they have not been an integral part of decision-making processes on grant applications to date.

7 OVERVIEW OF ADVOCACY AND WELFARE SUPPORT

7.1 Introduction

Advocacy and welfare support is provided through a strong partnership arrangement between the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs). The relationship has evolved over many decades to the current position.

Key to the provision of advocacy and welfare support is the existence of four support programs, namely the:
1. Training Information Program (TIP)
2. Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grants Program
3. Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program
4. ESO Insurance Program – Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA).

TIP and the ESO Insurance Program are administered in a partnership arrangement, while BEST and V&CG are administered by DVA and subject to Ministerial determination.
A model depicting the relationship between the entities and support programs is below:

Advocacy and Welfare Support Relationship Model
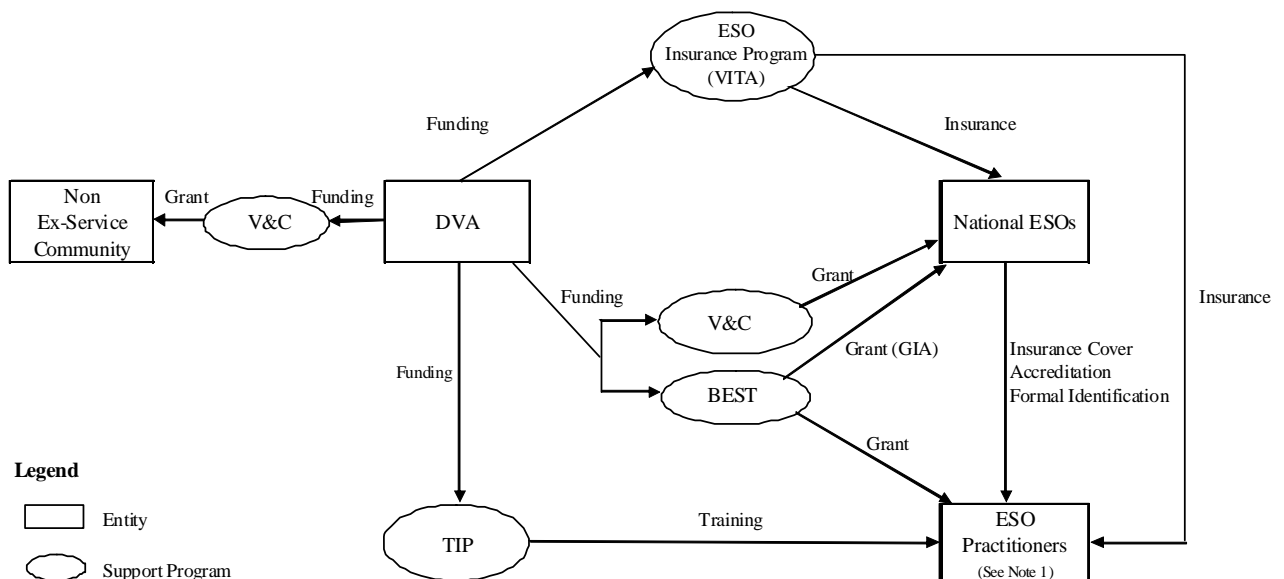
Note 1: This term encompasses the range of service models currently in place from individual volunteers to collaborative Veteran Support Centres.

7.2 Training Information Program

7.2.1 History of the Program

In his media release of 18 August 1993 the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator the Hon John Faulkner, announced that *"after consultations with the ex-service community, DVA will introduce a program this financial year to improve veteran's representation through better training of their advocates around Australia"*.

That commitment was reiterated in the Minister's Budget Review 1993-94 with the Government allocating $100,000 for the program.

The initiative was quickly implemented. By the end of October 1993, an Advocacy Training Program involving intensive three-day advocacy training courses had been developed and was being delivered to ESO advocates appearing before the Veterans' Review Board (VRB). The development of this program was in many ways the precursor of TIP. During the establishment of the program, the involvement of ESO advocacy practitioners and their equivalents in DVA was sought, and State Consultative Committees were established under the auspice of State Deputy Commissioners.

Over 400 ESO advocates and claims officers had received training by the time the program was replaced by the more extensive Training Information Program (TIP), which was announced in the 1994-95 Budget. At this time it was generally understood that the concept of this training regime and its relationship with the BEST program was based on the premise of ESO ownership and accountability.

TIP provides ESO pension officers, welfare officers and advocates with specific training to enable them to assist veterans and their dependants in accessing compensation and other benefits. Pension officer courses provide participants with information relating to compensation benefits, as well as details of how claims and applications are determined. Welfare officer courses provide information relating to issues of veterans' health, housing and other community services available outside of compensation and across jurisdictions.

7.2.2 TIP Funding

The TIP co-ordinator in each State is provided an indicative funds allocation for provision of TIP training and support, including salaries for administrative assistance to TIP Chairs. TIP Chairs verify the requirement for expenditure, which is approved through relevant DVA State Offices.

Funds are provided nationally to DVA to manage TIP Conferences, conversion of training modules to an eLearning environment and the high level training for the Tribunal Advocacy Course.

A summary of TIP funding from 2005-06 to 2009-10 is provided below.

Table 3: TIP Funding, 2005-06 to 2009-10

Source	Financial Year					Total ($m)
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	
V1 Funding ($m)	0.38	0.39	0.42	0.60	0.60	2.39
V2 Funding ($m)	0.60	0.60	0.60	1.00	1.00	3.80
Total ($m)	0.98	0.99	1.02	1.60	1.60	6.19

Source: DVA Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group

As can be seen, DVA provides a high level of support to TIP operations, with substantial financial support as well as administration of annual conferences, maintenance of training resources and partial funding for Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) activities.

7.2.3 Previous Reviews

Previous TIP reviews have included:
- May-August 2006 – internal DVA (John Geary/Pam Schartner) – "Training and Information Program – A Service Delivery Profile".
- Ongoing 2008/October 2009 – internal DVA working paper, data updated as required (Sean Farrelly/Mike Armitage, Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group) – "Sustainability of TIP and BEST".

7.3 Building Excellence in Support and Training Grants Program

7.3.1 History of the Program

BEST replaced the lapsed Claims Assistance Grants Scheme (CAGS) in 1999. CAGS was a 1996 budget initiative where funds were allocated over a three year period to resource ESOs to employ additional staff and acquire equipment to assist with the lodgement of primary claims for entitlements under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*.

Following a review of CAGS in 1998, the BEST grants program was developed in close consultation with ESO stakeholders. In response to the CAGS review, BEST incorporated what was regarded then as a more thorough monitoring of project outcomes and a more targeted approach to funding needs.

The BEST program provides financial assistance for salaries, on-going running costs and the purchase of computers office equipment, office furniture and reference material for ESO practitioner sites to assist with the lodgement of primary claims e.g. disability and service pension claims, war widow claims, applications for increase (AFI), review of decisions (Section 31 review), appeals, Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and support for welfare work.

7.3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the BEST program are to:
- improve the quality of claims received at the primary determining level and assist ESOs in achieving this objective;
- reduce the rate of appeals to the VRB and the AAT;
- promote the provision of welfare services to veterans and assist access to the veteran and service community, with BEST funded organisations providing information on a wide range of available welfare services and benefits; and/or
- provide support to the administrative and representative roles of national ESOs.

The BEST program is closely linked with TIP to enable greater integration between training and the provision of infrastructure. Organisations are required to ensure practitioners have undertaken the appropriate levels of TIP training prior to BEST funds being granted. This ensures that ESO practitioners are kept up to date with developments in the repatriation system, the welfare arena and in the use of electronic tools.

7.3.3 BEST Funding

BEST, like CAGS, provides resources to ESOs to help in the claims assistance process. It was always intended to provide supplementary funding, not meet full costs.

The Government initially allocated $5.4m over four years for BEST commencing in 1999. However, unlike CAGS, BEST is ongoing with annual funding indexed and with provision to continue this funding in future years. In 2007 an election commitment resulted in the BEST funds being increased by an additional $5m to enable the purchase of capital equipment by ESOs.

Table 4: BEST Bids and Grants, 2005-06 to 2009-10 (not including GIA)

BEST	No/$m	Financial Year						Total
		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2007-08 Capital	2008-09	2009-10	
Bids	Number	181	206	211	268	249	281	**1,396**
	$million	$5.0m	$6.5m	$6.6m	$2.5m	$7.5m	$10.0m	**$38.1m**
Grants allocated	Number	176	200	205	257	229	197	**1,264**
	$million	$3.5m	$3.6m	$3.6m	$2.1m	$4.1m	$4.0m	**$20.9m**
$Grant/$Bid Percentage		70%	55%	55%	84%	55%	40%	**55%**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

BEST grants are made on an annual basis. ESOs seeking grants are required to lodge applications during the first quarter of each year to the Department's Grants Unit in Adelaide, South Australia.

7.3.4 Previous Reviews

- April-July 2002 – Better Enterprises Pty Ltd – "Building Excellence in Support and Training – An Evaluation".
- April 2004 – internal DVA (Disability Compensation) – Future Strategic Partnership with Ex-Service Organisations.
- Ongoing 2008/2009 – internal DVA working paper, data updated as required (Sean Farrelly/Mike Armitage) – "Sustainability of TIP and BEST".
- December 2009 – internal DVA (SA Grants Unit) – BEST application form.

7.4 ESO Insurance Program - Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association

7.4.1 History of the Program

The Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) was established for the purpose of providing professional indemnity insurance for suitably qualified, trained and authorised members of ESOs who give advice in good faith to the ex-service community on matters relating to DVA pension and compensation entitlements and welfare support. VITA also provides an accident insurance policy to cover those people who conduct training under the auspices of TIP, provided their parent ESO is a member of VITA.

7.4.2 Funding

Membership is open to all ESOs and Veteran Support Centres. Where a national organisation joins, all of the state organisations and local sub-branches receive coverage. VITA charges a membership fee of $200. In the past, DVA has assisted with a 50% contribution to the cost of

the Professional Indemnity Insurance and full cost of the Accident Insurance. In 2010, the DVA contributions were $6,200 and $2,673 respectively.

7.4.3 Previous Reviews

There have been no reviews of VITA to date.

7.5 BEST Grants for National ESOs

7.5.1 History of the Program

The Grants-in-Aid (GIA) program came into operation as a cross-portfolio program in 1976 when the Department of Administrative Services first implemented the *Commonwealth Grants in Aid* program.

The emergence of the specific purpose programs BEST and V&CG resulted in some inevitable overlaps with BEST/GIA, and an increase in the numbers of programs to which ESOs may need to submit applications. The BEST/GIA guidelines have been reviewed periodically by DVA, primarily with the aim of improving accountability standards and acquittal requirements.

The most recent changes were made in October 2008 when GIA was subsumed into the BEST program. However, both the funding amount and the nature of the grant require GIA to be a separate "quarantined" component of BEST. The stated purpose of this funding stream is to provide support for the National ESOs in their administrative and representation roles.

7.5.2 BEST/GIA Funding

Available funds have remained small: in 1990, $70,000 was provided with increases over time leading to a current allocation of $145,000.

An analysis of the organisations to which grants were provided over the past four financial years is set out below:

Table 5: GIA Bids and Grants, 2005-06 to 2009-10 (GST Exclusive)

GIA	No/$m	Financial Year					Total
		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	
Bids	Number	13	13	16	13	10	**65**
	$million	0.364	0.389	0.288	0.184	0.307	**1,225**
Grants Allocated	Number	13	12	14	13	10	**62**
	$million	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.130	**0.710**
$Grant/$Bid Percentage		40%	37%	50%	79%	42%	**46%**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

7.5.3 Previous Reviews

The GIA program was the subject of an earlier review in August 2008 through the DVA Operations Support Group. The outcome of this review was that the GIA program was rolled into the BEST program for the purposes of administrative streamlining.

7.6 Veteran and Community Grants Program

7.6.1 History of the Program

There are three separately funded programs under the umbrella of the *Veteran and Community Grants* (V&CG) program. These are the Joint Venture Scheme established in 1985, Community Care Seeding Grants established in 1995 and Joint Venture Day Clubs which have been in operation since 1977. The three programs were amalgamated into V&CG in 1999.

V&C Grants provide funds for projects that address an identified need in the veteran community. The program provides funding for projects that support activities and services that sustain and/or enhance health and well-being and support carers. Projects supported include upgrades to premises, including kitchens and air conditioning/heating, social excursions, Men's Sheds, Day Clubs and computer courses and equipment. V&C Grants are not provided for recurrent costs.

Applicants must be an ESO, veteran representative group, community based organisation or private organisation that can demonstrate the ability to contribute to the welfare of members of the veteran community through a specific project or activity.

7.6.2 Funding

Information on V&C Grant funding for the past five financial years is provided below:

Table 6: V&CG Funding, 2005-06 to 2008-09

Grants Approved	Financial Year				
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	Total
number	227	230	232	280	969
$million	3.1	3.0	2.4	3.5	12.0

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

7.6.3 Previous Reviews

The program has been the subject of earlier reviews, including:
- November 2002 – internal DVA – Evaluation of the Community Care Seeding Grants
- September 2006 – internal DVA (V&C Grants Section) – Departmental Review of Community Care Grants Programme.
- November 2009 – internal DVA (SA Grants Unit) – V&CG guidelines

PART 2 - ASSESSMENT OF REVIEW TEAM FINDINGS

Structure of this Part
The Review team identified a range of issues either raised by the ESO community or other stakeholders as well as through their own observations. These issues were consolidated in the "Key Issues Paper" which has been discussed in Section 5.8. The Key Issues Paper contained a number of suggestions to which ESOs were asked to respond.

The approach used to document these suggestions and responses in Part 2 of this report is to:
1. note the findings and suggestions for change by the Review team;
2. provide a summary in table format of the responses to each suggestion received from ESOs;
3. provide a summary in table format of DVA's response to each suggestion;
4. where necessary, provide a discussion on the views of DVA.

The majority of issues relate to the support programs, TIP, BEST, BEST/GIA and VITA. Other more generic issues are covered separately.

> **NOTE:** The numbering of suggestions follows the sequence used by the Review team as published in the Key Issues Paper. As suggestions have been grouped into themes for the purpose of discussion in this report, suggestions do not always appear in numerical order.

8   TRAINING AND INFORMATION PROGRAM

8.1   Overview of Review Team Findings
The Review team acknowledged the earlier paper on the 'Sustainability of TIP and BEST' which, along with open discussions with John Printz the TIP National Chair and comments provided by TIP practitioners and trainers, greatly assisted the Review team in formulating its views.

The Review team was made aware of strong support for the TIP program. Observations included:
- all courses need to be widely available;
- there is enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these in overall program scope and geographical reach;
- interpersonal skills are vital and all courses should include interview techniques;
- an introductory course needs to be conducted to assess TIP course participants interest, intent and capability before further training is provided;
- the need for some level of accreditation is recognised by ESOs but there are concerns regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (i.e. Registered Training Organisations [RTOs], Technical and Further Education [TAFE] etc);
- national consistency (with flexibility for State requirements) of program design is desirable rather than individual State designs;
- both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;

- DVA needs to provide feedback regarding quality of claims submitted through TIP trained practitioners – linked to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s; and
- a tiered structure should be developed that could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained practitioners.

The Review team recognised the distinctive relationship between DVA, ESOs and the veteran community and believed that TIP is vital in maintaining that relationship in the provision of advocacy and welfare advice.

8.2 Certification/Accreditation

8.2.1 Review Team Findings

During consultation, the predominant view of ESOs was that it is unnecessary to move to a formal accreditation system for TIP through Registered Training Organisation registration and/or attendance at TAFE courses. The Review team agreed with this stance but suggested the development of what could essentially be seen as a competency based training framework[1]. The Review team understood this was in accord with the directions being taken by TIP Chairs and DVA.

The Review team believed that the framework should therefore be developed by DVA in collaboration with TIP and be subject to specified timelines for implementation. If necessary, this task could be undertaken through the engagement of a consultant with a requirement for follow-up reviews to take place to ensure progress towards national consistency. The Review team's view was that certification of trainees should be merit based, include online training (eLearning), exercise based learning (including face-to-face) and assessment, and have regard to the overall competency framework.

8.2.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
1. Develop a competency based training framework in which assessment and certification of trainees are merit based.	The suggestion was generally supported. However, two ESOs expressed concern that an assessment process may deter some people from volunteering. There was an additional suggestion that TIP trainers also need to be accredited, with several ESOs expressing concern about the quality of TIP trainers. Mentoring was suggested as an important component of the assessment process. Three ESOs suggested there needs to be more training specifically on MRCA and SRCA legislation.	DVA agrees with Suggestion 1. Trainers, training programs and trainees are viewed as three separate categories requiring certification. DVA also proposes that expert advice be engaged to determine, in consultation with TIP and ESOs, the levels of certification.

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[1] *A structured approach to training and assessment to assist individuals in acquiring skills and knowledge to perform a specific task to a certain standard. Outcomes are clearly stated so that trainees know what they have to do, trainers know what training needs to be provided and ESOs know the skill levels required.*

8.2.3 DVA Position

DVA endorses the concept of a certification framework for the provision of training for ESO members. However, while the Review team referred only to trainees, DVA considers that there are three distinct components of TIP that require certification:

1. the trainers
2. the training programs; and
3. the trainees.

Certification of trainers

There are standards of certification for trainers from attendance at a basic train-the-trainer course up to a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. While the latter is considered a minimum for people who are receiving significant remuneration for their work as a trainer delivering full programs to groups of people, it should not be imposed on people who are endeavouring to impart knowledge in a volunteer capacity on an on-the-job basis. However, it would be of benefit to have all volunteer trainers attend a basic train-the-trainer course to enable exposure to best practice training methods.

Certification of programs

In relation to the TIP training modules, the existing modules have been designed in consultation with ESOs, working practitioners and departmental experts, and with guidance from external training and development expertise. As the development of each module is finalised, the content is verified by DVA policy and legal practitioners. It should be noted that training modules for internal DVA use are not required to undergo any further accreditation than that which is in place for the TIP training modules. DVA considers that the current processes in place for the design and development of TIP training modules and this form of certification is sufficient.

Certification of trainees

The certification/accreditation of trainees is currently the responsibility of ESOs. ESOs are responsible for selecting potential pension/welfare officers and advocates and directing them into the role(s) for which they seem most suited and in which they are interested. A basic assessment of each attendee's understanding of the material should be an outcome of the course. A certificate of attendance is currently issued at the completion of each course. The certificate could be modified to indicate that the attendee has attained the level of understanding required to be able to move into a trainee role within their organisation.. The trainee would then return to the ESO and commence their new role with the appropriate level of mentoring and on-the-job training. When the organisation was satisfied that the practitioner had achieved a level of competence, it would formally accredit the practitioner.

It is noted that formal assessment in the eLearning environment will be easier to achieve than in a classroom environment.

DVA also notes that some ESOs have mentoring programs in place. DVA believes that all ESOs should implement a mentoring program for all practitioners, no matter what level of training they may have received and whether volunteer or remunerated. This is further discussed in more detail in Section 8.6 below.

DVA also recommends that expert advice be engaged to determine, in consultation with TIP and ESOs, the levels of certification.

8.3 Training Program

8.3.1 Review Team Findings

Since 2005, TIP has provided the following training:

Table 7: TIP Courses and Participants 2005-06 to 2009-10

TIP Course	Number	Financial Year					Total
		2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	
Pension Officer	Courses	134	141	107	86	80	**548**
	Participants	1,594	1,518	1,157	918	1090	**6277**
Welfare Officer	Courses	73	84	90	51	70	**368**
	Participants	870	1,027	1,342	1,043	646	**4928**
Military Compensation	Courses	42	44	34	39	42	**201**
	Participants	520	521	416	450	498	**2405**
Total	**Courses**	**249**	**269**	**231**	**176**	**192**	**1117**
	Participants	**2984**	**3066**	**2915**	**2411**	**2234**	**13610**

Source: DVA Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group

The activity appears substantial. However, given the considerable investment by both DVA and ESOs, the Review team believed it is very important that:

- there is more data provided on numbers of trained practitioners currently operating, not just those trained in any one year;
- it is clear that there is a targeted approach to training;
- there is evidence that new practitioners are supported and mentored; and
- there is visibility of training outcomes.

At the TIP 2009 National Conference it was agreed that consistent training modules across all TIP courses be adopted nationally. These should be developed and regularly updated taking into consideration views expressed by ESOs. The Review team agreed with this direction and that development should be in consultation with TIP trainers and using feedback from TIP trainees.

In regard to national consistency of course offerings, the Review team noted and supported ESO suggestions that:

- given interpersonal skills are vital, TIP training at each level should include a component on interview techniques (currently only provided in the basic eLearning and follow up face-to-face welfare courses); and
- brief introductory training (as provided in some locations) should be adopted nationally so as to gauge the longer term interest, intent and capability of a participant.

The Review team found that TIP practitioners have fairly widespread knowledge and understanding of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) and its compensation focus, but are less comfortable with the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) and the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) and the emphasis on rehabilitation. The Review team noted that rehabilitation is included in the eLearning Level 1 MRCA module and is in development for incorporation into Level 2 in the near future. The Review team suggested that rehabilitation is a priority for the TIP training as an outcome for veterans and serving members.

The consultation process showed that increased DVA support at TIP training and to TIP trainers is sought, including involvement and contribution at all TIP courses, as well as at welfare courses. In this regard the Review team noted that there is a perception in some

quarters that DVA representatives do not always have the knowledge to provide advice across all of the Acts administered by DVA. Whilst the Review team felt that this was not wide spread and that DVA has arrangements in place to ensure appropriately trained staff are available, sometimes staff availability is problematic and DVA should address this.

The Review team identified that there is genuine enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach. This would have the advantage of providing a portable consistent knowledge-base that is easily accessible to a wide range of people. It would also allow self-paced distance learning, an important factor when providing for a volunteer supported system.

The Review team believed that eLearning needs to be seen in the context of the overall training framework and should be complemented with face-to-face teaching, case study work and post training activity and support.

It concluded that other points in relation to online learning modules that need to be taken into account include:
- lack of IT skills by many volunteers and motivation to learn;
- non or limited availability of internet access in some regional locations; and
- whether eLearning could be accessed through local community education facilities.

The TIP program has seen an increase in welfare training to meet the needs of the ageing veteran population with the development of an eLearning demonstration welfare module. There was agreement at the 2009 TIP National Conference for this module to be developed further, recognising the possibility that different levels of welfare modules may be required. The Review team was advised that a demonstration module has now been finalised and accepted by TIP. Welfare modules deemed suitable for conversion to eLearning have been identified. However the work required to develop and manage this relies heavily on volunteer participation and input. Therefore, broader access to welfare training in an eLearning environment would not be available until some time in the 2010-11 financial year.

The Review team also believed the eLearning Level 1 Basic Welfare Course should be undertaken by all trainees to ensure completeness of skills and their capacity to support the veteran community.

8.3.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
2. In the delivery and continued development of TIP courses:		
2.1 ensure nationally consistent training modules are provided to participants;	This suggestion was well supported by ESOs. The TIP National Chair response pointed out that the National Training Consistency Project has now been running for 2 years.	Agreed.
2.2 develop minimum course standards;	The suggestion was well supported in principle, but few ESOs made specific comments. Two ESOs commented that minimum standards are already in place. The TIP National Chair response was: - training modules have been developed in consultation with ESOs, working practitioners, Departmental expertise and the guidance of substantial Training Development assets; - after each module is developed, it is tabled for policy and legal scrutiny by relevant Departmental experts.	Agreed.
2.3 provide brief introductory training to gauge the longer term interest, intent and capability of course participants;	Support was expressed from some ESOs with no real discussion provided about the pros and cons. TIP National Chair disagreed. He commented that such a course would be poor value for money; potentially duplicate content from existing courses; and that it is the role of the ESO to select and assess the suitability of potential practitioners, not that of TIP. One ESO agreed that an introductory course would involve an additional workload on TIP practitioners and be a duplication of some subjects. Some ESOs commented that potential practitioners should be vetted before receiving any TIP training, with one suggestion that they undergo a period of mentoring prior to TIP training.	Not agreed. DVA proposes that an Introductory Information Pack be developed for ESOs to provide to potential practitioners.
2.4 ensure a component on interview techniques is provided at each level;	The suggestion was generally supported with little comment from ESOs. Only one ESO disagreed with the recommendation on the grounds that interview techniques at every level of training would be "overkill." Interview techniques are already covered in the majority of Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 courses.	Agreed.
2.5 ensure the Level 1 Welfare Course is undertaken by all TIP practitioners.	The suggestion was generally supported with little comment from ESOs. Three ESOs commented that some assessment of interpersonal skills is important. One ESO suggested that this should not be a requirement but should be presented as an option.	Agreed.

8.3.3 DVA Position

DVA notes the TIP National Consistency Project, the purpose of which is to create a standard national training module for use in all locations. DVA also acknowledges the progress made since the project began in 2009 with completed courses for:

- VEA Compensation Level 1 and 2 Pension Officers,
- Welfare Support Level 1and 2 Welfare Officers,
- SRCA/MRCA compensation Level 1 and 2 Claims Officer,
- War/Defence Widow(er)s compensation Level 1,
- Advocate Level 3 (VRB), and
- Advocate Level 4 (AAT).

DVA does not support introductory courses. The general information that may be included in such a course could be provided by the ESO during their selection process. DVA notes that there is a Welfare Brochure available on the DVA website. As an alternative, DVA proposes the development of an Information Pack that could be provided by ESOs to potential practitioners.

DVA supports the suggestion to ensure a component on interview techniques is provided at each TIP level and notes that most courses already have this component included.

DVA agrees with the suggestion to ensure that the Level 1 Welfare Course is undertaken by all TIP practitioners and notes the feedback received from a number of Consultative Fora advising that pension and advocate practitioners invariably are requested to assist in welfare matters for their veterans.

8.4 Training Program Structure

8.4.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team suggested the development of a tiered structure for TIP practitioners. The team agreed with the current structure (see table below) which is based on a matrix that encompasses nationally consistent levels (Levels 1-4) and streams (welfare/VEA/MRCA etc), and suggested that the level at which particular practitioners are classified should serve as a guide to the way in which mentoring is provided across all ESOs.

Table 8: TIP Course Matrix

Lvl	Compensation VEA	Compensation SRCA & MRCA	Compensation War/Defence Widow/ers	Welfare & Support	Skills enhancement courses, seminars and expositions
	CURRENT TIP COURSE STREAMS AND LEVELS MATRIX				
1	Basic Pensions Course [Pension Officer Lvl 1]	Basic Compensation Course [Claims Officer Lvl 1]	Basic Widow/ers Compensation Course	Basic Welfare Course [Welfare Officer Lvl 1]	- GARP User Course - Electronic Tools Training
2	Advanced Pensions Course [Pension Officer Lvl 2]	Advanced Compensation Course [Claims Officer Lvl 2]	Advanced Widow/ers Compensation Course [Proposed]	Advanced Welfare Course [Welfare Officer Lvl 2]	- SOP User Course - VPAD User Course
3	Basic Advocacy Course [VRB] [Advocate Level 3]	Basic Advocacy Course [VRB] [Advocate Level 3]			- Above General Rate Course [AGR]
4	Advanced Advocacy Course [AAT] [Advocate Level 4]	Advanced Advocacy Course [AAT] [Advocate Level 4]			- Advocacy Seminars
					- VEA Pension Refresher Course - VEA Pension Officer Seminar - SRCA/MRCA Military Compensation Refresher Course - SRCA/MRCA Military Compensation Seminar - Welfare and Support Refresher Course - Income Support Seminar - Welfare Expositions - Well-being Seminar

Source: DVA Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group

8.4.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
3. Endorse a tiered matrix based structure for TIP practitioners.	The suggestion was well supported with few comments. Concern was expressed by one ESO over the lack of refresher training in the matrix.	Agreed.

8.5 TIP Committees

8.5.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team believed it is necessary to ensure that TIP Committee structures and governance align with best practice.

The Review team found that the current process in selecting TIP Chairs appeared to vary across states and invoked some criticism during the course of the Review, including comments made in submissions that there is a:

- lack of transparency, accountability and accessibility of overall TIP governance;
- disconnect between TIP and ESOs in some locations;
- lack of a formal selection process for TIP Chairs who should have full knowledge of legislation and effects on superannuation, and should be qualified to TIP Level 4; and
- need for a selection process for TIP trainers to determine their suitability for the role.

The Review team noted the significant work being undertaken by TIP Chairs to respond to the changing needs of the veteran community. Whilst not agreeing with all of the above comments, the Review team proposed that TIP be strengthened to include transparency and accountability of TIP Chairs, at both the National and State levels, with the development of DVA guidelines which would include:

- the appointment and selection process for TIP Chairs and trainers/presenters;
- specification of length of tenure for TIP Chairs;
- prescribed minimum level of skills and knowledge for TIP Chairs;
- development of a job profile for these positions;
- guidance on TIP funds usage and acquittal;
- advice regarding early communication to ESOs about training schedules and availability; and
- the participation of State Training Consultative Groups (TCG) in this process.

The Review team felt that these guidelines would ensure best practice and also support current TIP approaches. These guidelines should be developed jointly by DVA and TIP.

The Review team understood the need for Deputy Commissioners to exercise local autonomy in the management of their respective TCGs but suggested that they seek to ensure the above guidelines, when developed, are consistently applied.

8.5.2   Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
4.1 Develop DVA guidelines so that TIP Committee structures and governance reflect best practice.	Suggestion 4.1 was highly supported by ESOs responding to the Key Issues Paper. It was suggested that TIP guidelines be developed in consultation with ESOs.	Agreed. DVA is aware that governance arrangements vary between States and considers that this is not a best practice approach. DVA proposes that a model for adoption in all States be developed: • with involvement from DVA, TIP and each state Deputy Commissioner; and • taking into account the requirements specified by the Review team.

8.6   Mentoring

8.6.1   Review Team Findings

Many comments were made about the lack of suitably qualified mentors to assist advocates and pension and welfare officers in their work. Participants at the Focus Groups felt that insufficient consideration is given by ESOs when nominating a person to attend a TIP course and the subsequent ability to support that person to perform the work.

Comments were also made that sometimes nominations for TIP training have included individuals who have no intention of working with the veteran community afterwards. To ensure this does not happen, priority should be given to individuals who are making a longer term commitment to helping the veteran community. As noted in Sections 8.1 and 8.3, it was

suggested that an introductory course be conducted to assess the longer term interest, intent and capability of participants before further training is provided.

Other suggestions included:
- a mentor being assigned to a person who has been nominated for TIP training;
- mentors being available by phone and online;
- all attendees at TIP training should be offered a mentor;
- mentors could include DVA staff with knowledge of specific legislation; and
- that opportunities be provided for ESOs to advise both TIP and DVA on the work of advocates/pension officers/welfare officers.

The Review team agreed with the above points and in addition suggested that a mentor be specified on course nomination forms. The Review team also expected that over time, it is more likely that mentors would be full-time paid advocates.

Furthermore, the Review team believed that longer term planning for the TIP Program should include developing a policy framework for ESOs to fully support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers working in or for the organisation, both in a voluntary or paid role. This would require involvement by ESOs, TIP Chairs and DVA.

8.6.2   Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Response	DVA
4.2 Strengthen mentoring by developing a policy framework to support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers.	Suggestion 4.2 was highly supported by ESOs. Mentoring was seen by most ESOs to be an important component of the training process and two ESOs outlined systems of mentoring that could be used. One ESO expressed concern that mentoring may deter some volunteers from providing their services. The TIP National Chair response suggested that mentoring, along with on-the-job-training and overall management of the practitioner, is the responsibility of the ESO. The role of TIP is to offer assistance to the ESO community on how best to undertake mentoring.	Agreed. DVA proposes the development of a mentoring framework in consultation with TIP Chairs. DVA considers that the availability of mentors for practitioners should be mandatory.
4.3 Require trainees to specify an ESO or other suitable mentor – where available – on TIP course nomination forms.	Highly supported. No significant comments.	Agreed.

