



# National Aged Care and Community Forum Communique June 2023

## National Aged Care and Community Forum Meeting

A meeting of the National Aged Care and Community Forum was held on Tuesday 20 June, 2023. A broad range of issues was covered in the meeting.

### Department of Health and Aged Care Update

A representative from Department of Health and Aged Care (DOHAC) provided an update on progress on the new aged care Act. Work has begun on developing a new overarching aged care Act, to place older Australians at the heart of the aged care system and provide the framework for fundamental change.

The new Act will replace existing legislation, including the Aged Care Act 1997 and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018.

DoHAC will be seeking input and feedback from older Australians, their families and carers, and the sector as they develop the new Act. DoHAC will also be consulting with the Council of Elders and the National Aged Care Advisory Council.

Visit the Aged Care Engagement Hub at <https://www.agedcareengagement.health.gov.au/> to find out how you can become involved.

### Advocacy Services Reform

DVA understands that there is a strong interest in the reform of advocacy services. A working group chaired by the DVA General Counsel and comprised of nominees from ESOs with appropriate experience and relevant subject matter experts is being established to consider reform of advocacy services.

The work will be informed by previous reviews and papers and will acknowledge the changing environment, including commercial entrants into the marketplace, the emergence of some state funded advocacy services, the work of the Joint Transition Authority in Defence, the establishment of the Veterans' and Families' Hubs and the consultations currently underway about a pathway for legislation reform.

Options for advocacy services reform will be developed by the working group which will commence this month.

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## **Hearing Services Update**

DVA continues to look at opportunities to improve hearings services for veterans.

Ahead of a decision on the way forward on the recommendations in the Australian Government's Hearing Services Program (HSP) Independent Review (the Review), DVA has considered improvements DVA could make internally to support veterans with complex hearing needs.

It is recognised that the HSP delivered by the Department of Health and Aged Care, is appropriate for the majority of individuals seeking hearing support. However, it is recognised that a small number of individuals have more complex hearing needs and audiologists may seek DVA funding for a device which is not fully subsidised. DVA considers these requests on a case by case basis.

The work currently underway seeks to assess these requests more broadly, that is, with alignment to DVA's Wellbeing Framework. For example, clients may have dexterity issues whereby changing small batteries is difficult and a rechargeable device which is not accessible in the fully subsidised range may be more appropriate. Further, for an individual who is working, an Assisted Listening Device used with a HSP device to provide optimal hearing, may not be the most appropriate option to support complex hearing needs.

DVA is progressing this approach to support veteran wellbeing and timely decisions about access to hearing aids for clients. However, it should be noted that an appointment with the client's Audiologist, clinical evidence and an application to DVA for consideration will continue to be required.

To this end, a form has been developed for providers, which is aimed at ensuring DVA receives the necessary information to support timely decision making. Positive feedback continues to be received from providers about the form and its use to support decision making.

The next steps include continued consultation with providers, veterans and families; and continued provider education and support. We look forward to providing a further update as this work progresses.

## **Veterans' Home Care Update**

DVA's Community Nursing (CN) and Veterans' Home Care (VHC) programs have been impacted by the broader workforce capacity limitations across the aged and care sector workforce.

Unprecedented workforce shortages over the past two (2) years, the impacts of COVID and changes to the SCHADS\* award (requiring home care providers to pay employees a minimum two hour shift) have resulted in some providers relinquishing service plans and/or withdrawing services.

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DVA has a dedicated team, which assists to manage the transition of clients to new providers as necessary.

DVA has committed to report back at the NACCF meeting in October 2023 with a communications plan to raise awareness about the support available through household services, community nursing, and Veterans' Home Care.

### **Veterans' and Families Hubs**

The Australian Government is establishing eight new Veterans' and Families' Hubs in: Southwest Perth, Northern Adelaide, Ipswich, Queanbeyan, the Hawkesbury region, the Hunter region, the Tweed/North Coast region and the Surf Coast/Geelong region.

Work is underway to deliver hubs in Southeast Queensland (Caboolture) and Tasmania.

All six of the initial hubs are now established, with the Minister having opened the Darwin Hub on 29 May 2023. The six initial hubs are delivering support to veterans and families in Nowra, Wodonga, Darwin, Perth, Townsville and Adelaide.

For further information on the Hubs, please visit the website <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/health-support/work-and-social-life-programs/work-and-social-support/veterans-and>