

MINUTES OF THE REGISTER OF VETERAN ISSUES MEETING 21 MARCH 24

Co-Chairs: Jeremy Stredwick – Vice President Australian Commando Association ACT
Ian Lindgren – Chairperson Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans Association Ltd

Meeting Opened

The Meeting Opened at 1205pm.

Attendees

The Attendees are at Annex A.

Outstanding Items

- **Invoicing and TRNs for GPs and others.** Ian Lindgren outlined the improvements that Teena Blewitt PSM had put in place. The smaller businesses stated that they were working for them, however the mid-size businesses such as Veteran Medical stated that:
 - Great improvement in that more than one TRN is now available,
 - Permanent Impairment TRNs have never been a problem (Not known until now by Ian Lindgren)
 - Initial Liability TRNs are the issue and while getting more than one TRN has been resolved, actually getting them has become a problem with 20 TRNs being chased at the moment in one business. Recommendation is to have one POC for TRNs because now the burden has moved to chasing advocates to get additional TRNs when it was before having the right number of TRNs for everyone to have approved work and be paid.
 - TRNs still expire and it is hard to chase down an advocate to arrange a replacement.
 - **Action:** Ian Lindgren to address with Teena Blewitt PSM.
- **Medicinal Cannabis for PTSD.** Derek Pyrah has held a meeting with Andrew Kefford PSM and indications are that it was very positive. Action: Ian Lindgren to be kept advised by Derek Pyrah and Jason Frost.

General Business

- **Veteran and Family Hubs.** LTGEN John Caligari AO DSC (Ret'd) from OASIS Townsville presented an argument that is one arising as the more mature Hubs begin to operate. It is based around the need for overall governance with the commencing in Canberra at DVA, and then extending to the state and local government areas. The two key issues are:
 - operational funding after five years, and
 - optimising the variety of grants that are available to simplify them so they can be more economically used and those awarded grants held accountable. The detail of the discussion was:
 - Working towards - 16 Hubs, 5 original, 10 plus Oasis Townsville, broadly an intention to have a Community Centre rather than a focus on wellbeing centre. Noted that there could be over 10,000 ESOs identified by Royal Commission. Noted the lack of DVA having a presence within the veteran Community. Noted that 1 in 6 houses in Townsville has a veteran. QLD Government has now recognised Oasis Townsville as the major provider in QLD with 1500 people per month, attend 100 activities in the facility. Noted that Hubs need to work together to transfer information between each other and DVA to ensure veteran support is continuous as people move around Australia.
 - Noted operational funding after the initial grant as a critical issue for the Hubs and that Defence, Health and DVA could support the hubs by funding them each noting that it is a beneficial arrangement for each agency to support veterans.

Justin Mein represented Mark Brewer AM CSC and Bar and addressed a number of John Caligari's points and emphasised that he wished to hear more from the attendees rather than do the talking himself. That way DVA will grow its knowledge. **Action.** Ian Lindgren to transfer minutes to Alison McLaren and to Mark Brewer for 9 April 2024 activity yet to be announced.