8.7 Quality Assurance (QA)

8.7.1 Review Team Findings

Given the level of investment in TIP by both DVA and ESOs, the Review team suggested that the existing QA system within DVA be deployed to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs.

This issue was raised at all Focus Groups, where participants pointed to the need for DVA to monitor/evaluate primary claims and provide feedback to relevant ESO and State TIP Chair regarding the quality of claims. This should directly relate to the reporting requirements within the BEST program, in particular claims acceptance rates. TIP trainers also considered this to be an important factor in identifying training needs, including the need for refresher training.

The Review team noted that VITA includes the requirement to ensure regular refresher training is undertaken to ensure professional indemnity coverage for practitioners. It was understood that State TIP Chairs keep a list/database of trained practitioners to assist in identifying when refresher training is necessary, and the Review team believed this should be consistently applied, maintained, monitored and reported.

8.7.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
4.4 The existing Quality Assurance system within DVA be deployed to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs.	Suggestion 4.4 was strongly supported by respondents, with several ESOs commenting that DVA feedback on claims submitted is essential to improve the quality of claims. One comment was that specific feedback should be given to paid advocates so that mentoring needs can be identified. Another ESO suggested that a system to provide feedback on quality of claims, such as QUOKKA which was trialled in Queensland, should be completed by all delegates for all claims. The viewpoint of the TIP National Chair is that quality assurance feedback is a matter between DVA and the ESO responsible for the practitioner. The Committee believes the role of TIP in this matter is to ensure that feedback from DVA Claims Assessors and ESOs is included in refresher training courses, as well as to provide feedback via newsletters, email and post.	Agreed. DVA understands the need for, and value of, feedback to ESOs and practitioners on the quality of assisted claims. All stakeholders have a role to play in the provision of feedback. Further investigation and consultation is required to determine the most appropriate quality assurance processes and tools.

8.7.3 DVA Position

DVA understands the need for, and value of, feedback to ESOs and practitioners on the quality of assisted claims. It is acknowledged that:

- an informal arrangement is already in place in some locations where information is fed back directly to practitioners;
- feedback is provided to TIP attendees during refresher training by DVA staff;
- DVA staff also attend state TIP Training Consultative Group Committee meetings to provide feedback and address issues raised at training courses; and
- other feedback is provided by TIP via email, post and newsletters.

DVA considers that all stakeholders have a role to play in the provision of feedback.
To complement the processes above already in place, DVA should provide feedback to:

- ESOs regarding practitioners who are lodging claims that are either constantly meeting or not meeting the required standards;
- National and State TIP committees on trends, for example, where information is omitted or it is evident that the practitioner does not understand the legislation sufficiently. This could be addressed/emphasised in future courses.

In addition, DVA should be reviewing VRB and AAT decisions, where appeals have been both upheld and denied, to identify where trends may be occurring. This could then be fed back to claims assessors and ESOs as appropriate.

DVA acknowledges that an IT system could facilitate automation of some of the processes. Further analysis is required to determine the most appropriate system and the cost/benefit.

In summary, DVA supports the suggestions noting that further investigation and consultation is required to determine the most appropriate quality assurance processes and tools.

8.8   Public Register

8.8.1   Review Team Findings

Surprisingly, there was little comment provided through submissions on the Emerging Themes paper in relation to the 2007 pre-election commitment to establish a register of ESO officials and conduct regular surveys of them. Of the 133 submissions received, three agreed that a register should be held and maintained, another suggested there should be a process of ESO involvement from the grass roots if this path is taken and only one submission rejected the proposal. In Focus Group discussions, the matter was rarely raised.

Taking into account privacy and confidentiality issues, the Review team concluded that such a register and surveys are not necessary. However, ESOs, in adhering to the competency based training framework mentioned above, would be required to maintain a list of TIP trained practitioners in their locality who can assist a veteran, war widow or dependant. Currency of that list and referral to another ESO where expert assistance can be provided is essential. It is also recommended that DVA staff be able to access those lists to enable referral when required.

In this regard the Review team differentiated between this list and that required to be maintained by TIP Chairs.

The Review team also supported the practice that ESOs publicise their advocacy and welfare services to the veteran community, indicating they have TIP trained personnel available to assist.

8.8.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
4.5 Require State TIP Chairs to maintain a current list of all TIP practitioners in their State and their qualifications (to ensure refresher training is undertaken for VITA professional indemnity), with DVA and the public able to access those lists for relevant purposes.	Suggestion 4.5 received mixed support from ESOs. While there is support for the concept of a register, three ESOs commented that the register should be maintained at a national rather than a state level, and several ESOs expressed concern over the public availability of information on the register. One ESO suggested that State TIP Chairs should maintain a list of trained students, while State ESOs maintain a list of TIP practitioners. The TIP Committee is concerned about the impact on their volunteer resources if a public register is included as part of the TIP responsibilities. Currently all State Training Consultative Groups (TCGs) have representatives on the IPSS stakeholder committees and provide serving members of the ADF with contact to the "most appropriate" practitioner.	Partially agreed. DVA does not support the public release of practitioner details.
4.6 Require ESOs to maintain a list of local TIP practitioners for referral purposes, with DVA and the public able to access the lists for relevant purposes.	Suggestion 4.6 was generally supported but again there was concern over public availability of information on the register, i.e. exactly who will have access to the information and for what purposes. One ESO commented that maintenance of a register should be DVA's responsibility, not that of ESOs, while another commented that maintaining such a register may be "beyond the capacity" of some ESOs.	Partially agreed. DVA does not support the public release of practitioner details. DVA recommends that a single register be developed by DVA to record data appropriate to the needs of TIP, ESOs and DVA and that appropriate access be provided to TIP and ESOs.

8.8.3 DVA Position

ESOs are best placed to maintain a register of their own practitioners including the following data:
- TIP level
- Training data
  - Course(s)
  - date(s)
  - refresher course(s)
- Accreditation ID issued and date.

TIP is best placed to record:
- Training data
  - Attendee(s)
  - Course(s)
  - date(s)
  - refresher course(s).

DVA should maintain a register of ESOs with practitioners and the expertise that exists within each ESO, e.g.:
- Beaudesert RSL – Welfare only
- Naval Association Capricornia – Pensions, Advocate (VRB only).

A process needs to be developed and endorsed by all parties that, if a request for assistance is received by:

- DVA, the requestor will be advised of the nearest ESO that has the particular expertise that they are seeking;
- an ESO, the requestor will be advised that the expertise is available at that ESO and an appointment scheduled or they will be advised of the nearest ESO that has the particular expertise that they are seeking;
- TIP, the requestor will be advised of the nearest ESO that has the particular expertise that they are seeking.

The register of ESOs, only displaying particular expertise that is available from each ESO and not practitioner details, could be publicly available on DVA's website and each ESOs website.

For privacy reasons alone, DVA believes that individual practitioner details not be published. It should be the responsibility of each ESO/Veterans Support Centre to manage the case/welfare workload for each of their practitioners. This approach would provide protection for practitioners from receiving constant calls, taking on too heavy a workload and suffering burn out as a consequence. It also assists in ensuring that the sponsoring ESO is referring complex cases to advocates with appropriate competence.

In summary, DVA partially supports the recommendations. DVA agrees that a single register be developed but only non-personalised information be made available.

8.9   TIP PhotoID

8.9.1   Review Team Findings

In addition to the above discussion about moving towards a competency based training framework, the Review team also noted suggestions during the consultation process that a TIP photoID should be issued to TIP practitioners and trainers. Suggestions included that it should include the name of the person, the ESO or organisation they are representing and a validity date linked to the level of TIP competency achieved.

The Review team endorsed the suggestion as this would provide evidence to support personal indemnity though VITA coverage.

8.9.2   Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
4.7 Issue a TIP photoID to all trained practitioners.	ESOs responding to the Key Issues Paper voiced strong views both for and against a photo ID card. ESOs in favour of the concept claimed it is important to have a nationally consistent form of identification and that this will clearly indicate to clients the level of training of practitioners. ESOs against the idea said that a national photoID system will be resource inefficient, unnecessarily bureaucratic and difficult to administer. There was also concern it would be difficult to keep the card up to date. Several ESOs believe that the current name tags issued by ESOs work well and do not need to be replaced.	Partially agreed. DVA recommends a non-photo identification badge be a minimum stand of identification for all practitioners with a strong preference for a photo where feasible.

8.9.3   DVA Position

Currently, some ESOs provide an identification badge to practitioners. DVA agrees that all ESOs should provide all practitioners with an identification badge and that the Review team's suggested content is appropriate. This could be provided when the letter of accreditation is provided to practitioners. DVA believes that there would be a number of logistical issues around the inclusion of a photograph in the badge. Not all ESOs will have access to photographic equipment linked to the software required to produce a photographic identification badge. While facilities exist in DVA offices, those in rural and remote areas would be required to travel specifically to obtain a photographic identification badge.

DVA proposes that a non-photo identification badge be a minimum standard of identification for all practitioners with a strong preference for inclusion of a photo where feasible.

8.10   TIP Funding

8.10.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team believed that funding should not only be continued to support the TIP program but suggested that further financial support be provided to extend the development and provision of eLearning modules. The Review team was advised that estimated additional funding of $480,000 would enable the following:

- $200,000 to expand the range of eLearning modules, particularly for welfare;
- $180,000 over two financial years to provide full-time management of the conversion of existing training modules to the eLearning environment, including liaison with volunteer advocates in its development;
- $60,000 to provide "train-the-trainer" training to TIP presenters; and
- $40,000 for a workshop to support consistent national content, contribute to competency based learning ideals including outcomes to achieve accreditation/certification.

8.10.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
5. Continue DVA funding of TIP training, including extending the development and provision of eLearning modules.	Suggestion 5 was strongly supported by ESOs. Some suggested that modules for refresher courses be developed as a priority and that eLearning modules be completed as a pre-requisite to attending face to face training courses. One ESO noted that computer literacy may be an issue if eLearning modules are to become standard. Increased funding for TIP was highly supported. The TIP National Chair response pointed out that some progress has been made with the implementation of new eLearning modules since the Key Issues Paper was published.	Agreed. DVA notes that the additional costs could be met from current TIP funding. As in the past, competing initiatives will be prioritised.

8.11 Defence and Serving Members

8.11.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team recognised the increasing role being played by Defence through the deployment of Reservists in providing advice to serving members, and to those serving members about to transition to civilian life. At the time of its investigation, the Review team noted also that the advisory role previously undertaken by DVA personnel to provide additional transition support to medically separating ADF members through the Transition Management Service (TMS) was to be discontinued on 30 June 2010. The end date has since been changed to 30 June 2011.

The Review team was advised that Defence intends that the appointment of Australian Defence Force (ADF) case officers does not remove the current responsibilities of DVA staff, nor the access or role that advocates or ESOs provide.

The Review team considered that, whilst Defence is of the view that it will be able to provide advice and support, there could possibly be an increase in requests for assistance from ESOs by serving members seeking an independent viewpoint.

The Review team found that there was a differential level of access to military bases enjoyed by ESOs across the country. Where access was freely available and encouraged by the base commander, effective advice to serving members and their families was evident.

In its visit to the VVPPA Centre at Granville in Sydney, the Review team noted the extent of coverage of Defence bases that the female team of advocates from that Centre have been able to achieve. This is largely due to those advocates being spouses of serving members and having close links to bases, not only in NSW but also in other States, taking a holistic approach to their work and due to word of mouth referrals. The Review team thought that over time this pro-active approach could be replicated at other Centres.

In this regard, the Review team believed that TIP practitioners should continue their relationship with ADF establishments and provide support to people providing compensation and pension advice to Defence force personnel, or directly to serving personnel. The Review team was aware that TIP is a member of the Integrated People Support Services (IPSS) Regional Stakeholder Forum that oversights the ADF discharge process in various locations. The ongoing participation in the IPSS would assist TIP to retain that link with soon to be discharging members. Refer to Attachment J for more information on the TMS and IPSS.

8.11.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
6. Encourage TIP practitioners to continue contact with Defence establishments and in their role within the IPSS framework.	Suggestion 6 was generally supported by ESOs. One respondent suggested that a resident ESO representative be located on bases to provide information to serving members. Another suggestion was that a formal directive from CDFS guaranteeing access would ensure a universal approach.	Agreed.

# 9   BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORT AND TRAINING GRANTS PROGRAM

9.1   BEST Grant Funding

9.1.1   Review Team Findings

Distribution of Funding

BEST annual funding is approximately $3.8m (GST exclusive), indexed and with provision to continue in future years. As illustrated in the chart below, there has been an apparent inequity in distribution of BEST funding across the States, with Victoria receiving a significantly higher amount of funds per capita than the other States. The Review team understood that initial allocations are determined on a per capita basis but that final allocations across the States may vary due to the volume of applications and the items requested. Nevertheless, the Review team suggested that per capita allocations to each State should be the core determinant for grant funding.

Chart 12a in Attachment P

Australia
DVA Best Funding vs Net Beneficiaries
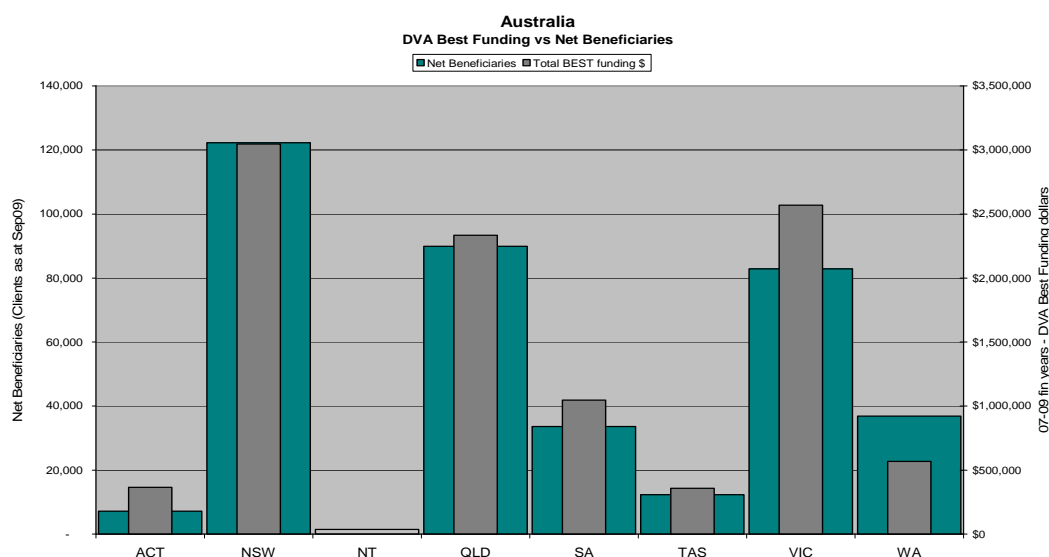
Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

Assessment for Funding

Demonstrated sponsor support is another issue raised during the Review that needs to be considered. That is, an assessment on a case by case basis during the grant assessment process with a need to recognise that BEST grants "assist" rather than fully fund ESO operations. The Review team was aware that some larger ESOs have a sound financial base and should have the capacity to contribute towards ongoing operational support for advocacy and welfare. It was suggested by the team that the BEST grant assessment processes need to take into consideration this capacity for ESOs to contribute (including 'in kind' support) and to take into account the variable levels of ESO and other support that is available, for example:

- access by Victorian ESOs to the Victorian Veterans' Fund (previously known as the Patriotic Fund);
- access to funds for Queensland ESOs through profits from the RSL Art Union lotteries; and
- other community support e.g. "peppercorn" rents provided through local councils.

In the general context of the above discussion, it should be noted that ESOs have access to other government funding sources from:

- other Commonwealth Departments e.g. the "Broadband for Seniors" funding initiative and the Volunteer Grants program of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs;
- State and Local government initiatives; and
- community based organisations.

Indeed, there are other organisations that could directly provide services that are relevant to the needs of the groups that ESOs represent. Alignment with these other services and avoidance of unnecessary overlap should be an imperative for ESOs and considered by DVA in assessing applications for grants funding.

Along with the above and although outside the Terms of Reference, the Review team was concerned that in some locations there appears to be segmentation between funds obtained through ESO club/social activities and the extent to which these become available for veteran support. To this end the Review team was of the view that prioritisation of funding should apply, with an income and assets means test approach utilised. This could entail a requirement for some level of "matching" funds criteria for ESOs in the funding formula and matrix used to assess grant applications.

In regard to the matrix, the basic rationale of the Review team was that monies should in large part be granted where there is an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers. This focus on supporting existing and prospective veteran support centres would lead logically to Funding Principles and application of a Funding Formula (discussed further at Section 9.1 below) that encompass incentives for ESOs to embrace a co-operative approach.

Funding Principles and Funding Formula
There were a number of suggestions advanced to the Review team as to how funding should be determined, for example one suggestion was that criteria for funding should be based on a "fee for service" (that is, a scale of fees be established and funds provided for services delivered, e.g. basic consultation, preparation and lodgement of claim, additional consultations, preparation of cases for VRB/AAT). A similar suggestion was to apply a sliding scale for determining grant allocation based on a primary claim representing a set value, with additional amounts set for Section 31 and VRB reviews etc.
The Review team acknowledged that these and other suggestions had merit but on balance concluded that the following Funding Principles should apply:

1. There will be a State indicative allocation made in the first instance.

2. Funding is to support the further development of the Veteran Support Centre model(s) (or an integrated approach to service delivery, discussed in Section 13) and be predicated on the veteran population and service needs of a particular location.

3. Ideally, funding will be in line with a formula based approach, applied to an assessment of input/output data for a region/area such as:
   a. veteran population with weightings applied, e.g. for age;
   b. historical data:
      i. numbers of veterans assisted;
      ii. primary and secondary claim numbers (by VEA/SRCA/MRCA);

iii. number of VRB/AAT claims/matters;
iv. number and type of welfare activities provided;
c. projection statistics – similar to above; and
d. numbers of salaried staff, volunteers and hours worked.

4. Prioritisation of funding will apply, with an income and asset means test approach being utilised, including funds matching criteria.

It was recognised though that this formula based approach may be difficult to achieve in the short term due to the lack of data sets currently available. Nevertheless, the Review team suggested that this approach be applied as soon as IT system enhancements and/or developments provide sufficient data to enable the approach to be utilised. An indication of the Funding Formula to be applied is provided at Attachment K.

It was also suggested there be a lead time of approximately three years before full implementation occurs, and that in the interim some demonstration projects be funded and evaluated.

Evidence Base for Assessment
Comments were made to the Review team about transparency in the BEST grants process. In particular, the need to have better informed processes and for assessments to be more evidence based. To achieve this, access to information to support the BEST grant assessment (e.g. ESO membership numbers versus numbers of veterans supported and services provided, validity of data provided etc) would be required. Factors such as these would need to be addressed in any funding formula.

An example of the difficulty in measuring the level of work undertaken by practitioners (both paid and volunteers), is the lack of data captured by both ESOs and DVA. The Review team prepared the following graphs that show the number of claim decisions[2] made by DVA compared with how many claims have been identified as having a representative[3].
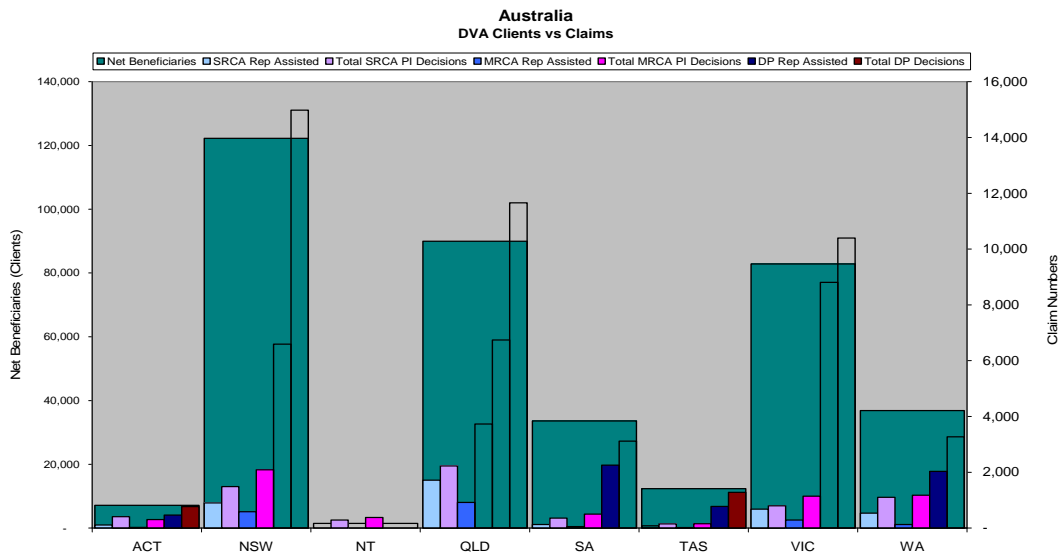
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[2] *Regardless of the outcome of the decision. The numbers do not include applications made to the VRB or AAT.*

[3] *A representative in this instance, i.e. nominated on a claim, could be a lawyer, a TIP trained practitioner, a friend or a family member.*
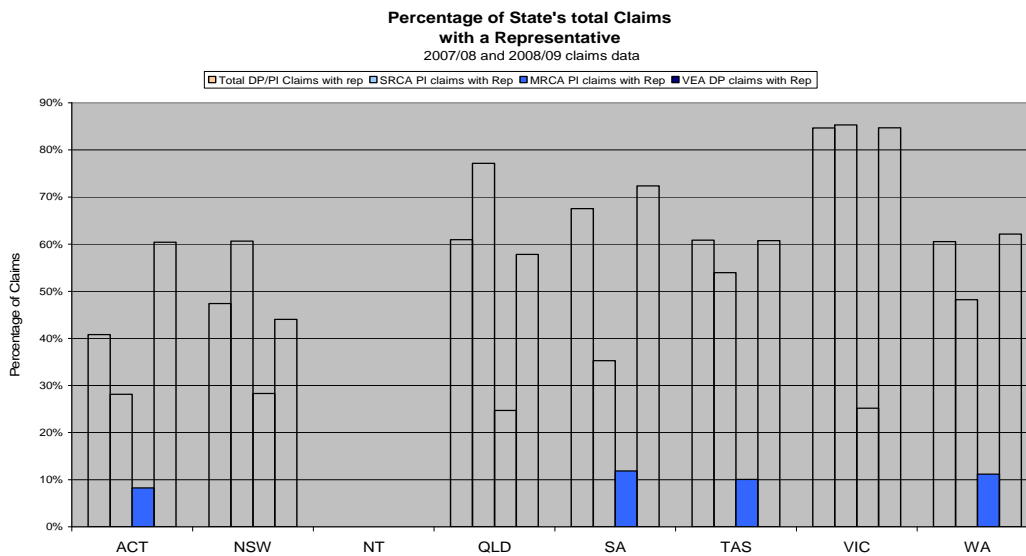
Chart 1b in Attachment P

Australia
DVA Clients vs Claims

Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

Chart 11 in Attachment P

Percentage of State's total Claims
with a Representative
2007/08 and 2008/09 claims data

Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

The Review team understood that the missing variable is the extent to which "non represented" claims could in fact involve a level of practitioner support.

The Review team also noted the extremely low percentage of representation for MRCA claims submitted to the Department. Possible explanations were that there is a larger number of younger veterans prepared to submit their own claims, or that some assistance may be provided by ESO advocates, or DVA staff, but these are not recorded on the claim form when submitted.

9.1.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
18. Apply a set of Funding Principles and, in the longer term, a Funding Formula based on demographic data, service delivery needs and sponsor support.	Suggestion 18 was partially supported by ESOs. There was some concern that the use of per capita allocations as the core determinant for funding will not take into account demographic variables that may affect the amount of funding required under specific circumstances. For example, in states such as Western Australia a centre may service a vast geographical area requiring practitioners to travel long distances to clients and thereby increasing the cost of service per veteran. One ESO commented that greater priority should be given to ESOs active in regional networks, especially in remote areas. Another concern was that there is currently too much funding going to larger, wealthier ESOs in metropolitan areas for salaries and not enough support for volunteers in regional areas. A further comment was that, whilst allocation of funding by region is useful, there needs to be an ability to 'smooth out' funding across regions and States to distribute funds equitably.	Agreed.
7.1 Utilise per capita allocations to each State as the core determinant for BEST grant funding.	Suggestion 7.1 was supported by ESOs. However, it was noted that, for a formula based approach to work, a robust system of calculating workload needs to be properly developed. A major reservation was that it will be too difficult to devise a funding formula that factors in all variables.	Agreed.
7.5 In the development of the Funding Formula, build in factors for: 7.5.1 encouraging the further extension of integrated service delivery models (including Veteran Support Centres); 7.5.2 reflecting a level of sponsor contribution (including means testing and "matching"); and 7.5.3 reflecting other sources of funding and services provided through other organisations.	Suggestion 7.5 received general support although some of the details are disputed. There is concern that a mathematical formula is unlikely to be effective due to the multitude of variables involved. There is also concern that: • ESOs that justify "stand alone" status should have continued BEST funding; • organisations' assets should not be used to determine BEST funding, but rather profits should; and • integrated service delivery will result in a decrease in overall BEST funding.	Agreed. The funding formula relies on demographic and claims data which is not currently available. Sponsor and other sources of funding is sought on the current Application Form. DVA also proposes that an integrated approach to service delivery be a basic requirement unless an ESO can justify why it needs to operate as a stand alone facility.

9.1.3 DVA Position

DVA supports the use of per capita state allocations as the core determinant for funding. As noted by the Review team, DVA acknowledges the apparent disparity in the funding approval levels across states and between metropolitan and regional areas. BEST funds are initially allocated based on veteran numbers in each state. Some of the inequity can be explained by the situation that occurs when there are not sufficient applications from one State which meet the funding criteria and limitations to use all the funding allocated to that State. The surplus funds are then reallocated to a State that may be oversubscribed with applications that meet the funding criteria and limitations. This occurred in the 2010-11 round where NSW was under its allocation and Victoria and Tasmania were over their allocation. Funds were re-distributed accordingly.

The Department accepts the Funding Principles outlined by the Review team as a guide when assessing BEST applicants. It is acknowledged that a robust system for measuring workload needs to be developed in order for a formula based approach to work. Collection of reliable claims data and demographic statistics is very much dependent on the design and development of an effective IT system. The system will need to include the facility for data input by practitioners at an ESO or centre to be readily transferred to the DVA system. A proposed IT system is discussed in Section 12 of this report.

It is estimated that an appropriate IT system will take up to two years to develop and the suggested approach of funding a number of demonstration projects in the interim to evaluate how the Funding Principles work in practice is supported.

Development of a Funding Formula can take place in parallel with the development of an IT system. The range of demographic variables will need to be identified and considered in the development of the Funding Formula, including factors such as serving member population and travel required due to geographic distance between centres.

Those factors suggested by the Review team (Suggestion 7.5 refers) will also be further tested and integrated, where feasible, noting ESO concerns about the assessment of assets.

Further investigation into the practicalities of a means testing or funds matching assessment approach would be required in consultation with a financial expert as well as with ESOs.

DVA Suggestion
In relation to funds matching by ESOs, DVA proposes that no change be made to the current approach taken to funding of salaries whereby the Department funds the core salary component and ESOs fund salary on-costs, including superannuation and leave but that ESOs be required to advise DVA the value of the ESO contribution towards salary remuneration (salary assistance funding is discussed further in Section 9.3.3).

9.2 Funding Criteria

9.2.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team considered the funding criteria for BEST grants and suggested that they be revised so that future funding is characterised by the First Principles (Attachment L), the Funding Principles and Funding Formula outlined in Attachment K, and support the Veteran Support Centre model. This should be based on demographic data, service delivery needs (decreasing claims work over time and an increasing focus on welfare services), and sponsor support.

The Review team believed that funds should be predicated on the above and provided for:

1. Salaries/wages for full-time or part time advocates and pension officers to assist in the:
   - preparation, lodgement and monitoring of primary level claims applications;
   - section 31 reviews;
   - applications to the VRB;
   - Military Compensation and Rehabilitation Scheme (MRCA) reconsiderations;
   - appeals to the AAT; and
   - providing information on a range of support programs.
2. Salaries/wages for administrative assistance when justified by client activity and subject to a cap on funding to a total of 80% of all BEST funding.
3. A demonstrated need for:
   - software or software upgrades;
   - ongoing internet access;
   - replacement of end-of-life/essential computer hardware;
   - replacement of end-of-life/essential office equipment e.g. printers, desks;
   - consumables including stationery, pensions and welfare travel, phone call costs;
   - utilities or rental assistance, only when funded previously, where there is ongoing need, and as determined on a case by case basis.

Rent

In Focus Groups and submissions, comments were made in relation to funding to assist with the cost of rent and utilities which are excluded in the current BEST Grants Guidelines.

In regards to grant funding for rental, the Review team understood that rental costs have a significant impact on some BEST grant recipients that do not have ESO or other sponsor support. The Review considered that wholesale funding for rent could limit the overall availability of funds but recognised the difficulties some ESOs have in funding this cost themselves, particularly in Tasmania. Over the past five funding rounds, funds to cover rental costs have been provided to the Joint Venture Tasmania, totalling nearly $206,000, with just over $66,000 being provided in the most recent funding round. Other ESOs that have applied have not received grants for this purpose but the Review was aware that one ESO received rent funding via a grant variation request.

It was the Review team's belief that rent should not be included in the funding criteria and a consistent approach be applied in the future. Given that it is already provided in some circumstances, any future support through BEST will need, at the very least, to be considered on a case-by-case basis and in line with the funding formula. One option considered by the team was to "grandfather" existing funding arrangements to certain ESOs. However, the Review team suggested that funding for rent should in fact be removed by Round 14. In considering this issue, the Review team was mindful, that some ESOs may have received funds for rent under the auspice of 'ongoing running costs'.

In making this suggestion the Review team noted that Tasmania was a possibility for specific targeted assistance in advancing the overall thrust of the report (see Section 14). Accordingly, the Review team was aware that it might be necessary to look further at Tasmania as a specific case in considering the cut-off for "grandfathering" provisions.

