



## Minutes

### Agenda Item 1 Welcome

Attendees list is at Annexure A.

The Chair welcomed members and noted the following apologies;

- Deputy Chair, Leanne Yannopoulos
- Mr Shawn Bergquist, Legacy Australia

The Chair asked that members provide submissions to the Secretariat be considered for inclusion on the agenda for the September 2022 meeting.

### Agenda Item 2 Minutes & actions of previous meeting

Members **NOTED** that the minutes from the previous meeting were endorsed out of session and have been published on the DVA website.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2022A/NACCF2, 2022/NACCF6, N2021/012, 2022A/NACCF1, 2022A/NACCF4, 2022/NACCF5, 2022/NACCF7, and 2022/NACCF8.

The Chair advised members of the work being done by the Operational Working Party and Ex-Service Organisation Round Table to publish claims data. Members **ENDORSED** the Chair's request to close N2021/009, noting the Secretariat will create a new action item to distribute claims data when it becomes available.

Members **NOTED** that 2022A/NACCF3 remains open, and Secretariat will look to schedule a presentation from NOUS at the September meeting.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022NACCF/A9	Secretariat to distribute link to published claims data to NACCF members when it becomes available.	Secretariat

### Agenda Item 3 DVA Update

The Chair acknowledged that despite an increase in the speed of claims processing, DVA is still unable to keep up with the pace of incoming claims. Members noted the incoming government's commitment to an additional 500 frontline staff.

The Chair advised that the McKinsey Report is now available on the DVA website, and noted that the Department has begun implementation of 11 of the McKinsey initiatives, with some of the 11 initiatives requiring allocation of funds through the October Budget Process.

The Chair summarised the work completed to date to address the backlog of invoices for household services and noted that the backlog is almost resolved. Members **NOTED** that the current process is under review to prevent future backlogs and that invoices for services should be submitted through the Portal rather than emailed or faxed to the Department.

The Chair summarised the topics covered recently at the Royal Commission. The Chair noted the importance of the Royal Commission, notwithstanding the volume of work generated in responding to the requests. Members noted that Block 6 of the hearing will commence in Hobart, Tasmania in early August 2022.

Members **NOTED** that COVID-19 continues to impact veterans and staff.

The Chair provided an update on the priorities for the incoming government and the new Minister, the Hon Matt Keogh MP. Members noted Minister Keogh's public statements that even though the Veterans' Affairs Portfolio is no longer a Cabinet appointment, the Minister for Defence is also the Deputy Prime Minister therefore the portfolio is well placed, and Minister Keogh will be present for DVA matters being considered.

The Chair provided members a summary of biographical details of the newly elected Ministers for Veterans' Affairs.

Members **NOTED** the Chair's update on the Department's current strategic priorities.

#### Agenda Item 4 Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division Service Review and Transformation Program

Members **NOTED** that DVA's Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division is conducting a Service Review and Transformation Program. Ms Jennifer Veitch Executive Director Strategic Development – Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division (MHWSO) provided members information about opportunities for veterans, families and the ex-service community to contribute to consultation and co-design activities.

Members sought clarification of the escalation process for clients in distress and Ms Veitch summarised the functions of Triage & Connect within MHWSO, noting that that this is an internal referral pathway for clients with complex needs. Referrals to Triage & Connect can be made through several channels, including Claims processing, Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling and 1800 VETERAN. Referrals are triaged and clients are provided wrap around support through an individual plan for as long as they need. Members requested a copy of the Triage and Connect Escalation Framework.

Members thanked Ms Veitch for her clear explanation of the process.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2022NACCF/A10	Secretariat to provide members a copy of the Triage & Connect Escalation Framework.	Secretariat
2022NACCF/A11	Secretariat to provide the Advocate Hotline number to members and the Chair undertook to explore whether this could also be used by welfare advocates, in addition to claims advocates.	Secretariat
2022NACCF/A12	Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division Service Review and Transformation Program to return to the September meeting to provide a further update on the MHWSO Transformation Program.	Secretariat

#### Agenda Item 5 Carers Gateway

Members **NOTED** the information provided by Ms Rebecca White, Carer Policy and Programs Section Department of Social Services regarding the services available through the Carer Gateway.

Members **NOTED** that the Carer Gateway complements other service hubs and that there are no age restrictions or requirement to be registered as a carer to access services through this mechanism. Ms White reiterated that this service is available to anyone who is looking after another person, noting that the majority of people who do, don't identify as a carer.

