



Wednesday 9 August 2023

<b>Location:</b>	Hobart and Launceston – Tasmania
<b>Time:</b>	14:00 – 16:00

#### DVA Participants

Luke Brown	Deputy Commissioner Tas (Chair)
Anne James	Executive Officer (Scribe)
Kathy Turner	Open Arms

#### Attendees

Name	Organisation
John Hardy	RSL Tasmania
Gordon Fuller	NAA
Annette Ottway	Hobart Legacy
Charles Hill (proxy)	RAAF-A
LTCOL Neil Greirson	Senior ADF Liaison Officer
Clare McCarthy (Observer)	PVA – Tas
Jacinta Leahy	PVA- Tas
Mark Horner	APPVA
BRIG John Withers	VRG
Ray Williams OAM	TPI Assn.
Mark Green	DPAC
Terry Roe	VVAA – Tas
Kevin Evorall	Legacy Launceston

#### Apologies

Cathy Starling	Mates4Mates
David Waddle OAM	Advocacy representative

#### Guest Speaker

Alison Maltby	Kookaburra Kids Australia
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#### Business arising

Meeting chaired in Hobart and held via TEAMS in other locations

Apologies noted and proxies welcomed.

Forum endorsed minutes from Meeting 47 Budget Brief held on 5 May 2023. There were no outstanding action items.

#### **Agenda item submitted**

Nil

#### **Deputy Commissioner Update**

Chair Luke Brown recognised the recent HRH-90 Taipan incident and acknowledge the impact this maybe be having on serving members and the ex-service community more broadly. He noted that while Defence has the current lead on support for the families of the ADF personnel DVA are ready to provide appropriate supports moving forward. Our thoughts are with the families and colleagues of those soldiers. This also extends to those that serve alongside them including those who are aiding in the recovery effort.

#### **Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services (MATES) program.**

Luke asked who had heard about the Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services (MATES) program which has been in the press recently.

The Veterans' MATES program has been operating for more than 18 years to provide a valuable proactive service addressing 'real life' health care problems in the veteran community. Specifically, the program seeks to positively change veteran medicine usage, and increase the uptake of complementary DVA funded health services, to support veteran wellbeing and a reduction in adverse medicine events.

The program takes an evidence based, targeted approach, using a team of clinical experts to develop current health and medicine information and using secure and private billing data to identify members of the veteran community who would benefit from receiving this information. Identified data is only used to determine veterans who are at risk of medicine related problems, writing to the veteran and their doctor to bring them together to have a positive conversation that is tailored to the veteran's specific health care needs. All other data used in the program is de-identified. DVA takes privacy very seriously, and we assure veterans and families that DVA and the University have strict policies in place to ensure the appropriate protection of personal information, and that ethics approval remains in place, guiding the delivery of the program.

We would like to reassure veterans and families that there has not been a breach of their data, and there is no systemic data security issue. The recent determination by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) relates to an individual case in 2017 whereby the individual opted out of participation in the program and the Department did not fully implement this request. The Department has unequivocally apologised for this.

As a result, the Secretary has this week requested a review of the MATES program to ensure that all requests to opt-out of the program have been actioned appropriately and to provide further assurance of the compliance with opt out provisions under the program.

Veterans have always had the ability to opt out of the program, however DVA has taken steps to more prominently communicate this, so veterans can make an informed decision about their participation.

The Department is engaging with OAIC openly and in good faith, as it looks to improve its processes

### **Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide**

The Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide is ongoing with hearings in Adelaide recently. DVA Secretary, Alison Frame PSM appeared as a witness. It was relayed that the Commission handed down its Interim Report on 11 August 2022. Recommendation one and two were to:

1. Simplify and harmonise veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation, and.
2. Eliminate the claims backlog.

Luke briefed the forum on the implementation progress of Recommendations 1 and 2, and provided an update on actions and progress. He reminded members that the process of Legislation change is lengthy and that there will be opportunities for feedback as it progresses particularly during the exposure draft and consultation stages. The reform is on track to meet the timelines required.

Mark Green asked if the intent is to have the back log to zero. Luke discussed the department's workflow process, claims on hand and the flow on effect of claims being accepted or reviews being initiated.