Utilities

In relation to funding for the cost of utilities, the Review team also believed that this should not be included in the BEST funding criteria and was aware that no grants have been provided for this purpose over the past five funding rounds. Though similar to the discussion on rent above, there may be a number of ESOs who may have received funds for utilities under 'ongoing running costs'.
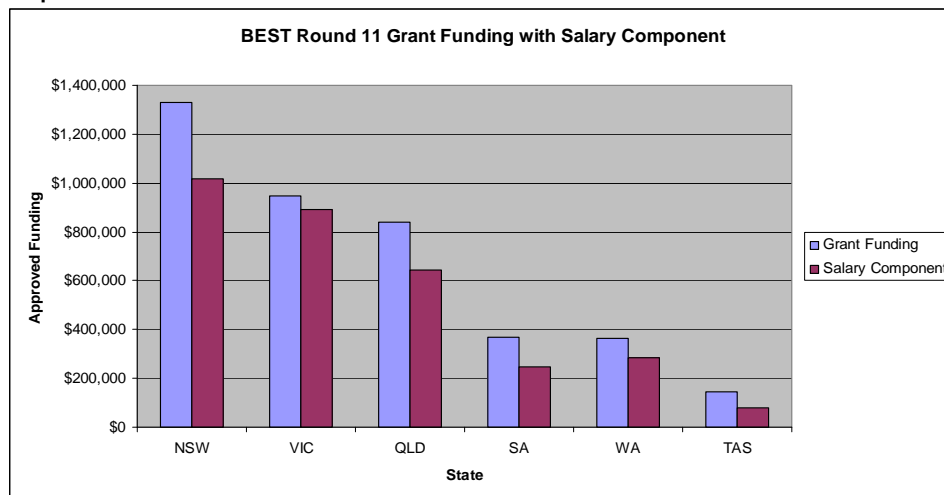
Salary or Wages

In relation to funding for salary or wages it was noted by the Review team that approximately 80% of BEST funding is currently provided for this purpose and suggested that this be set as the maximum. During BEST Round 11, funding for salaries and wages for 137 positions was approved and provided as detailed below:

Table 9: BEST Funding – Round 11 Salary Component

State	Grant Funding	Salary Component	Salary %
NSW	$1,329,260	$1,019,384	76.69
VIC	$948,193	$892,864	94.16
QLD	$838,528	$645,089	76.93
SA	$366,432	$249,167	68.00
WA	$362,384	$284,632	78.54
TAS	$145,992	$78,925	54.06
TOTAL	**$3,990,789**	**$3,170,061**	**79.43**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 5

Source: Grants and Bursaries Section

The Review team believed that, as numbers of volunteers drop, there will be greater demand for salaried positions, both for administrative staff and advocates. This would need to be monitored closely, along with veteran demographic data, to determine if, over time, the appropriation for BEST grant funding is sufficient to meet the needs of the veteran community, as well as the way in which funds are distributed.

Other Purposes

The Review team believed it is imperative that some BEST funds be 'partitioned' so that grants can continue to be provided for consumables and in instances where funds may need to be accessed in the case of an emergency. To this end, the Review team considered that a minimum of 20% of total BEST funds should be allocated for this purpose.

ESOs would be expected to continue to provide either monetary (i.e. for additional salaried positions, rent etc) or 'in-kind' support through the use of workspace, computer equipment, internet access and consumables.

BEST Funding Rounds

Throughout the Review, there has been a level of interest in changes to funding cycles, funding criteria and administrative arrangements – for example, recurrent funding with yearly reviews for BEST grants, timeliness of funds allocation, rolling programs together, keeping grants to National and State ESOs discrete.

The Review team agreed with many ESOs in their concerns where funding for salary and wages occurs and the lack of certainty that currently exists for ESO management and individuals with a single year grant funding cycle. The Review team suggested a three year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages, with funds to be acquitted on an annual basis and with an opportunity for reassessment to adjust funding allocations if necessary.

However, it was suggested that consumables and capital equipment continue to be provided through an annual funding cycle.

In response to some comments to move the financial audit requirement for acquittal of grants from a financial to a calendar year basis, the Review team believed this is not necessary.

9.2.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
7.2 Revise the funding criteria for BEST grants in the context of the "First Principles" and "Funding Principles and Funding Formula" and reflect that:		
7.2.1 any support through BEST for rental costs should be considered on a case-by-case basis;	ESOs responding to the Key Issues Paper were strongly in favour of funding for rent being considered on a case by case basis. Six responses commented that rent may become more of a funding issue if ESOs move to shared premises as a result of integrated service delivery. Five ESOs advocated means testing or asset disclosure to determine eligibility for rent funding.	Agreed. The preference is to phase out funding for rent through a grandfathering arrangement beginning in Round 14.
7.2.2 grant funds should not be provided for the cost of utilities;	In general, ESOs considered funding for utilities should also be considered on a case by case basis along with rent. Some views were that utilities funding is an important consideration given the move to an integrated approach to service delivery. However, other ESOs expressed strong opposition to funding for utilities on the grounds that these expenses are part of normal running costs and would use up too much of the funding allocation if covered by BEST.	Agreed.
7.2.3 in the short term, a maximum of 80% of BEST funding be set for salary and wages, to be assessed during that time to ensure a real reduction by Round 14; and	ESOs generally agreed there needs to be some level of funding under BEST for salaried positions due to declining numbers of volunteers. However, the ratio of funding is debatable. One ESO expressed concern at the "possible arbitrary application of the proposal to set an 80/20 ratio for the application of funds between salaries and other uses."	Agreed. DVA also proposes that salary assistance funding be monitored against demographic changes to determine whether a reduction is needed in future rounds.
7.2.4 in the short term, a minimum of 20% of BEST funds be 'partitioned' for consumables, internet access, computer equipment etc and for use in an emergency – to be reviewed in line with the target set above.		

7.3 Introduce a three year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages with annual acquittal and an opportunity to adjust annually.	Funding salaries on a three year rolling cycle, was strongly supported by ESOs with no disagreement.	Agreed. In-principle approval would be given in years 2 and 3 for 85% of the funded year 1 amount.
7.4 Continue to provide consumables and capital equipment through an annual funding cycle.	Suggestion 7.4 was highly supported. The only disagreement was from two ESOs that believed funding should be on a two to three year cycle.	Agreed. DVA also proposes that greater visibility of the workload of paid practitioners is required to ensure that funds are being directed appropriately. This would require changes to the BEST application form to: - identify each paid practitioner; and - record their caseload statistics for the previous 12 months. In addition, DVA proposes that the proposed list of BEST eligible and ineligible items at <u>Attachment M</u> be approved for future purposes.

9.2.3 DVA Position

Given the limited funds available through BEST, it is not seen as viable to fund rent and utilities on an ongoing basis. The rationale behind this view is that BEST funding is available to help support the services provided by ESOs and centres but not to sustain centres that are not financially viable in their own right. The Department's view is that rent and utilities form part of the basic operational costs of a centre and should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution to the provision of services. The Department acknowledges that funding of rent has occurred in the past but agrees with the Review team's suggestion to phase out funding for rent through a grandfathering arrangement beginning in Round 14.

The Department agrees with 80% of BEST funding being set as an initial maximum for salary and wages. It is noted that for BEST Round 12 the average funding for salaries across all states was 78% of total BEST funding. However, in New South Wales and Victoria the salary component was 82% and all other states between 54% and 75%. A cap of 80% for salaries seems reasonable with a possible reduction in the future. Future funding of salary for MRCA practitioners may need to be offset against savings from reduced numbers of VEA practitioners due to the changes in client demographic.

DVA proposes that salary assistance funding be monitored against demographic changes to determine whether a reduction is needed.

It is also agreed that an initial 20% of BEST funding be partitioned for other uses.

DVA agrees in principle with Suggestion 7.3. The Department considers that an in-principle approval of a percentage of the requested amount be given for Years 2 and 3, with the ESOs being required to undergo an annual reassessment. The in-principle approval provides greater

certainty of ongoing service provision in the event that there is a delay in the assessment process. The percentage amount needs to be agreed. An 85% option gives the ESO a sound basis for forward planning. A 75% option allows for the situation where the caseload may be trending downward and the same level of salary assistance is no longer required and/or restructuring of ESO service delivery arrangements produces some rationalisation of overall resourcing.

The 85% option is preferred. If, in fact, a significant downward trend is apparent, the in-principle approval of funds for Year 3, approved in Year 1, *may* also be adjusted downward.

DVA Suggestion
DVA also proposes that greater visibility of the workload of paid practitioners is required to ensure that funds are being directed appropriately. This would require changes to the BEST application form to:
  * identify each paid practitioner; and
  * record their caseload statistics for the previous 12 months.

DVA Suggestion
In addition, DVA proposes that the proposed list of BEST eligible and ineligible items at Attachment M be approved for future purposes.

9.3   Volunteers and Paid Practitioners

9.3.1   Review Team Findings

Discussions and submissions reflected support for volunteerism whilst also recognising the need to retain and provide skilled advocacy and other services. There was a clear understanding of the need to get the right balance of paid and unpaid personnel as services to veterans change to meet future needs.

Whilst noting some submissions called for SRCA/MRCA to be administered by appropriately appointed legal representatives, the Review team believed that higher level TIP training is both adequate and appropriate. This is particularly the case given that there are many people in the current 'pool' of volunteers who are very competent and provide advocacy and support to the veteran community at an exemplary level. The Review team noted that currently only 4% of all MRCA claims have legal representation (source: DVA MRCA data).
The Review team noted ESO concerns about aligning the notion of a tiered model to simply volunteers versus paid advocates, as stated in Recommendation 8.1 in Professor Dunt's *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* which was delivered to the Government in February 2009. It is also noted that the Government gave In-Principle Agreement to this recommendation subject to a closer review of the feasibility of the recommendation. The Review team shared the ESO concerns but does accept Professor Dunt's observation that more complex work may, over time, be increasingly conducted by paid advocates. The Review team was of the opinion that effective deployment of paid personnel will increasingly rely on the establishment of Veterans Support Centres.

Throughout the Review reference was made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework(s). Many ESOs commented on the expectation that volunteers be conversant with all aspects of veteran related legislation. They argued that, whilst this may be a reasonable expectation for paid practitioners, it is not the case for volunteers, some of whom are reluctant to become

familiar with MRCA. This issue is compounded by the fact that volunteer numbers are decreasing and are therefore, as a group, less likely to deal with the more complex claims and provide advice across multiple legislations. Many need assistance themselves but feel pressure to continue to do their work as they feel there is no-one to take over from them.

The Review team concluded that it is reasonable to expect that volunteers should only operate within their expertise or preference. It was also expected that advocates/pension officers lacking knowledge of specific legislation would pass matters on to a qualified person.

The shift towards MRCA and away from VEA related activity can be seen in the following graphs with a:

- decreasing VEA workload over time, and a marginal increase seen with MRCA claims;
- slight increase in VRB applications over two years; and
- decrease in AAT – VEA applications lodged, with no apparent increase yet in the volume of SRCA/MRCA applications lodged.
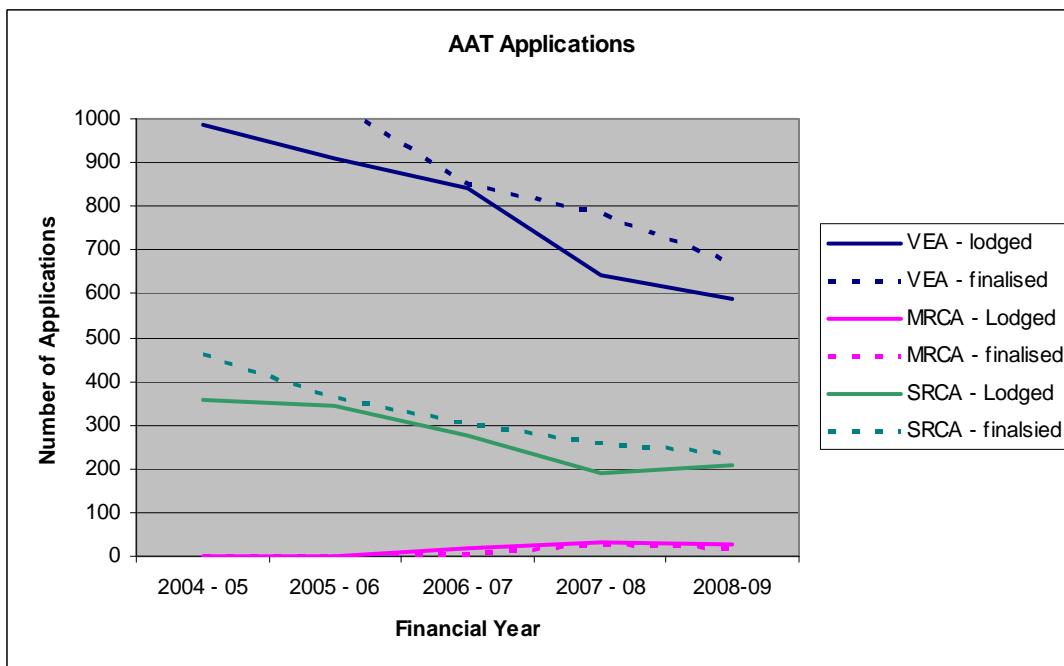
Graph 2 of Attachment P
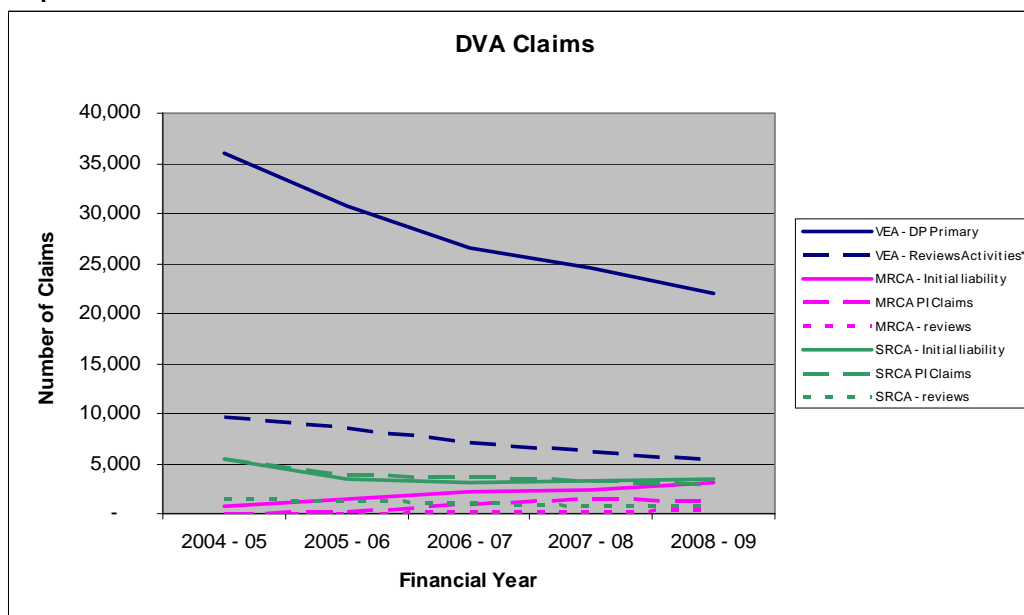
Source: Created from data within DVA Annual Reports

Graph 3 of Attachment P

VRB Applications
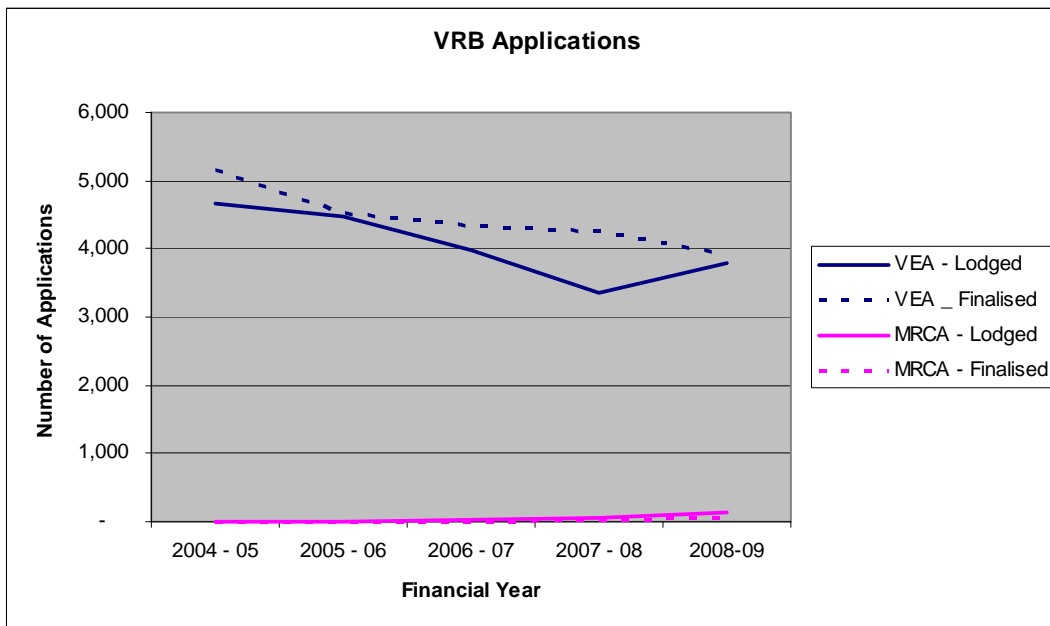
Source Created from data within VRB Annual Reports

Graph 4 of Attachment P

AAT Applications

Source: Created from data within AAT Annual Reports

As mentioned in Section 8.4, the Review team envisaged a structure based on a matrix that encompasses nationally consistent levels and streams. In those circumstances where practitioners are remunerated this would be based on the level and stream together with overall experience and performance delivery.

The Review team suggested that the level of remuneration should be set by the employing ESO, but that DVA will continue to provide guidance as to appropriate APS equivalent salary levels which was understood to be:

- APS5 – Advocate – this level is on par with delegates/decision makers within DVA,
- APS4 – Pensioner Officers (TIP trained Levels 1 and 2),

- APS3 – Administrative Support Officers – this APS level also applies to administrative support provided under the TIP Program.

In relation to welfare officers, the Review team was of the view that these services should, in the main, be provided by volunteers. In circumstances where welfare officers are paid, the indicative salary level should be APS 3. Options for other form of financial support for volunteers, including welfare officers, is discussed in Section 9.6.

The Review team recognised that overall remuneration should include allowance for on-costs such as holiday leave, long service leave, superannuation and any other items as required by relevant legislation. The Review team believed that these additional costs should not form part of BEST grant funding for salary and wages, but should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.

The Review team suggested that the framework going forward should not draw a line between paid and unpaid personnel at work levels, or tiers as recommended in Professor Dunt's Study. It should have regard to the particular circumstances of an ESO and service delivery needs of its veteran community, and the competency of available personnel. However, it is recognised that the more complex work may, over time, be increasingly provided by paid personnel.

Greater reliance on paid personnel could have consequences for service delivery in the future. In any event, ESOs will continue to need good, highly trained, competent, and dedicated volunteers. Progression to new modes of service delivery needs to recognise this skill base and respect the value of volunteers.

9.3.2   Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
12. ESOs should determine [salary] remuneration based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA.	Suggestion 12 was generally agreed. However, three ESOs expressed disagreement, two stating that the suggested APS levels are too low given the nature of the work performed by advocates, and the other that the APS levels are too high, therefore consuming too much funding that could be used elsewhere. One ESO commented that while APS salary levels provide a fair basis for funding, the issue of remuneration properly sits with the employing body with regard to awards, etc.	Agreed. DVA considers that the conduct of the Review provides an opportunity to establish a new salary assistance policy which will still meet program objectives and will introduce some transparency to the assessment process.
13. ESOs should include on-costs in remuneration provided but these additional costs should be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.	Suggestion 13 received mixed responses. Respondents in disagreement expressed the opinion that ESOs with limited funds should not be expected to fund on-costs of salaried staff. ESOs already contribute by providing time, space and volunteer organisational support.	Agreed.

9.3.3 DVA Position

Salary assistance for paid practitioners has evolved over the years with no real policy to inform ESOs or the grant assessment process. Salary assistance was seen initially as an incentive to attract skilled and knowledgeable practitioners into the pensions/advocacy arena. It further evolved into salary assistance for administrative support officers and welfare officers. It was a case of salary assistance being considered more important than other items. The requirement for salary assistance both in numbers of paid practitioners and the amounts paid has continued to grow until the previous Minister intervened during 2009-10 (Round 11) whereupon the eligibility criteria changed to exclude any salary assistance for new positions and no increase in salary assistance for existing positions. It was then that the previous Minister established the Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare services. The salary criterion for Round 12 was amended to allow a 2.9% increase in salary assistance, equivalent to indexation.

The Review team raised a number of valid concerns over the allocation and use of salary assistance. In relation to claims and appeals assistance, the Review team noted that the number of volunteers that are able and prepared to undertake these roles is reducing and that it is likely that more paid practitioners will need to be involved in this work.

While the volume of welfare work continues to increase, the work itself is considered less complex and more suited to a volunteer workforce. This view does not in any way denigrate or devalue the work undertaken by the many welfare officers currently assisting the veteran community. The Review team held the view that these services should, in the main, be provided by volunteers but, if they are to be paid, that they be remunerated at the APS 3 level.

DVA is of the view that welfare work should be undertaken entirely by a volunteer workforce. However, it is noted that there are 20 paid welfare officer positions in 14 ESOs funded from BEST Round 12 (2 full-time and 18 part-time, totalling $413,978). It is acknowledged that some ESOs feel it is necessary to have paid welfare officers. DVA needs to understand what work is being undertaken by the 20 paid welfare officers that may differentiate those positions from the volunteer positions with a view to informing the new policy.

Salary assistance for administrative support officers evolved when some ESOs were struggling to find volunteer workers with the skills, aptitude and desire to manage an office. It was felt that most veteran volunteers were better placed to undertake the pension, welfare and advocacy work. The Review team had no view on this role. DVA considers that the role of the paid administrative support officer is justified in certain circumstances, for example, if:

- the BEST grant funding to be administered is reasonably large, greater than say $50,000; or
- there is a large volume of work and/or number of advocates and other practitioners requiring telephone services and appointment management; or
- there are many mobile practitioners requiring maintenance of log books and other documents.

However, if the demand for salary funds becomes greater than the available funds, the preference would be to fund a paid pension/advocacy practitioner.

DVA Suggestion

DVA considers that the conduct of the Review provides an opportunity to establish a new salary assistance policy which will still meet program objectives and will introduce some transparency to the assessment process.

Proposed new salary policy

DVA proposes that the policy include:

1. Salary assistance be recognised as a form of contribution to the cost of the resources required by ESOs to provide assistance to the veteran and serving member communities;

2. Salary assistance be recognised as a method of attracting and retaining skilled and expert people in the provision advice for claims lodgement, appeals to the VRB and appeals to the AAT;

3. Salary not be provided for welfare officers[4];

4. Salary assistance be available for administrative support work where it is difficult to retain the services of a volunteer to undertake the work;

5. where the demand for salary funds becomes greater than the available funds, the following priorities will apply:

    1st priority – Advocate/Pension Officer,

    2nd priority – Administrative Support Officer;

6. funding for salary assistance be capped at 80% of the available funds and this limit be applied within each state allocation;

7. that salary assistance be funded on a 3 year funding cycle with annual acquittal and the opportunity to adjust annually;

8. salary assistance be funded in accordance with the DVA Certified Agreement base salary rates as follows:

    - a full-time advocate be funded to a maximum of 44 weeks of an APS5,

    - a full-time pension officer be funded to a maximum of 44 weeks of an APS4,

    - a full-time administrative support officer be funded to a maximum of 44 weeks of an APS3,

    - part-time paid officers be paid proportionally based on the number of hours worked,

    - increases in salary assistance will align with the DVA indexation that occurs on 1 January each year,

    - incremental advancement to higher pay levels within an individual salary range will not be funded as these are reflective of career progression within the APS, and

9. each ESO will determine the level of actual remuneration for its paid practitioners and hence any contribution over and above the salary assistance funded by DVA, including payment for leave and superannuation.

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[4] Salary assistance would continue to be available for current paid welfare officers while DVA investigates the bases behind these positions.

DVA is aware that the above policy could not be implemented immediately without significant impact in certain ESOs. For example, it is noted that 82% of both the New South Wales and Victorian allocation is currently directed to salary assistance. In addition, DVA needs time to consult with the ESO that have paid welfare officers to understand how this practice has developed and why.

DVA notes that the move to the integrated service delivery models will afford ESOs the opportunity to begin to address the aspects of the new policy that are currently unachievable. It is acknowledged that the policy will need to be implemented progressively and may take three to four years to be fully implemented.

Recognition of Volunteer Expenses
In relation to the issue of ensuring the continuation of a viable volunteer workforce, there is a recognition that some form of remuneration for out-of-pocket expenses must continue to be available. The nature of remuneration options is outlined at <u>Section 9</u>.

9.3.4   Professor Dunt's Recommendation

With regard to the two-tiered approach recommended by Professor Dunt, DVA has a different view. DVA believes that rather than the paid/unpaid status of the practitioner being the determinant for the allocation of complex/non-complex work, the level of training and expertise should be the key criterion for allocating pensions/advocacy/welfare work. However, it is acknowledged that as the volunteer workforce declines, more paid practitioners will be required to take on the complex work.

DVA proposes to respond to the Dunt recommendation in relation to the two-tiered practitioner model stating that rather than the paid/unpaid status of the practitioner being the determinant for the allocation of complex/non-complex work, the level of training and expertise should be the key criterion for allocating pensions/advocacy/welfare work.

9.4   Documentation, Reporting and Evaluation
9.4.1   Review Team Findings

The Review team noted recognition amongst all stakeholders of the importance of accountability in the management of BEST, TIP and V&C Grants. BEST forms and documentation attracted a great deal of comment. This varied: at one level there were concerns about the demands that are placed on volunteers whilst at another there was concern for the need for more guidance and prescription in completing documentation,
e.g. around welfare reporting.

The Review team suggested that the Guidelines be revised and updated, and the application form for BEST be amended and made available online. It was noted that work on a revised BEST application form has already commenced. The Review team believed that documentation should be continually evaluated and include views provided by ESOs and practitioners.

In submissions and discussions, many comments were made on the need for relevant performance indicators for grant funding and for the DVA to evaluate the reports provided by the grantee.

The current guidelines call for grant performance objectives to be agreed upon and quarterly reports provided. The Review team believed that the current objectives provide a sound basis to evaluate the performance of the grantee and to guide future funding. These include:

(a) complete an agreed number of primary claims;

(b) provide regular quarterly progress reports which will detail:

- number of claims prepared, and comparisons with numbers of claims prepared in the last quarterly report,
- number of appeals, and comparisons with numbers of appeals undertaken in the last quarterly report,
- all TIP training undertaken by Advocates/Pension Officers/Welfare Officers and comparison with training undertaken in the last quarterly report, and
- number of clients assisted with welfare information and comparison with clients assisted with welfare information in the last quarterly report;

(c) an agreed percentage of time spent on welfare assistance, or number of welfare clients assisted;

(d) reduction in the time taken to prepare certificates of readiness for VRB cases;

(e) maintenance of skills standards through attending TIP training at the appropriate levels; and

(f) other specific reporting conditions that may be required depending on the nature of the application e.g. where the grantee is a national ESO there is a likelihood that some may have a welfare and administration focus rather than a claims work focus.

In noting the guidelines, the Review team considered quarterly reporting to be overly onerous and suggested that six-monthly reporting be adopted. The reports should include advice on the distribution and expenditure of funds within the integrated approach to service delivery. The Review team believed the critical issue is the capacity of ESOs to provide this information and DVA's ability to adequately assess the reports, including data verification being undertaken. Proposed IT system enhancements (as discussed in Section 12) should help to address both of these concerns.

The Review team also considered that a regime of continual assessment of grant recipient reports should be undertaken by DVA. This could be supported through the Department's audit program by randomly selecting some grants for sample audit. This audit process would need to be included in the revision of the guidelines and operating instructions and, if outsourced, additional funding might need to be allocated.

The consideration of performance reporting and evaluation should be seen in the context of the quality of the work being undertaken. This is supported by Section 8.7 above which suggested that the existing quality assurance system within DVA be deployed to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs.

9.4.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
8. Strengthen the administration of the BEST Program by: 8.1 the BEST guidelines being revised and updated, and the application form amended and made available online; and 8.2 utilising the current grant performance objectives with grant reporting to be on a six-monthly basis.	Suggestion 8 was well supported by ESOs responding to the Key Issues Paper. The one disagreement was that six-monthly reporting for BEST is too frequent. One ESO also commented that acquittal procedures for small grants are too onerous and for grants of under $5,000 a 'Statement of Use' should suffice. There were some comments that acquittal requirements create an unnecessary workload on volunteers and should be simpler. One ESO commented that they would prefer the BEST auditing period to align with the calendar year (their organisation's financial year) to eliminate the need to get two financial reports per year. Alternatively, they suggest the removal of the need for an official audit. ESOs suggest guidelines be made available for ESO comment before implementation.	Agreed. The application form will also be available electronically as a fillable PDF for Round 13. Reporting will move to a six-monthly basis from Round 13.

9.5 BEST Funding for National ESOs

9.5.1 Review Team Findings

The Review team was asked to see if any unintended consequences occurred when Grants-in-Aid (GIA) was rolled into the BEST program during the application and approval process for BEST Round 11.

In 2009-10, ten ESOs received grants. The Returned & Services League of Australia and the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council were the primary beneficiaries of funding, receiving 31% and 20% respectively of available funds.

Table 9: Outcomes of BEST (GIA) applications from National ESOs in 2009-2010 (GST exclusive)

Approved

Name of Applicant	$ Amount Requested (GST Incl)	$ Amount Approved (GST Incl)	Percentage of Total %	Items
RSL National	44,000.00	44,000.00	30.12	Part-time Administrative Assistant salary
Partners of Veterans Association National Office	7,535.00	5,287.00	3.62	National meeting, software, running costs and consumables
The Australian Veterans & Defence Services Council Inc	35,394.00	26,940.30	18.44	Part-time Admin Assistant salary, consumables, computer equipment, on-going running costs, administrative costs
Defence Force Welfare Association	41,500.00	9,261.00	6.34	Part-time Administrative Assistant salary
Vietnam Veterans Federation	11,000.00	3,850.00	2.64	Administrative costs
The Naval Association of Australia National Council	10,739.00	9,712.00	6.65	National meeting, IT equipment and consumables
The Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Service Men and Women Ltd	55,550.00	13,370.00	9.15	Subscriptions, office equipment maintenance, runnig costs, training and congress expenses
Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans Association Inc - National Executive	11,686.95	9,087.00	6.22	computer equipment, office equipment, travel, running costs
Legacy Australia Council Inc	11,650.00	9,900.00	6.78	Office equipment and consumables
Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia National Council Inc.	75,591.00	14,656.00	10.03	Travel, computer equipment
TOTAL	**304,645.95**	**146,063.30**	**100.00**	

Not Approved

Name of Applicant	Amount Requested (GST Incl)	Items Requested
War Widows Guild of Australia	13,000.00	Part-time Administrative Assistant salary

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

The Review team observed that, in the main, funding has been provided to the same organisations over time and it could be reasonably said that the funding could be seen to be "recurrent", i.e. similar funding amounts for the same purpose, although there is a requirement that the National ESOs apply each year for these funds. The Review team was also concerned that in the past it appeared that DVA received financial acquittals but very little else has been received to account for funds usage.

A further area of concern for the Review team was that funds appeared to be granted to some National ESOs that are quite financially secure and the team wondered if this could be justified. The Review team concluded that, if a funding formula was adopted as an outcome of the Review there might be some "levelling" of grant funding under this stream as part of the analysis of applications and the capacity of ESOs to contribute.

On examination of the applications received from National ESOs for Round 11, the Review team noted that applications included items that could be funded under both BEST criteria as well as the old "GIA type" criteria due to a lack of clear definition between the two funding streams in the guidelines current at the time. Although it did not appear to the Review team that any National ESO had suffered any substantial disadvantage, the team suggested that better definition of the funding stream within BEST for support to National ESO bodies should be provided in the BEST application form and guidelines.

The Review team also suggested the assessment process take into account the extent to which distribution of funds is appropriately targeted, equitable and needs based, and that greater guidance needs to be provided for effective reporting on the expenditure of these funds.

The team believed that the $145,000 currently allocated under GIA is sufficient and should be continued to assist National ESOs with:

- major administrative costs and/or projects for which grants cannot be obtained through State or Federal funding or through donations or fees made available from members or other benefactors;
- communication between the ex-service community, ESOs and the Australian Government; and
- the advancement of the objectives of ESOs.

