



## Minutes

### Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The acting Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees, noting recent membership changes and representation arrangements for this meeting, including apologies received. Details are listed at **Annexure A**. No conflicts of interest were raised.

The Ode was recited and Members acknowledged the service and sacrifice of all veterans and families.

### Agenda Item 2.1 Action Items

Members **NOTED** the 18 September 2023 minutes were endorsed out of session and published on DVA's website.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2023ESORT/A25, 2023ESORT/A23, 2023ESORT/A31 (noting a new action to be raised informing Members of the number of DVA clients in Aged Care rather than names), 2023ESORT/A36, 2023ESORT/A38.

Members **DISCUSSED** actions 2022ESORT/A26, 2023ESORT/A26, A27, A29, A34, A37, which were proposed for closure but are to remain open, with further information to be provided.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A40	DVA to provide ESORT members with the number of DVA clients in Aged Care facilities.	Program Delivery
2023ESORT/A41	Secretariat to provide a 'comments and context' box for the recording of actions to give Members sufficient information to make decisions on action status. It was noted that Members should review action items as soon as possible to ensure recorded actions reflect the discussion and appropriate context.	Secretariat

### Agenda Item 2.2 2023ESORT/A23 Veteran Engagement Strategy

Members received an update on the draft Strategy noting it is based on best practice and is a living document. Members **NOTED** that while the Strategy is focused on engagement and designed to promote a structured and consistent approach for DVA staff, the importance of good communication should also be included. Several initiatives are underway in DVA to improve communications. An internal communications campaign to launch the Strategy is planned for early 2024. It will be publicly available once finalised.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A42	ESORT members to provide feedback from Members on the draft Strategy to DVA by 14 December 2023, with regular updates to be provided to ESORT in 2024.	Ministerial, Engagement & Communication

### Agenda Item 3 Veteran Journey Mapping

Members **NOTED** efforts to map how veterans and families currently interact with government agencies responsible for providing services and programs. Members **DISCUSSED** areas for improvement and ESORT will continue to be consulted as journey mapping evolves. Areas of particular interest included assisting veterans and families with superannuation and taxation choices, improving the transitioning member experience and intersection with reservist duty. Members **NOTED** Services Australia is leading mapping and play a central role in the broader ecosystem of support to veterans and families.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A43	ESORT members to be consulted from a co-design basis to help 'build the picture' of service planning going forward and regular updates to be provided to ESORT in 2024.	Ministerial, Engagement & Communication

#### Agenda Item 4 Secretary's Update

Members **NOTED** the update, in which the Secretary acknowledged the significant contribution of ESORT members and noted the value of ongoing collaboration to learn from experience and leverage expertise. Members **NOTED** achievements in 2023 including a significant reduction in the compensation claims backlog, recruitment of 500 additional DVA staff and implementation of MyService upgrades. Emerging priorities include Aged Care, continuing to meet information requests of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, transition, legislation reform, connecting with veterans who are currently not accessing DVA services and building on DVA's research and evaluation agenda, in collaboration with our Five Eyes partners across areas of common interest.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A44	ESORT members to be briefed on work underway to provide additional training to General Practitioners being led by the DVA Chief Health Officer.	Chief Health Officer

#### Agenda Item 11 The Hon Matt Keogh MP Minister for Veterans' Affairs Address

Members **NOTED** the update provided by Minister Keogh. The Minister thanked members for their efforts and contributions, not only through forums such as ESORT, but for the work they do in their respective organisations to support veterans and families. The Minister discussed key priorities including consultation on the legislation reform pathway to produce a better, simpler system of compensation, opening new Veterans' and Families' Hubs and the importance of veterans and families having access to well-trained advocates through support systems.

#### Agenda Item 5.1 Royal Commission Update

Members **NOTED** that DVA is focused on implementing Recommendations 1 to 4 of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, relating to legislation simplification, reducing the claims backlog, claims processing and DVA resourcing.