Members **NOTED** the importance of the Carer Gateway as a resource available to carers of veterans, and undertook to help spread awareness of this resource in the ex-service community.

No.	Action	Assigned to
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<b>2022NACCF/A13</b>	Secretariat to distribute copy of the Carer Gateway presentation provided by Ms Rebecca White to members at 29 June meeting.	Secretariat
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## Agenda Item 6 War Widow/er Entitlements and TPI & EDA Automatic Entitlement to War Widows Pension

Members **NOTED** the paper presented by Deputy Commissioner South Australia Janice Silby, Assistant Secretary Income Support Branch, in response to the member submission from the TPI Federation regarding War Widow entitlements for widows of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated veterans.

Ms Silby acknowledged that delays caused by the implementation of a new ICT system had impacted the time taken to process all bereavement work, including Widow/er entitlements where automatic eligibility existed. To address the backlog, additional resources were allocated and Members **NOTED** that timeframes are returning to normal.

Ms Silby requested members email her directly if they become aware of a widow who has not received a bereavement letter, noting that in some instances DVA is not aware of a partner on the death of a client. Members **NOTED** that in such cases, form D9126 would be sent, seeking proof of identification and bank details.

Ms Silby confirmed that letters of condolence sent to next of kin include information on National ex-service organisations (ESOs) which may be able to provide additional support if required. Members also **NOTED** that DVA provides next of kin details to certain ESOs to facilitate early contact and support on the death of a veteran.

Members also **NOTED** that DVA provides the details of deceased veterans and/or war widows to certain ESOs to facilitate early contact and support on the death of a veteran. DVA clients are able to opt out of this if they wish.'

Ms Silby referenced a previous query raised by the TPI Federation and advised that DVA would be meeting with Department of Social Services representatives to resolve the policy issue that sees some TPis in receipt of Disability Support Pension being asked to completed medicals. Ms Silby confirmed that she would respond directly to the TPI Federation.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
<b>2022NACCF/A14</b>	Secretariat to distribute D9126 form to NACCF members to facilitate their assistance to partners of deceased veterans.	Secretariat

## Agenda Item 7 Department of Health Update

Ms Amanda Miller, A/g Director, Aged Care Fees Section Funding Operations and Analysis Branch, Department of Health provided members with an update from the Department of Health.

Ms Miller advised members that from 1 July 2022, the Department name would be changed to the Department of Health and Aged Care, reflecting the portfolio responsibilities of Minister Butler and Minister Wells.

Members **NOTED** that Departmental officials are still working with new Ministers to establish priorities for any budget measures that were announced by the previous Government. Ms Miller acknowledged that any measures initially indicated to start 1 July 2022 are in abeyance.

Ms Miller also advised that broader sector reform is also paused, however hopes to be able to provide an update to members at the next meeting.

Members **NOTED** that Australian Defence Force (ADF) support to residential aged care facilities has been extended. Facilities are able to request ADF support through relevant Commonwealth Department of Health office in each state and territory.

Members **NOTED** that the Department of Health is unable to advise how many veterans or DVA clients have died of COVID in residential aged Care Facilities, as data is not collected at that granular level. Action Item 2022A/NACCF2, seeking this data will be closed.

Members **NOTED** the implementation of the 'Re-engaging Volunteers into Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACF)' Program, aimed to reduce social isolation of aged care residents and to address the decline in volunteers during the pandemic. This complements the existing Community Visitors Scheme.

Members **NOTED** that there are no updates on the Hearing Services Program at this stage. Members asked if the Department of Health could give any indication regarding the new government's approach to veterans' hearing needs. Ms Miller was unable to address this query, however advised that Hearing Service Program would be able to provide an update at a later stage.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
<b>2022NACCF/A15</b>	Secretariat to liaise with DVA business area to list Department of Health Sector Reform Taskforce to present to future NACCF meeting	Secretariat
<b>2022NACCF/A16</b>	Secretariat to distribute link to Community Visitors Scheme to members	Secretariat
<b>2022NACCF/A17</b>	Secretariat to invite representative from the Department of Health Hearing Services Program to attend September meeting of NACCF.	Secretariat

### **Agenda Item 8 Chief Health Officer Update**

Chief Health Officer, Professor Jenny Firman noted the early start to the influenza season and encouraged members and their cohorts to get the FluVax. Professor Firman also encouraged members and their cohorts to get a COVID vaccine booster, noting that research is indicating that the third booster is estimated to increase immunity by 65 per cent. In discussion of the effects of a fourth booster, Professor Firman noted that the available evidence indicated that it did not appear to confer a huge increase in immunity for those who were otherwise well without risk factors and was not recommended. However for those who are at increased risk, including those who are immunocompromised do receive a benefit.