9.5.2   Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
9 For grant funding under BEST for National ESOs, that: 9.1 the funding stream for grants specifically for National ESOs (former GIA program) should be clearly articulated in the BEST guidelines; 9.2 total funding available is specified; and 9.3 distribution of funds is appropriately targeted, equitable and needs based.	Suggestion 9 was generally supported by ESO respondents. Two ESOs commented that national (GIA) funding should not be part of the BEST program as the funding criteria for these two streams are completely different. There was some concern expressed about equity in the distribution of national funding. Some ESOs suggested that there be means testing for wealthier ESOs and that grant assessment take into account other monetary support ESOs receive, such as concessions like approval to conduct national appeals and lottery licences, etc. Another ESO commented that GIA-type funding should be available to State ESOs that undertake similar representational work.	Agreed. The amended funding criteria should result in more equitable distribution of funds. DVA also proposes the funding criteria for national ESOs be amended to: a. be for activities that support pensions, welfare and advocacy work; b. be limited to a maximum of $10,000; c. be limited to one grant per organisation per funding round; and d. exclude salaries and on-going running costs.

9.5.3   DVA Position

Like the advocacy, pensions and welfare component of BEST, the National organisation funding has always been recognised as funding assistance, i.e. a contribution. DVA concurs with the Review team in relation to the evolution of the program into a recurrent funding program for those ESOs that were able to gain access to the funds in the early days of the program. Of the 41 National ESOs, there are a significant number that have not been able to access the grant funds in the past.

DVA Suggestion

DVA also proposes the funding criteria be amended to:

   a.   be for activities that support pensions, welfare and advocacy work;
   b.   be limited to a maximum of $10,000;
   c.   be limited to one grant per organisation per funding round; and
   d.   exclude salaries and on-going running costs.

The proposal endeavours to remove the current restriction for those ESOs that have never been able to access the funds because they have been fully allocated. The cap of $10,000 is proposed to enable more organisations access to the limited funds.

9.6   Welfare Services

9.6.1   Review Team Findings

The Review team believed that the concept of volunteerism involves people offering to do something that they do not have to do, often without having been asked to do it and/or without expecting payment. This is particularly relevant when considering the work of volunteer welfare officers.

The level and type of welfare services provided to the veteran community by TIP practitioners is an area of ESO activity that is increasingly difficult to evaluate or quantify. This has been recognised by TIP through the establishment of a Welfare Sub-Committee to develop and monitor progress of welfare training modules as discussed in Section 8.4.

Discussions about what is welfare at the Focus Group sessions and in submissions provided some suggestions of activities undertaken and advice and referrals provided. These included:
   •   reduction of social isolation;
   •   promotion of local support networks;
   •   promotion of and referrals to community care services;
   •   hospital visits;
   •   home visits;
   •   prison visits;
   •   bereavement support and advice;
   •   attend funerals;
   •   crisis management e.g. PTSD and suicide prevention;
   •   provide support to police, ambulance officers;
   •   bush visits e.g. hermits;
   •   treatment principles for MRCA and those under the Repatriation Health Card Scheme for the VEA;

- health entitlements;
- discharge planning;
- DVA Rehabilitation Appliance Program (RAP);
- home modifications;
- DVA HomeFront program;
- DVA Veterans Home Care program;
- respite care;
- concessions;
- transport entitlements;
- dental services;
- relationship issues;
- facilitating access to emergency relief, including financial assistance;
- injury or disease advice (when visiting in the home);
- conduct commemorative activities.

This list is by no means comprehensive but did indicate to the Review team the diverse range of activities that volunteers are providing to the veteran community. It was also noted that there are a number of community based organisations that play a key role in the delivery of welfare services and that this is important in the context of BEST funding priorities, effective local networking can optimise the assistance provided to the veteran community.

It was mentioned in discussions that many volunteers are reluctant to record the nature of work devoted to these activities but the Review team believed that some information is required by DVA, through either hours worked or specific activities undertaken, to enable measurement of the level of activity which can be used in the assessment process for grant funding and acquittal. The Review team suggested the data required (such as numbers of clients assisted and the type of assistance provided) be identified in enhancements to VPAD and in any new system developed, and in the interim, information be required to be supplied by grant recipients. The Review team, in recognising that the level and type of welfare services is difficult to evaluate or quantify, suggested further needs based analysis should take place.

A list of enhancements to VPAD were identified by the TIP community which, when implemented, would provide much needed welfare activity based data to support BEST Grant applications from ESOs.

The Review team was of the belief that, despite many people volunteering their services without thought of seeking remuneration or reimbursement for costs incurred, there are many instances where some costs should be considered, e.g. telephone, internet access and travel, particularly in regional and remote areas were long distance travel occurs. The Review team believed needs should be judged on a case by case basis and on demonstrated need.

It was noted that ESOs have access to other government funding sources and services provided by community based organisations (see Section 9). Alignment with these other services and avoidance of unnecessary overlap was identified as an imperative for ESOs, particularly in the welfare arena.

9.6.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
14. Collect statistical data in the future to measure the level of welfare activity.	Suggestion 14 was highly supported by ESOs. There was some concern that welfare activity is difficult to measure and the term needs to be clearly defined. One ESO expressed the view that many volunteers are reluctant to maintain detailed records of work performed, and as much of this work is incidental to other activities it is hard to measure.	Agreed. The Department concurs with both the Review team and ESOs that welfare activity is difficult to measure and that it would be useful if the term were clearly defined. The definition included in the TIP guidelines should be reviewed in this context. An easy system for recording welfare activity needs to be devised.
15. Utilise the statistical data as a basis for a needs based analysis for the direction of welfare services in the future.	Suggestion 15 was generally supported.	Agreed. DVA also proposes that a facility for recording welfare statistics be incorporated into a new IT system (see Section 12).

10   VETERANS' INSURANCE AND TRAINING ASSOCIATION (VITA)

10.1 Review Team Findings
The Review team made no additional comments on the role of VITA.

10.2 ESO Comment
ESOs were not specifically requested to respond to this topic. No comments were received.

10.3 DVA Comment
DVA considers VITA's role to be a key component in the operation of the overall support model. It is noted that membership of VITA requires the organisation to be a bona fide ESO or an organisation commonly referred to as a Veteran Centre. As a number of Veteran Centres are made up of people who are members of ESOs, it is possible for the Veteran Centre to not be a member of VITA, on the assumption that the ESOs to which people belong have taken out VITA membership. DVA considers that this assumption creates a risk that some practitioners may unknowingly not have VITA coverage.

DVA Suggestion
DVA proposes that VITA membership records be checked against each of the BEST grant applications to ensure every applicant has VITA coverage and that ESOs ensure that every practitioner has coverage under VITA or an equivalent Professional Indemnity insurance program.

11   VETERAN AND COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

11.1   Review Team Findings

In relation to V&CG, the Review team noted an acknowledgement of the benefits obtained by these grants and for the current administrative arrangements. However, mention was made in submissions to the Review of the need to consider both current funding criteria and to evaluate the outcomes that are being achieved. The Review team acknowledged the work that was being undertaken at the time by the DVA Grants team in Adelaide in reviewing and revising current Guidelines and supporting documentation. The Review team suggested that the revised documents be presented for consideration by the Repatriation Commission and the Minister as soon as possible.

The Review team noted that V&C Grants are well received across the ESO and community organisations. While some discussion in the Focus Groups was on providing DVA funding to ESOs only, and for the specific benefit of the veteran community, the Review team believed that, as a result of the assessment process, funds provided to community organisations appeared to have been directed to organisations where there was high likelihood the veteran community would access the services provided. However, the Review team was not confident that a detailed evaluation of the outcomes of V&C Grant funding had been undertaken over the past four years.

Similar to BEST funding, the Review team noted an inequity of grant funding across the States. As can be seen from the chart below, there was an imbalance with South Australia and Tasmania receiving a significantly higher percentage of V&CG funds per capita than the other States. Similar to the discussion in Section 9.1.1, the Review team understood that initial allocations are determined on a per capita basis but that final allocations across the States might vary due to the volume of applications and the items requested. Again, the Review team suggested that per capita allocations to each State should be the core determinant for grant funding.

Chart 13a of Attachment P
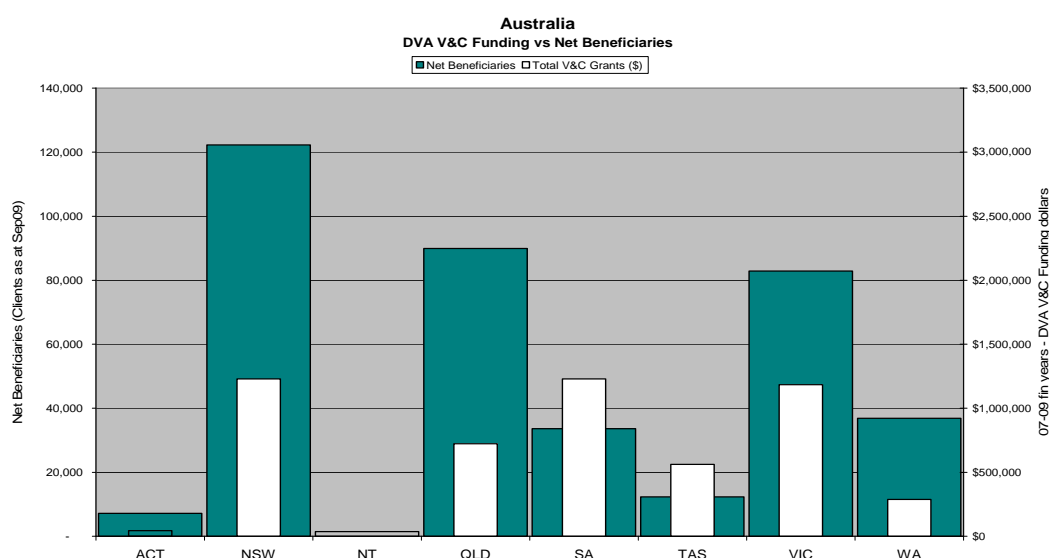
Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

The number of funding rounds for V&CG were examined and, given the workload of the Grants teams and current overlapping of BEST and V&CG funding rounds, it was suggested that the number of rounds for V&CG be reduced from three to two. The Review team considered that this change could commence in 2011/2012, to enable ESO participation in redesigning relevant processes. It was also suggested that the funding rounds could be September/October 2011 (i.e. funds provided to ESOs in November 2011), and February/March 2012 (funds provided in April 2012).

11.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
10. Clarify V&CG funding so that: 10.1 per capita allocations to each State are the core determinant for V&CG grant funding; and	Suggestion 10.1 was generally supported with little comment. However, one ESO commented that funding on a per capita basis does not reflect the true needs of regional ESOs. There was also one comment that the program guidelines should be reviewed and more emphasis given to courses that improve veterans' wellbeing and lifestyles.	Not agreed. Refer to discussion below.
10.2 funding rounds are reduced to two by 2011/2012.	Suggestion 10.2 was supported with no disagreement. One ESO suggested the funding criteria be reviewed and clarified.	Agreed. This allows time to consider the most appropriate timing of rounds.

11.3 DVA Position

DVA acknowledges that an evaluation of the outcomes of V&C grants should be undertaken. A number of grants could be selected for a retrospective assessment of outcomes. DVA also suggests that analysis be undertaken on categories of projects currently funded to develop an understanding of what categories have the highest demand for funding and also those that provide the highest return on investment. The outcomes of this analysis could enable the Department to target specific projects in a future year where there may be the greatest benefit for the veteran community.

DVA does not agree that per capita allocation is appropriate for the V&CG program as currently structured. In relation to V&C grant funding, DVA notes that projects are submitted by community based organisations as well as ESOs. Also, funds are categorised as seeding funds to assist organisations in establishing projects which will have a life into the future or as a contribution to one-off project costs. Projects are assessed purely against the criteria.

Recent experience with V&CG has been that all projects that have met the funding criteria have been funded either wholly or in part (if not wholly, this would be attributed to some components of the project not meeting the funding criteria). Some projects are deferred until the next round due to a deficiency in the information provided. Projects that are not recommended have not met the funding criteria.

Therefore, basing the allocation of funds on a veteran population per capita would not enhance the assessment process or ensure a more equitable allocation of grant funds.

12 IT SUPPORT

12.1 Veterans' Practitioner Activity Database
12.1.1   Review Team Findings

There were a number of views expressed about the overall usefulness of the Veterans'
Practitioner Activity Database (VPAD) through discussions at Focus Groups and in
submissions. Concerns were expressed around functionality, accessibility, training, technical
support and overall usefulness for all veteran groups. Against this, there were views that it
could generate enough detail to adequately case manage claims on behalf of veterans and
provide reports. In summary comments included that:
- there is a need for enhancements to proceed;
- a level of ongoing support is necessary, including through a help desk facility;
- any alternative systems that have emerged should be reigned in;
- opportunities needed to be explored for bringing the application process and case
  management together; and
- the current system should be modified to include quality indicators relating to service
  delivery/performance management.

These comments were often made in the context of broader discussions of the need for
IT systems to inform funding, activities and acquittal processes.

The level of computer literacy of some volunteers was seen by the Review team to be
problematic. In many instances it was commented in Focus Groups and submissions that some
pension officers did not, and could not, enter data and that this work was undertaken by
administrative staff, when available. This led to either incomplete information or indeed no
information at all being recorded with necessary case notes not being documented on the
system.

The Review team noted that an analysis of existing capabilities of VPAD was being undertaken
through a joint DVA/TIP working group in order to identify enhancements required to develop
additional functionality. The Review team suggested that this be quickly progressed and that
these enhancements should be an interim arrangement until such time as a decision is made
about a proposed new IT system that would encompass both the National Grants Database
(NGDB) and VPAD.

12.1.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Response	DVA
No suggestion offered.	Whilst not specifically asked to comment on this issue, the need for improvements to VPAD was raised by several respondents to the Key Issues Paper. Some individual comments were: • *"complex and therefore not widely used"* • *"Analysis of existing capabilities needs to be revived as a matter of priority. The current version is too labour intensive and not user friendly. The VPAD project should be fully funded by DVA"* • *"no backup support staff in DVA to help users"* • *"strongly recommend considerable resources be put in to improve VPAD to make it reliable and easy to use. It should be adapted to assist with the preparation of returns requested by DVA to acquit BEST grants"*	DVA proposes that the VPAD enhancements be progressed as a priority. DVA also proposes a new IT system be developed as soon as possible to replace VPAD and provide data recording and accessing capabilities for all stakeholders. A feature of the new IT system would be ESO profiles that cover a range of information about ESOs including workload statistics, veteran population served and BEST funding details.

12.2 National Grants Database

12.2.1 Review Team Findings

The NGDB is a corporate resource that records information on the Department's four grants programs. The database captures grant details, provides a history of all projects for each applicant and other information. This data assists with the preparation of documentation for grants funding round packages as well as reporting functions.

The Review team concluded that the NGDB should be an integral tool in the administration of grant applications and the provision of reliable management information. However it noted that, the current functionality provided by the NGDB falls well short of the capability needed for future BEST and V&CG rounds.

The current NGDB functionality provides very limited support for officers required to assess grant applications and prepare necessary grant documentation. These limitations require staff to key the same data up to three times on different spreadsheets in as well as keying the same data into the database. In addition, staff manually create reports, letters, grant agreements, letters of acceptance and website material. This double and triple keying can create errors and a large amount of time is spent editing documentation to ensure correctness of information.

The inaccuracies and inefficiencies with the NGDB were highlighted during the Review period when statistical information was requested, resulting in the Grants team needing to use alternate sources to extract accurate information.

The Review team suggested that DVA immediately enhance the NGDB to ensure it can meet optimal operational requirements. This was seen by the Review team to be an interim arrangement until such time as a decision is made about a proposed new IT system that would encompass both the NGDB and VPAD.

12.2.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
No suggestion offered.	ESOs were not specifically requested to respond to this topic. No comments were received.	DVA has commenced a number of enhancements to the NGDB to assist in the assessment process and notification of outcomes to applicants. DVA proposes a new IT system be developed as soon as possible to replace the NGDB and VPAD and provide data recording and accessing capabilities for all stakeholders. A feature of the new IT system would be ESO profiles that cover a range of information about ESOs including workload statistics, veteran population served and BEST funding details.

12.3 New IT System

12.3.1 Review Team Findings

Given the difficulties already faced by the Department and ESOs with existing IT systems, the Review team held discussions with the Grants and Bursaries Section about the possibility in the future of developing a new IT system. This system would need to not only perform the functionality required of the existing two systems and to a higher degree of user confidence but also provide additional functionality that has been requested by ESOs and individuals at Focus Groups and in submissions. This would include the capability of electronic lodgement of assisted primary claims and grant applications.

The Review team acknowledged that development of any new system would need to be properly costed (early indications being in the vicinity of $500,000), along with any savings that may be garnered by decommissioning the two heritage systems and reducing workloads of the grants team.

During the course of the Review team's work, discussions commenced with DVA's ICT Services Group (ICTS Group) about the feasibility of a new IT system which would comprise a number of integrated modules and cater for the following high level requirements:

1. Replace VPAD with a more user friendly system module that better meets the requirements of BEST grant recipients and provides the statistical data required by DVA to better inform the grant assessment process.
2. Replace the NGDB with a new system module to record grant applications for all DVA grant programs and allow for fully informed assessment of each application, including a history of grants to each ESO.
3. Allow for electronic lodgement of assisted primary claims and Applications for Increases (AFIs), and include full editing prior to lodgement and a scanning capability for hard copy documents.
4. Provide for data from electronic claims to be automatically updated into existing databases that currently support a range of DVA production systems.
5. Enable immediate acknowledgement of receipt of claim via Short Message Service (SMS), electronic message or letter.

6. Provide for electronic lodgement of applications for BEST and other DVA grant programs.
7. Provide a facility to record and maintain a Grants Asset Register.
8. Provide a facility for Claims Assessors to record feedback on the quality of assisted claims. The feedback would be collated and provided to the relevant ESOs and State TIP chairs.

The system could include a module to allow State TIP Committees to record course information, attendees, course refresher requirements. The Review team was aware that some of the above requirements would require new ICT infrastructure but noted that it would become available in the next 12 to 24 months as DVA took on some elements of the Whole of Government technology solutions. ICTS Group advised that the remaining requirements could be met within the existing ICT environment.

The Review team suggested that the Grants and Bursaries Section continue this work and develop a business case for submission to the DVA Information Committee for decision.

12.3.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
11. The Department should continue to consider a new online IT system for grants and applications.	Highly supported with no disagreement. There is concern that a new IT system be easy to use and that there will still be an option to print forms. Problems with VPAD were mentioned by a number of respondents, in particular the lack of technical support available to users of the system.	Agreed in principle. Both VPAD and the National Grants Database require replacement. A TIP module to meet the requirement for a register of ESOs with accredited practitioners, TIP training details and accredited practitioner details (as per Section 8.8) would also be included. Any development would need to be prioritised against other DVA ICT projects.

12.4 Future Data Requirements

12.4.1 Review Team Findings

The collection and reporting of meaningful data is a major challenge for DVA and ESOs alike. Discussion has already been provided in various Sections above on enhancing the existing VPAD database and/or developing a new IT system to capture the necessary data. While there is no sense in over-engineering an IT system for minor grants programs, the benefits gained by the provision of service delivery through, in the main, volunteers, would provide DVA with an opportunity to gather a wealth of information that would assist it in the future for planning and positioning of services.

The Review team considered that there is a need to find a balance so that data meaningful to DVA and ESOs is collected for grant decisions and acquittal, without having unnecessary overheads for ESOs that may impact on BEST grant applications. This would be imperative if the requirement for data collection creates a need for administrative assistance specifically for that purpose. The Review team also considered that the necessary data sets to support the emerging Veteran Support Centre approach should be developed in time for BEST Round13

and beyond. The planned enhancements to VPAD and/or a new IT system are relevant in this regard.

12.4.2 ESO Comment

ESOs were not specifically requested to respond to this topic. No comments were received.

12.4.3 DVA Comment

DVA proposes that a full analysis of future data requirements will be in scope for the business case for the development of a new IT system. In the interim, consideration will need to be given to the best means of enhancing data collection and reporting manually while minimising additional administrative burden.

13 MODELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

13.1 Review Team Findings

ESOs showed a clear understanding of the need to move to a model or models that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. The Review team noted this is already happening across the country as ESOs realise the potential to support each other in their bid to provide the best services to the veteran community.

The Review team examined various models of service delivery, including outsourcing, insourcing and the approach being used by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) where assistance for primary claims and departmental reviews is managed within VAC, with support for further appeals to the Veterans Review and Appeals Board (VRAB) being provided by the Bureau of Pensions Advocates (BPA).

BPA is a nationwide organisation of advocates within VAC whose role is to provide free legal assistance in the preparation of applications for review or appeals and to arrange representation at hearings. All BPA advocates are lawyers and members of their respective law societies and are considered specialists in the area of disability pension claims.

The difference between the Canadian model and that in Australia is that the vast majority of assistance provided by volunteer ESO pension officers is at the primary claim level (including claims for statutory increases), notwithstanding the fact that advocates and pension officers are trained to assist at the various appeal levels.

The Review team believed that the Australian model whereby ex-serving members voluntarily take on a role to assist fellow veterans, war widow/er(s), dependants and serving members of the defence forces, is one that to date has worked very well, and should be continued. The very nature of this voluntary work should be valued, not understated, and continue to be supported through funding mechanisms such as the BEST grants program.

The position taken by the Review team in relation to service delivery included the schematic diagram below which shows both the current delivery model and the proposed approach for the future. The diagram does not address the ongoing support/assistance provided by DVA through its State offices and the VANs in response to veteran pension queries. This service although difficult to quantify will continue to be a major activity for these offices.
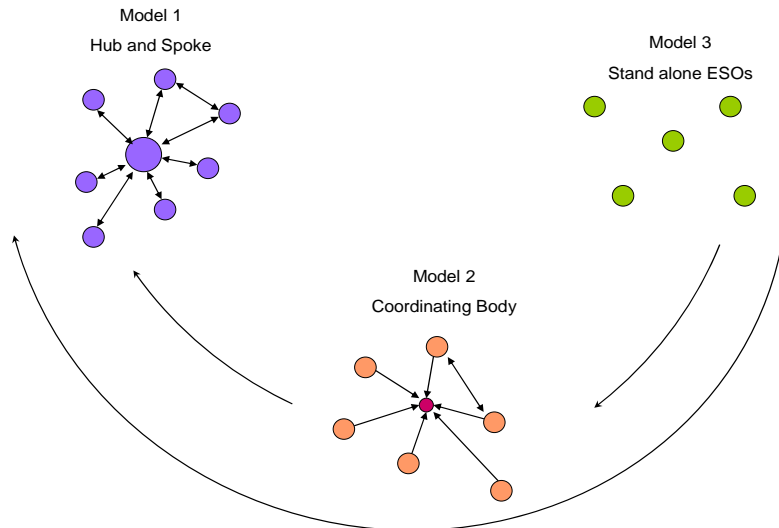
Models for provision of advocacy and welfare services to the veteran community

Models explained

- *Currently there are versions of all 3 models identified above in operation, with most grant funding (except in Victoria) going to ESOs operating under Model 3.*
- *The move towards Models 1 and 2 would occur over time with the reduction of volunteers willing and able to undertake pension and welfare work, along with the projected reduction in veteran numbers.*
- *While there was a preference for grant funding to be managed by a coordinating body or through a hub and spoke approach, it was recognised that not one model will suit all.*
- *It was expected that in the longer term grant funding would primarily be provided to ESOs that operate within Models 1 and 2 and that a collaborative approach to service provision would be the norm.*

The "hub and spoke" approach shown in Model 1 above would see a Centre ("hub") established with ESOs and other like organisations working in a single physical locality but with responsibility for outlying ESOs ("spokes"). The mechanism for management could be through a Committee or Board of Management or some other like mechanism.

A Memorandum of Understanding operating between organisations should cover ESO participation and include:
- supporting each other within the Centre;
- supporting practitioners who operate in other physical localities;
- a Code of Practice;
- a Grievance process;
- adoption of the TIP Code of Ethics;
- privacy and confidentiality requirements to be specified; and
- funds accountability and reporting mechanisms identified.

Model 2 differs in that ESOs operate under their own banner, and through their usual home base, but where each ESO is represented on a co-ordinating body that would assume responsibility to provide mutual support (e.g. help desk arrangements) and administer BEST grant funding. Practitioners across all organisations involved in the Group could come together at regular intervals to share knowledge and experience. This could occur through face-to-face meetings or regular phone or internet arrangements.

ESOs (or practitioners) establishing themselves as a Group for the purposes of integrating their service delivery for advocacy, pension claims and welfare services (including referrals) would need to consider the model under which they would like to operate.

Notwithstanding the extent to which ESO arrangements correspond to either Models 1 or 2, or variations of these, the Review team suggested the application of a common set of First Principles to apply in the management of DVA grant funding (Attachment L refers). The First Principles would provide a guide to the establishment of governance structures and administration and management.

The Review team strongly supported these co-operative approaches but recognised that funds may still need to be provided to ESOs that could demonstrate significant levels of services to specific groups, for example Legacy and the War Widows Guild. However during the course of the Review it was noted that at the regional level there are many instances where these organisations are working collaboratively with other local ESOs.

The Review team was of the opinion that, wherever possible, funding should be provided to a lead ESO, a consortia or a management body in accordance with either Models 1 or 2 and the First Principles be applied to ensure that:

- funds are allocated to those ESOs involved within the group; and
- best practice accountability processes are applied, including reporting mechanisms that ensure funds allocation and expenditure has taken place in accordance with the grant application.

The Review team considered that premise for longer term BEST grant funding should be that funds are primarily granted where there is an integrated approach to providing services to veterans, their spouses and/or dependants, and in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs.

Examples of models currently in operation include:

- the twenty-six Veteran Support Centres in Victoria (although the Review team recognised the progress that has been made in Victoria, the opportunity may exist for further consolidation);
- the ESOs that work together and operate out of premises at the Townsville RSL Sub-branch (although BEST grants funds are provided to the individual ESOs);
- the operation managed out of Granville by the Vietnam Veterans' Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia; and
- the Illawarra Veterans Entitlement Service (IVES).

As well as those detailed above, there are many other Centre based approaches currently in varying forms of integration, operation or in development by ESOs.

The Review team believed that the level of support provided by these various approaches led logically to the establishment of a set of funding principles that could be used in deliberations of both the short and longer term recommendations of grant applications for future rounds.

13.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Community	DVA
18. Apply a common set of "First Principles" in the administration of DVA grant funding.	The Suggestion was supported. The only comments were that the First Principles need to be clarified and that sufficient allowance will be made to ensure ESOs in remote areas are not disadvantaged.	Agreed. DVA notes there will be implementation challenges.
19. Direct BEST grant funding primarily to applicants demonstrating an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs but ensure there is sufficient flexibility to provide a critical analysis of the suggested regional approach.	The suggestion was supported with little comment.	Agreed. DVA notes there will be implementation challenges.

13.3 DVA Position

While a move to Models 1 and 2 appears both sensible and logical, DVA notes that to achieve this across the board will require significant change for some ESOs that consider themselves "special" or "unique". Also, there will no doubt be individuals who may be reluctant to change from their current operational arrangements. This should not necessarily deter an implementation but it may restrict the pace at which integration of all ESOs (where feasible) into the new models can be achieved.

As acknowledged by the Review team, one size does not fit all. There will be numbers of ESOs established in remote areas where it would be impractical to co-locate with another ESO a significant distance away. However, there would be an opportunity for these ESOs to link with others in their "region" to enable all to share resources and expertise, both financial and human.

14   DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS/TARGETED ASSISTANCE

14.1 Review Team Findings

14.1.1   Data Analysis

In its deliberations the Review team undertook an analysis of available data (refer Attachment I). It was suggested that the move to a co-ordinated approach by ESOs to the delivery of advocacy and welfare services to veterans (i.e. Models 1 or 2) be supported by a small number of demonstration projects.

These projects would need to be granted funds for set-up costs (or 'seed' funding) from monies remaining from previous BEST funding rounds. The Review team suggested that these initial demonstration projects be subject to evaluation and validation of the model prior to a future roll-out. In managing these demonstration projects, the Review team noted that financial support to State Offices would need to be taken into account.

In its analysis, the Review team considered the difficulties that would be likely to occur in resourcing State locations for this work and noted that the Department would need to identify the source and quantum of funds required for this activity during the implementation and transition phases.

The demonstration projects would entail teams from DVA working closely with the ESOs involved in the selected Regions to establish arrangements in accordance with both the Funding Principles (at Attachment K) and the First Principles (at Attachment L) already outlined in this Report.

The Review team suggested that demonstration projects be set-up in regional areas as opposed to the larger metropolitan areas. It is against this background that the issues and challenges inherent in establishing a "hub and spoke" approach can be fully identified and tackled. However, the Review team remained aware of the significant amount of claims activity undertaken in metropolitan centres.

14.1.2   Regional Basis

When looking at mapping to establish a regional breakdown to determine where Veteran Support Centres could be modelled, various approaches were considered, including using Federal Electorates, LGAs and Veterans' Home Care (VHC) regions, and taking into consideration the location of VAN offices which will be integral in the support provided by the Department during implementation. The model considered most appropriate was a combination of 2009 Statistical Districts (as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] and at Attachment N), and LGAs to enable greater detail.

For the purposes of this Review, the 2009 ABS Statistical Districts were considered to be "Districts". The Review team was of the view that a Veteran Support Centre is not necessarily required for each District. While there will be instances where one District **is** a Region, in other instances more than one District could form a Region, or there may even be more than one Region within a District (e.g. in metropolitan areas). The key variables here are population density, geographical distance, ESO locations, and with the eastern seaboard also presenting an opportunity. The boundaries for the demonstration projects identified for NSW and Queensland show how these variables come into play and why a strict statistical differentiation does not easily apply, and a more strategic approach is needed.

When determining a Region, the Review team was also of the view that State boundaries do not need to be taken into consideration, instead other demographic data should be used, e.g. veteran numbers, claims activity, location and support provided by ESOs and advocates, and distance. Examples of this could be Tasmania with perhaps either one or two Regions in that State, or along the borders of NSW (Albury) and VIC (Wodonga) which could conceivably be a single Region.

The Review team did not prescribe Regions within Australia, preferring to leave that to ESOs together with the support and guidance of Deputy Commissioners. However, as a guide, the ABS Statistical District map can be found at Attachment O along with examples of suggested Regional maps for the mid-north of NSW and regional Queensland.

Data used by the Review team when examining service delivery and DVA funding is provided in the charts and graphs at Attachment P.

14.1.3   Claims Activity

The Review team believed that the initial demonstration projects could be undertaken in the mid and north of NSW and in the north and south of Queensland. These areas were selected after analysis of available data that show they have a sufficient number of veterans and high claims activity, and there is ESO support and willingness to move to an integrated model/approach.

