

Deputy Commissioner's Consultative Forum - Tasmania
Meeting Number 44 - Summary
8 February 2023

Present:

Luke Brown (Chair)	Deputy Commissioner TAS – Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)
Barry Quinn	Returned and Services League (RSL)
Brian Ellis	Naval Association of Australia (NAA)
Cathy Starling	Mates4Mates (M4M)
David Waddle OAM	Advocacy and Hobart Legacy Inc
Deb Coulson (proxy)	Royal Australian Air Force Association (RAAF-A)
Elaine Devlin	Open Arms (OA)
Jacinta Leahy	Partners of Veterans Association (PVA)
John Findlater	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA)
BRIG John Withers	Veterans Reference Group (VRG)
Ray Williams OAM	Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women Ltd (TPI)
Terese Smith	Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPAC)
Terry Roe	Vietnams Veterans Association of Australia (VVA)
Anne James	Executive Officer – Department of Veterans' Affairs
Rochelle Devlin (scribe)	Executive Assistant – Department of Veterans' Affairs

Apologies:

Kevin Evorall	Launceston Legacy Inc
Neil Grierson	Senior ADF Officer (SADFO)

Business Arising:

Apologies noted. Members endorsed minutes from Meeting 43 Budget Brief held on 26 October 2022. There were no outstanding action items.

Agenda item submitted by PVA:

Dissatisfaction of DVA's fee schedule for medical personnel and all allied health professionals.

- Jacinta Lahey advised on feedback received that some TPI veterans and Gold Card holders had been asked to pay for medical services and secondly, raising the issue of the fee health professionals receive from DVA.
- Chair Luke Brown explained that DVA has a fee schedule for medical providers that is generally at a higher rate than the Medicare schedule, the difference being that DVA doesn't allow providers to pass on a gap fee to card holders, essentially bulk billing the Government for those services.
- Luke explained that DVA doesn't set the fee schedules and that it's a matter for Government. Any increase to fee schedules would have to be considered in the Budget context. DVA provides data and advice to Government on concerns around providers that refuse to provide services under DVA treatment arrangements.
- In the previous few Budgets, fee schedules have been reviewed and raised for a number of provider groups, it is expected these will continue to be reviewed.

Deputy Commissioner Update:

- Luke Brown advised that the Department's new Secretary Ms Alison Frame PSM commenced her tenure 23 January.
- Luke acknowledged the substantial contribution of outgoing Secretary Liz Cosson.
- Attention has turned to implementing recommendation 1 of the Royal Commission's interim report which aims to simplify veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation.
- Focus as well is on recommendation 2 of the Royal Commission's interim report which recommends elimination the claims backlog.
- Funding of \$2.2 million for a Veteran's Hub in Burnie was announced.
- 31 March will see the opening of the Veteran's Hub in Launceston.
- Shelly Enders is the new Kookaburra Kids engagement manager and will be in Tasmania at the end of March with the view to commencing programs in July.

Forum Updates:

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

- Terese Smith advised members that the Frank MacDonald memorial prize has returned post Covid.

Veterans Reference Group

- John Withers confirmed that Tasmanian Government Department of Communities has now disbanded.
- Discussions have been held to make the TASGOV online concessions portal more user friendly.
- Solid focus this year will be the State Government Veterans Employment Strategy.

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

- Terry Roe reported VVAA state branch's AGM is to be held Saturday 25 February with sub-branches to follow.
- February 17 saw a consultative meeting around the 50th Anniversary of ceasing of conflicts in Vietnam with consideration of a commemorative medallion and addition of a bar to the Vietnam Veterans medal.
- Terry wrote to the Premier suggesting a local commemoration for the 50th Anniversary, response yet to be received.
- VVAA addressed a letter to the Premier expressing concerns over the proposed stadium at Mac Point.
- Costs have increased to establish VVAA's new training facility with grant funds having not yet been received.
- The veterans' retreat at Lake Sorell was well utilised over the festive season.
- Terry to travel to Canberra to attend forum with Commissioner Nick Kaldas for update on the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Returned and Services League

- Barry Quinn advised on a bolstering of RSL's welfare and compensation support team.
- A business case has been submitted by RSL for a southern veteran's hub.
- 2023 marks the 30th Anniversary of deployment of troops to Somalia with a function to be hosted by the Governor-General on Anzac Day.

Royal Australian Air Force Association

- Deb Coulson reported on the imminent endorsement of a new national structure.
- RAAF-A sub branches are currently holding their AGM's with State branch to be held in March.
- An afternoon tea was held at RAAF-A headquarters commemorating the 81st Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

Mates4Mates

- Cathy Starling advised members of a staffing vacancy for a Senior Liaison Officer.
- M4M exercise programs are going well with them now being offered in six week blocks.
- Undergoing revision of support for families of Mates post a Mates Christmas suicide.

Advocacy

- David Waddle updated the forum on accreditation and training statistics.

Hobart Legacy

- David Waddle advised on impending commencement of Legacy's Centenary Torch Relay.

- Hobart's celebration of Legacy's Centenary commences with a church service at St David's 12 March.
- One of Legacy's Tasmanian widows and her children enjoyed a trip to Canberra's Government House on the invitation of the Governor-General.

Partners of Veterans Association

- Jacinta Leahy notified of the recent passing of their National President Heather Evans.
- August 22 2022 saw the Tasmanian branch AGM.
- PVA to move from their current premises to Anzac House in New Town.

Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women

- Ray Williams advised on the resignation of TPI's secretary.
- Due to late recommencement in the New Year, upcoming events are yet to be finalised with the deadline being the end of February.

Naval Association of Australia

- Brian Ellis reported that NAA have a national meeting in Canberra early March with the State AGM to be held 31 March.

Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association

- John Findlater advised of APPV-A's 75th Anniversary in 2022.
- Saluting their Service grant funds have gone towards two plaques, one commemorating Colonel Herbert to be placed at Anglesea Barracks, the other at the Cenotaph in Wynyard.

Open Arms

- Elaine Devlin reported on staffing changes with the loss of Peer Advisor Jon Jeffrey in the north and Community Engagement Officer Donna Brown in the south.
- A new counsellor Chris Wigg has commenced in Launceston.
- The [Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy](#) was launched in December; Open Arms hopes to have input to the actions within the strategy as it evolves.
- A top priority for the year is strengthening relationships with Tas Health.

Executive – DVA

- Anne James thanked RAAF-A for providing their premises for the Deputy Commissioner's Christmas function.
- Forum is reminded of the State Government's [Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program](#).