



MINUTES

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees, observers and new members, noting apologies received. Details are listed at **Annexure A**. No conflicts of interest were declared.

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

Agenda Item 2 Previous Minutes & Action Items

Members **NOTED** action items 2023YVF/A08, A04, A12 and A14 will remain in progress.

Agenda Item 3 DVA Strategic Update

Members **NOTED** the update from the Secretary and **DISCUSSED** key topics of interest. Members were **ENCOURAGED** to promote the new Deputy Secretary led Community Consultation Forums open to the veteran community as an engagement session. These sessions will be held on a specific theme that is of concern to veterans. Members **NOTED** the update on the claims backlog and **ACKNOWLEDGED** misinformation in the public sphere regarding both the claims backlog and the MATES program. The Secretary assured members that the intention of the MATES program has always been to benefit veterans and work is underway to identify a solution that will provide this benefit and meet expectations around privacy. Members **NOTED** the flow on effects to timing of responses to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

Members were **ENCOURAGED** to provide feedback on Legislative Reform Exposure Draft Bill the by 28 April 2024. Members also **NOTED** the update on commemorations including the Secretary's intention for commemorative events to be more of current serving ADF, families of veterans and younger veteran, including opportunity to potentially participate in overseas commemorations. Members were **ENCOURAGED** to provide any feedback or ideas of how to implement this approach.

Agenda Item 4 Compensation Claims Processing Update and Time Taken to Process

Members received an update on the current status of claims and **NOTED** the recent announcement that no Permanent Impairment (PI), Initial Liability (IL) or Incapacity Payments more than two weeks old remain unallocated. Members **NOTED** the focus is now on timely decision making for determination of claims. Members were **ENCOURAGED** to contact the Department if they have any concerns regarding processing times or delays.

Agenda Item 5 Computer-Based Decision Making

Agenda Item 6 Member Submission – Streamlined Claims Processing (The Warriors Return)

Members **DISCUSSED** Computer-Based Decision-Making for straightforward claims that are decision ready and **NOTED** the member submission on Streamlines Claims Processing. Members **NOTED** that Straight Through Processing and streamlining of processes enable decision ready claims to be more promptly accepted. Members **NOTED** that regular reviews will be conducted.

Members **NOTED** that information about the use of Computer-Based Decision-Making (CBDM) will be published on a publicly available webpage within DVA's Consolidated Library of Information and Knowledge (CLIK).

DVA **ENCOURAGED** feedback on any conditions that may be suitable for consideration for Straight Through Processing and ways to improve the process.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2024YVF/A01	Warriors Return to provide further information and examples of conditions that may be suitable for streamlined claim processing.	The Warriors Return and Claims Process Improvement

Agenda Item 7 Legislative Reform Update

Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** the Minister's announcement of the release of the Legislative Reform Exposure Draft Bill. Members **NOTED** the implementation date of 1 July 2026, from which all future claims will be considered under MRCA, and existing claims under the VEA will be grand-parented. Members **NOTED** the key changes and **DISCUSSED** the consultation phase, with feedback required by 28 April 2024. Members **NOTED** concerns raised about offsetting and the Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP).

No.	Action	Assigned to
2024YVF/A02	Legislative Reform Webinar from 9 April 2024 to be provided to Younger Veteran Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) members.	Legislative Reform

Agenda Item 8 Advocacy Update

Members **NOTED** the paper provided on Advocacy and **NOTED** that an Advocacy Working Group, focussing on governance, was currently being held and is expected to report back to the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table.

Agenda Item 9 Heart Health Program

Members **NOTED** the update provided by the Heart Health Program and **DISCUSSED** challenges and health issues faced by all veterans, not just the cohort who are eligible for the program. Members **NOTED** that it is not a clinical program and only de-identified data is utilised. Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** the value of the program and are seeking advice from DVA as to whether the program, or similar, could be expanded to all veterans. Members **NOTED** the financial implications and possible future cost savings and outcomes for clients.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2024YVF/A03	Heart Health Program PowerPoint to be circulated to members for their information.	Secretariat
2024YVF/A04	DVA requested to investigate and provide advice on how a program such as Heart Health could be expanded to all veterans.	All members

Agenda Item 10 Member Submission – DVA Fee Schedules (Returned and Services League of Australia)

Members were updated on the submission and **NOTED** it will be circulated out of session for information. Members **NOTED** decisions to amend price setting arrangements for DVA-funded health care services are subject to Government consideration as part of the Budget process. In relation to service provider availability and gap payments, more work is needed to understand the broader issues being experienced by some veterans. Members **AGREED** that the proposal required further work and **AGREED** that a collective submission be put forward by the members of the Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) and provided to the Chair for consideration.