As can be seen from the following charts, the level of claims activity in regional areas of NSW and Queensland is quite significant.
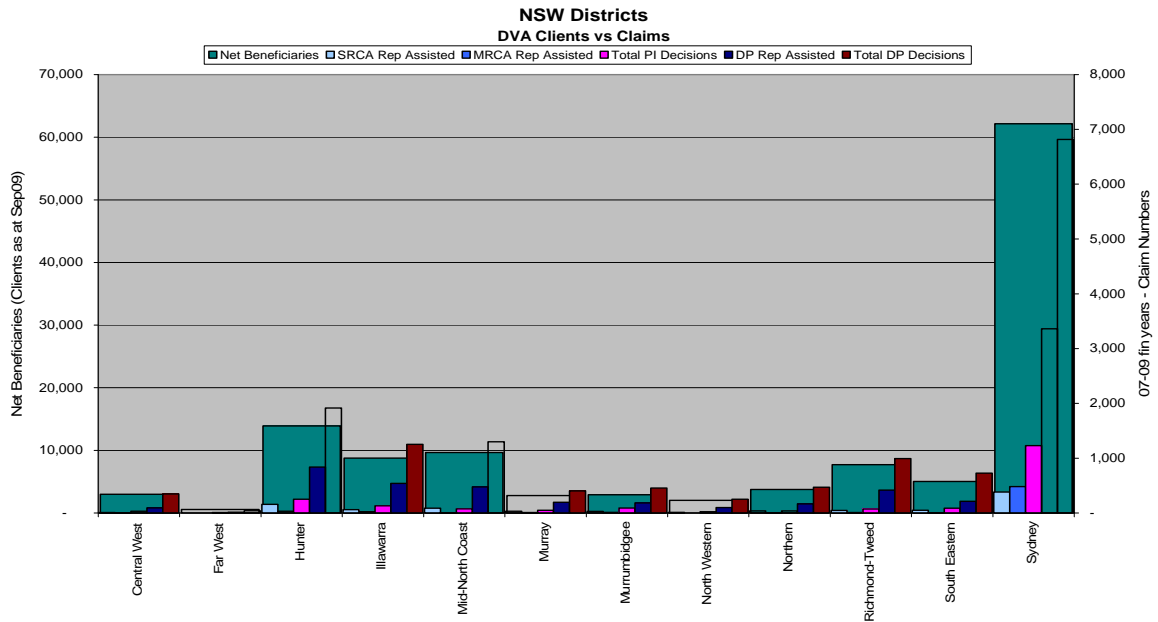
Chart 2b of Attachment P
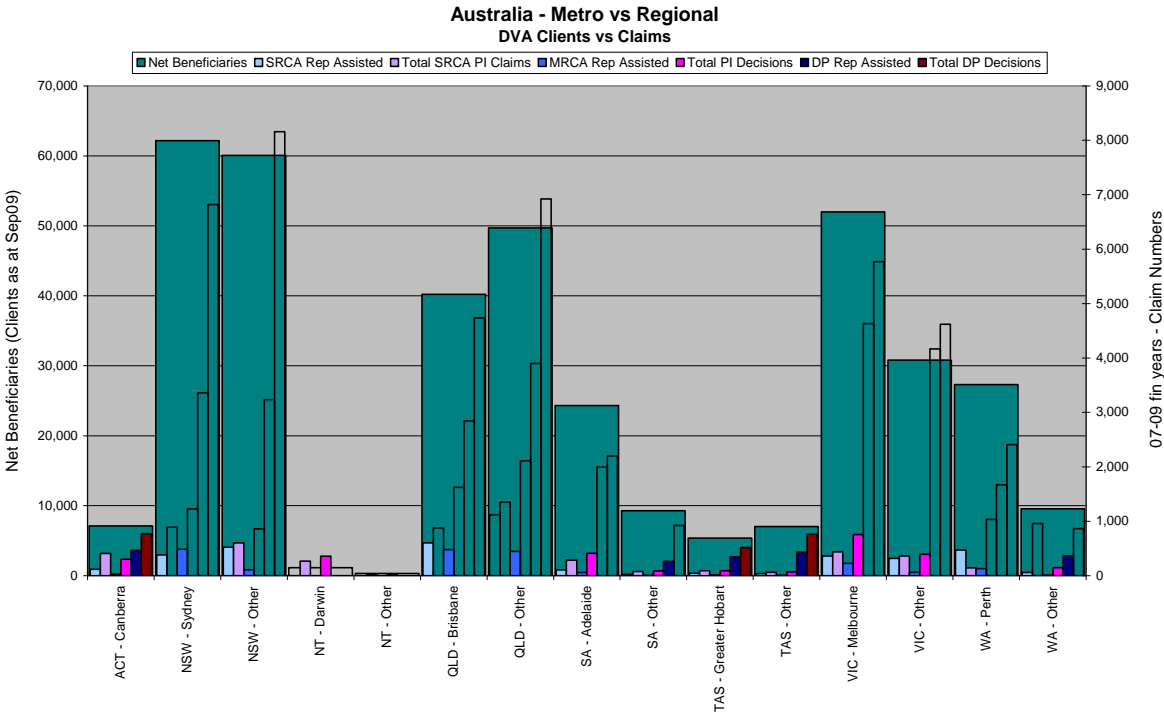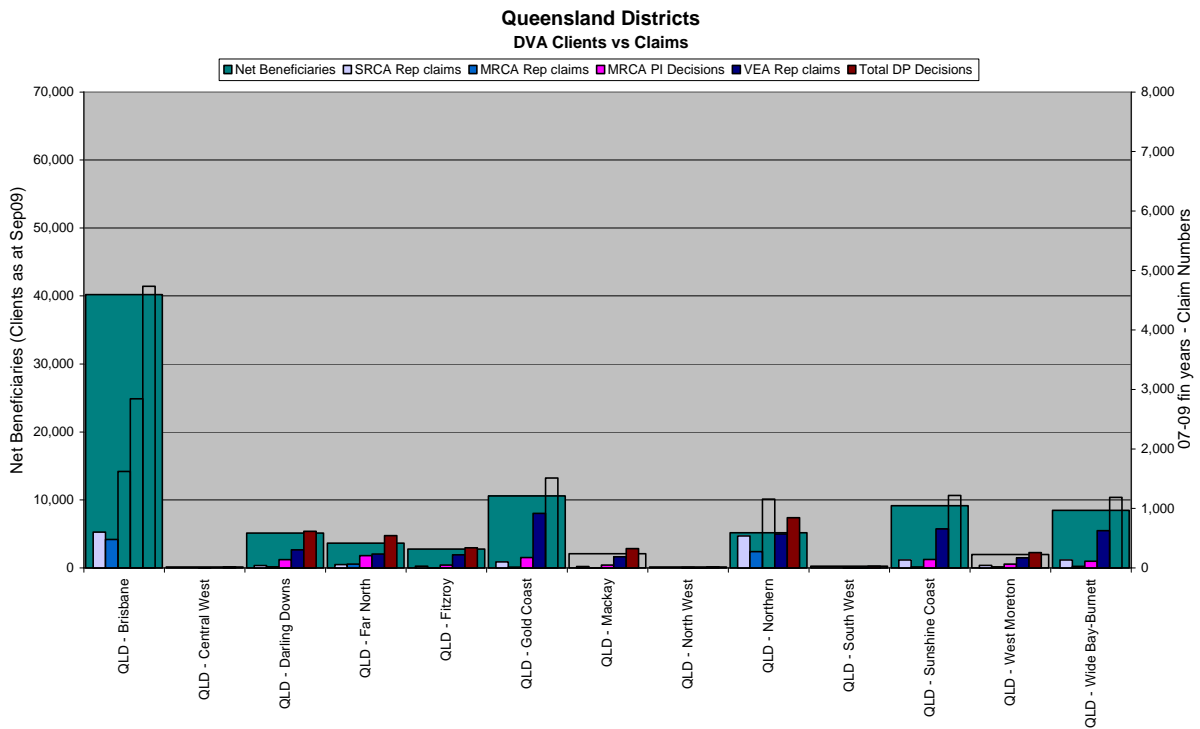

Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

The following two charts drill down to the ABS District level within NSW and Queensland:

Chart 4b of Attachment P

NSW Districts
DVA Clients vs Claims

Chart 8b of Attachment P

Queensland Districts
DVA Clients vs Claims

Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis

14.1.4   New South Wales

The NSW Deputy Commissioner along with key ESOs represented on the NSW Consultative Forum conducted stakeholder forums throughout the State during 2010. The location of ESOs, the VAN in NSW and transport hubs and linkages were used to determine the regional areas for the stakeholder forums.

The Review team believed that although the areas that have been identified do not necessarily align with the ABS Statistical Districts, they do form the basis to identify Regions for demonstration projects.

Accordingly and after discussion with the NSW and Queensland Deputy Commissioners the Review team identified that Tweed Heads could form part of a demonstration project with the Gold Coast Region – refer to Section 14.1.5 for further discussion on this.

The Review team believed an ideal area for a demonstration project in NSW would be the Richmond-Tweed and Mid North Coast Districts where there have been moves by the ESOs in the area towards co-operative arrangements which can be supported and extended through the VAN. This could be called the Far North Coast Region and would extend from south of Tweed Heads down to Coffs Harbour and across to Casino and Grafton. In the first instance discussions with the ESOs in the major centres of Lismore, Grafton and Coffs Harbour would be necessary.

Another demonstration project could be the Mid North Coast Region comprising south of Coffs Harbour, including Nambucca Heads down to Forster and across to Dorrigo through to Gloucester. This Region is selected on the basis of demographics and demand for services (now and in the future). The operation would provide financial, administrative and mentoring support along the coastal strip and provide support to approximately 6,500 veterans.

For reasons of demographics and existing service arrangements other locations that could be considered are the Hunter (encompassing Scone, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Maitland, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Upper Wyong) or Central Coast (Gosford, Wyong) Regions. These could either be back-up demonstration projects or locations for targeted support.

A map 3 showing these proposed regions within NSW is provided at Attachment O (refer to Map 3).

Demonstration projects in these regions would provide an opportunity in the future to focus on sustainability and scalability of services to support the veteran community. Attachment P provides charts showing the regions with a breakdown by LGAs, claims activity and beneficiary numbers.

14.1.5   Queensland

In Queensland, the Northern District (which encompasses Townsville, Burdekin, Charters Towers and Hinchinbrook) was selected by the Review team as an ideal area for a demonstration project. This was due to the large ADF population, overall veteran numbers, claims activity and demand for services (now and in the future). Additionally, there has been a significant move by the ESOs in the area towards co-operative arrangements which could be supported and extended by a demonstration project.

The Review team also considered that there might be opportunity for Townsville (Northern District) to service a "hub" for a larger area which would also encompass the North West and Central West Districts. The operation would provide financial, administrative and mentoring support to the other Districts and would provide support to approximately 5,400 veterans. These three Districts could be named the Queensland North and Central Region. While the veteran numbers for this Region may be lower than would be expected for other Regions in Australia, significant logistical issues arise due to the distances involved.

In considering Regions for demonstration projects for NSW, it was identified that Tweed Heads would logically fit with the Gold Coast. In looking at both the demographics and existing service arrangements within the Gold Coast, the Review team came to the view that a good fit could be splitting it into North Gold Coast and South Gold Coast with the Northern Region centred around Nerang and the Southern Region bringing together the Currumbin and Tweed Heads areas.

Another location that could be considered is the Wide-Bay Burnett District which would stand alone as a Region, again due to demographics and existing service arrangements. This could be seen as either a back-up demonstration project or a location for targeted support.

A map showing the proposed regions within Queensland is provided at <u>Attachment O</u> (refer Map 5). <u>Attachment P</u> provides charts showing the regions with a breakdown by LGAs, claims activity and beneficiary numbers.

When identifying areas for potential demonstration projects the Review team considered a number of locations before opting for those mentioned above. The amount of funding relative to activity was considered and as noted previously in the report, imbalances both across metropolitan and regional areas is apparent. In considering Regions within Queensland, this issue was particularly apparent within the Fitzroy and Far North Regions.

14.1.6   Other Opportunities

While other States and regions, including metropolitan areas, were considered, and could be supported subject to funds availability and where there is a move to a collaborative approach, the Review team felt that it is necessary to limit the scope of project activity in the first instance. This would provide an opportunity to fully evaluate the move to the new service delivery model.

While the Review team did not select Victoria as an area for a demonstration project at this stage, it believed there is scope to further consolidate the 26 Veteran Support Centres that currently operate in the State. Using the ABS Statistical District approach, of which there are ten in regional Victoria, it could point towards ten Veteran Support Centres being provided with funding, unless demographic and claims data suggest otherwise. The Review team believed there have been a lot of advances made in Victoria which present an opportunity to examine and further develop the natural momentum towards further consolidation. The implementation arrangements that support this Report call for the use of existing ESO reference group arrangements to progress key recommendations. This would provide logical fora within which DVA and the ESO community can build upon and progress the momentum.

Additionally, the Review team noted the ESO collaboration and progress being made in a number of locations and recommends a level of targeted support be provided to several regions well positioned to move towards the new model within the next 18 months to two years.

The Review team expected that appropriate sites could be drawn from existing ESO efforts to move towards collaborative arrangements, e.g.:

- Tasmania (Hobart);
- NSW (Hunter, Central Coast); and
- Queensland (Wide-Bay Burnett).

The aim would be to provide support such as facilitation of workshops or meetings but not for leadership or project management-type activities to the extent that is envisaged would be provided to a full scale demonstration project. Resources for DVA State Offices will again be a necessary consideration.

In regard to Tasmania and WA, the Review team believed that in the longer term those States, along with SA/NT, would be best served by having a more significant level of integration. This could mean a single Region to cover the State.

14.2 Summary of Comments

Review Team Suggestion	ESO Response	DVA
19. Request ESOs to provide a critical analysis of the suggested regional approach.	Some ESOs provided specific feedback about proposed regions for integrated service delivery. In particular, the following feedback and comments were made: 1. Far North Coast Legacy suggested the Northern Rivers region of NSW is a logical regional catchment and "DVA would be wise to adopt it as a basis for the organisation of joint services." Far North Coast Legacy already works closely with the district RSL and put forward a proposal for a joint welfare service in BEST Round 12. 2. The Currumbin Palm Beach RSL Veteran Support Centre nominated itself as a support centre for the region of South Gold Coast and northern NSW. 3. Ballina RSL Sub-branch commented that the proposed region of Far North Coast (7767) covering the area from Byron Bay to Coffs Harbour is unrealistic because of the distances that would need to be travelled by veterans. They propose that the region be halved with one central point at Ballina and another in Coffs Harbour. Ballina RSL is suggested as the hub for the Ballina region. 4. The response from the RAAF Association Tasmania Division commented that a State conference between all concerned parties would be the best way of determining a suitable model in Tasmania. 5. Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Far North Coast Sub-branch commented that the proposed Far North Coast Region should not include Coffs Harbour as this area fits in better with the "social, transport and medical referral area of the Mid North coast". The sub-branch pointed out that, in the Far North Coast area, most veterans access help from Lismore, Ballina and Grafton and that many veterans who reside in the New England area also access services on the Far North Coast due to issues of confidentiality.	Agreed. DVA proposes that confirmation of the proposed demonstration project areas and the number that can be supported at any one time be undertaken in consultation with the relevant State Offices and ESOs. Start up of the proposed demonstration projects could begin as soon as practicable. Funds for implementation are available from the 2010-2011 BEST surplus, so implementation is not dependent on alignment with BEST funding rounds although clearly any funding provided to participants in a project this financial year would need to be taken into consideration. Funds have been identified for: - financial advice to amalgamating ESOs - incentives to encourage ESOs to participate assistance in the design and implementation of an appropriate level of reporting under an integrated approach.

15   IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSITION

15.1   Review Team Findings

The Review team considered the need for the development of Implementation and Transition Plans to provide the way forward. A high level assessment of what might be required is at Attachment Q to assist the Department to manage the next process in implementing accepted recommendations. This includes the establishment of a Project Implementation Team, governance structures, timelines, communication arrangements, progression of demonstration projects and necessary changes to guidelines and funding requirements. It also considers how implementation will align with "business as usual" (BAU) arrangements and that the move to BAU should occur as soon as possible. Particular reference has been made in Section 14 to project set-up costs including financial support for State Offices.

The Review team was mindful that it will be necessary for Implementation and Transition Plans to be developed in detail prior to further action being taken by DVA.

In order for both DVA and ESOs to exercise their responsibilities to the veteran community in managing the move to integrated models of service delivery, the Review believed it would be necessary draw on appropriate ESO reference group arrangements, at both the National and State levels, for example the Operational Working Party and Deputy Commissioner Consultative Fora. This would need to be addressed early during the implementation and transition phases.

The Review team believed that the Report's Recommendations and the Minister's Response should be promulgated within the above fora, to allowing consideration and progression of specific issues such as:
- development of TIP competency based training framework and governance structures;
- consideration of DVA quality assurance feedback processes;
- monitoring of demonstration projects and highlighting broader outcomes in relation to integration of service delivery;
- facilitating ESO co-operation in working towards new service delivery arrangements;
- monitoring shifts in demand for veteran services (e.g. pension claims work vs. welfare); and
- IT systems developments/enhancements.

15.2   ESO Comment

ESOs were not specifically asked to respond to this suggestion and no comments were received.

15.3   DVA Comment

DVA proposes to establish a Project Implementation Team to further develop and oversight implementation and transition. The development of a Review Implementation Plan is critical to achieving the Review objectives. The plan will provide the following information for each recommendation:
- implementation approach i.e. phased or single implementation
- who are the stakeholders
- what consultation/communication will be required

- what issues will need to be addressed
- an estimate of costs and source of funding
- what is a target implementation date.

The Plan will also need to provide a suggested approach for communicating the Review outcomes with the broader ESO community, particularly current grant recipients.

The required resources for implementing the plan are a matter for internal consideration.

PART 3 – CONCLUSIONS

The Department acknowledges the significant effort of, and insights provided by, the Review team and the contributions from the ESO community throughout the extensive consultations that have been undertaken.

The Australian model whereby ex-serving members voluntarily take on a role to assist in claims preparation is one that to date has worked very well and should be continued. The very nature of this voluntary work should be valued, not understated, and continue to be supported through funding mechanisms such as TIP and BEST. The programs have evolved significantly during that time. Based on the findings of the Review team, the input from the ESO community and internal departmental consultation, the following conclusions are presented.

TIP

TIP requires some further development to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the ESOs. The governance structures in place have stood the test of time. However, DVA could be providing more support to the TIP National and State Committees. DVA considers that need for on-going funding at current levels for current activities is appropriate and that additional funding for new projects should also be considered.

The move to a nationally consistent program of courses and the development of eLearning modules in conjunction with face-to-face training should continue.

In relation to TIP certification, it is acknowledged that there are two areas where some form of certification is required, namely that of trainers and the courses themselves. The certification needs to be at a level which ensures that appropriate training is being delivered but does not impose requirements that are overly burdensome for a volunteer workforce.

On a related matter, accreditation of practitioners is seen as essential to ensure the trust that has been built up over the years between ESOs and the veterans they are assisting continues to be there in relation to the informed quality of advice being provided. Essential to this is the role that ESOs play both prior to and following TIP training. A mentoring program and the provision of on-the-job training are key components that will ensure the practitioners are provided with appropriate support as they are developing the knowledge and skills required. The provision of a form of identification which indicates the level of accreditation and the areas of expertise will provide assurance to the veteran community that they are dealing with someone who is credible, knowledgeable and able to assist them to receive the service they require.

The development of a quality assurance program to monitor assisted claims will serve to provide feedback to ESOs and practitioners. Similarly, the creation of a Register of Accredited Practitioners with appropriate policies and procedures will ensure that veterans receive the necessary assistance from people in the best position to meet their needs, and that there is an appropriate and up-to-date means of cross-checking grant funding applications with funds consumption.

The relationship with the Department of Defence and in particular the Integrated People Support Services (IPSS) and Defence bases is important to maintain as it enables TIP to have visibility of issues for discharging members.

BEST

In relation to BEST, the changes that have taken place in Rounds 11 and 12 have increased the rigour and transparency in the assessment process. DVA agrees with the majority of the Review team suggestions including:

- per capita funding for BEST;
- applying a set of Funding Principles and Funding Formula;
- incorporating the recognition of other sources of funding and services into the assessment of grant applications;
- the assessment of applications for rent and utilities;
- the partitioning of a minimum of 20% of funds for items other than salary assistance;
- the introduction of a 3-year funding cycle for salary assistance;
- that total salary remuneration be determined by ESOs;
- that ESOs be responsible for salary on-costs;
- that guidelines be revised and performance reporting become six-monthly; and
- minor changes to the administration of grants to national organisations.

In addition, DVA has made further suggestions in relation to:

- the expectation that ESOs should be moving to an integrated approach unless they can justify retaining a stand-alone status;
- funding of other eligible items remain the same;
- monitoring of salary assistance against demographic changes to determine whether a reduction is needed;
- a revised list of eligible and ineligible items be adopted;
- the introduction of a new salary assistance policy;
- greater visibility of the workload of paid practitioners with the capture of caseload statistics;
- changes to funding criteria and reporting requirements for national organisations; and
- additional data collection for welfare activities.

With regard to the two-tiered approach recommended by Professor Dunt, DVA has a different view. DVA believes that rather than the paid/unpaid status of the practitioner being the determinant for the allocation of complex/no-complex work, the level of training and expertise should be the key attribute for allocating pensions/advocacy/welfare work. However, it is acknowledged that as the volunteer workforce declines, more paid practitioners will be required to take on the complex work.

In relation to the issue of ensuring the continuation of a viable volunteer workforce, there is a recognition that some form of remuneration for out-of-pocket expenses must continue to be available.

While the combined package of BEST recommendations will ensure greater visibility of and accountability for grants, it is acknowledged that some will be implemented in a phased manner over several years commencing from Round 14 (2012-13).

VITA

The role of VITA is well-understood and necessary to ensure the protection of ESO practitioners. However, there needs to be a process introduced to check VITA membership records against each of the BEST grant applications, grant acquittal and other grant reporting documentation to ensure every applicant has VITA coverage, and appropriate practitioners have ESO sponsor endorsement.

V&CG

There is acknowledgement by stakeholders that the Veteran and Community grants are meeting program objectives. However, DVA acknowledges that there has been no independent validation of the view in the recent past.

While DVA disagrees with the Review team in relation to changing the allocation of funds from a national allocation to a per capita state allocation, the suggested move from three funding rounds to two funding rounds will improve the administration of the program. Further consideration needs to be given to these issues.

IT Systems

Enhanced system support will bring significant benefits for all stakeholders. Improvements to VPAD and the National Grants database will provide quick, short term benefits. The development of a new integrated system is considered to be the best means for ESOs and DVA to fully realise the benefits expected to arise from the Review outcomes. However, cost must be weighed against benefit and other DVA IT priorities, particularly in the short term, are factors that will affect both timeframe and scope. The development of a business case with the involvement of all stakeholders, ESOs, TIP and DVA should commence as early as possible in 2011.

Service Delivery Models

In considering service delivery models it is concluded that ESOs were seen as having a very clear understanding of the need to move to a model(s) that supports an integrated approach to the delivery of services. It is considered that there is evidence of this already happening across the country. It is also concluded that current practice can be represented as conforming to three current models which can be characterised as stand alone, "hub and spoke" and co-ordinated services. Irrespective of whether a "hub and spoke" or co-ordinated approach is adopted, the Report prescribes some first principles to guide governance, administration and management.

However, it is recognised that there is a continued need for funds to be provided to organisations demonstrating significant level of services to specific groups, such as provided by Legacy and the War Widows Guild. It is noted that these groups often work closely with other ESOs at the local level.

There is widespread support for the commencement of projects that demonstrate a co-operative approach in smaller, contained regions within New South Wales and Queensland with expert advice and incentives to assist ESOs being made available by DVA. Close monitoring and evaluation of the projects should be undertaken prior to rolling the approach out more extensively to ensure lessons learnt are taken on board. There are sensitivities around the location of demonstration projects. Therefore, close consultation with Deputy Commissioners should take place prior to any announcement of final locations. Funds for implementation are available from the 2010-2011 BEST surplus, so implementation is not dependent on alignment with BEST funding rounds although clearly any funding provided to participants in a project this financial year would need to be taken into consideration. Amount have been flagged for:

- financial advice to amalgamating ESOs;
- enticements to encourage ESOs to participate; and
- assistance in the design and implementation of an appropriate level of reporting under an integrated approach.

In considering the role of volunteers and how paid and unpaid practitioners work together, all stakeholders share concerns about aligning a tiered model simply to the construct of "paid versus unpaid". However, it was concluded that more complex work will, over time, be increasingly performed by paid personnel and that remuneration should be determined by the employing ESOs based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA. It is also concluded that transition towards more paid practitioners should be handled carefully and with sensitivity to the needs and concerns of volunteers. The report recognises that regardless of who delivers services, the most important issue is the quality of those services.

In considering the provision of welfare services, the department supports the views of the Review team in relation to the recognition of volunteerism, and involvement of people offering services without expectation of payment. The Review team did recognise that there should be some scope to recompense volunteers for some out of pocket expenses. It was also concluded that it was important to recognise that there are organisations other than ESOs that play a key role in the delivery of welfare services and both alignment and networking with these organisations is very important. The Review recognised that the level and type of welfare services are difficult to evaluate or quantify and further needs based analysis is necessary.

PART 4 - RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table provides a summary of recommendations.

No.	Recommendation	Report Section Reference
	Training Information Program	
1.	Develop a competency based training framework in which assessment and certification of trainees is merit based.	Section 8.2
2.	Engage expert advice to determine, in consultation with TIP and ESOs, the level of certification/accreditation.	Section 8.2
3.	Develop nationally consistent training modules for TIP participants.	Section 8.3
4.	Develop minimum TIP course standards.	Section 8.3
5.	Develop an Introductory Information Pack for ESOs to provide to potential practitioners.	Section 8.3
6.	Provide a component on interview techniques at each level of TIP training.	Section 8.3
7.	Ensure the Level 1 Welfare Course is undertaken by all TIP practitioners.	Section 8.3
8.	Endorse the TIP Training Matrix as the tiered matrix based structure for TIP practitioners.	Section 8.4
9.	Develop and adopt best practice TIP Governance model in all States: • with involvement from DVA, TIP and each state Deputy Commissioner; and • taking into account the requirements specified by the Review team.	Section 8.5
10.	Develop a mentoring policy framework, in consultation with TIP and ESOs, to support and critique advocates, pension officers and welfare officers.	Section 8.6
11.	Ensure mentors are specified on TIP course nomination forms.	Section 8.6
12.	Investigate and develop a quality assurance system within DVA to provide appropriate feedback on claims quality to advocates, ESOs and TIP Chairs.	Section 8.7
13.	Develop a single register to record data appropriate to the needs of TIP, ESOs and DVA, and access be provided to TIP, ESOs/VSCs and DVA.	Section 8.8
14.	Develop and implement a non-photo identification badge for all trained practitioners as a minimum standard for identification of ESO practitioners.	Section 8.9
15.	Continue DVA funding of TIP training, including extending the development and provision of eLearning modules	Section 8.10

16.	Encourage TIP practitioners to continue contact with Defence establishments and their role within the IPSS framework.	Section 8.11
	Building Excellence in Support and Training	
17.	Utilise per capita allocations to each State as the core determinant for BEST grant funding.	Section 9.1
18.	Develop and apply a set of Funding Principles, and in the longer term a Funding Formula, based on demographic data, service delivery needs and sponsor support building in the following factors: **a.** encouraging the further extension of integrated service delivery models; **b.** reflecting a level of sponsor contribution (including means testing and "matching"); and **c.** reflecting other sources of funding and services provided through other organisations.	Section 9.1
19.	Adopt a service delivery model whereby an integrated approach to service delivery be a basic requirement unless an ESO can justify why it needs to operate as a stand alone facility.	Section 9.1
20.	Investigate the practicalities of a means testing assessment approach in consultation with a financial expert and ESOs.	Section 9.1
21.	Remove access to funding for rental costs under BEST by Round 14, subject to "grandfathering arrangements" for current recipients of rental funding.	Section 9.2
22.	Retain the policy of utilities being an ineligible item for BEST funding.	Section 9.2
23.	Cap salary assistance at a total of 80% of total BEST funding and monitored against demographic changes to determine whether a reduction is needed.	Section 9.2
24.	Partition a minimum of 20% of total BEST funds for consumables, internet access, etc and for use in an emergency, and reviewed in line with the target set in Recommendation 25.	Section 9.2
25.	Introduce a three year rolling funding cycle for salaries/wages with: • annual acquittal and an opportunity to adjust annually; and • in-principle approval given in years 2 and 3 for 85% of the funded year 1 amount.	Section 9.2
26.	Continue to provide consumables and capital equipment through an annual funding cycle.	Section 9.2
27.	When applying for BEST funding, require ESOs to disclose the workload for their paid practitioners to ensure that funds are allocated appropriately.	Section 9.2
28.	Approve the proposed list of BEST eligible and ineligible items at Attachment M.	Section 9.2
29.	Continue the current practice whereby ESOs determine [salary] remuneration based on competency, overall experience and performance within the parameters of APS levels set by DVA.	Section 9.3

30.	Continue the current practice whereby ESOs include on-costs in remuneration provided to paid practitioners be borne by ESOs as part of their contribution.	Section 9.3
31.	Approve the salary assistance policy, allowing three to four years for transition to a complete implementation.	Section 9.3
32.	In relation to the Dunt recommendation about the two-tiered practitioner model, DVA recommends that the level of training and expertise of practitioners be the key criterion for allocating pensions/advocacy/welfare work.	Section 9.3
33.	Strengthen the administration of the BEST Program by: **a.** the BEST guidelines being revised and updated, and the application form amended and made available online; and **b.** utilising the current grant performance objectives with grant reporting to be on a six-monthly basis.	Section 9.4
34.	Clearly articulate the funding stream for grants specifically for National ESOs (former GIA program) in the BEST guidelines; including specifying total funding available; and providing greater guidance on meeting reporting requirements.	Section 9.5
35.	Amend the funding criteria for national ESOs under BEST as follows to ensure the distribution of funds is appropriately targeted, equitable and needs based. Funding to: **a.** be for specific activities that support pensions, welfare and advocacy work; **b.** be limited to a maximum of $10,000; **c.** be limited to one grant per organisation per funding round; and **d.** exclude salaries and on-going running costs.	Section 9.5
36.	Require ESOs to collect statistical data to measure the level of welfare activity and to provide a basis for a needs based analysis of the direction of welfare services in the future.	Section 9.6
37.	Incorporate a facility for recording welfare statistics into a new IT system.	Section 9.6
	Veterans Insurance and Training Association	
38.	DVA to check VITA membership records against each of the BEST grant applications to ensure every applicant has VITA coverage and that ESOs ensure that every practitioner has coverage under VITA or an equivalent Professional Indemnity insurance program.	Section 10.3
	Veteran and Community Grants	
39.	Reduce funding rounds to two by 2011/2012.	Section 11.3
	IT Systems	
40.	Progress VPAD enhancements as a priority.	Section 12.1
41.	DVA develop a business case for a new IT system to replace the NGDB and VPAD and provide facilities for the lodgement of grant applications.	Section 12.3

		New Service Delivery Models	
42.	Apply a common set of "First Principles" as set out in <u>Attachment L</u> in DVA's assessment of grant applications		Section 13.2
43.	Direct BEST grant funding primarily to where there is an integrated approach to providing services in areas of high veteran numbers and/or service needs.		Section 13.2
		Regional Approach	
44.	Determine the locations for the demonstration projects in consultation with relevant Deputy Commissioners and ESOs in potentially affected regions.		Section 14.2
		Implementation and Transition	
45.	Establish a Project Implementation Team to further develop and oversight implementation and transition.		Section 15.3

ATTACHMENT A - EXTRACT FROM 2007 GOVERNMENT ELECTION COMMITMENT

Labor's Plan for Veterans' Affairs – Election 2007 Policy Document

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Establish a public register of ex-service officials and will conduct regular surveys of them

A Rudd Labor Government will prepare a public register of ex-service advocates, and pension and welfare officers.

DVA will then publish this list online to make it accessible for individuals seeking information about local ex-service officials that are available and suitable for assisting with their claims.

Labor will also open communication with ex-service officials by conducting an annual survey of these officials.

The surveys will be administered by DVA and the results will be presented to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

The content of the surveys will be developed in conjunction with the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters.

This commitment is designed to ensure that the Minister receives information about the ex-service community from outside of the bureaucracy.

ATTACHMENT B - EXTRACT FROM THE DUNT REPORT

Extract from the *Independent Study Into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* by Professor David Dunt

An independent study to examine the broad issue of suicide in the ex-service community was a Government election commitment.

