



# Ex-Service Organisations Round Table September 2023

## Ex-Service Organisations Round Table Meeting

A meeting of the Ex-Service Organisations Round Table was held on Monday 18 September, 2023. A broad range of issues was covered in the meeting.

### **Open Arms - 2023-24 Model of Care**

Open Arms - Veterans' & Families Counselling provided a presentation on its new Model of Care which refines the building blocks of Open Arms' offering to the veteran community. The Model defines what Open Arms can deliver while highlighting areas for future development. Engagement of primary care is an important area of future development.

### **Royal Commission Update**

DVA is fully cooperating with the work of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The Department strives to provide information in line with requested deadlines as requested by the Royal Commission at all times.

### **Legislative Reform**

DVA understands there is a strong interest in legislative reform. The Government is considering feedback on the pathway to simplify veterans' legislation. Draft legislation is expected to be released for public comment by early 2024. Member submissions relating to grand parenting of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA), differences in compensation payments under the

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*Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) and VEA and the 'Wholly Dependent Partners' definition under MRCA were discussed.*

### **Claims Processing Update**

An ongoing priority for DVA is to reduce the claims processing backlog and wait times. DVA is on track to clear the Initial Liability backlog by the end of 2023 – largely due to a significant increase in claims delegates. The Initial Liability backlog is lower than the Permanent Impairment backlog for the first time in three years. The need for clear messaging on the DVA website to encourage veterans' to engage with an advocate was discussed.

### **Advocacy Working Group**

Advocacy is an area of strong interest for Round Table members. Discussion focused on progress to enhance and support advocacy services in the future. There is a need to leverage information across the veteran support system to ensure a sustainable model of advocacy that incorporates increases to grant funding to improve the capacity of Ex-Service Organisations to employ advocates. Good leadership and commitment is required to enhance and support advocacy across organisations and further consultation on a range of issues is required. The challenging nature of advocacy and efforts of the Working Group to date were acknowledged. A Member submission on advocacy was discussed.

### **Aged Care**

Supporting veterans during their transition to aged care was discussed including concerns about being able to visit veterans in aged care facilities and the promotion of shared information products. In recognition of these challenges, DVA continues to advocate for veterans to be a priority group, with the Department of Health and Aged Care and with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. DVA also continues to engage with the aged care sector to promote a greater understanding of the veteran community and its needs.

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## **Retirement Income Product Presentation**

The Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation provided a presentation on a Retirement Income Product for ADF Superannuation members.

## **SeMPRO**

The Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Office (SeMPRO) gave a detailed presentation to the Round Table explaining its role and responsibilities.

SeMPRO provides immediate and confidential help to those impacted by sexual misconduct, including:

- Current or ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families
- Current ADF cadets
- Current Defence Australian Public Service employee
- Current Defence contractors

SeMPRO social workers and psychologists are available 24/7 to assist or refer.

SeMPRO services are confidential and are accessible without needing to make a report to Defence, the military police, or civilian police. Client may choose to remain anonymous.

Support is client-focused and customised to each person's unique needs. SeMPRO can assist with strategies, such as how to help support a friend or approach a difficult conversation, in order to promote the wellbeing of everyone involved. SeMPRO can also help with navigating Defence and civilian health care services.

SeMPRO is not an investigation service, but can guide and support clients through reporting, investigation, and legal proceedings

## **UNOPAA**

The United Nations & Overseas Policing Association of Australia provided a presentation on the work of their organisation and the issues facing their organisation and membership.

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## **Younger Veterans – Forum Update**

The Round Table received an update from the Younger Veterans - Contemporary Needs Forum. Of key interest is the cost of veteran travel expenses, particularly in context of cost of living increases.