No.	Action	Assigned to
2024YVF/A05	RSL to work with YVF membership to expand DVA Fee Schedule submission, and seek YVF Chair consideration prior to submitting to Government for consideration.	Returned and Services League of Australia and YVF Members
2024YVF/A06	Update to be provided at the next YVF meeting on 16 July on the Draft National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy.	Policy

Agenda Item 11 Member Submission – Cleaning of Solar Panels under 3 different acts (The Warriors Return)

Members **NOTED** the advice provided in the submission regarding cleaning of solar panels, that cleaning of solar panels is not eligible under any of the three Veterans Entitlements Acts. Members **NOTED** there is potential for this activity to be considered under Veteran Home Care and Household Services providing that sufficient evidence exists that the activity was being undertaken by the recipient prior to injury. Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** there would have to be satisfactory evidence and criteria met to be considered if the veteran had not reached the cap in payments.

Agenda Item 12 Ex-Service Organisation Round Table Update from YVF Representative

Members **DISCUSSED** the new arrangements for YVF representation on the Ex Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT). Members **DISCUSSED** the need for the representative to understand the outcome being sought from the relevant forum and **NOTED** the need to keep critically analysing the intent of the National Consultation Framework forums in representing the veteran and family cohort.

Agenda Item 13 Afghan Scoping Study

Members **NOTED** the update provided by the Chair on the Afghan Scoping Study and **ACKNOWLEDGED** the intention to focus on one operation. Members **NOTED** further advice will be provided in due course.

Agenda Item 14 Other Business

Agenda Item 14.1 Defence Force Welfare Association Representation

Members **NOTED** the request for Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA) to re-instate representation and members **AGREED** to DFWA initially attending as an observer, **NOTING** that full membership will be considered as part of the NCF Review.

Agenda Item 14.2 Young Veterans Australia Representation

Members **NOTED** the request for Young Veterans Australia to be represented on Younger Veterans Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF) and members **AGREED** to Young Veterans Australia initially attending as an observer, **NOTING** that full membership will be considered as part of the NCF Review.

Meeting closed: 2:00pm

Members	
Mr Kahlil Fegan DSC, AM	Chair, Repatriation Commissioner
COL James Burns CSM	ADF Liaison Officer to DVA, Department of Defence
Mr Nick Russon	Australian Special Air Service Association
Ms Emma Whitehead	Mates4Mates
Mr James Dallas	Returned and Services League of Australia
Mr Scott Harris	The Warrior's Return
Ms Barbara Boyer	Legacy Australia Inc
Mr Tom Hanley	Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans' Association
Mr Matthew Bondarczuk RAN	Australian Veterans Alliance (new representative)
Mr James Milliss	Soldier On
LCDR Graham Thomas RAN Rtd	Naval Association of Australia (new representative)
Presenters	
Mr Alex Caroly	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Claims Processing Improvement – Items 4, 5 & 6
Ms Sally Dennington	A/g Assistant Secretary, Business Improvement & Quality Assurance – Item 5
Mr Luke Brown	A/g First Assistant Secretary, Policy – Items 7,10 & 11
Mr Ben Dix	General Manager, DVA Heart Health Program, Corporate Health Management & The Wellness Practice – Item 9
Mr Zymri Alimi	Director, Corporate Health Management & The Wellness Practice – Item 9
Observers	
Mr Simon Hill	Assistant Secretary, Legislative Reform – Item 7
Ms Jennifer Veitch	A/g Assistant Secretary, Health & Wellbeing Policy – Item 11
Mr Damian D	A/g Director, Rehabilitation Policy – Item 11
Mr Peter Kennedy	Young Veterans Australia
Mr Chris Lewis	Defence Force Welfare Association
Secretariat	
Ms Morgan S	A/g Assistant Director, International & Stakeholder Relations
Ms Karen G	Senior Secretariat Officer, International & Stakeholder Relations
Apologies	
Ms Monique Suters	Defence Families Australia
SQNLDR Dee Cherry	Air Force Association