The study was conducted by Professor David Dunt, an eminent public health specialist and epidemiologist from the University of Melbourne. Professor Dunt's study examined the broad issues of suicide in the ex-service community and a number of specific cases to help identify the extent of suicide, some common contributing factors, veterans who may be at risk and what administrative changes can be made to help combat this serious problem.

Professor Dunt's report, the *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community*, was delivered to the Government on 6 February 2009. The study contains 21 detailed recommendations. The recommendations cover wide ranging matters including suicide prevention, mental health programs, compensation schemes and administrative processes in relation to servicemen and women transitioning from the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The recommendation from the study that relates to the provision of welfare and advocacy services to the veteran community, and the Government's response, is provided below:

Recommendation 8.1: While volunteer Pension Officers endorsed by ESOs have provided a great community service, it is time to move to a new two-tier system. The first tier would consist of largely volunteer TIP-trained Officers as at present. They would in future restrict their advice to straightforward cases. The second tier would consist of a new group of trained Pension Officers and Advocates who would be accredited on the basis of their completion of a Diploma or Certificate IV TAFE qualification. They would be paid through BEST or similar DVA-funded program. They would provide advice to veterans in cases that were not straightforward including appeals and tribunal appearances. Both groups would be subject to appropriate quality assurance procedures. Both tiers of Officers would operate with the endorsement of an ESO. The second-tier, paid, accredited Officers would operate on a day-to-day basis more independently of the ESOs so they can provide services both to veterans who align themselves with an ESO and those who do not by reaching out to the veteran.

Government Response: Accepted in principle
The Government agrees there are some issues that need to be reviewed regarding the future operations of Pension's Officers and the TIP and BEST programs. These initiatives may result in significant change. To ensure changes are appropriate, the Government will consult with key groups. This will be a government priority in 2009-2010.

ATTACHMENT C - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
Terms of Reference

Content and approach

The Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services (the Review) will be conducted by David Batchelor and Olivia Witkowski, with advice and support from other departmental officers and will include:

1. reviewing the following programs:
    a. Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Grants Program,
    b. Training and Information Program, and
    c. Veteran and Community Grants Program;

2. conducting the Review in consultation with the ex-service community and other relevant stakeholders;

3. examining current ESO service models in considering future funding models for their delivery of advocacy and welfare services to the veteran community in relation to VEA, SRCA and MRCA entitlements; and

4. identifying interdependencies and interactions of the three programs.

Objective

The objective of the Review is to recommend a program that ensures:

*   funding levels enable efficient and effective service delivery;
*   the range of items eligible for funding are distinct;
*   appropriate services are provided for younger veterans;
*   the distribution of available funds is transparent and fair;
*   there is no duplication of ESO advocacy and welfare services funded by the Government in individual locations; and
*   harmonious working relationships are established and maintained.

Key issues

The following points will also be addressed:

*   consideration of the recent recommendations made by Professor Dunt as well as the Government's Election Commitment to establish a public register of ex-service officials and conduct regular surveys of them;
*   the impact of rolling *Grants-in-Aid* into BEST in 2009-10;
*   the sustainability and scalability of future programs;
*   opportunities for ESOs to share resources and work in partnership;
*   ensuring the concept of "volunteerism" remains a key theme;
*   options and implications for change to funding cycles and length of grant funding periods; and
*   the effectiveness and efficiency of DVA administrative arrangements, including grant monitoring and acquittal processes.

Key program redesign elements

The Review will consider previous BEST and GIA grant application processes and outcomes, and incorporate the following items for each recommended ongoing program:

- guidelines, operations and administration, including processes, quality assurance, performance measurement and accountability;
- technology and systems,
- eligibility and assessment criteria;
- client demographics;
- location of ESO, DVA and community support groups;
- items that are currently funded;
- the extent to which all programs are meeting the needs of the key stakeholder groups;
- other DVA programs and sources of support; and
- areas of concern from each of the key stakeholder groups.

In considering any new arrangements, the eligibility criteria and items to be funded under the V&CG Program will be taken into account.

Deliverables

The review team will provide a report with recommendations to the Secretary and the Minister. This will include recommendations for:

- renewed programs that provide appropriate financial support and training;
- sites that would serve as a centre-of-expertise for surrounding more "localised" services, including the nature and extent of technological and administrative needs to support ESO activities;
- streamlined but more rigorous grants application, assessment, contractual and monitoring/acquittal processes; and
- optimal grant allocation timings – that is, frequency of grant Rounds in any given financial year and length of grant coverage (e.g. one, three, five years).

Timeframe

The Review will commence by end August and will be concluded by mid-December 2009.

Governance

The Review Team will be guided by the National Manager Research, Development and Support on a day-to-day basis. Senior direction will be provided by the Repatriation Commissioner and the General Manager Support Division.

Interdependencies

The Review Team's analysis will inform the separate consideration being given to the conditions under which the funds remaining from Round 11 will be made available to ESOs within the 2009/10 financial year. The Review Team's input will be important to the Department making recommendations to the Minister that are not inconsistent with either:

- the decision-making framework applied to Round 11 to date or
- the objectives of the Review.

ATTACHMENT D - DISCUSSION PAPER

Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
Discussion Paper

Background

As you would be well aware, the nature of the Department's beneficiary population is undergoing change both in terms of the ageing of the veteran population but also at the same time the increasing number of younger veterans and serving members needing help.

Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), through their practitioners, advocates and welfare officers, provide an invaluable service in assisting members of the serving and ex-service communities. There is a clear need for the Review to address the sustainability of the Government-funded programs that support ESO activities in relation to claim and appeal work, and information services on broader welfare issues.

Some ESOs report that it is difficult to attract, train and retain a sufficient number of advocates, and welfare and pension officers to act on behalf of DVA beneficiaries and claimants and to deal with increasingly complex legislation. Accordingly, the Review needs to ensure that the resources that are available are used to best effect. To this end, the Review will consider the potential for collaboration and co-operation between ESOs including the sharing of facilities and resources, being mindful of issues around location e.g. rural and remote, veteran-specific groups and the relative size of ESOs. The question of what other forms of support are available to ESOs beyond Government funding, must also be a consideration.

It is also very important to ensure that the links between ESO advocacy services and TIP are such that current and informed advice and support are available to all DVA beneficiaries and claimants.

The level of administrative rigour that applies to support programs will also be considered. Grant policies and eligibility criteria will be considered in order to enhance grant application lodgement processes and supporting systems including VPAD and other local arrangements. Opportunities to enhance DVA grant assessment and notification processes and systems will also be explored. Overall, attention will be given to quality assurance, better performance measurement, accountability and reporting. The intent is not to make monitoring and reporting processes so onerous that they become a disincentive to applying for program funds. Rather, it is important in designing the new programs, that the Department can ensure that the objectives of the Review can continue to be met in future years.

The Terms of Reference of the Review outline its objectives, the approach that will be taken and the scope of the Review. In undertaking consultations, feedback is being sought around a number of key focus points, including but not limited to, those outlined in the next two pages.

Any other comments on the Review and any aspect of the operations of the programs will also be welcome.

Key Focus Points for Discussion

BEST service delivery models
- Since BEST was first introduced, ESOs have established various models of service delivery for claims, advocacy and welfare support for the veteran and defence communities. We are interested in views on those models you have experience of or are aware of, including:
    - strengths and weaknesses of those current arrangements;
    - the opportunity for partnerships including the veteran centre approach;
    - scope for joint venture arrangements with other ESOs and /or community organisations;
    - sharing facilities and resources;
    - joint funding approaches to BEST-related activities;
    - meeting the needs of small ESOs and those servicing rural and remote localities;
    - what would be considered appropriate welfare activities; and
    - meeting the needs of veteran-specific groups, e.g. Indigenous veterans.

TIP scope and accreditation
- The Review is also interested in a number of issues around the TIP program and seeks views on such issues as:
    - training content and delivery;
    - scope for the extension of recent developments in E-learning to expand, strengthen and improve the skills and knowledge basis;
    - accredited representation;
    - opportunities arising out of the evolution of veteran centres e.g. sharing of highly skilled TIP-trained officers across ESOs;
    - responding to changing demographics including the demands for welfare support (which could include services not provided by DVA);
    - the challenge of working across the VEA, SRCA and MRCA; and
    - the respective contributions of paid and unpaid representatives and the role of volunteers.

Grant administrative processes
- As well as the construct of the programs themselves, the Review is focusing on administrative practices around grant application and approval processes for BEST, GIA and V&CG and is seeking views on:
    - grant guidelines, application processes and forms, and assessment and notification processes;
    - quality assurance, performance measurement, monitoring and accountability, including acquittal requirements;
    - items that are funded and criteria for eligibility and assessment;
    - the extent to which the programs meet ESO needs and respond to client demographics;
    - duration of grants for example continuation of annual grants versus funding for longer periods of time; and
    - timeframes for and timing of lodgement of grant applications.

Tools to support grants management processes

- The Review is expected to make recommendations on how both the Department and ESOs can better utilise technology to provide consistent more reliable information about how grant monies are being utilised and what outcomes are being achieved for the veteran and defence communities through BEST, TIP and V&CG. The intention is to streamline assessment and accountability procedures as much as possible; and collect information that can be used to support future ESO applications. Therefore, views are being sought on:
    - the extent to which VPAD is currently used;
    - the need for enhancements to VPAD including reporting and monitoring frameworks;
    - other systems (technology or paper-based) that may be in use;
    - the usefulness of on-line completion and lodgement of forms;
    - on-line data entry of claims and other services information; and
    - opportunities for bringing application and case management processes together through VPAD.

ATTACHMENT E - EMERGING THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

Emerging Themes from Focus Groups

The emerging themes that are summarised below represent broad observations by the Review team who are continuing their detailed consideration of the views that they have received through both written submissions and in the face to face discussions that have been held.

- From discussions held ESOs show a clear understanding of the need to move to a model or models that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. Points made in support of Veteran Support Centres include:
  - o recognition that resources (human and equipment) need to be optimised;
  - o funding needs to match the service needs of veterans in particular locations;
  - o establishment of new Centres may need specific additional support; and
  - o any new model or models need to have regard to the needs of veterans in all locations.

- There has been recognition that grant assessment processes need to recognise the capacity of ESOs to contribute to total service costs whilst taking into account the variable levels of ESO and other sponsor support that are available.

- The Review team has been made aware of strong support for the TIP program. Observations made have included:
  - o a need for all course offerings to be widely available;
  - o enthusiasm for E-learning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach;
  - o recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (i.e. Registered Training Organisations, TAFE etc);
  - o national consistency (with flexibility for State requirements) of program design is desirable rather than individual State designs;
  - o both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
  - o need for DVA feedback regarding quality of claims – linked to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s; and
  - o a tiered structure could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained officers.

- Throughout the Review reference has been made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework/s.

- Comment has been made to the Review team about the need to have better informed processes for grants and for assessments to be more evidence based. This involves the need for better data (e.g. ESO membership numbers is not a valid basis compared to numbers of veterans supported and services provided), development of work load indicators, assessment of applications (e.g. the validity of data provided) and reporting processes.

- There has been a very high level of recognition at all levels for the importance of transparency and accountability in the management of BEST, TIP and V&CG Programs.

- Discussions and submissions reflect support for volunteerism whilst also recognising the need to retain and provide skilled advocacy and other services. There is a clear understanding of the need to get the right balance of paid versus unpaid personnel as services to veterans transition to the future.

- The Review has noted that there are concerns about aligning the notion of a tiered model to simply paid versus unpaid. At the same time it is evident that more complex work may, over time, be increasingly conducted by paid personnel.

- The extent of demographic challenges have been frequently mentioned. These can be located on a continuum with the needs of younger veterans at one end and the increasing need for effective referral to aged care/community services at the other.

- Throughout the Review, there has been a level of interest in changes to funding cycles, funding criteria and administrative arrangements – for example, recurrent funding with yearly reviews, timeliness of funds allocation, rolling programs together, keeping grants to National and State ESOs discrete.

- There has been general acceptance of current arrangements for V&CG but mention has been made of the need to consider both current funding criteria and to evaluate the outcomes that are being achieved.

- Forms and documentation have attracted a great deal of comment. These vary and at one level there are concerns about the demands that are placed on volunteers whilst the need has also been expressed for more guidance and prescription in completing documentation, e.g. around welfare reporting.

- There has been a number of views expressed about the Veterans Practitioner Activity Data base (VPAD). These have been around the extent to which it is used or not and the reasons why, the need for enhancements to proceed and the level of ongoing support that is necessary. These comments have been made in the context of a broader discussion of the need for IT systems to inform funding, activities and acquittal processes.

ATTACHMENT F - REVIEW TEAM MEETING SCHEDULE

Date		Event	Place
Meeting Schedule			
Sep	14	Secretary	Canberra
	16	DVA Deputy Commissioner's meeting	Melbourne
	21	Grants team in SA	Adelaide
	23	VVF Centre visit	Page ACT
Oct	1	John Printz, National TIP Chair	Melbourne
	8	NSW Regional Focus Group	Dubbo
	8	WA Office staff	Perth
	9	WA Focus Group	Perth
	12	TAS Focus Group	Launceston
	13	VIC Focus Group	Melbourne
	14	NSW Regional Focus Group	Lismore
	15	VITA AGM	Canberra
	15	PMAC	Canberra
	16	Ken Doolan - Nat Pres RSL	Canberra
	19	QUEENSLAND Regional Focus Group	Townsville
	20	QUEENSLAND Focus Group	Brisbane
	21	QUEENSLAND Regional Focus Group	Rockhampton
	22	TIP National Conference	Brisbane
	23	NSW Focus Group	Sydney
	30	DVA Executive Management Group	Canberra
Nov	4	SA Focus Group	Adelaide
	6	ACT Focus Group	Canberra
	12	Operational Working Party	Canberra
	27	ESO Round Table	Canberra
Dec	15	DVA Executive Management Group	Canberra
	15	PMAC Teleconference	Canberra
Feb	4	Operational Working Party	Canberra
	17	DVA Executive Management Group	Sydney
	17	VVPPA at Granville	Sydney
	24	Emerging Issues Forum	Canberra
Mar	4	PMAC	Canberra
	26	ESO Round Table	Canberra
Jun	4	Emerging Issues Forum	Canberra
	15	PMAC	Canberra
Jul	1	Operational Working Party	Canberra
Sep	10	Emerging Issues Forum	Canberra
	23	ESO Round Table	Canberra
Oct	13	Operational Working Party	Canberra
Nov	22	ESO Round Table	Canberra
	24	PMAC	Canberra

ATTACHMENT G - CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

Consultation with the Veteran and Defence Communities

Background

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs has instructed the Department to review advocacy and welfare services available to the veteran community through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grants program and the Training and Information Program (TIP) to support the changing DVA client demographic.

The Review will consider recommendations made by Professor Dunt in his *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-Service Community* in relation to advocacy and advice services. The Review will also include DVA's Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) program and take into consideration relevant aspects of the Government's 2007 Election Commitments.

The Minister requested that the Review be completed by mid December 2009.

Consultation

Given the timeframes for the Review, discussions with the veteran and defence communities will be carefully targeted whilst still ensuring that appropriate consultation occurs. To support the consultation, a letter will be provided to the following groups outlining the purpose of the Review, together with the Terms of Reference and a discussion paper providing key focus points for feedback and submissions to the Review Team:

- National Presidents of all ESOs;
- ESO Round Table members;
- Key State ESOs;
- National TIP Chair;
- Chair of each State TIP Consultative Group; and
- All BEST Round 11 applicants.

Meetings that will be attended by (or held by) the Review Team include:

- Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters;
- ESO Round Table;
- TIP National Conference;
- Operational Working Party;
- State Consultative Fora as arranged by Deputy Commissioners; and
- ESOs in key regions such as Townsville, North Coast NSW and others as identified by Deputy Commissioners.

The Review will not include direct consultation with individual members of the veteran and defence communities – other than in their role as an ESO service provider funded under BEST or trained under TIP. V&C grant recipients will also not be included directly in consultations by the Review.

However, notification about the Review will be provided on the Department's website along with the Terms of Reference and the discussion paper. That notification will invite individuals or organisations to make submissions if they wish. Submissions will be accepted electronically to best.tip.review@dva.gov.au or in writing to the Review Team, Review of DVA-funded ESO

Advocacy and Welfare Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, Grants and Bursaries Section, PO Box 21, Woden ACT 2606.

There is a range of service models operating that have been set up or are being supported at some level through BEST funding and/or TIP training. To complement the consultation activities, the Review Team will visit a small number of these services, across the range from largely welfare and information provision by volunteers through to salaried claims and advocacy services. This additional process will assist the Review team in better understanding how services are delivered at the moment and where effective approaches and processes might be valuable in structuring the revised BEST and TIP programs.

The Review Team will contact those service providers direct to make arrangements to undertake a location visit, where practicable.

The programs being reviewed
BEST grants provide funding to ESOs to support their advocacy and welfare activities. This may include costs associated with employing advocates, pension and welfare officers, or equipment such as computers, printers and software.
- In 2008-09, more than $6.168 million was provided to BEST grant recipients, $4.072 million for Round 10 grants and $2.096 million in the Capital Equipment Round.
- In 2009-10, $3.991 million in funding has been provided for Round 11 grant recipients.

The 2009-10 round was oversubscribed by $5 million. Some 98 applicants were unsuccessful, and of the 182 successful many received less funding than requested given concerns about future scalability and flexibility of the program as it is now being accessed.

A similar trend continued in the initial 2010-11 round assessment with the round being oversubscribed by $4million, 36 applicants were unsuccessful and 195 applicants were successful. This round subsequently approved additional funding to 85 applicants as part of the second pass assessment and a further six (6) applicants that requested a review of the Minister's original decision.

V&C grants provide funding to community and ex-service organisations to support health and wellbeing initiatives for local veterans, war widows and widowers. The program aims to support activities and services that maintain and improve the independence and quality of life of older members of the veteran community. Projects supported include social excursions, Men's Sheds, Day Clubs, cooking classes, updating facilities at activity venues and health and fitness activities.

There are three rounds of V&C grants each year (March, July and October). The most recent funding round, July, was announced by the Minister on 1 September 2009.
- more than $1.2 million was provided in the July 2009 round; and
- more than $1.5 million was provided in the March 2009 round.

The **TIP program** provides training and information to volunteer pension and welfare officers who provide services through ESOs. The aim of TIP is to enable pension and welfare officers to provide the best possible advice to veterans and ex-service members seeking compensation and benefits from DVA. In 2008-09, $1.6m in funding was provided to the TIP program. There were 174 training courses held nationally with 2,401 participants.

ATTACHMENT H - CONSOLIDATED COMMENTS FROM ESOS

The following is an overview of the views expressed by ESOs during the course of the Review. It is not exhaustive and in formalising their recommendations the Review team has had regard to the full and detailed analysis they have undertaken of the comments provided at the face to face consultations and those contained in the written submissions that were received.

DEMOGRAPHICS
The extent of demographic challenges have been frequently mentioned. These can be located on a continuum with the needs of younger veterans at one end and the increasing need for effective referral to aged care/community services at the other. Some of the comments made were along the following lines:
   a) younger veterans are often not aware of their service and legislative entitlements;
   b) spouses of younger veterans have very strong expectations and are challenging for advocates;
   c) 80,000 deployments since Vietnam have resulted in significant and increasing needs but many in this cohort are not well organised;
   d) need to support younger veterans in the face of complex needs and legislation; and
   e) ageing clients are requiring greater levels of personal support.

BUILDING EXCELLENCE IN SUPPORT AND TRAINING (BEST)
BEST is seen by many as the most significant resource available in meeting the needs of the veteran community, and along with TIP is a vital component of overall support. Comments about its strengths were frequent and included:
   a) funding has been very beneficial to assist organisations with the provision of computer, printer, software and administrative assistance; and
   b) the direction of funding to Veteran Support Centres would increase the probability of claims being accepted and reduce the out of pocket impost on volunteers.

More critical observations were:
   a) increasing numbers of BEST applications chasing finite dollars;
   b) absence of the facility to lodge applications electronically;
   c) delay in BEST grant approvals;
   d) a general lack of DVA monitoring of claims submitted and provision of feedback;
   e) lack of ESO accountability, quality assurance and support to advocates and pension officers;
   f) absence of performance indicators;
   g) the current system fails to meet the needs of veterans in remote areas;
   h) concern that centralisation may mean that veterans may miss out on some services; and
   i) priority should be to retain motivated pension officers through respecting their efforts rather than needing to centralise ESOs.

Perceived needs included:
   a) better funding strategies and feedback mechanisms;
   b) rent, electricity and other costs being permitted where necessary as an essential element in supporting pension and advocacy work;
   c) better outcomes data and clear measurable objectives;
   d) support for necessary administrative assistance;
   e) support for VRB attendance;
   f) fair proportion of funding to war widows; and

g) priority for funds to those advocates dealing with MRCA (consistent with the need to shift focus from compensation to rehabilitation).

There has been recognition that grant assessment processes need to recognise the capacity of ESOs to contribute to total service costs whilst taking into account the variable levels of ESO and other sponsor support that are available. Comments made include:
  a) income and asset means testing should apply when prioritising grants;
  b) organisations with funds in excess of $1million should not receive grant monies; and
  c) there is a need to focus on the needs of smaller organisations.

However it was reported that organisations sometimes viewed as well off may have their assets tied up in capital such as housing/property therefore monies are not readily accessible for on-going services.

GRANTS-IN-AID (GIA)
Comments received included:
  a) GIA grants should be separate from BEST grants;
  b) a belief that complications have arisen through rolling in GIA;
  c) GIA could be consolidated into BEST but that funding should be separately identified and guidelines should clarify who is able to apply for this funding;
  d) funds need to be quarantined to ensure BEST funds are not transferred from BEST to support national ESOs;
  e) grants should not cover running costs of a national ESO;
  f) funds should be prioritised so that ESOs without commercial backing have the first call on funds;
  g) grants should only to go to national ESOs with a significant body of members;
  h) that a grant funding formula be used; and
  i) that acquittals need to be tightened to ensure grants are used for the purpose for which they were given.

VETERAN AND COMMUNITY (V&C) GRANTS
There has been general acceptance of current arrangements for V&C Grants but mention has been made of the need to consider both current funding criteria and to evaluate the outcomes that are being achieved. Specific comments include:
  a) V&C grants should be retained but closely monitored and directed at projects with significant veteran involvement;
  b) current frequency of rounds provides for requirements that may present at short notice;
  c) there is a need to recognise that new organisations will need to access funding to perform a critical role for their specific constituencies;
  d) an increase in funding is needed in line with actual costs;
  e) eligible items need to be reviewed at the beginning of each funding round, at present there is narrow focus and no flexibility for innovative ideas;
  f) program could be aimed at younger members, their wives and children;
  g) the criteria for grants and application documentation should be simplified;
  h) use of grant funds to provide training for ESO managers in organisational and financial administration to provide confidence in their management skills and abilities;
  i) grants should be of value to wider cohort than the veteran community; and
  j) V&C grants should be more widely utilised by Veteran Support Centres and they should co-exist with other grants, all complimenting each other to successfully obtain necessary objectives.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Throughout the Review, there has been a level of interest in changes to funding cycles, funding criteria and administrative arrangements, e.g. recurrent funding with yearly reviews, timeliness of funds allocation, rolling programs together and keeping grants to National and State ESOs discrete. Specific comments were made along the following lines:

a) the inability to plan beyond the next BEST round creates inefficiencies and can lead to excessive staff turnover;

b) in relation to funding cycles a broad range of views were received, including:

- a funding cycle of at least 3 years would provide certainty of tenure and enable professional training and development;
- support for 3-5 year rolling cycles where funds are acquitted annually with an opportunity to adjust where necessary;
- commitment to funding ESOs over 3 years could impact negatively on other prospective projects;
- applications should be submitted annually and reviewed quarterly for supplementary funding if necessary;
- funding for salaries/wages to be long term whereas monies for equipment and consumables to be annual;
- annual grants provide better accountability and allow DVA to meet changing government budgetary provisions; and
- longer term grants are able to identify purpose and outcomes;

c) there is a need to assist members and constituents with representation at Regional and State forums;

d) DVA should move away from an applications approach and replace this with a planning approach where grants are distributed according to services provided (based on numbers) whilst still encompassing specific proposals from organisations;

e) preference for a less competitive system capable of covering the operating costs of volunteers, their accommodation, technical and administrative support;

f) funding should be outcome based and reflect not only cases supported but also lobbying, social support, welfare work and the intellectual and independent advice ESOs offers Government;

g) rent and utilities should be included, removal of utilities and rental has made it difficult to sustain a regional centre to assist all veterans therefore many committees and practitioners operate from private residences;

h) suggestion that criteria for funding should be based on a "fee for service" basis – that is, a scale of fees be established and funds provided for services delivered, e.g. basic consultation, preparation and lodgement of claim, additional consultations, preparation of cases for VRB/AAT;

i) suggestions that there should be sliding scale for determining grant allocation, e.g. primary claim a set value then an additional amount for Section 31 reviews, VRB reviews etc;

j) there should be transparency in the grants approval process; and

k) grants should properly support the work of volunteers.

APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESSES

Comment has been made to the Review team about the need to have better informed processes for grants and for assessments to be more evidence based. This involves the need for better data (e.g. ESO membership numbers is not a valid basis compared to numbers of veterans supported and services provided), development of workload indicators, assessment of applications (particularly the validity of data provided) and reporting processes.

There has been a very high level of recognition at all levels for the importance of transparency and accountability in the management of BEST, TIP and V&C grants.

Forms and documentation have also attracted a great deal of comment. These vary and at one level there are concerns about the demands that are placed on volunteers whilst the need has also been expressed for more guidance and prescription in completing documentation, e.g. around welfare reporting.

Comments made by some included that administrative processes, guidelines, forms and assessment processes are adequate and there is no need for change.

More generally comments were along the following lines:
a) guidelines, application process and forms, assessment and notification processes should be streamlined with emphasis on funding going to the right place for work actually carried out. Forms should be more user friendly and figures supplied should be validated;
b) applications forms change every year as does terminology, annual acquittal requirements present difficulties and there is a case for 3 year funding with continued quarterly reporting;
c) electronic lodgement of BEST applications is preferred, essential forms should be available on the DVA website and able to be completed and submitted electronically;
d) forms often not applicable for type of funding being sought, need to be on-line, administration cumbersome, quotes out-of-date by time received, annual audit of ESOs could encompass audits of grant funds;
e) concerns regarding lack of DVA advice on relevant progress reports or acquittals;
f) higher performance should be recognised in considering continuation or for a new grant;
g) existing quarterly reports tedious to complete, perhaps an annual on-site DVA audit more useful;
h) grant funding should be transparent, accountable, include acquittal using measurable outcomes. Claims numbers should be identified and quality and performance measured and assessed. Future funding should depend on prior performance, if benchmark not met then no funds;
i) performance indicators for grant funding are necessary and could include number of claims, number of appeals, TIP training undertaken, welfare activities, numbers of clients, reduction in time taken to prepare certificates for VRB cases, maintenance of skills standards, plus other reporting requirements depending on the content of the grant application;
j) claims should be subject to minimum guidelines regarding the time taken, e.g. primary claims up to 2h 45min, a VRB hearing from
k) 10 to 15 hrs, an AAT hearing from 20 to 24 hrs;
l) departmental monitoring to assist volunteers to become productivity focussed;
m) DVA needs to appoint a grants coordinator in each State who can inspect ESOs in regard to grant funds; and
n) DVA to:
- evaluate grants made in the previous year;
- ensure all documentation is received (failure to produce a financial acquittal, quarterly or annual report, should jeopardise future assistance under BEST;
- consider performance of grantee against objectives of grant;
- analyse impact of quality and throughput of claims; with
- results achieved to be included in DVA Annual Report.

IT SYSTEMS – TECHNICAL SUPPORT

There have been a number of views expressed about the Veterans Practitioner Activity Data base (VPAD). These have been around the extent to which it is used or not and the reasons why, the need for enhancements to proceed and the level of ongoing support that is necessary. These comments have been made in the context of a broader discussion of the need for IT systems to inform funding, activities and acquittal processes. Critical comments included that currently:

a) the accuracy of output and ability to produce reports is questionable;
b) the system is time consuming, difficult to use, and both data entry and extract are cumbersome;
c) the system is not supported with appropriate training;
d) there is an absence of on-going technical support; and
e) VPAD is directed more at veterans than widow(er)s and as a consequence it is not useful for Legacy advocates.

However there were some more positive views:

a) it provides enough detail to adequately case manage submissions on behalf of veterans; and
b) it can generate a BEST report.

But even where there was positive input there were a number of suggestions as to how it could be improved by being:

a) expanded to include measurement of all activity;
b) supported by an advertised help desk; and
c) updated to provide all information pertinent to funding requirements.

In general terms there was recognition that:

a) the plethora of alternative systems that have emerged should be reigned in;
b) emphasis in the future should be about having the facility to entering claims and other information on-line;
c) opportunities needed to be explored for bringing the application process and case management together;
d) the current system should be modified to include quality indicators relating to service delivery/ performance management;
e) eTechnology should be utilised to provide a reliable and current information flow;
f) VPAD or its successor should be utilised to reflect outcomes being achieved and to provide an accountability platform as well as streamlining assessment and accountability procedures; and
g) the current system should be either subject to significant enhancement or it should be withdrawn and replaced with a more user friendly system that has the necessary functionality.

ESO INTEGRATION

From discussions held, ESOs show a clear understanding of the need to move to a model or models of service delivery that support an integrated approach to the delivery of services. Some general points made in support of Veteran Support Centres included:

- recognition that resources (human and equipment) need to be optimised;
- funding needs to match the service needs of veterans in particular locations;
- establishment of new Centres may need specific additional support; and
- any new model or models need to have regard to the needs of veterans in all locations.

It was felt that incentives should be provided to those ESOs that join with others to develop "combined Service Centres", the strengths of which were commented on as follows:

a) grants can be targeted to those in need of funding;
b) the model as operating in Victoria provides a sound basis to deliver consistency of standards and the orderly location of resources;
c) the Townsville RSL Sub–branch was also seen as a very good example;
d) it is an approach better geared to provide services that involve VEA, SRCA and MRCA;
e) it supports the provision of timely advice;
f) these Centres can be further developed to enhance efficiency, better allocation of funding and transparency of resource usage;
g) the Centre model serves all veterans and widows;
h) it addresses issue of diminishing numbers of volunteers and allows for sharing of resources and knowledge sharing;
i) it provides critical mass for grant funding and can facilitate in-house training; and
j) provides an effective and efficient model with a capacity for outreach and mentoring where core effort can be borne by full or part time paid staff, supported by qualified volunteers.

Concerns raised included that:

a) shared resources need to be looked at very carefully as issues of privacy and security of files arise;
b) the focus of the Review may be on the elimination of small service providers and on saving costs;
c) the Review is an attempt to centralise activities to areas that are more suitable to major ESOs;
d) internal politics may impact on sharing of resources with larger ESOs monopolising funding;
e) the Veteran Centre approach has merit but is subject to individuals and the relative strength of organisations;
f) the needs of widows and children are unlikely to be met;
g) no ESO is going to look favourably at a concept where they lose their ability to provide services to their existing constituency;
h) the idea is good in theory but difficult in practice as there is a need to resolve questions as to who is responsible for funds;
i) grants are often small and sharing is not always practical;
j) set up costs may be prohibitive;
k) it would difficult to set up Centre such as in Victoria elsewhere because of logistics, geography and current limitations of facilities e.g.. North Brisbane;
l) it is important to maintain an alcohol and gambling free environment as an alternative to RSLs;
m) centralisation will see many trained and experienced Pension and Welfare Officers lost because of travelling requirements;
n) amalgamating small sub-branches may be a big mistake with the likelihood of losing highly trained volunteers who like to work from their own office; and
o) An organisation has advised that :
   - disadvantages could be created by the current grants process which favours Veteran Centres;
   - partnerships and sharing of resources under joint ventures are supported but it cautions against a one size fits all approach;
   - they believe partnerships already exist in many areas at a local level where most benefit can be gained; and

- they are of the view that Veteran Support Centres on their own do not facilitate a whole of life approach to advocacy and welfare support.