#### Agenda Item 5.2 Legislative Reform

Members **NOTED** an update on the exposure draft legislation to simplify veterans' legislation, including expected timing for consultation and passage through Parliament. Members **DISCUSSED** areas of interest to members, including grandparenting provisions, non-liability healthcare and definitions contained in the current legislation. It was **NOTED** that reform represented a very technical and complex drafting exercise and the motivation to get the exposure draft out for public consultation as quickly as possible to meet timeframes in the Interim Report, including passage of the legislation early next year.

#### Agenda Item 6 Advocacy

Members **NOTED** considerations related to the recognition and endorsement of well trained professional advocates. Members were updated on key pilots underway to improve training, mentoring and support of advocates, and access to claims lodgement assistance. Members **DISCUSSED** key interest areas including content and structure of ATDP modules. Members **NOTED** the Advocacy Working Group would be disbanded and thanked members of that group for their work.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A45	DVA to request interest from ESORT members to form a small working group to consider how a professional advocate scheme could operate.	Policy & Research
2023ESORT/A46	DVA to provide a progress report to the first ESORT meeting in 2024 in regards to advocacy and work underway.	Policy & Research

2023ESORT/A47	DVA to provide a final report to the second ESORT in 2024 in regards to advocacy and work underway.	Policy & Research
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### Agenda Item 7.1 Aged Care

Members **NOTED** the an update on the number of DVA clients receiving Veterans’ Home Care, Community Nursing, and known to be in Residential Aged Care. Members noted expected growth in the number of DVA clients aged over 60 in the coming decade. Members **NOTED** DVA will establish an Older Veterans Taskforce to examine approaches to improving the provision of DVA services and information to veterans and war widows(ers), case management functions, enhance engagement with aged care providers, and the aged care regulator. Members **NOTED** DVA would convene a workshop with some ESOs, providers, and peak bodies on 11 December 2023 as part of this work, and that significant legislative reform is underway by the Department of Health and Aged Care.

### Agenda Item 7.2 Hearing Services

Members **NOTED** that DVA will continue to work with the Department of Health & Aged Care to apply a wellbeing framework approach to hearing service entitlements, noting that approval under exceptional circumstances is available to address individual needs.

### Agenda Item 8 Proposed Commemorative Strategy 2024-2028

Members **NOTED** that a review of the current commemorative program is underway to inform a new Strategy for 2024-28. The focus is on ensuring commemorative services remain relevant while maintaining the sanctity and dignity of services. Members were asked to provide feedback on activities they believe should be included in the new Strategy.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A48	ESORT members to provide feedback on commemorations (included as paper 8 of 7 December 2023 ESORT meeting pack), by 19 December 2023.	Commemorations

### Agenda Item 9.1 ATO Implementation of the Douglas Decision

Members **NOTED** a presentation provided by the Veteran Alliance Association on the impact of the Douglas Decision on affected veterans. Members **NOTED** that DVA is establishing a working group to further map out impacts and to inform ongoing consultation with the Australian Taxation Office. Members **DISCUSSED** the mental health impact on individuals and families and improving communications to ensure individuals can make informed choices.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2023ESORT/A49	DVA to extend an invitation to ESORT members to join the working group established under the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum to further explore issues in relation to the Douglas Decision.	Policy & Research

### Agenda Item 9.2 Member Submission – Offsetting – Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans’ Association

Members **NOTED** a presentation by the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans’ Association on offsetting provisions over the years and their impact. Discussion focused on options under the current system and ensuring individuals have the right information to make informed decisions and the importance of informing government about needs moving forward. Members **NOTED** that the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum working group being established will also consider offsetting issues.

### Agenda Item 10 Other Business

#### Agenda Item 10.1 Forward Schedule of 2024 ESORT Meetings

Members **NOTED** the proposed dates for next year’s meetings. No other business was raised.

**Agenda Item 10.2 Noting of the below items**

Members **NOTED** the items provided below the line, with any questions or follow up information to be requested through the ESORT Secretariat out of session.