Members asked about the effectiveness of antivirals and Professor Firman noted that there are two antivirals available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for those over 65s with two additional risk factors for developing severe disease and those over 75 years with one additional risk factor. Professor Firman summarised some of the comorbidities and contraindications of the medications.

Professor Firman went on to outline the continuing work on GP engagement. The challenge was to reach HPs with specific information about veterans DVA services amid the large volume of general health information that GPs receive daily noting that the veteran cohort makes up less than 2 per cent of patients seen by GPs.

Professor Firman and her team are addressing this in a multi prong approach that includes;

- Working towards inclusion of veteran health and mental health trauma modules in the GP training curriculum
- Articles in the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Journal;
- Incorporation of Coordinated Veteran Care information into Chronic Disease Management nursing training;
- Conducting webinars for Practice Nurses;
- Improving web resources;
- Utilising Primary Health Network to provide information to GPs on veteran health pathways to care relevant to their location. Professor Firman also advised that her office is working with departmental business areas to review the forms that GPs are required to complete.

Members **NOTED** the update from the Chief Health Officer.

Members continued previous discussion regarding prescription of medicinal cannabis. Professor Firman advised that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has recently revised the regulatory requirements for medicinal cannabis prescribing. Details of the new process is published on the TGA website.

Professor Firman confirmed that under the current medicinal cannabis framework, DVA does require that a submission for funding for medicinal cannabis from a veteran's doctor includes a suicide and mental health assessment. Members **NOTED** that the department is looking at the current framework, particularly in light of the recent TGA changes.

Members sought to confirm if the previous government's Budget measure to align payments to psychiatrists would be proceeding. The Chair advised that Minister Keogh would be reviewing all previous measures in preparation for Budget in October.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
<b>2022NACCF/A18</b>	Secretariat to provide members with copy of current DVA framework for medicinal cannabis.	Secretariat
<b>2022NACCF/A19</b>	Secretariat to distribute link to TGA website medicinal cannabis prescription protocols.	Secretariat

### **Agenda Item 9            Other Business**

Members sought confirmation from the Chair if Benetas had replaced Blue Care as providers of veteran home care packages services in QLD. The Chair confirmed that a limited tender was recently completed for provision of home care services and undertook to confirm if Benetas is in addition to, or is replacing Blue Care.

The Chair advised members that she would like to review the Terms of Reference at the next meeting. Members **AGREED** to review the current Terms of Reference and provide comments and feedback to the Secretariat by 10 August 2022.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Assigned to</b>
<b>2022NACCF/A20</b>	Secretariat to confirm if Benetas has replaced Blue Care as provider of veteran home care packages in QLD and advise members.	Secretariat
<b>2022NACCF/A201</b>	Members to provide comments and suggested amendments to NACCF Terms of Reference to Secretariat by 10 August 2022.	Members

**Meeting closed: 3.30pm.**

<b>MEMBERS/ATTENDEES</b>	
Ms Vicki Rundle PSM (Chair)	Deputy Secretary, Veterans and Families Services
Mr Ward Gainey JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Ms Jenny Gregory	Australian War Widows Inc. (AWWI)
Ms Wendy Bateman	Returned and Services League of Australia
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Mr Michael Benyk	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Ms Alison Bowman	Partners of Veterans Association
<b>Presenters</b>	
Ms Leanne Cameron	First Assistant Secretary Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division
Ms Jennifer Veitch	Executive Director Strategic Development Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division
Mr Simon Hill	Assistant Secretary Policy Development Branch
Ms Rebecca White	Carer Policy and Programs Section, Department of Social Services
Ms Kate Duncan	Director Reviews and Governance, Income Support Branch
Ms Amanda Miller	A/g Director, Aged Care Fees, Funding Operations and Analysis Branch, Department of Health
Professor Jenny Firman	Chief Health Officer
<b>Secretariat</b>	
Tiki Stephens	Assistant Director, Governance and Ministerial Events
Ms Kylie Robinson	Assistant Director, Governance and Ministerial Events
<b>Apologies</b>	
Mr Shawn Bergquist	Legacy Australia Incorporated
Ms Leanne Yannopoulos (Deputy Chair)	First Assistant Secretary, Client Engagement and Support Services Division