Although the above concerns were raised, there was a clear recognition of a need to moved to a more integrated approach and many organisations identified the opportunities that would arise. These included:

a) the creation of regional centres where ESOs are allowed to 'tender' for the provision of salaried duties to the veteran community;
b) opportunities to work with government and business and properly structure available resources;
c) the ability to deploy nationally accessible panels of people with necessary skills thus supporting soundly based outreach;
d) a suggestion that five (5) groups could be strategically placed within VAN office regions in NSW with each operating autonomously and sharing intellectual assets and services to smaller ESOs within their region;
e) another suggestion for ESOs working together on neutral ground deploying a model of operations that allows ESOs to be autonomous and goal specific in relation to service delivery (practitioners not needing to abandon their ESO but become a member of a 'guild' that provides peer support and shared intellectual assets);
f) mutual support centres with an independent Board of Management through an initial steering committee consisting RSL, Legacy, VVF, APPMA, formed in each region with local VAN providing Secretariat role; and
g) concept of a Regional Veterans Centres (perhaps 2 to 3 in the NSW Northern Rivers Region) and joint service hubs in other significant towns. The RSL could perhaps chair a preliminary identification of needs, a preliminary service delivery capability analysis, the formation of at least one Veteran Support Centre, formalise joint service hubs, allow for an extensive transition period.

It was felt that in order to achieve integration it may be necessary to:

a) accept that such an approach would only work within an independent shopfront style environment and that workload should be examined to ensure it was shared to reduce the likelihood of burnout;
b) have a separate allocation of DVA funds for resource issues such as rooms, computers, telephones and other items;
c) have statistical data from DVA to develop strategic service delivery plans with demographics a key consideration;
d) have ownership and equality so that no one ESO could dominate;
e) ensure that structures and demographics are taken into account and there is a necessary emphasis on supporting the needs of small ESOs serving rural and remote localities; and
f) disregard negative views and look at what has made others work, and the overall benefits such as self esteem through self help, moving from dependence to involvement, shared experience, shared insurance cover, co-operative culture, having a national system of Veteran Centres and better prospects of effective quality assurance.

PAID AND UNPAID

The discussions that were held and the submissions received reflected support for volunteerism but also recognised the need to retain and provide skilled advocacy and other services. There is an understanding of the need to get the right balance between paid and unpaid personnel as services provided to veterans transition into the future.

The Review has noted concerns about aligning the notion of a tiered model to simply paid versus unpaid. At the same time it is evident that more complex work may, over time, be increasingly conducted by paid personnel.

Comments in support of volunteerism included that:
a) volunteers have a role to play at all levels and that adequate services could not be provided without them; and
b) volunteers are currently working alongside paid employees in a cohesive and harmonious manner that is leading to improved delivery of services, capability and legislative knowledge.

However, there was also general recognition of the challenges in maintaining a volunteer workforce. These included that:
a) the volunteer base is ageing;
b) some volunteers only work a few hours per week;
c) volunteers are being lost because of the:
   • trend to remain in paid employment longer;
   • barriers such as police checks;
   • moves to accreditation;
   • liability issues in a litigious society; and
   • expanded general community demands on volunteers;
d) younger vets are trained and practice in basic pensions and welfare but often subsequently disengage; and
e) ageing clients require greater levels of personal support.

These lead to increasing pressures for paid employees and comments were made to the effect that :
a) there is a need to ensure that salaried persons are fully trained in all areas i.e. VEA, MRCA, SRCA and welfare matters;
b) paid practitioners can mentor volunteers;
c) paid advocates have very good results, as good if not better than those legally trained;
d) paid personnel need to have performance measures to justify funding and should be tertiary qualified;
e) there are added dimensions to consider with paid and unpaid practitioners working together in bringing issues of experience, knowledge and mentoring; and
f) some paid representatives provide excellent service but unpaid volunteers also very necessary.

Summary comments were along the following lines:
a) it will be beneficial to see an increase in the number of paid practitioners operating generally through Veteran Centres which in turn support regional outreach programs and continued active encouragement of volunteers;
b) ever increasing complexity in legislation, reporting and administrative requirements, changes in technology and structural issues all contribute to the need to replace volunteers with paid staff;
c) work carried out by paid officers should not disadvantage volunteers;
d) transition requires good highly trained competent dedicated volunteers;
e) progression to a new model should recognise the existing volunteer skill base;
f) an effective transition program should respect the values and competence of volunteers;
g) an appropriate balance must be found in transitioning to the future; and

h) a view that ESOs can operate effectively if all levels of pension officers are volunteers with supervisory staff being paid thus ensuring DVA money is well spent because effectiveness comes from the strength of support and supervision.

LEGISLATION

Throughout the Review reference has been made to the challenges that present themselves both in terms of the increasing complexity of the needs of veterans and the legislation framework(s).

Some observations were made to the effect that:
a) currently, trained people were able to cover all legislation;
b) all practitioners need to be trained in all legislation thus avoiding specialisation and inefficient workload management; and
c) widely held familiarity of legislation will ensure necessary support for veterans.

It was generally felt that:
a) it was problematic for all practitioners to cover all the legislation;
b) there is a reluctance for those trained in VEA to become familiar with MRCA;
c) there are differences and confusion in processing various Acts within DVA;
d) DVA should transfer rather than return incorrect lodgements;
e) training needs to adequately cover all legislation;
f) younger veterans need to be aware of their rights under MRCA which in turn raises question of ESO access to Military Bases;
g) there is a need to consider whether accreditation requires competence in all legislation;
h) a Veteran Centre approach could facilitate necessary access to broadly based expertise and advice; and
i) legislative requirements underpin the argument for more paid personnel.

WELFARE SERVICES

The increasing importance of welfare services was the subject of considerable input. Comments have been made to the effect that:
a) overall pension activity is decreasing but MRCA and welfare activity is increasing;
b) welfare may include support and advice or simply be about encouraging those suffering social isolation, advising on entitlement issues, causal relationships of injury or disease, recreation transport, funeral benefits, bereavement payment, payment of medical expenses privately incurred, qualifying service, home care and to promote local support networks and community care services;
c) welfare services can differ in each rural and remote locality;
d) some Veteran Centres were set up to assist pension work and they have no desire to work in the welfare field;
e) the thrust of the work these days is in the welfare arena;
f) reservists are a 'forgotten' group (deployed in battle groups not units) and return to Australia with no particular ESO to look after them;
g) welfare needs to be broadly defined in terms of complex needs, including counselling and referral, which in turn requires trained and professionally qualified workers;
h) the main role of welfare officers is to liaise with hospitals, bereavements, home visits – the role is not to directly service but make the necessary contacts; and
i) what constitutes welfare services requires a full needs analysis.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION PROGRAM (TIP)

The Review team has been made aware of strong support for the TIP program. Observations made have included:

- a need for all course offerings to be widely available;
- enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach;
- recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (i.e. Registered Training Organisations, TAFE etc);
- national consistency (with flexibility for State requirements) of program design is desirable rather than individual State designs;
- both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
- need for DVA feedback regarding quality of claims – linked to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s; and
- a tiered structure could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained officers.

More specifically, comments on the following subjects are included:

Course offerings
a) there is a need for all courses to be more widely available, particularly due to the difficulties encountered in some areas in accessing courses, e.g. in rural locations;
b) timely details of scheduled courses are needed at the local level to enable ESOs to nominate participants to attend;
c) sometimes courses are cancelled at short notice and there is a need to reduce this as much as possible when participants are travelling large distances;
d) there is a need to consider the time taken to travel to and from courses (reported that in some instances participants have been required to drive over 300kms on the same day that a course ends thus presenting an occupational health and safety issue); and
e) there should be an emphasis on VITA linking to all refresher training.

Course Content
a) there should be national consistency of program design (with flexibility for State requirements) rather than individual State courses;
b) content needs to be directly relevant to the target audience and must not assume prior knowledge;
c) induction courses need to be offered;
d) compulsory welfare courses are required for both advocate/pension officers and those providing welfare advice/referral/support;
e) there is a need for emphasis on privacy and confidentiality issues;
f) MRCA/SRCA training needs to be more compact. This is supported by other comments that course formats are too long, particularly for volunteers who themselves may have an illness (e.g. a suggestion to reduce some training to 4 hrs per day);
g) interpersonal skills are vital so all courses should include interview techniques;
h) case studies are valuable in training;
i) role playing is valuable in training;
j) cross cultural training is needed to help ATSI clients;
k) shorter training sessions be considered e.g. refresher training over 1 day not 2 days;
l) a course similar to current Level 4 (for AAT) be provided for practitioners to advocate at VRB hearings with particular emphasis on research skills;
m) the MRCA course needs to include issues that impact on veterans e.g. relationships, Defence Service Loans (repayment adjustments), access to VVCS for spouses and families; and
n) it was universally stated at Focus Group sessions that regardless of excellent course content and delivery at training sessions, the best learning comes from experience.

eLearning

There is genuine enthusiasm for eLearning developments and support to extend these both in overall program scope and geographical reach. Other points included:

   a) lack of IT skills by many volunteers and no desire to learn;
   b) non availability of internet access;
   c) eLearning could be conducted through local community education facilities; and
   d) eLearning needs to be complemented with face-to-face teaching.

TIP Trainers

The good work undertaken by TIP trainers/presenters is recognised but that there is, in general, a lack of TIP trainers across the country and it is becoming difficult to 'recruit' people to undertake this work, especially if there is a need for the trainers to be conversant across all legislations. Specific views about the way forward regarding TIP trainers included:

   a) trainers, and managers at State and National levels, should be qualified to TIP Level 4 standard. (This is not necessarily the view taken by the Review team which feels that a trainer/presenter should be qualified to provide information relating to the level of the course offering e.g. if the course relates solely to welfare then an in depth knowledge of MRCA legislation should not be necessary, but an understanding of it should be required);
   b) an evaluation of trainer ability to be included at the time of the course or as a separate exercise.

Accreditation/Certification

There is recognition of the need for some level of accreditation but concerns have been expressed regarding adoption of a full accreditation framework (i.e. Registered Training Organisations [RTO], TAFE etc). The Review team agrees with the concerns expressed. Other comments provided include:

   a) both attendance and competency need to be certified and advice provided to ESOs;
   b) the certification needs to be undertaken in a 'testing' regime and levels of achievement/attainment be awarded;
   c) a tiered structure could be aligned with the differing levels of TIP trained officers;
   d) one suggestion included the provision of an award for participation and re-qualification;
   e) consider if the nationally recognised Medical Terminology Course should be introduced into the TIP training program;
   f) a few ESOs consider that all advocates should have tertiary qualifications (either TAFE or University trained) and at no cost to the ESO or volunteer; and
   g) another suggestion is for a 3 day welfare and pension officer course to be regarded as introductory, allowing the practitioner to operate under supervision and an advanced 2 day course be conducted to gain final accreditation.

Mentoring

Some volunteer claims officers and advocates believe there is a lack of suitably qualified mentors to assist them in their work. This also applies to paid advocates while they come up to speed with their knowledge of the legislations. Suggestions include:

   a) mandatory mentoring by an ESO nominating a person for TIP training;
   b) mentors be available by phone and online;
   c) mentors could be DVA staff with knowledge of specific legislation; and
   d) all attendees at TIP training should be offered a mentor.

ESO role

Many participants at the Focus Groups felt that insufficient consideration is given by ESOs when nominating a person to attend a TIP course, and after the event in supporting that person to perform the work and monitor the work undertaken. Other issues include:

a) it was felt that sometimes nominations for TIP training have included individuals who have no intention of working with the veteran community afterwards and that priority be given to those who make a commitment to helping others;
b) no mechanisms for ESOs to provide input to TIP; and
c) no mechanisms for ESOs to provide input and feedback to DVA on the work of advocates/pension officers/welfare officers.

DVA role

a) a necessary requirement for DVA to monitor/evaluate primary claims and provide feedback to relevant ESO and State TIP Chair regarding the quality of claims, linking this to TIP refresher training for practitioner/s;
b) more involvement in TIP training, including provision of case study work;
c) the above is tempered by a comment that the role of DVA in service delivery can lead to conflicts (unexplained); and
d) expand the involvement of VRB in conducting courses.

Register of officials

While there has been concern expressed about a register of officials being made public, there has been agreement generally that a list of qualified/certified advocates be maintained by ESOs and Centres in their region so that information about a suitably qualified advocate can be provided to a veteran on enquiry for assistance.

Tiered structure for TIP trained officers

There were differing views about this across ESO representatives and in the submissions but in general there was an acceptance that the current system does tend to lean towards a tiered structure. Views offered include:

a) welfare officers could be Levels 1 and 2;
b) pension officers Levels 1 to 3; and
c) existing TIP Level 4 course considered to be equivalent to a TAFE course. It was noted though that there are significant numbers attending this TIP course but very few who represent at the AAT.

Other Issues

Other issues raised include:

a) identification (ID) should be provided for all TIP trained officers;
b) recognition that there are some volunteers who like to only work on welfare matters;
c) difficulties in identifying people to undertake TIP training;
d) that TIP has become a self governing empire disconnected from the ESOs;
e) a selection process be utilised to select TIP Chairs and that the person selected should have full knowledge of all applicable legislation, effects on superannuation and be able to be a good communicator; and
f) lack of accountability regarding TIP funds.

ATTACHMENT I - DATA AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Overview
As mentioned and outlined in Section 20, a large amount of raw data was collected to provide the Review team with the information to make informed decisions.

Data from the following sources were obtained for the analysis:
- Beneficiaries – information is based on the 26 September 2009 extract of the client database and represents all persons receiving a VEA pension/allowance or holding a treatment or pharmaceutical card issued by DVA.
- Claims data – two (2) year claims data for disability pension (VEA), and Permanent Impairment (MRCA and SRCA) for the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial years based on the decision date (regardless of the decision).
- Veterans Review Board (VRB) data was collected from the VRB database and the VRB annual reports.
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) data was collected from the AAT annual reports.
- Mapping information – ABS statistical districts and LGAs – Attachments N, O and P provide relevant charts and graphs for further information.
- War widow manual/automatic grants – claims data
- BEST, GIA and V&CG grant information – DVA grants database and internal spreadsheets. For consistency purposes only two financial year information has been included in the graphs and charts, unless otherwise indicated within the Report.
- TIP – financial information and that on training modules was provided by the Rehabilitation, Compensation and Income Policy Group and through the TIP Chairs.

Beneficiaries
Data collection on beneficiary numbers is undertaken by DVA at a point in time every quarter and is used in a number of publications that the department creates and which is available on DVA's website.

For the purposes of this exercise the net beneficiaries is based on the 26 September 2009 extract of the client database and represents all persons receiving a VEA pension/allowance or holding a treatment or pharmaceutical card issued by DVA. It should be noted that this number will not include the following groups of clients:
- clients only on SRCA, or
- clients only on MRCA without a treatment card

Of interest is Chart 14 of Attachment P which shows the granting of War Widow/er Pension since 1970. In 1992 the granting of a War Widow/er Pension was provided automatically under certain circumstances. The chart below shows a spike in 2002 which was a result of changes in eligibility to enable those war widows who lost eligibility to their WW Pension prior to 1984 due to remarriage. This cohort was able to reapply for the WW Pension. The Chart also shows the reduction in manual grants, indicating a reduction in workload for ESOs assisting partners of deceased veterans with their claims.

The Review team believes that this, along with the overall decrease in the projected war widow/er population, is likely to have a significant impact on the claims workload for the War Widow's Guild and Legacy. This will not negate the ongoing, and increasing, welfare workload that those organisations undertake.

Chart 14 of Attachment P

War Widow/ers
War Widow Pension grants vs War Widow population
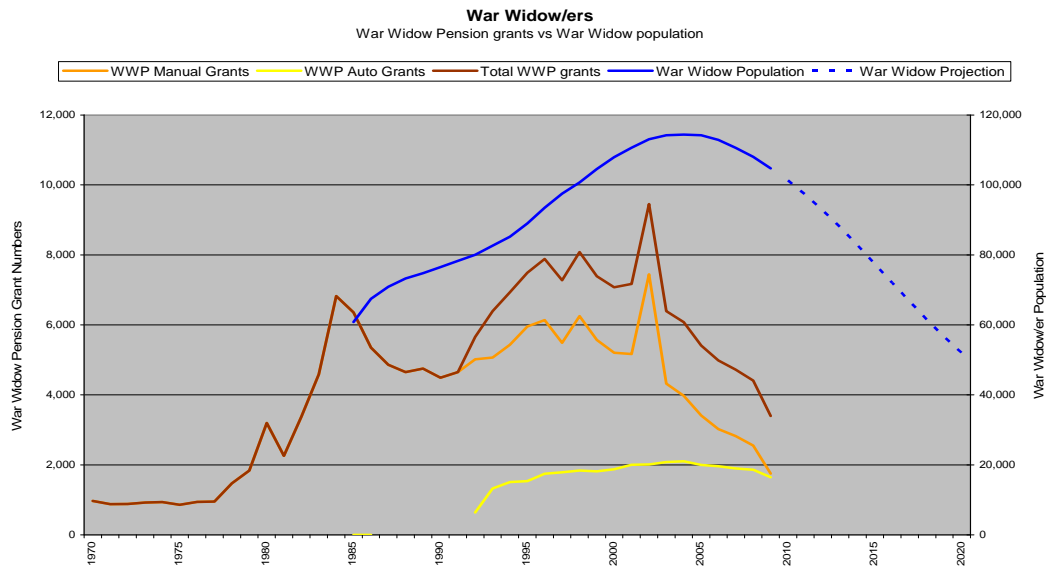
Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

General Observations
General observations made during the analysis of data includes:

- the number of claims processed by States is broadly proportional to the number of clients within that State;
- V&C Grant distribution differs greatly across the country, this could be due to the one-off nature of the grants together with a relatively short sampling period of two (2) years;
- the level of BEST grant funding is broadly proportional to client numbers, with an average funding per client between $25 to $31 (with the exception being the ACT at $51). However, when this figure is broken down to an ABS Statistical District level there are a number of areas where this does not hold true. For example the Rockhampton LGA ($64 per net beneficiary) has proportionally more funding that that of the Townsville LGA ($18 per net beneficiary);
- within Victoria considerably more grant funding is provided outside the metropolitan area. This is in contrast to NSW where the majority of funds go to the metropolitan area.
- the level of representational assistance is overall much higher in Victoria (84.7%) compared to other States.
  - 90% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas of Victoria compared to 80.3% in the metropolitan area;
  - in South Australia, 28.6% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas compared to 90.8% in the metropolitan area; and
  - in NSW, 39.6% of Disability Pension claims are assisted in non-metropolitan areas compared to 49% in the metropolitan area.

Claims

Claims data in regard to disability pension under the VEA and permanent impairment under MRCA or SRCA for financial years 2007/08 and 2008/09 is provided below:

Table 10: Claims data

	Total Claims	Total Claims with a Rep.	Total Clients	Total Clients with a Rep.
VEA	90,644	29,750	65,907	23,230
MRCA	9,591	2,056	4,301	1,764
SRCA	6,944	4,263	3,632	1,855

Note: a client who claims under multiple Acts will be counted under each Act.
Source: Table constructed from data available from DVA

Veterans Review Board

VRB applications lodged and finalised are shown below:

Table 11: VRB Applications Lodged

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA lodged	4,674	4,486	3,986	3,359	3,792
MRCA lodged	2	11	36	68	137

Source: Table constructed from data available from VRB Annual reports

Table 12: VRB Applications Finalised

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA finalised	5,165	4,532	4,324	4,268	3,928
MRCA finalised		4	12	35	58

Source: Table constructed from data available through VRB Annual reports

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

AAT applications lodged and finalised are shown below:

Table 13 : AAT Applications Lodged

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA	986	909	842	642	589
MRCA	0	1	16	32	27
SRCA	357	346	274	189	207

Source: Table constructed from data available through AAT Annual reports

Table 14: AAT Applications Finalised

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
VEA	1027	1038	849	785	671
MRCA	0	0	3	26	17
SRCA	460	361	305	256	237

Source: Table constructed from data available through AAT Annual reports

Mapping clients

In order to map clients the following approach was taken.

1. All data was mapped according to postcode:
    a. clients – against their residential postcode;
    b. claims data – against clients' residential postcode;
    c. claims assisted by a representative – against the representative's postcode;
    d. ESOs – against the ESO postcode;
    e. BEST and V&C Grants – based on the grant recipient's postcode.
2. Postcodes were then assigned to LGAs. Where postcodes crossed LGA boundaries, a proportional attribution was used based on the current distribution of clients.
3. LGAs were then assigned to ABS Statistical Districts.

The mapping exercise included mapping ESOs across the country, beneficiaries, locations where BEST and V&CG funding has occurred, locations of Day Clubs (through V&CG funding) and Men's Sheds (again through V&CG funding. Due to the size of this exercise not all these maps are provided as part of this Report. Those maps that are considered relevant have been provided at Attachment O.

Graphs and charts derived from raw data and requested by the Review team to assist in the analysis are provided at Attachment P.

BEST Grants

Apart from gaining an appreciation of the administration processes and grants distribution across the country the Review team was interested in looking at the unit cost derived over the past few years. While this is not necessarily a good indication of the "value" of a grant, or whether grant funds are put to good use, it has highlighted the inequity of funds distribution. Chart 12c of Attachment P, shown below refers:

Chart 12c of Attachment P

**BEST dollars per Net Beneficiary
2007-09 fin years**
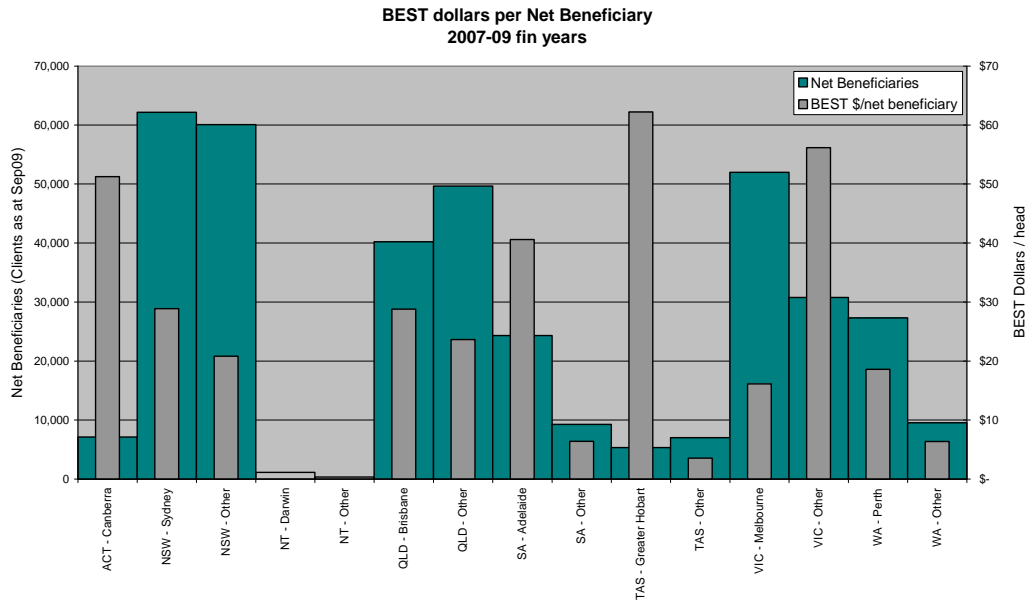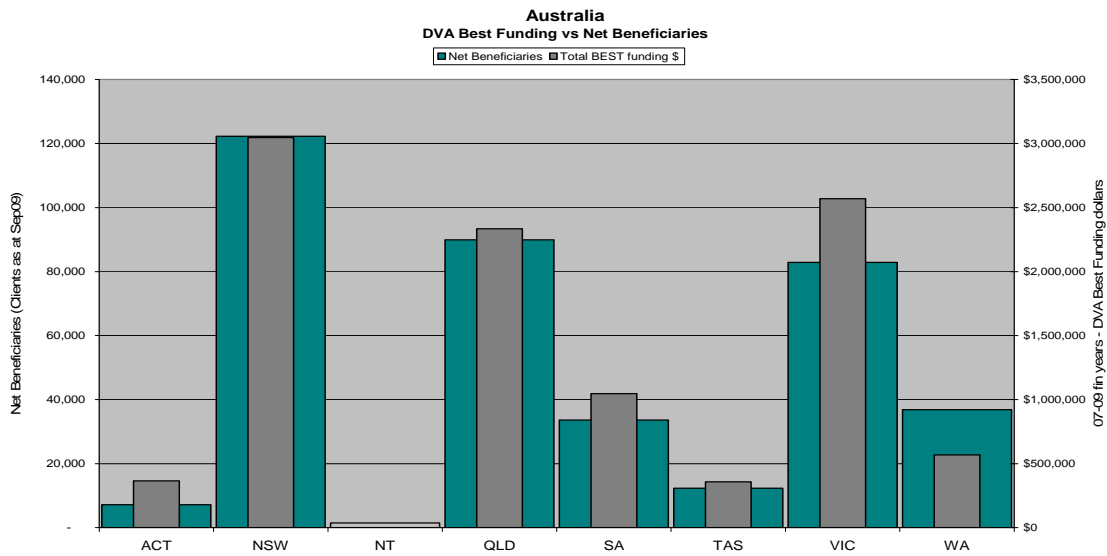
Source: Statistical Services and Analysis Section

Chart 12a of Attachment P (provided below) also shows this inequitable distribution, with Victoria, SA and the ACT receiving a higher proportion per capita than the other States.

Chart 12a of Attachment P

**Australia
DVA Best Funding vs Net Beneficiaries**

Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

The Review team also looked at the purpose for which grant funding was provided and noted the large percentage (80% overall) that was provided for salary or wages. Provided below is an overview by State from the recent BEST Round 11 (and prior to any appeals being lodged):

Table 15: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary

State	Grant Funding	Salary Component	Salary %
NSW	$1,329,260	$1,019,384	76.69%
VIC	$948,193	$892,864	94.16%
QLD	$838,528	$645,089	76.93%
SA	$366,432	$249,167	68.00%
WA	$362,384	$284,632	78.54%
TAS	$145,992	$78,925	54.06%
TOTAL	**$3,990,789**	**$3,170,061**	**79.43%**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 5 of Attachment P

BEST Round 11 Grant Funding with Salary Component
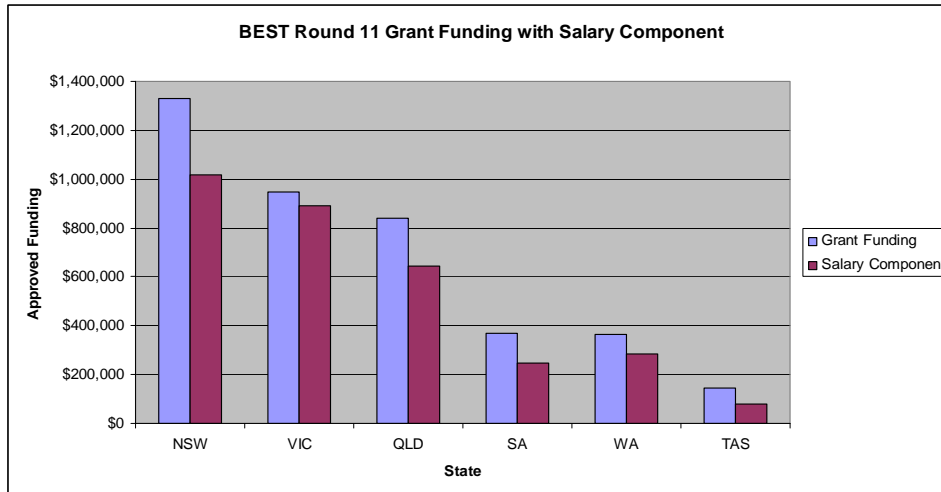
Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Table 16: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary by Position

State	Advocate	Pension Officer	Welfare Officer	PO/WO	Admin Assistant	Other
NSW	$348,545	$123,334	$101,490	$59,090	$377,925	$9,000
VIC	$113,487	$96,257	$42,000	$0	$603,090	$38,030
QLD	$173,283	$91,090	$68,026	$0	$312,690	$0
SA	$45,450	$90,900	$84,061	$0	$28,756	$0
WA	$123,459	$0	$54,185	$0	$106,988	$0
TAS	$32,223	$0	$5,100	$0	$41,602	$0
TOTALS	**$836,447**	**$401,581**	**$354,862**	**$59,090**	**$1,471,051**	**$47,030**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Graph 6 of Attachment P: BEST R11 Grant Funding for Salary by Position

BEST Round 11 Salary Funding
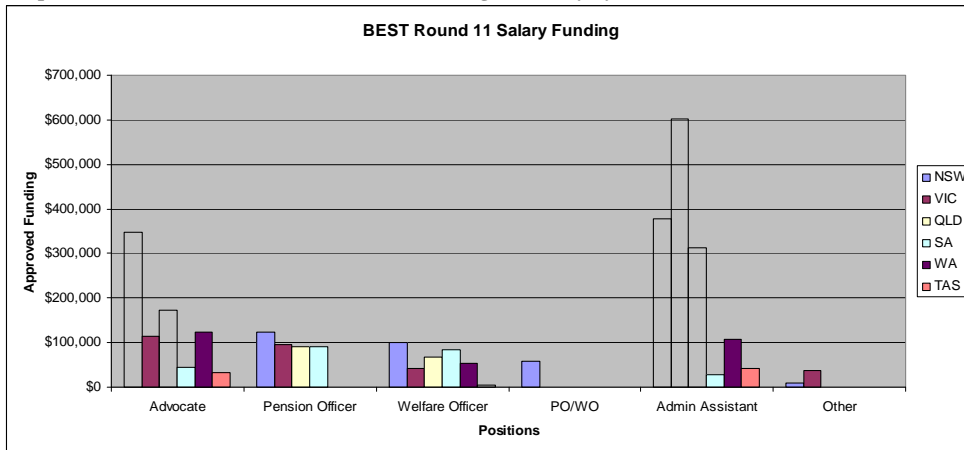
Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Specific information on BEST funding that has been extracted from the raw data is provided within the Report in the discussion on BEST at Section 7, with further information discussed at other stages of the Report. Charts and Graphs to support the discussion and conclusions of the Review team can be found at Attachment P.

GIA GRANTS

An overview of the GIA funding to National ESOs provided over the past four (4) financial years has been listed at Section 8 in the Report.

V&C GRANTS

While there is some concern about the quality of data on V&C Grants, there was still a lot for the Review team to work with.

Similar to the discussion above on BEST grants, the Review team undertook to determine the unit cost for V&C Grants and Chart 13a of Attachment P (provided below) shows that a significant amount of funding over the past two (2) years has been provided to SA and Tasmania.

