



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

VETERANS' AFFAIRS
CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

April 2009

Introduction

In its plan for Veterans' Affairs, the Government made a commitment to establish a Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Ex-Service Matters to advise the government on strategic and complex issues concerning the ex-service community. To complement this announcement, a review of the Department's current consultative arrangements was proposed.

To view the broader consultation process in context, it is important to consider the relationship between the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council and the proposed consultation framework.

The Prime Ministerial Advisory Council as one arm of the broader mechanisms used for consultation with the ex-service and defence community will consider strategic issues affecting the ex-service and defence communities and report to the Prime Minister via the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

On the other arm, and the focus of this document, is the proposed consultation framework relating to the operation of and the dialogue between the Repatriation and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commissions, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the ex-service and defence communities. The forums of the framework are therefore the responsibility of the head of the Commissions and the Department.

While the two arms of the new consultation arrangements will operate independently, interaction will be enhanced, where appropriate, with a member of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council participating on national forums that make up the proposed consultative framework. This cross membership will ensure issues are progressed logically and efficiently.

Development of a New Consultation Framework

The Department needs to consult with all stakeholders including for purposes of the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003* where changes to legislation affect stakeholders. This requires a consultative framework structured to adequately address the current and future issues impacting stakeholders and one that will create efficiencies in process, deliver appropriate outcomes for stakeholders and ensure the consultation links between the Department and the ex-service community are strong and forward thinking.

The development of the new consultation framework has involved:

- examination of the Department's consultation needs;
- analysis and comparison of the purpose, terms of reference, cost, membership and outcomes of current committees with a view to streamlining the consultation process;
- consultation with General Managers, Deputy Commissioners and National Managers; and
- broad consultation with the ex-service community.

A New Consultation Framework

Structure

The new consultation framework consists of a high level strategic forum supported by four specific national forums that focus on policy/program areas and state level forums with a focus on state specific and age/stage of life issues. Special interest groups or industry specific groups required to address specific needs will complement the framework.

The framework endeavours to deal with the major issues affecting veterans' affairs and the ex-service and defence communities.

Membership

Broad representation at each consultative level will utilise members' expertise and knowledge to best highlight the needs of and provide a perspective of the ex-service and defence communities. There needs to be consideration of the workload involved and the capacity of members to contribute actively to expected meeting outcomes. Membership on multiple forums will therefore be limited. As a general rule, no member, other than representatives from the Department, should serve on more than one of the national forums. However there may need to be exceptions, for example, where an ex-service organisation (ESO) may not have sufficient representatives with the required expertise and capacity for participation in all the relevant forums.

An issue that may impact on the effectiveness of membership is the need for greater representation and participation of ex-service and defence persons who do not associate or align with ESOs, in particular younger veterans, serving members and younger war widows. A process will be in place to ensure that where appropriate, forum participants are selected from these groups and it will be for the individual forums to implement innovative mechanisms to engage and communicate with the younger generations.

Operational Aspects

All consultative forums at a national and state level will operate with defined work agendas, formal terms of reference, operational protocols and standardised secretariat services to assist the framework to remain robust and outcome orientated.

Members will be appointed from nominations provided to the Department from selected ESOs. The ESOs will be able to nominate three people they feel are the most appropriate representatives for specific forums. From these nominees the Department will recommend the most appropriate members and the Secretary, or the Deputy Commissioner in the case of the State forums, will appoint members in consultation with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. For each forum no more than one representative will be chosen from a given organisation. It should also be noted that not all ESO nominations may be successful in the selection process for the forums.

ESO Round Table

Terms of Reference

This forum is intended to enhance the capacity of the Repatriation Commission and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission to address issues of strategic importance to the ex-service and defence communities and assist in setting strategic directions for the medium to long term, including:

- acting as the main forum for dialogue between the Military Rehabilitation Compensation Commission (MRCC), Repatriation Commission, Department of Veterans' Affairs and the leadership of the ESO and Defence communities;
- providing advice on how government can better facilitate a common approach to veteran and ex-service issues against the current background of ageing members, declining membership and multiple ex-service organisations not necessarily united in their common concerns;
- guiding strategic directions for the portfolio; and
- serving as the main body for consultation under the *Legislative Instruments Act 2003* on the development of legislative instruments impacting members of the ex-service and defence communities under:
 - *the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*;
 - *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*;
 - *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*;
 - *Defence Service Homes Act 1918*; and
 - *War Graves Act 1980*.