- **Veterans' Legislation Reform.** A short survey distributed prior to the meeting indicated that of the veteran attendees:
 - The Net Promotor Score was -100 for the question "How likely is it that you would recommend the current arrangements for post transition veteran care to a friend or colleague?" There is therefore significant opportunity to raise this to a positive reading and on a larger sample size.
 - On the question "How aware are you that consultation on the proposed changes to Veterans' Legislation in order to simplify the current three Acts commenced on 28 February 2024 and closes on 28 April 2024?" the answers were:
 - 33% were very aware,
 - 33% were somewhat aware,
 - 17% were somewhat unaware, and
 - 17% were very unaware.
 - On the question "How likely is it that two months is sufficient time for the veteran and veteran family community to review the new legislation?" the response was:
 - 17% felt it was very likely,
 - 17% felt it was likely,
 - 16% felt it was unlikely, and
 - 50% felt it was very unlikely.
 - On the question "How likely are you to agree or disagree that the DVA claims backlog has been eliminated?"
 - 17% felt it was very likely,
 - 17% felt it was likely,
 - 16 % felt it was unlikely, and
 - 50% felt it was very unlikely.
 - Ian Lindgren advised all that anyone wishing to have a brief on the Veterans' Legislation Reform can make contact on the [page here](#), and the legislation team will arrange a brief. The email is: legislation.reform@dva.gov.au. The team lead by Luke Brown is very willing to answer all questions and arrange briefing sessions. Ian advised that the APPVA is arranging a meeting where as many advocates as possible can contribute to a single position on the legislation TBA April 2024. Dr Kay Danes OAM remarked how complex it all was, and that the reading of the legislation and relating it from existing to future is not something that is likely to be achieved to result in a veteran and veteran family community position by 28 April 2024. This was agreed by all veterans in attendance and Bill Williams indicated that his experience as an advocate for many years and after witnessing new veteran legislation being introduced beforehand supports Kay's position.
 - **Claims Statistics.** Ian Lindgren described the changes in the claims statistics that have been made recently demonstrating the transparency of the new DVA leadership. He advised that it still does not show the lowest common denominator, which is a claim for a condition, however there were indications that further transparency changes may be made subject to Ministerial approval. If they occur there will be true transparency, an awareness of the effort involved and improved trust.

Other Business

- Michael Kruger asked about the FOI requests regarding the DVA MATES program where DVA has not responded to the FOI request. A personal story was shared where the email address INFORMATION.ACCESS@dva.gov.au was used to obtain information regarding PII information shared with the MATES Program. Ian Lindgren advised that the load on DVA responding to FOI requests will be out of the ordinary and agreed to ask if funding had been increased to assist. **Action.** Ian Lindgren to ask Andrew Kefford PSM re funding for FOI Requests.
- A concern was raised with regards to the funding/grant model of ESOs where monies are awarded without a perceived benefit to veterans to organisations that may have many millions of dollars in the bank. Noted that there appears to be no awareness of interplay between state and federal grants where ESOs might essentially be double dipping. **Action.** Ian Lindgren agreed to pass to Alison McLaren.

- On invoicing for medical professionals, Dr Reddy noted that as a psychiatrist he hasn't had an issue being paid within a 30 window by DVA and observed that the situation is much improved from last year.
- Ian Lindgren noted that Offsetting and the Douglas Decision are the topics of an ESORT Working Group yet to be established. Ian commented that this demonstrates the increased level of maturity that is now inherent in the governance of the ESORT and across DVA.

Meeting Closure

All attendees agreed that the Forum was valuable and should continue.

The next meeting will be held on 18 April 2025 at midday to 130pm.

The meeting closed at 131pm.



Jeremy Stredwick
Co-Chair
21 March 2024



Ian Lindgren
Co-Chair
21 March 2024

Attendees

Ian Lindgren	Chairperson Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Jeremy Stredwick	Association Vice President Australian Commando Association of the ACT
Dr Kay Danes OAM	
Amanda McCue	Career Swag
Michael Kruger	DXC Consulting and Analytics
Mark Leatham	Frontline Labs Australia
Nathan Shingles	Cairns RSL Sub Branch
Annette Rudd	NT Government
Christee H	
Jess Sullivan	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association
Cassandra Morris	(Murrumbidgee LHD) NSW Health
Bill Williams	1 RAR Association
Dr. Vineel Reddy	Psychiatrist
Justin Mein	DVA
Ray Martin	DefenceNT (Darwin)
Claire Harris	(Cowork Coplay program)
LTGEN John Caligari AO DSC (Ret'd)	Oasis Townsville
Sarah Watson	RSL NSW Board Member
Jacqui Van de Velde	Pro Patria Centre Wagga Wagga