John Withers asked if simple claims are given priority. Luke explained the triage process, lodging claims through My Service and the importance of providing information and evidence with claims where possible to expedite the process.

Jacinta Leahy asked what interface DVA have with Aged Care. What are the boundaries and the lines of communication? **Action Item:** Anne to arrange a guest speaker to explain the process at the next DCCF.

### **Building works at 254 Liverpool St**

The forum was advised that there will be extensive building works commencing on the Liverpool St site commencing next week. Locally we received very short notice of this occurring but it is welcomed as it will allow additional staff to be located on site. The project is not expected to be completed until Sep 2024. The current parking arrangements for clients will not be available and local staff are working with our property team in Canberra and the building owner and manager to source alternative parking for clients of DVA and OA. Several possible solutions are being investigated involving local private and public parking. Information will be distributed as it becomes known. The need for accessible parking has been identified as a priority.

### **Kookaburra Kids**

Alison Maltby, Head of Service Delivery Kookaburra Kids – Australia provided the attached information brief.



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DEFENCEAug.pptx

Following the presentation Clare McCarthy requested clarification of who can attend. All young people (8-18yrs) from families who have been affected by mental illness *as a* result of serving in Defence deserve to be supported, to be valued and to strive to reach their potential. This includes children and grandchildren. The eligibility and referrals process is also available on line at [Kookaburrakids.org.au](http://Kookaburrakids.org.au) .

### Attendee updates

#### **Department of the Premier and Cabinet**

Mark Green advised the forum that the State Government have recently launched the Veterans' Employment Strategy [Department of Premier and Cabinet \(dpac.tas.gov.au\)](http://Department of Premier and Cabinet (dpac.tas.gov.au)) with the aim of employing 100 new veterans within four years.

Other initiatives include the **Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program** which supports veteran's participation in healthy activities for their health and wellbeing and to develop social networks. The free Program is open to eligible Tasmanian veterans who may apply for a voucher of up to \$100 to put towards the cost of registration or membership fees at participating gyms and sporting clubs. Gyms and sports clubs will also benefit by an opportunity to grow their membership and will be reimbursed for each voucher they accept. The program is open to gyms and clubs throughout Tasmania.

Edward "Teddy" Sheean VC Memorial Grants Program 2023-24 Round One is now open with applications closing on 31 Aug 2023. Full details at [Department of Premier and Cabinet \(dpac.tas.gov.au\)](http://Department of Premier and Cabinet (dpac.tas.gov.au))

The 2023-24 Concession guide will be released shortly. Neil Grierson asked if there were any plans for the Tasmanian State Government to release a Veteran Card as has recently been introduced by the Victorian State Government. Mark replied that he was aware of the Victorian card and that it has been discussed. As there are policy and financial considerations the Minister and Treasurer would need to consider any proposals for a similar system in Tasmania.

#### **Veterans Reference Group**

John Withers reiterated the aims and importance of the Veterans' Employment Strategy full details are available at: [Department of Premier and Cabinet \(dpac.tas.gov.au\)](http://Department of Premier and Cabinet (dpac.tas.gov.au))

New members will be sought for the Veteran's Reference Group by Expression of Interest (EOI) towards the end of 2023. A link to the EOI document will be promulgated when it becomes available.

#### **Vietnams Veterans Association of Australia**

Terry Roe reported that the veterans' retreat at Lake Sorell continues to be well utilised.

ADF members who served during the Vietnam War have been recognised with the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm Unit Citation. Details of eligibility are available at: [defence.gov.au](https://defence.gov.au). Applications can be lodged from that website.

Terry will be attending the Vietnam Veterans Commemorate Service in Canberra on 18 Aug. There are local services being held around Tasmania. Contact your local branch for details.

A very successful luncheon was held last week for Vietnam Veterans at Parliament House, hosted by Minister Guy Barnett. The luncheon was arranged to commemorate the Tasmania lives lost in Vietnam and coincides with graveside vigils conducted around the state. Thanks to the Minister.

