



Minutes

Agenda Item 1 Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging country, veterans, current serving Australian Defence Force Personnel and NAIDOC week. Members **NOTED** apologies as listed at Annexure A and no conflicts of interest were raised.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes & actions of previous meeting

Members **NOTED** the minutes from the previous meeting on 29 April 2024 were endorsed out of session and published on the DVA website on 14 June 2024.

Members **AGREED** to close action items 2023OWP/A10, A31, 2024OWP/A03, A04 and A05.

Members **AGREED** that 2023OWP/A11 would remain in progress until further advice could be given and 2024OWP/A06 would remain open until after discussions had occurred during the meeting.

Members **NOTED** that the action items 2023OWP/A28, 2024OWP/A01 and A02 remain in progress, with the Australian Veterans Alliance to provide examples for 2024OWP/A01 and A02 in preparation for discussion at the next meeting.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A07 – Report back out of session if possible ahead of the next OWP meeting or by the next OWP meeting on reallocations, including process of what occurs when a delegate leaves DVA and data to gain a sense of the broader implication of reallocations.	Client Benefits

Agenda Item 3 Compensation Claims Processing Update

Members **NOTED** the renewed focus on reducing the time taken to process claims and **DISCUSSED** the impact that older claims are having as they are being completed. Members **DISCUSSED** the need for a smarter process and **AGREED** the ESO portal has limitations when lodging claims. Members **NOTED** an increase in complex claims taking longer to assess, due to an increase in the number of conditions. Members **NOTED** that determinations are at record levels in May 2024.

Members **NOTED** that Budget Measures have facilitated clearing of the Initial Liability claims backlog. Members **NOTED** concern around the level of data on the website and would like to see more transparency of data and information regarding claims processing. Members **NOTED** prioritisation and an increase amongst serving, non-serving and reservists claims. Members **RAISED** concerns at impact of DVA staff turnover and requested a more streamlined process for reallocation of delegates

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A08 - Report back to OWP the number of conditions for streamlined and computer-based decision making.	Data & Insights

Agenda Item 4 Modernisation Program Update – MyService Banners

Members **NOTED** the update provided on the MyService Advocacy Messaging and **NOTED** that wording is being assessed against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). If the current design meets compliance guidelines,

it will be scheduled for release on 7 September 2024. Members **NOTED** that DVA will revisit the approach if it does not.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/09 – Circulate information on the agreed approach for MyService Advocacy Messaging to the OWP membership for information.	Policy

Agenda Item 5 Legislative Reform Update

Members **NOTED** the introduction of the Veterans’ Entitlements, Treatment and Support Bill 2024 into Parliament and subsequent referral to the Senate Committee. The Senate Committee is due to report on the Bill on 3 October 2024. Members **NOTED** the consultation report is being prepared to summarise the information submitted by the veteran community and it will be published on the website once finalised.

Agenda Item 6 Telephone Security – changing ‘no caller ID’ to DVA to identify DVA Delegates

Members **NOTED** the telephony constraints affecting their ability to identify DVA delegates by Caller ID, and the limitations on displaying DVA contact details. Members **NOTED** the current services contract is coming to an end and that a new provider has been selected. DVA is working with Services Australia on the design and timeframes and is scheduled to rollout by end of the 2025 calendar year.

Members **NOTED** timing constraints with the rollout and DVA **AGREED** to investigate if they could be resolved sooner.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A10 – Follow up a query from the Australian Veterans Alliance - called a delegate on a normal working day and receiving a DVA Public Holiday message.	Finance, Technology & Insights
2024OWP/A11 – Consider expansion of caller ID displaying DVA to specific areas of the Department. Advice to be provided back to OWP members.	Finance, Technology & Insights
2024OWP/A12 – Ensure OPTUS (new provider) has 24/7 contact and mitigation for loss of service for transition to soft phones.	Finance, Technology & Insights
2024OWP/A13 – Advice to be provided to OWP members if the rollout of new services by OPTUS can be resolved sooner, in particular the caller ID displaying DVA.	Finance, Technology & Insights

Agenda Item 7 Advocacy Update

Members **NOTED** the Advocacy Working Group is close to finalising their advice on the Constitution Code of Ethics and how it would be supported by DVA. Members **NOTED** that the Working Group will report back through the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT).

Members **DISCUSSED** concerns regarding Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Certification and the Level 4 Advocate Course under trial. Members were **ADVISED** DVA is currently running a pilot program and is waiting on feedback before becoming a certified course. Members **AGREED** to further discussion on this issue at the next meeting.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A14 – Update to be provided at the next OWP meeting on Level 4 Advocates, Recognition of Prior Learning and the determinates for qualification. How this will be wrapped up into Advocacy Reform to be included.	Client Benefits & Policy

Agenda Item 7.2 Member Submission - Advocates in the Preparation and Submission of Claims for Compensation

Members **NOTED** the member submission and **DISCUSSED** how the MyService electronic process excludes the client in any communications from a delegate. Members **NOTED** the importance of collegiate relationships between delegate, advocate and client, and the merits of ongoing improvements to MyService and digital channels.

