

Summary of Meeting – 30 May 2024

The 67th meeting of the Department of Defence/Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Links Steering Committee (DLSC) was held on Thursday 30 May 2024. The following Policy, Programs and Initiatives were discussed at the meeting.

Strategy

Defence and DVA are working together to develop a new joint Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, expected to be finalised in mid-2024. Working in concert to develop the Strategy will enable Defence and DVA to link department specific approaches to meeting the mental health and wellbeing needs of serving members and veterans along a lifetime continuum – during service, transition, and life post-transition. This approach aligns with the Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report, A Better Way to Support Veterans, which called for a new single mental health strategy for veterans' lifetime mental health (Recommendation 17.4).

Steering Committee members were provided with an update on the development of the Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy. This included the commencement of public consultation on the draft Family Strategy. The Family Strategy Working Group continue to progress the development of the action plans, which are expected to be released following the finalisation of the strategy. DVA and Defence are also developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategy and action plans. This includes work on indicators to measure the outcomes in a clear and meaningful way.

A verbal update on the privacy needs for the Data Sharing and Analytics Solution (DSAS) project was received.

Governance

The Memorandum of Understanding between Defence and DVA for the Cooperative Delivery of Veteran Wellbeing Support, Services and Transition System, has been re-written to incorporate the evolution of the Defence/DVA relationship and to reflect on how the parties will work together to deliver against Strategies and assuring the Transition System.

Performance

DVA's Transition Branch delivers a range of activities spanning policy, program and service delivery, which aim to support the wellbeing of veterans and families as they transition from the Australian Defence Force to a predominantly civilian life.

Current activities include initiatives under the Veteran Employment Program and the Veteran Support Office, development of the Veteran Transition Action Plan and an evaluation framework for the Veteran Transition Strategy, research and continuous improvement.

Members were informed on the progress of the Scoping Project underway that investigates the feasibility and design requirements for establishing an enduring longitudinal study that measures the health and wellbeing of ADF members through their service and transition to civilian life.

One of the four key strategies of the ADF Health Research Framework (2021-2025) is 'Improved translation of the health research evidence base into Defence practice and policy'.

Defence has a number of projects underway that will catalogue and synthesise the body of research evidence on the health of ADF members. This will assist in directing future research and inform health policy and practice.

Other Business

The Committee received an information update on the Transition Medical Assessment Pilot Project and discussed options for future expansion.

As part of the October 2022-23 Federal Budget, the Australian Government committed \$46.7 million to expand the Veterans' and Families' Hubs (Hubs) network to support more veterans, including current serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members, reservists and families across the country.

Eight new Hubs are being established 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 also continuing to establish hubs in Tasmania.

Lead organisations have been selected for these hubs, and grant agreement negotiations are underway.

It is expected that the hubs will be completed by mid-2026, however, it is likely that service delivery will commence before this time. DVA will continue to work with the lead organisations throughout the establishment of the new hubs.