### **Returned and Services League**

John Hardy (proxy) provided an update on the Veterans Hub project. RSL Tasmania have received \$5m grant funding and this will enable them to enact the business plan they proposed of a hub(s) and spokes model that will provide support to approximately 90% of the State. The hubs will be in Launceston, already established, and Hobart with spokes in areas identified in the 2023 Census as having high veteran populations. This includes towns on the west and east coasts and areas south of Hobart and along the north coast as far as Wynyard.

Each spoke will have a reach of approx. 50 km. Clients can make contact via RSL TAS or a local Hub. Referrals to services including doctors, accommodation, employment and social workers, recreational activities, evidence based treatment and lifestyle supports will be offered. Case files will be held centrally with relevant information shared with service providers, as approved by the veteran, as needed to avoid the veteran having to retell their story. Full details are available at [veteranhub.org.au](https://veteranhub.org.au)

An issue of note is finding an appropriate way to contact transitioning members to advise them of the services the Hubs offer.

Jacinta Leahy asked what ongoing funding is available. John advised that the terms of the grant are very specific and that ongoing funding is not provided. Therefore RSL Tasmania will use other revenue sources including land held by sub branches, and rental properties around the state to support the project moving forward.

Luke Brown reminded members that the Northwest Tasmania Veteran's Hub, a clinical model in Burnie, which also received grant funding is operating under Dr Andrew Clark. [theveteranshub.org.au](https://theveteranshub.org.au)

### **Royal Australian Air Force Association**

Charles Hill (proxy) advised that the annual Battle for Britain Commemorations will be held in Hobart 15-17 Sep. It is anticipated that the Chief of Air Force will attend.

### **Hobart Legacy**

Annette Ottway (proxy) updated the forum on the success of the Legacy's Centenary celebrations to date. Annette advised that Hobart Legacy have recently begun supporting a veteran family with young children.

The PVA AGM will be held next week.

### **Launceston Legacy**

Kevin Evorall advised that they have a junior Legatee undertaking the Kokoda track soon. They have a new program that funds pocket money and internet connection for Legacy kids. Kevin advised that three Widows were giving the incorrect form to apply for War Widows by VAN staff. He recommended that greater emphasis be placed on training.

### **Senior ADF Liaison Officer**

Building works are in progress at Anglesea Barracks predominantly at the McGee building currently. This in conjunction with a site at Coomera houses the ADF call centre.

An ADF transition seminar will be held over two days in September at Anglesea Barracks. The southern Tasmania leg of the Legacy Torch Relay will now commence at Anglesea Barracks recognising the synergy between the founding father of Legacy, MAJGEN Sir John Gellibrand KCB, DSO and Bar and Anglesea Barracks.

### **Partners of Veterans Association**

Jacinta Leahy introduced Clare McCarthy who maybe acting as proxy for PVA in the future. PVA continues as predominately a social group locally, with the AGM being held later in August.

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

Ray Williams advised that their new volunteer office manager, Sheena Bass, has settled in well. She works two days per week and her assistance is appreciated.

TPI Assn will only hold two social activities this year due to restrictive grant opportunities.

Two State Directors will travel to Canberra for the annual Congress in September this year. It is understood that there may be several nominees for the position of Federal President.

The Hobart branch has been allocated grant funding to digitally record Veterans stories across a number of conflicts. This project is expected to be completed in Apr 2024.

### **Naval Association of Australia (NAA)**

Gordon Fuller (proxy) advised that the National Council meeting and AGM were held in May with the Secretary Alison Frame and two other DVA staff attending. Their attendance was appreciated and well received.

Navy Day will be held on 1 Dec 23 at Shropshire Park Ulverstone, all welcome.

### **Open Arms**

Kathy Turner reported that Open Arms is now a separate division of DVA which provides increased representation at the departmental level.

Tasmania and Victoria are now managed separately, Kathy is acting Regional Director while Elaine Devlin is on leave.

Terry Roe comment that the separation of Victoria and Tasmania into two separate regions is a good decision for veterans and should have a positive impact on services in both locations.

### **Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Assn – (APPVA)**

Mark Horner (proxy) advised that John Findlater is overseas currently.

APPVA have installed two plaques thanks to STS grant funding. The plaques are located at the RSL in Wynyard and adjacent to the Peacekeeper and Peacemaker memorial carving at Anglesea Barracks Hobart.

**Next meeting: Budget 15 November at 2pm**