Chair

The Chair of the ESO Round Table will be the Chair of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission.

Membership

- Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women (TPI);
- Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
- Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council (AVADSC);
- Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA);
- Legacy Coordinating Council;
- Partners of Veterans' Association (PVA);
- Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL);
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA);
- War Widows Guild of Australia;
- all members of the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission; and
- a representative from the Department of Defence.

The Chair of the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council will be invited to attend with observer status.

The leaders of the ESOs listed above will be the appointed members of the Round Table.

Operational Working Party

Terms of Reference

The Operational Working Party (OWP) will:

- enhance the ex-service community's understanding of DVA's service delivery performance through information sharing and improved communication between DVA and the ex-service community;
- be a forum for ex-service organisations to discuss concerns arising from operational issues; and
- identify and provide recommendations for improvements in operational policy to promote quality and accountability in service delivery.

Note: The Operational Working Party could, in conjunction with the National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum, fulfil the statutory role of the National Treatment Monitoring Committee (NATMOC) in relation to:

- monitoring the quality of treatment available to entitled persons as private patients (under the VEA); and
- monitoring the access to treatment by entitled persons as private patients (under the VEA); and
- providing advice and making recommendations to the Repatriation Commission.

For this forum there is a need for broad representation that utilises the knowledge and expertise of individuals including those who are across day-to-day issues and with specific experience such as advocates or pension officers.

Chair

The Chair of the Operational Working Party will be the Executive General Manager.

Membership

Membership will be drawn from some or all of the following:

- Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women (TPI);
- Australian Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
- Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA);
- Legacy Coordinating Council;
- Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL);
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA); and
- a representative from the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council.

Departmental representation will be available as appropriate.

The forum will maintain the right to invite representatives of other organisations or individuals as determined by the areas of focus or specific agenda items.

To enable the appointment of members, the Department will ask ESOs from those listed above to nominate three people they feel are the most appropriate representatives for the OWP. Note that no more than one representative will be chosen from a given organisation. It should also be noted that not all ESO nominations may be successful in the selection process for the forum.

National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum

Terms of Reference

The forum will:

- be a link between ESOs, providers and DVA in the dissemination of information on health, aged and community care issues;
- provide information on the current and future aged care needs of veterans and war widow/ers and other members of the ex-service and defence community including carers;
- be a conduit for developing and proposing better practice residential and community care arrangements for the ex-service community;
- ensure that non ESO aged care service providers are aware of the special commemorative and cultural needs of their ex-service community clients;
- influence future policy directions regarding ageing for the ex-service community;
- monitor developments in the aged care industry and the aged care needs of the ex-service community, including access to residential care; and
- consider how the Department better supports people at home with community support.

Note: The forum, in conjunction with the Operational Working Party, could contribute to the statutory role of the National Treatment Monitoring Committee (NATMOC) in relation to:

- monitoring the quality of treatment available to entitled persons as private patients (under the VEA); and
- monitoring the access to treatment by entitled persons as private patients (under the VEA); and
- providing advice and making recommendations to the Repatriation Commission.

Chair

The Chair of the National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum will be the Deputy President of the Repatriation Commission.

Membership

Membership will be drawn from some or all of the following:

- Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women (TPI);
- Legacy Coordinating Council;
- Partners of Veterans' Association (PVA);
- Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL);
- War Widows Guild of Australia;
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA); and
- a representative from the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council.

Membership of this forum should include provider representatives from the aged and community care and health sectors (e.g. aged and community and residential care).

Departmental involvement in this forum will be available as appropriate but because of its remit should include the Department of Veterans' Affairs Principal Medical Adviser.

The forum will have the flexibility to invite representatives from other organisations or individuals as determined by the areas of focus or specific agenda items. As the consultation in this field has traditionally focussed on issues of ageing and related policy, it has involved service providers.