**Agenda Item 10.3 Grants Review Update**

Members **NOTED** that an update will be provided out of session.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Assigned to</i>
2023ESORT/A50	Update to be provided out of session to ESORT members on the Grants Review.	Ministerial, Engagement & Communication

**Meeting closed: 4.30pm**

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## ATTENDEES

ESORT Members	
Mr Mark Brewer AM CSC and Bar	A/g Chair, A/g Deputy President, Repatriation Commission and MRCC Member
Mr Kahlil Fegan DSC AM	Repatriation Commissioner and MRCC Member
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, MRCC Member
RADM Sonya Bennett	Representing RADM Sarah Sharkey, Department of Defence ( <i>Proxy</i> )
COL Andrew Love	MRCC, Department of Defence ( <i>Proxy</i> )
The Hon Martin Hamilton-Smith	Australian Special Air Service Association
BRIG Michael Annett CSC	Defence Reserves Association
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation Australia
Ms Bev Benporath	The Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc
Ms Jenny Gregory OAM	Australian War Widows Inc
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia
Mr David Manolas	Naval Association of Australia
Ms Amy Cooper	Soldier On
Group Captain Carl Schiller OAM CSM (retd)	Air Force Association
Mr Mike von Berg MC OAM	Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
LT COL Chris Moss	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association ( <i>Proxy</i> )
Mr (Legatee) Wayne McNee	Legacy Australia Inc ( <i>Proxy</i> )
MAJGEN Greg Melick AO RFD SC	Returned & Services League of Australia
Ms Del Gaudry CSC	Defence Force Welfare Association
Other Attendees	
Ms Alison Frame	President, Repatriation Commission and Chair, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (MRCC)
Mr Andrew Kefford PSM	Deputy Secretary, Policy & Programs
Ms Teena Blewitt PSM	Deputy Secretary, Client Benefits & Chief Operating Officer
Ms Alison McLaren	Deputy Secretary, Veteran, Family & Stakeholder Experience
Mr Mark Fullick FEAust, CPEng, APEC, RAN	Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) Representative
Presenters	
Ms Heather Macdonald	A/g Assistant Secretary, Engagement – <b>Item 3</b>
Mr Luke Brown	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Royal Commission Implementation – <b>Items 5.1 &amp; 5.2</b>
Mr Michael Harper	Assistant Secretary VEA Compensation and Support – <b>Item 6</b>
Ms Tara Hatzismalis	Assistant Secretary, Processing – <b>Item 6</b>
Mr Peter King	Assistant Secretary, Compensation Process & Payments – <b>Item 6</b>
Mr David Pullen	First Assistant Secretary, Program Delivery – <b>Item 7.1</b>
Ms Sarah Kennedy	Assistant Secretary, Client Programs – <b>Item 7.1</b>
Mr Glen Ferrarotto	Assistant Secretary, Commemorations Review – <b>Item 8</b>
Ms Veronica Hancock	First Assistant Secretary, Policy & Research – <b>Items 9.1 &amp; 9.2</b>
Mr Adam Weiderman	Assistant Secretary, Benefits Policy – <b>Items 9.1 &amp; 9.2</b>

<b>Observers</b>	
Mr Simon Hill	Assistant Secretary, Legislative Reform – <b>Items 5.1 &amp; 5.2</b>
Ms Wendy C	Director, Benefits & Payments Policy – <b>Items 9.1 &amp; 9.2</b>
Ms Victoria Benz	Assistant Secretary, Grants, Veterans Experience & Program Evaluation – <b>Item 10.3</b>
Ms Liane Pettitt	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Ministerial, Engagement & Communication
<b>Apologies</b>	
Ms Kate Pope PSM	Deputy President, Repatriation Commission and MRCC Member
MAJGEN Wade Stothart DSC AM CSC	MRCC Member, Department of Defence
Mr Greg Vines	MRCC, Comcare
Mr Eric Easterbrook OAM	Legacy Australia Inc
Mr Ian Lindgren	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
RADM Sarah Sharkey AM CSC RAN	Outgoing MRCC Member, Department of Defence
Mr Bill Roberts OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Advocate (TBC)	Defence Families Australia
<b>Secretariat</b>	
Mr Mark Kalleske	Assistant Secretary, Ministerial, International & Stakeholder Relations
Ms Morgan S	A/g Assistant Director, International & Stakeholder Relations