Agenda Item 8 Claim Communication Procedures

Agenda Item 8.1 Member Submission – Passage of Information

Agenda Item 8.2 Member Submission – Nominated Representatives

Members **DISCUSSED** concerns for better communication between the delegate, representative and client and a focus on operational procedures to improve communications. Members **AGREED** that making sure all forms across the Departments system be consistent with clear instructions. Members **NOTED** that DVA’s procedure where a representative arrangement is in place, stipulates that communication should be directed to the representative and sought that practices be embedded more consistently.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A15 – Compensation and Welfare letters to be reviewed to ensure information included where a representative is required to provide the information to the client as it has not been done by DVA. Report back to the next OWP meeting.	Client Benefits, and Program Delivery
2024OWP/A16 – Process for authority to represent report back to next OWP meeting; a. Is it possible for the DVA staff to contact either the representative or the other ATR to clarify the position when form requirements change? b. Can older forms still be considered valid even if they do not conform with the current forms? c. Can the parties concerned be consulted prior to any decision being made to change representatives?	Client Benefits
2024OWP/A17 – Ensure we embed how clients want to be contacted and third party authority policies and procedures are embedded in DVA and staff are reminded across systems and departments. Advice to be provided back to OWP members at the next OWP meeting that reminders have taken place, what legal advice has been sought for policies and what process is in place to ensure that changes get made across all systems used.	Client Benefits

Agenda Item 9 Member Submission – ESO’s Receiving Details of New War Widows

Members **ACKNOWLEDGED** the need to support War Widows and discussed the appropriate timeframe to contact a widow or family after a veteran has passed, **NOTING** privacy issues. Members were **ADVISED** that Legislation needs to be followed, however DVA is exploring ways to engage with widows and families.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A18 – DVA to consult out of session with the Australian War Widows Association Inc and Partners of Veterans Association Australia Inc on bereavement letters and recommendations that will provide support to war widows within legislation.	Client Benefits

Agenda Item 10 Member Submission – Veterans Home Care

Members **NOTED** the opportunity for coordination of services for multiple clients in the one location. Members **NOTED** that an assessment from a Veteran Home Care Assessment Agency would be required, and DVA clients would need to advise DVA or the Assessment Agency where services for multiple clients in the same location are required.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A19 – DVA to investigate the possibility of adding a clause into provider contracts where providers can identify multiple clients in one location to provide home services.	Aged and Community Care Taskforce

Agenda Item 10 Other Business

Members were invited to nominate agenda items out of session and the agenda and appropriate length of meeting time would then be settled.

Members **DISCUSSED** the need for a dedicated ESO advice line to seek advice on complex claims. DVA **ADVISED** this is currently being investigated and the 1800 Veteran line can currently be used for ESO Support.

The Australian Veterans Alliance raised concerns of the interpretation of Lumbar Spondylosis Statements of Principles (SOPs) and photos being used to deny claims. The Member was invited to provide specific details through to DVA to allow the specific matter to be followed up.

Action Item and Description	Responsible
2024OWP/A20 – “Secure Emails” to be added to the next OWP meeting for discussion and if any alternative option can be used.	Secretariat
2024OWP/A21 – Advice to be provided on the use of photos to deny Lumbar Spondylosis, following provision of more specific details by the Australian Veterans Alliance	Client Benefits

Meeting closed: 12:55pm

MEMBERS/ATTENDEES	
Mr David Pullen	A/g Chair, First Assistant Secretary, Program Delivery
Mr Michael Harper	Assistant Secretary, VEA Compensation & Support
Ms Pat McCabe OAM	TPI Federation
Mr John King	Returned and Services league of Australia
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
Mr Ward Gainey	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia (<i>proxy</i>)
Mr Michael Carlon	Australian Special Air Services Association
Mr Rod Hutchings	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Mr Rob Connor	Legacy Canberra
Ms Narelle Bromhead OAM	Partners of Veterans Association of Australia Inc.
Mr John McNeill	Australian Veterans Alliance
Ms Jenny Gregory OAM	Australian War Widows Inc.
Mr Clem Russell OAM	The Royal Australian Regiment Corporation
Ms Vanessa Cheng	Air Force Association
Presenters	
Mr Alex Caroly	Assistant Secretary, Data and Insights (<i>item 3</i>)
Mrs Gwen C	Director, Channel Strategy & User Experience (<i>item 4</i>)
Mr Luke Brown	First Assistant Secretary, Policy (<i>items 4, 5, 7 & 7.2</i>)
Mr Vinay K	Director, ICT Operations & Support (<i>item 6</i>)
Ms Janice Silby	Assistant Secretary, Income Support (<i>item 9</i>)
Ms Sarah Kennedy	First Assistant Secretary, Aged and Community Care (<i>item 10</i>)
Observer	
Mr Luke Wrigley	Director, Advocacy Policy (<i>items 4 & 7</i>)
Secretariat	
Morgan S	A/g Assistant Director, International and Stakeholder Relations
Karen G	Senior Secretariat Officer, International and Stakeholder Relations
Apologies	
Mr William (Bill) Roberts	Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia
Mr Andrew Kefford	Chair, Deputy Secretary Policy & Programs, Department of Veteran's Affairs
Ms Natasha Cole	Deputy Chair, First Assistant Secretary, Client Benefits

Next Meeting – 22 October 2024