To enable the appointment of members, the Department will ask ESOs from those listed above and provider groups (representing health, aged and community care sectors) to nominate three people they feel are the most appropriate representatives for the National Health, Aged and Community Care Forum. Note that no more than one representative will be chosen from a given organisation. It should also be noted that not all ESO nominations may be successful in the selection process for the forum.

Current and Former Members of the ADF – Emerging Issues Forum

Terms of Reference

The forum will:

- provide a mechanism for regular consultation and discussion about emerging issues affecting younger members and their families;
- assist in identifying priority issues that require consideration;
- consider how the Department engages with and provides services to younger members; and
- provide a mechanism to disseminate information about Departmental initiatives and other issues.

Chair

The Chair of the Current and Former Members of the ADF – Emerging Issues Forum will be the Repatriation Commissioner.

Membership

Membership will be drawn from some or all of the following:

- Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA);
- Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
- Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA);
- Injured Service Persons Association;
- Partners of Veterans' Association (PVA);
- Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL);
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA);
- a representative from the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council; and
- a representative from the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Departmental representation will be available as appropriate.

The forum will have the flexibility to invite additional participants relevant to the areas of focus or specific agenda items (including service specific and non-ESO aligned). For example, membership of this forum could include a representative of the Australian Federal Police (International Deployment Group) or the United Nations Police Association.

To enable the appointment of members, the Department will ask ESOs from those listed above to nominate three people they feel are the most appropriate representatives for this forum. Note that no more than one representative will be chosen from a given organisation. It should also be noted that not all ESO nominations may be successful in the selection process for the forum.

National Mental Health Forum

Terms of Reference

The forum will:

- enable broad consultation on mental health issues;
- promote a network between ex-service organisations, health providers, Department of Defence and Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) that support the adoption of recovery and wellbeing orientations to mental health issues. This should focus on prevention, early intervention, diagnosis, assessment, rehabilitation, treatment and relapse management;
- contribute and be responsible for raising awareness of mental health issues although the forum will not develop educative processes directly; and
- provide a sounding board for advice on national mental health programs, services and initiatives, particularly as they affect the veteran community.

Chair

The Chair of the National Mental Health Forum will be the Repatriation Commissioner.

Membership

Membership will be drawn from some or all of the following:

- Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women (TPI);
- Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA);
- Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
- Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA);
- Partners of Veterans' Association (PVA);
- Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL);
- Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA);
- a senior representative of the Department of Defence;
- Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH); and
- a representative from the Prime Ministerial Advisory Council.

Departmental and expert representation will be available as appropriate. Additionally, the National Manager of the VVCS will attend all meetings as an ex-officio member.

The forum will have the flexibility to invite additional participants relevant to the areas of focus or specific agenda items. For example, membership of this forum could be supplemented by relevant clinical experts or a representative of the Australian Federal Police (International Deployment Group) or the United Nations Police Association.

To enable the appointment of members, the Department will ask ESOs from those listed above to nominate three people they feel are the most appropriate representatives for this forum. Note that no more than one representative will be chosen from a given organisation. It should also be noted that not all ESO nominations may be successful in the selection process for the forum.

State Consultation Forums

Purpose of State Forums

The state forums will provide a link for ESOs into the Department and are an avenue for Deputy Commissioners to address ESO leaders and to deliver a consistent message to the ex-service community.

It is envisaged that there will be one major forum in each State/Territory. Regional and local level consultation will continue in each State/Territory but consultation at this level will not be considered part of the formal consultative framework.

Membership

Membership will be drawn from some or all of the following:

- Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Servicemen and Women (TPI);
- Australian Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Veterans Association Inc;
- Australian Veterans' and Defence Services Council (AVADSC);
- Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA);
- Legacy;
- Partners of Veterans' Association (PVA);
- Returned & Services League of Australia (RSL);
- Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia (VVAA);
- Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia (VVFA); and
- War Widows Guild of Australia.

Membership of the State Consultative Forums should have a core membership of ESO representatives. This will of course depend on the presence and strength of the organisations in specific States/Territories.

There will be flexibility to invite additional participants where relevant to specific or local issues and the agenda of meetings.

The local Deputy Commissioner will chair the forum and be responsible for appointing members in consultation with the Secretary and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.