Chart 13a of Attachment P

Australia
DVA V&C Funding vs Net Beneficiaries
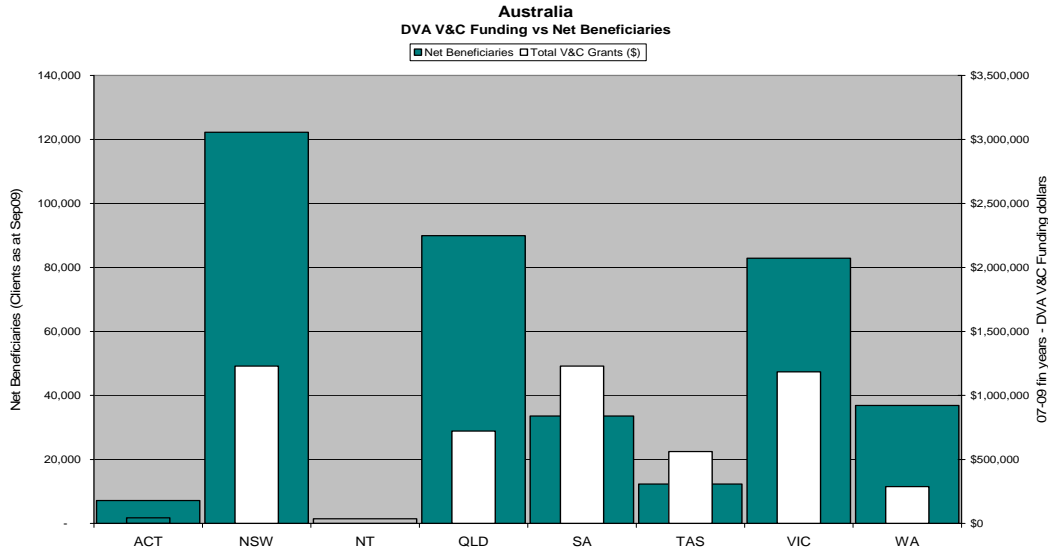
Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

When drilling down further into the data it can be seen that there is a fairly equivalent distribution across the metropolitan and regional areas of those States.
Chart 13c of Attachment P below refers.

Chart 13c of Attachment P

V&C Funding Dollars per Net Beneficiary
2007-09 fin years
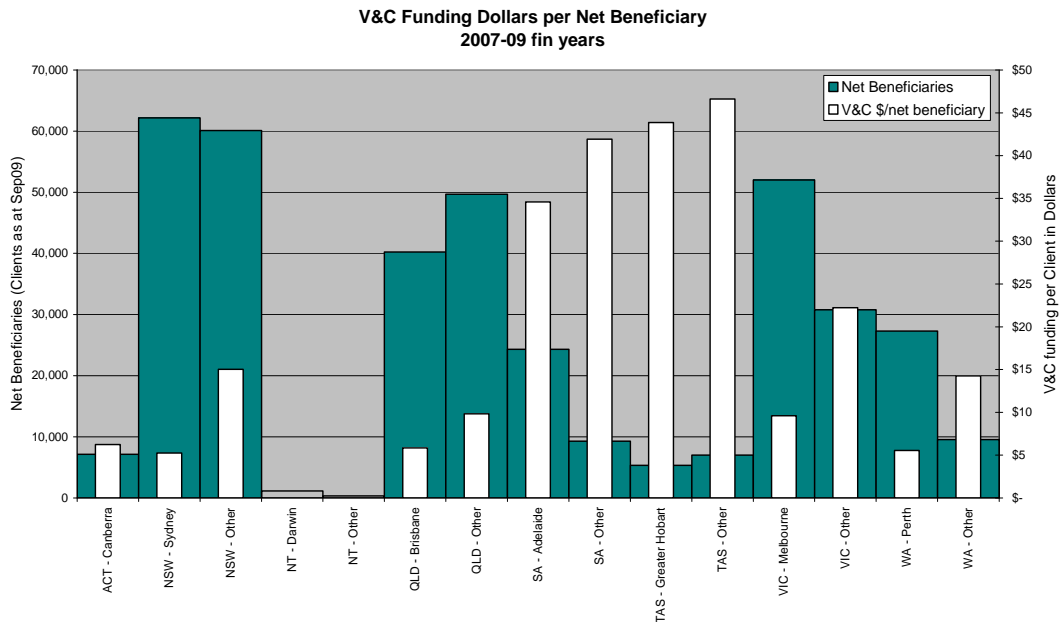
Source: DVA Statistical Services and Analysis Section

Comment at Focus Groups indicated that some ESOs felt that a high distribution of V&CG funding was provided to community organisations. The following table actually shows that a large percentage is directed towards ESOs.

Table 17: V&CG Funding to ESOs and Community Organisations – 2005-06 to 2008-08

Grants Approved	Financial Year				
	2005-06	**2006-07**	**2007-08**	**2008-09**	**Total**
Community	$1.4m	$0.6m	$0.6m	$0.9m	$3.5m
ESO	$1.7m	$2.4m	$1.8m	$2.6m	$8.5m
Total	$3.1m	$3.0m	$2.4m	$3.5m	$12.0m

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Over the last four years, a total of $12m has been provided under the V&C Grants Program to the veteran and wider community. Of this approximately 70% ($8.5m) has been provided directly to ESOs and approximately 30% ($3.5m) to community organisations.

In total over the four (4) year period, 969 grants were provided, 790 of those grants went to ESOs and 179 grants to community organisations. These included:

Table 18– V&C Grants to ESOs vs. Community Organisations

Grant Amount	ESOs	Community Organisations	Total
Up to $5,000	391	50	441
$5,001 to $10,000	161	40	201
$10,001 to $50,000	217	74	291
$50,001 to $100,000	21	11	32
Over $100,000	0	4	4
TOTAL	**790**	**179**	**969**

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

The tables below show broadly the purposes for which grants were used, and the distribution to major ESOs.

Table 19– V&C Grants – grant purpose

Purpose	Amount
Facilities – Set-up costs and refurbish	$4.18m
Administration/Equipment	$2.73m
Training and other courses	$1.72m
Bus – Purchases	$1.11m
Bus – Trips	$0.76m
Men's Shed – Establish	$0.62m
Men's Shed – Equipment	$0.46m
Day Clubs – Establish	$0.12m
Day Clubs – Equipment	$0.20m
Other	$0.14m

Source: DVA Grants and Bursaries Section

Table 20 – V&C Grants – ESO distribution

ESO	Amount
RSL	$5.46m
Legacy	$0.54m
VVAA	$0.35m
Naval Association	$0.26m
RAAF Association	$0.26m
VVFA	$0.14m
Regiment Associations	$0.13m
T&PI Association	$0.11m
War Widows Guild	$0.11m
Others	$1.15m

Source: DVA Grants Database

Community Organisations received approximately $3.5m. The largest single grants and their purpose are listed below. Three (3) of these four (4) grants were made in 2005/06 and the fourth in 2007/08.

Table 21 – V&C Grants – purpose for grants over $100,000 to community organisations

Organisation	Purpose	Amount
Council on the Ageing	Training/Courses	$110,000
Eat Well Tasmania	Admin/set-up costs	$108,108
Nutrition Australia	Training/Courses	$126,410
Shoal Bay Aged Care	Bus Purchase	$126,100

Source: DVA Grants Database

In addition to the above four (4) grants over $100,000 there were eleven (11) grants between $50,001 and $100,000. Eight (8) of these were for Training Courses, two (2) for the establishment of Men's Sheds and one (1) each for a bus purchase, to assist in building a facility and refurbishing a facility for use by veterans and spouses.

ATTACHMENT J – TRANSITION MANAGEMENT SCHEME AND INTEGRATED PEOPLE SUPPORT STRATEGY

During 2008, Defence reviewed the functions of the ADFRP and the enhanced ADF Transition Support Service. DVA was not directly involved in this review although were informed of the outcomes. The review outcomes were endorsed by the Secretary of Defence and CDF in late 2008. The review identified that the functions within the scope of the Transition Management Scheme (TMS) provided under the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Defence and DVA are now being performed by the ADFRP and the enhanced ADF Transition Support Service and found that the services within the scope of the SLA are now duplicated.

It was acknowledged by all parties that the actual services provided by DVA evolved beyond that intended by the SLA and included the provision of permanent support on-base in Lavarack Barracks and Enoggera Barracks and a regular visiting service to a number of other bases nationally. These services are undertaken to improve quality and timeliness of the claims process and to facilitate handover of rehabilitation responsibilities. That said, the Defence review concluded that TMS, as originally intended, was no longer required and Defence decided to cease TMS with effect from 30 June 2010. The implication of this decision is that the additional on-base services provided by DVA in Lavarack Barracks and Enoggera Barracks will also cease after 30 June 2010. From this date, ADF members will need to visit a DVA office or make contact with DVA by telephone to receive those same services.

In 2009, the Services were funded through the Defence White Paper to establish a case management capability to support ADF members who are injured or become ill. The Services are also implementing arrangements to improve the administration of and support to members with injury or illness. To this end, Army is establishing a Casualty Administration and Support Framework which will include the deployment of Regional Casualty Support Officers (RCASO) who will be responsible, among other things, for facilitating the raising of claims and to be the link between the ADF member and DVA. Navy and Air Force are establishing similar capabilities and are working on their respective frameworks at present. The Services have advised that this capability will be implemented by 30 June 2010. The ADF intends that the appointment of case officers does not in any way remove the current responsibilities of DVA staff, Advocates, or that of ESOs more generally. One small part of the case officer duties will be to assist in the early education of personnel, notification to commands and compilation of MRCA claims in a sequence and level of detail that expedites claims management and approvals by DVA staff. The Services see this very much as complementary activity that supports DVA in their core business.

Based on this understanding, The Defence / DVA Links Steering Committee met on 12 February 2010 and considered, among other items, the Future Model for Support to ADF Members. In essence, this model of support for people who are transitioning from Service will be based on the current practices but will include a more formalised governance framework and the addition of enhancements as approved by the Defence/DVA Links Steering Committee. Items to be considered in further detail include the training of ADF case officers (by DVA) and governance processes that ensure appropriate advice continues to be available to Serving members, along with procedures for handover of case management from Service Chiefs responsibility to that of the MRCC. There has been no discussion to date regarding any changes to the existing advice or access that Advocates or ESOs provide.

In summary, the circumstances which prevailed in the period 1999 to 2000 when the SLA between DVA and Defence was executed have changed considerably. The introduction of the MRCA, the enhancements made by Defence and DVA to separation processes and the initiatives introduced under the auspices of the Integrated People Support Strategy have overtaken the requirement for DVA to provide the services outlined in the SLA for the TMS. Ongoing work between Defence and DVA is targeted at ensuring a high level of support to Serving members.

ATTACHMENT K - FUNDING PRINCIPLES AND FUNDING FORMULA

Funding Principles

1. There will be a State indicative allocation made in the first instance.

2. Funding will support the further development of the Veteran Support Centre model (or an integrated approach) and be predicated on the veteran population and service needs of a particular location.

3. Funding will be in line with a formula based approach, applied to an assessment of input/output data for a region/area such as:
   3.1. veteran population with weightings applied, e.g. for age;
   3.2. historical data:
       3.2.1. numbers of people in the veteran community assisted;
       3.2.2. primary and secondary claim numbers (by VEA/SRCA/MRCA);
       3.2.3. number of VRB/AAT claims/matters;
       3.2.4. time taken to assist the above;
       3.2.5. number and type of welfare activities provided, including time taken;
   3.3. projection statistics – expected increase or decrease of service delivery activity;
   3.4. numbers of salaried staff, volunteers and hours worked.

4. Prioritisation of funding will apply, with an income and asset means test approach being utilised, including funds matching criteria.

Funding Formula
Example

BEST funding for financial year 2020/2021 is $6million.

Beneficiary numbers by State for that financial year and the percentage allocation are as follows:

State	VEA Projected Figure	Plus 10% increase to account for additional SRCA/MRCA[5]	% of Total Veteran Population	$ Allocation
NSW/ACT	59,200	65,000	30.8%	1,848,341
VIC	34,400	38,000	18.0%	1,080,569
QLD	55,400	61,000	28.9%	1,734,597
SA/NT	16,500	18,000	8.5%	511,848
WA	19,600	21,000	10.0%	597,156
TAS	7,100	8,000	3.8%	227,488
TOTAL	**192,200**	**211,000**	**100%**	**6,000,000**

[5] As there are no DVA projected figures for SRCA/MRCA beneficiaries a 10% increase on the number of projected VEA beneficiaries has been used.

Funding to ESO X (hub) which is located in NSW and has the following information:

Historical data – i.e. average provided in the previous period (to be determined)

i. 5,000 veteran population;
ii. 3,500 of the veteran population being aged 70+;
iii. 500 in the veteran community assisted;
iv. 300 primary and secondary claims;
v. 10 veterans/war widows assisted for VRB/AAT matters;
vi. 2 part time volunteers working solely on welfare matters.

vii. projected decrease of claims assistance of 25%;
viii. projected increase of welfare activity of 20%;
ix. 0 FTE BEST funded;
x. 1 FTE funded through other sources;
xi. 5 volunteers (= approx 1 FTE);
xii. $0 ESO or "other" financial support but "in-kind" support provided by local council through a "peppercorn" rent.

These figures should be applied to a matrix (to be developed along the lines of the funding formula and taking into consideration funding priorities for a particular year).

ATTACHMENT L - FIRST PRINCIPLES

First Principles for the management of DVA grant funding to ESOs using a co-ordinated approach

ESOs (or practitioners) establishing themselves as a Group for the purposes of integrating their service delivery for advocacy, pension claims and welfare services (including referrals) will need to consider the model under which they would like to operate.

First Principles include:
1. Establishment of a Board of Management – to include all participating organisations (if desired).
2. DVA ex-officio involvement to be available if sought.
3. Ensure governance structures are in line with best practice (as outlined by Volunteering Australia - The *Model Code of Practice* and the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations* which sets the benchmark for best practice and provides guidance for organisations).
4. A co-ordinated approach to the management of DVA grant funding applications – a fair and transparent process for funds distribution to organisations and in the acquittal process.
5. Collection and provision of data in accordance with DVA program guidelines.

To set up this model the Review team believes the following actions would need to be undertaken in the first instance:
- at least 5 people would be required to be office bearers of an incorporated body;
- a meeting would need to be called to elect the office bearers;
- an application for incorporation with the appropriate body would need to be lodged;
- adoption of "Model Rules" (Department of Fair Trading) as the constitution (with amendments as required by the ATO);
- adoption of the TIP Code of Ethics in the constitution;
- obtain an ABN and register as a "Public Benevolent Institution" with the ATO;
- apply to VITA for professional indemnity insurance.

ATTACHMENT M - BEST ITEMS ELIGIBLE AND NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

ELIGIBLE ITEMS

SALARIES

Advocate, Pension Officer/Welfare Officer, Administration Assistant

(Names of all paid practitioners to be provided. Individuals performing multiple roles to be identified as such)

- *APS5 - Advocates (TIP Level 3 and 4)*
- *APS4 - Pension/Welfare Officers*
- *APS3 - Administrative Assistant*
- *Full and Part Time (Hours to be specified for part-time)*
- *Base level funding only*
- *CPI increases to be applied in accordance with DVA's Certified Agreement*

ON-GOING RUNNING COSTS

Computer Software

Anti-virus Software annual licence, Microsoft Version Upgrades – only if DVA approved

Internet

Based on network setup, number of stand-alone PCs, laptops, wireless for laptops being used remotely

Office Supplies

General stationery, postage, paper, toner, ink, folders, tapes, cleaning products, read/write DVDs, brochure holder, flash drives

Telephone Costs

Rental and calls for a Landline only - related to the provision of pension and welfare services.

Travel

Reimbursement for travel, related to pensions and advocacy work, travel to local VRB and AAT hearings - calculated at current DVA staff travel rate (a Travel Log will be required)

ONE-OFF ITEMS – AN EQUIPMENT REGISTER WILL BE REQUIRED FOR ALL PURCHASES IN THIS CATEGORY

Computer Equipment

Related to pensions/welfare work

Desktop, laptop each with 3 yr warranty, DVD burner, printer, Multi-Function Device (MFD), Fax Machine, scanner, surge protector, computer network

Computer Software

Anti-virus, operating systems, application tools (e.g. MS Office), fire wall

Note: ESOs are entitled to purchase education versions of software

Internet access

Internet modems for Dial Up and Broadband and wireless, establishment fees

Office Equipment

Answering machine, tape recorder

Office Furniture

Filing cabinet, desk and chair, meeting table, visitor chairs, bookcase

Reference Material

Related reference books and medical information that is available via print and online (e.g. MIMS)

CENTRE ESTABLISHMENT COSTS

Applicant needs to detail all requirements in a Business Case

INELIGIBLE ITEMS

COMPUTER MAINTENANCE

After the grant period and the end of the warranty period, the equipment belongs to the ESO and it is their responsibility to maintain it. This includes all computer network costs. If the equipment breaks during the grant year and the cost of repair is greater than the replacement cost, the ESO may apply for a replacement within the grant year

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Air conditioning unit, television, VCR/DVD, data projector, screen, refrigerator, digital camera, laminator, guillotine

OFFICE EXPENSES AND FEES

Insurance, advertising expenses, audit fees, bank fees

RATES

RENT

New requests for Rent are not eligible. Where an ESO is currently paying rent, support in the form of BEST funds will no longer be available from 2012-13 (Round 14). Assistance will be provided to the ESO if they are required to re-locate to a new centre. A Business Case detailing the re-location and associated costs to re-establish in the new centre will be required.

SALARIES

Superannuation, leave loadings, workers' compensation, management fees, recreation leave, sick leave and other personal leave

TELEPHONES

Mobile phones and other handheld phone/internet devices (such as a smart phone)

TRAVEL

General Welfare work which involves travel within the local district, i.e. within a 20 kilometre radius from the person's home, interstate travel for all pensions, welfare, and advocacy work (including VRB and AAT Hearings)

UNRELATED SOFTWARE

Such as MYOB - no relevance to provision of pension and welfare services. Purely admin in nature.

IF ESO upgrades to a newer version of Microsoft Windows and the effect is that some other DVA software does not work e.g. VPAD, the ESO will be required to re-load the earlier version.

UTILITIES

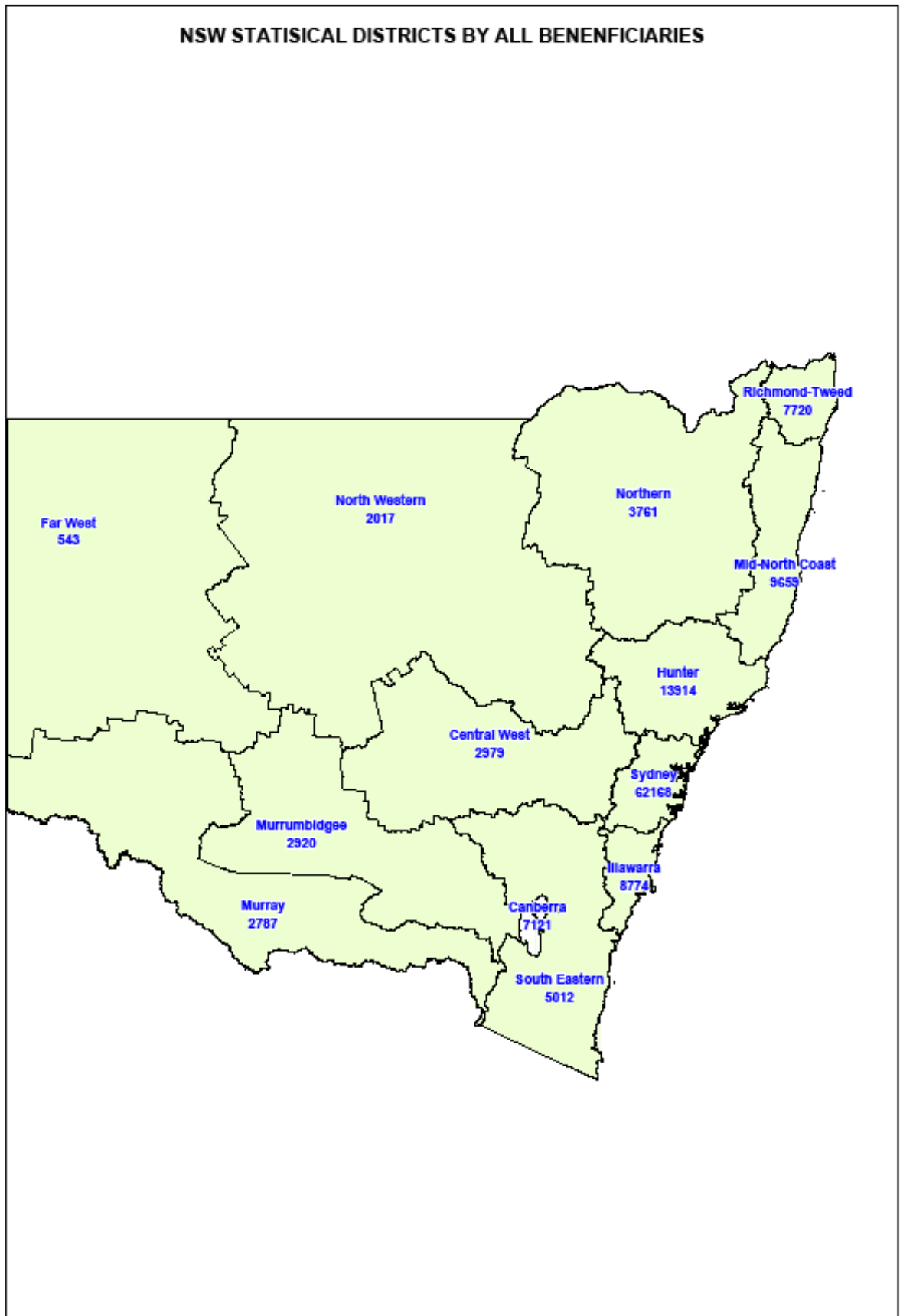*Electricity, Natural Gas, utilities, sewerage*

ATTACHMENT N - ABS DISTRICTS AND ELECTORATES

Electorates	Statistical Division	Statistical Division	Electorates
Barker	Murray Lands	Adelaide	Sturt
Barker	South East	Australian Capital Territory	Canberra
Bendigo	Loddon	Barwon	Corangamite
Calare	Central West	Brisbane	Dickson
Calare	Far West	Canberra	Canberra
Calare	North Western	Central	Kalgoorlie
Canberra	Australian Capital Territory	Central Highlands	Wannon
Canberra	Canberra	Central West	Calare
Capricornia	Mackay	Central West	Maranoa
Corangamite	Barwon	Darling Downs	Maranoa
Cowper	Mid-North Coast	Darwin	Lingiari
Dickson	Brisbane	East Gippsland	Gippsland
Dickson	West Moreton	Eyre	Grey
Eden-Monaro	South Eastern	Far North	Leichhardt
Fadden	Gold Coast	Far West	Calare
Fairfax	Sunshine Coast	Fitzroy	Flynn
Farrer	Murray	Gippsland	McMillan
Flynn	Fitzroy	Gold Coast	Fadden
Flynn	Wide Bay-Burnett	Goulburn	Indi
Forrest	South West	Greater Hobart	Franklin
Franklin	Greater Hobart	Hunter	Hunter
Gilmore	Illawarra	Illawarra	Gilmore
Gippsland	East Gippsland	Kimberley	Kalgoorlie
Greenway	Sydney	Loddon	Bendigo
Grey	Eyre	Lower Great Southern	O'Connor
Grey	Northern	Mackay	Capricornia
Grey	Yorke and Lower North	Mallee	Mallee
Hasluck	Perth	Melbourne	Hotham
Hotham	Melbourne	Mersey-Lyell	Lyons
Hunter	Hunter	Midlands	O'Connor
Indi	Goulburn	Mid-North Coast	Cowper
Indi	Ovens-Murray	Murray	Farrer
Kalgoorlie	Central	Murray Lands	Barker
Kalgoorlie	Kimberley	Murrumbidgee	Riverina
Kalgoorlie	Pilbara	North West	Kennedy
Kalgoorlie	South Eastern	North Western	Calare
Kennedy	North West	Northern	Grey
Kennedy	Northern	Northern	Kennedy
Leichhardt	Far North	Northern	Lyons
Lingiari	Darwin	Northern	New England
Lingiari	Northern Territory - Bal	Northern Territory - Bal	Lingiari
Lingiari	Other Territories	Other Territories	Lingiari
Lyons	Mersey-Lyell	Outer Adelaide	Mayo
Lyons	Northern	Ovens-Murray	Indi
Lyons	Southern	Perth	Hasluck
Mallee	Mallee	Pilbara	Kalgoorlie
Mallee	Wimmera	Richmond-Tweed	Page

Maranoa	Central West	South East	Barker
Maranoa	Darling Downs	South Eastern	Eden-Monaro
Maranoa	South West	South Eastern	Kalgoorlie
Mayo	Outer Adelaide	South West	Forrest
McMillan	Gippsland	South West	Maranoa
New England	Northern	Southern	Lyons
O'Connor	Lower Great Southern	Sunshine Coast	Fairfax
O'Connor	Midlands	Sydney	Greenway
O'Connor	Upper Great Southern	Upper Great Southern	O'Connor
Page	Richmond-Tweed	West Moreton	Dickson
Riverina	Murrumbidgee	Western District	Wannon
Sturt	Adelaide	Wide Bay-Burnett	Flynn
Wannon	Central Highlands	Wimmera	Mallee
Wannon	Western District	Yorke and Lower North	Grey

ATTACHMENT O - ABS DISTRICTS MAPPED

MAP 1

STATISTICAL DISTRICTS - 2009

MAP 2

NSW STATISICAL DISTRICTS BY ALL BENENFICIARIES

Richmond-Tweed
7720

North Western
2017

Northern
3761

Far West
543

Mid-North Coast
9659

Hunter
13914

Central West
2979

Sydney
62168

Murrumbidgee
2920

Illawarra
8774

Murray
2787

Canberra
7121

South Eastern
5012

MAP 3

Proposed NSW Demonstration Regions

MAP 4

QLD STATISTICAL DISTRICTS BY ALL BENEFICIARIES

Far North
3662

North West
147

Northern
5187

Mackay
2093

Central West
145

Fitzroy
2801

Wide Bay-Burnett
8492

Sunshine Coast
9160

Brisbane
40218

South West
276

Darling Downs
5133

West Moreton
2002

Gold Coast
10592

MAP 5

Proposed QLD Demonstration Regions
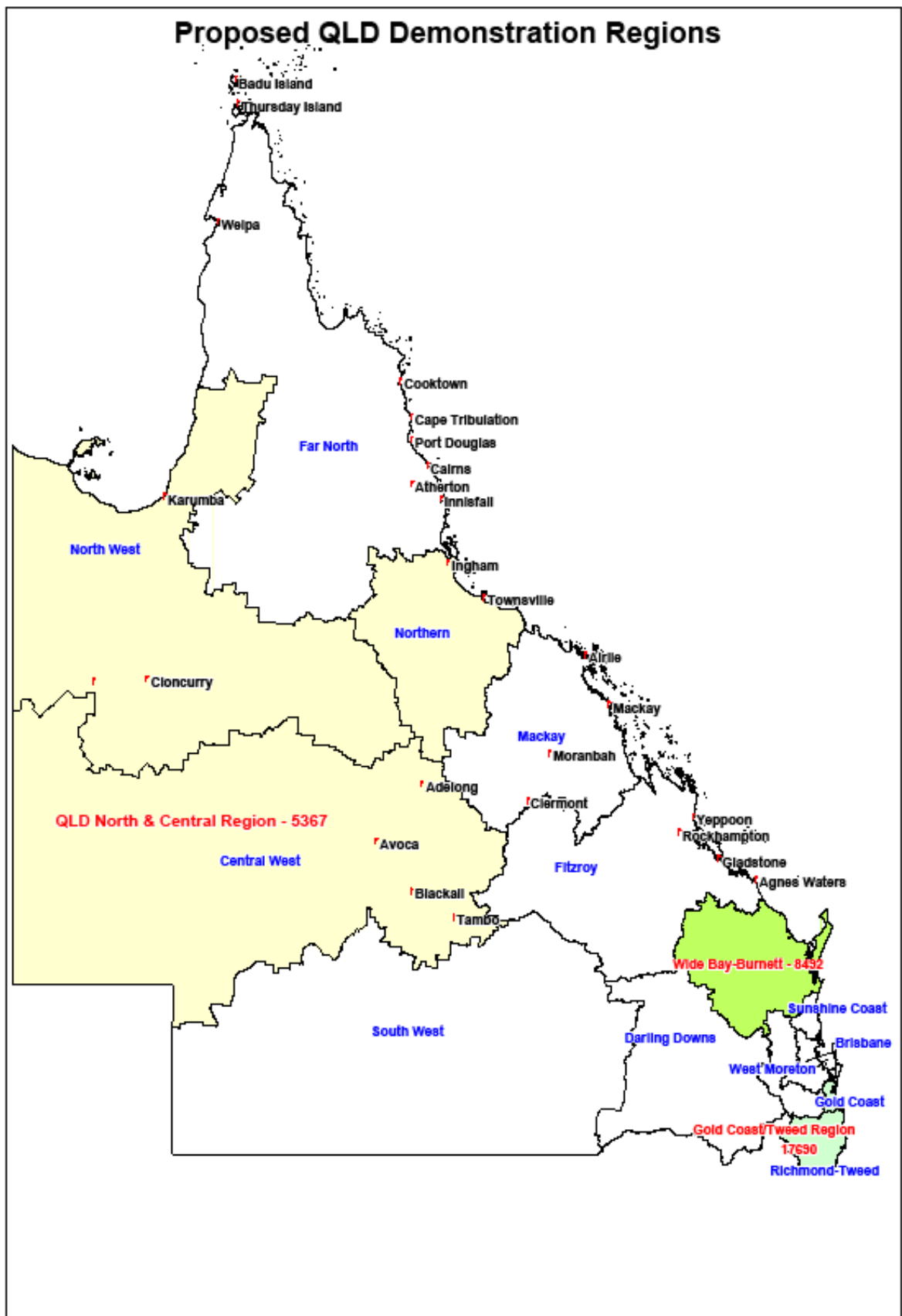
ATTACHMENT P - CHARTS AND GRAPHS

ATTACHMENT Q - IMPLEMENTATION AND TRANSITION

IMPLEMENTATION
1. Establish a project implementation team – estimate the overall resource requirements and costs, including for State Offices.
2. Determine governance structure for the project.
3. Determine roles and responsibilities between implementation and grants teams – including IT system developments.
4. Identify timelines.
5. Assess major risks of the project.
6. Develop a communication plan – internal and external.
7. Confirm the roles and responsibilities of the Operational Working Party and DC Consultative Fora in implementation and transition.
8. Progress recommendations of the Review and identify the major activities to be performed, including;
   a. facilitate establishment and ongoing evaluation of the initial demonstration projects, including:
      i. a preliminary identification of needs;
      ii. a service delivery capability analysis;
      iii. project milestones; and
      iv. a formal evaluation plan;
   b. oversight grants guidelines and supporting documentation amendments;
   c. develop funding formula;
   d. establish data sets for funding and audit requirements;
   e. develop performance indicators and reporting mechanisms; and
   f. a three year strategy for program review and evaluation.
9. In conjunction with relevant DVA Groups, facilitate the:
   a. development of the TIP competency based training framework (as supported by external consultancy);
   b. development of policy in relation to TIP governance structures and management;
   c. DVA QA feedback process to ESOs and State TIP Chairs regarding lodgement of claims and appeals.

TRANSITION
1. Two teams in the RG&CC Group operating in tandem during the implementation phase of progressing project recommendations:
   a. the Grants BAU team to manage IT system developments and Round 13 during implementation of Review recommendations; and
   b. the Implementation team (with support from the Grants BAU team and State Office personnel) to manage:
      i. overall project implementation; and
      ii. the oversight of Round 12 surplus regarding demonstration projects and targeted support.

Implementation team to terminate when demonstration projects and other deliverables outlined at 8 above have either been met or progressed sufficiently for the Grants BAU team to manage ongoing business. This transition to occur at the earliest possible time.