



# Younger Veterans Forum July 2023

## Younger Veterans Forum Meeting

A meeting of the Younger Veterans Forum was held on Wednesday 19 July, 2023. A broad range of issues was covered in the meeting.

### 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 has been established to consider reform of advocacy services.

The work is 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.

This working group met in June and July and is due to meet again shortly. A report will be provided to ESORT in September outlining these discussions and proposed next steps.

### RSL Veteran Catalogue

The Returned & Services League of Australia presented to the Forum on the RSL Veteran Catalogue.

The RSL Veteran Catalogue launched on 1 November 2022 and is a 12-month collaboration between RSL Australia and Servulink. The Catalogue is an online portal that will provide veterans with access to services and supports available in their community. The RSL hopes to further expand its already extensive database of established Australian services, and sought input from YVF Members and their constituents to improve the Catalogue. Further information on the Catalogue can be found at [rslaustralia.org/veterans-catalogue](https://rslaustralia.org/veterans-catalogue)

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## **Presentation from the Thompson Institute**

The Thompson Institute, University of Sunshine Coast provided a presentation which highlighted current clinical trials and research underway in the mental health field. It was noted that the National PTSD Research Centre that is scheduled to open in 2024. Further information on the work of the Thompson Institute can be found at:

<https://www.usc.edu.au/thompson-institute>

## **Medical Forms Project**

In May 2023, DVA commenced a project to review compensation medical assessment forms to improve how they obtain medical information from doctors for veteran claims. This review will continue through to mid-2024, but the first seven forms are now in use and have been published on DVAs Medical Provider page.

The review of medical forms is one initiative to gain efficiencies in the claims process and in response to feedback from medical providers, advocates, veterans and families on the complexity of the current medical assessment forms.

The review will deliver forms that are easier for medical providers to understand, consolidates and simplified, while helping the delegate obtain and understand the information they need to make a decision on a claim. The other focus will be to ensure the medical forms are digital ready and help improve claim assessment times.

The review process has included internal consultation processes and external consultation with Medical Providers and their representative organisations, ESOs and the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government.

DVA has already reviewed its top 19 most frequently used forms and been able to consolidated them into 7 new forms, reducing 33 pages to 17 pages.

## **Retrospective Discharge and Back Pay**

In recognition of the complexity faced by veterans when they apply for a retrospective discharge from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), DVA, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) and the Australian Tax Office (ATO) developed the Transitional Approach to manage cases where a veteran is in receipt of incapacity payments and Commonwealth-funded superannuation. Offsetting provisions under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 require that the Commonwealth-funded portion of a veterans' superannuation pension reduces incapacity payments on a dollar for dollar basis.

The Transitional Approach aims to reduce the administrative burden on veterans within the limits of the law. The ATO manages the taxation implications of these retrospective

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assessments. DVA applies taxation to incapacity payments in accordance with instructions provided by the ATO.

### **Veterans Travel Entitlements**

DVA recognises that the rate for reimbursement for private travel varies across the three Acts. The differences in travel for treatment assistance entitlements are being considered by the Government as part of reforms that may be implemented outside of Recommendation 1 of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

### **SeMPRO**

The Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO) provides immediate and confidential help to those impacted by sexual misconduct, including:

- Current or ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families
- Current ADF cadets
- Current Defence Australian Public Service employee
- Current Defence contractors

SeMPRO social workers and psychologists are available 24/7 to assist or refer.

SeMPRO services are confidential and are accessible without needing to make a report to Defence, the military police, or civilian police. Client may choose to remain anonymous.

Support is client-focused and customised to each person's unique needs. SeMPRO can assist with strategies, such as how to help support a friend or approach a difficult conversation, in order to promote the wellbeing of everyone involved. SeMPRO can also help with navigating Defence and civilian health care services.

SeMPRO is not an investigation service, but can guide and support clients through reporting, investigation, and legal proceedings.