



NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Friday 27 November 2020 10:00 – 16:30

ATTENDEES	
Members	Representing
Professor Jane Burns	Chair
Dr Andrew Khoo	Psychiatrists
Mrs Anne Pahl	Peacekeepers
Major Benjamin Flink	Reservists
Dr Brad Murphy	General Practitioners
Mr Ken Foster	Vietnam Veterans
Ms Talissa Papamau	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Adrian Sutter	Contemporary Veterans
Ex-Officio	
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner
Dr Stephanie Hodson CSC	National Manager, Open Arms
Dr Jenny Firman	Chief Health Officer, DVA
Professor David Forbes	Director, Phoenix Australia
Mr Paul Way	Director General, DCO
WOFF Glenn Lyons	On Behalf of Warrant Officer RAAF
WO-N Deb Butterworth	Warrant Officer Navy
RADM Sarah Sharkey	Surgeon General ADF, JHC
WO Grant McFarlane	RSM-A
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate, DVA
MAJGEN Stuart Smith	Commissioner for Defence Engagement, DVA
Invited Guests	
Ms Helen Braun	Assistant National Manager, Open Arms
CAPT Mark McConnell	Director, Joint Transition Authority
Libby Roughead	VeteransMATES
Rob Swanwick	Strategic Engagement Manager, Open Arms
Apologies	
WOFF-AF Fiona Grasby	Warrant Officer RAAF

Additional item:

Prior to the formal commencement of meeting, the Committee discussed the effects of the release of the recent Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (IGADF) Afghanistan Inquiry report on the veteran community, and what supports have been put in place. Some important points from this discussion included:

- Claims – claims for individuals effected by the release of this report are being prioritised by the Department. This does not mean they ‘jump the que’ for claims processing, but ensures the individuals are provided with wrap-around support. It was noted the Vietnam veteran cohort have raised concerns their claims will be affected by this perceived priority. At the suggestion of the Repatriation Commissioner a briefing on claims processing will be provided at a future meeting.

- Media – it was noted that the community would benefit from a Special Forces Peer, to be the 'face' for the Media. This would provide the more positive narrative promoting the help available to individuals affected during this time.
- General Practitioners (GPs) – consideration for how Open Arms communicate their services to GPs who may not be military aware.

ACTION: Add DVA Claims briefing to 2021 agenda.

Item 1: Welcome, Acknowledgements and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the final National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting for 2020.

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Owners of Country through Australia and recognised their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. Respects were paid to their Elders past, present and emerging. The Chair also acknowledged the service of all current and former Australian Defence Force members and their families. In particular, Australia's Vietnam veterans – Open Arms is their legacy. They have ensured that future generations of serving men and women will have access to specialised mental health and wellbeing support.

An apology was accepted from WOFF-AF Fiona Grasby, with WOFF Glenn Lyons attending on her behalf. Conflicts of Interests were declared via the Conflict of Interest form.

Item 2: NAC Membership Update

Presenter: Dr Stephanie Hodson, National Manager Open Arms

The Chair invited the National Manager to provide an update on the NAC Membership vacancies. Due to a Departmental review of all consultative forums, the release of the vacancy Expression of Interest (EOI) is currently on hold.

Item 3: Open Arms National Manager Update

Presenter: Dr Stephanie Hodson, National Manager Open Arms

Trends

Demand: Following the peak in July 2020, the number of counselling clients has levelled off but remains consistently high.

Call Volume: Total monthly calls have been consistently high over the last five months, with over 7,000 calls received each month. The average wait time for a call to be answered over the previous week was 23 seconds.

Complex Needs & Peer Support: Complex needs services continue to rise, with a prominent trend of veterans and their families presenting with more severe and complex issues. Peer support sessions also continue to rise each month.

IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry

Open Arms is working closely with the Department to ensure individuals that are directly affected have access to support. All Open Arms staff have also been briefed on sensitivities and the implications of the report for our clients.

Square Away

The Open Arms Square Away campaign launched on 19 October 2020. This grassroots social media campaign aims to increase the awareness of the service. The following usage statistics have been collected from 19 October 2020 to 24 November 2020:

- over 44,000 website users;

A service founded by Vietnam veterans, now for all veterans and families

- over 22,000 campaign page views;
- 100,000 website page views; and
- 1,401 calls from the website to the Open Arms support line.

Item 4: VeteransMATES Presentation

Presenter: Libby Roughead, VeteransMATES

The Chair invited guest, Libby Roughead of the Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre (University of South Australia) to present on VeteransMATES.

Ms Roughead provided the committee with an overview of the data driven health promotion program that aims to provide up-to-date health and medicines specifically tailored for members of the veteran community and their healthcare teams. VeteransMATES is funded by DVA, and provided by the University of South Australia in partnership with University of Adelaide, Australian Medicines Handbook, Drug and Therapeutics Information Service, NPS MedicinesWise and HealthLink.

VeteransMATES work to identify health care issues and trends within veterans, pinpoint those who would benefit from an intervention in their care and provide individually tailored recommendations. Following the interventions they also measure the impact of this.

Ms Roughead highlighted the factors that contribute to VeteransMATES success including:

- a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach;
- clinical information is evidence based;
- continuous research and innovation;
- methodologically rigorous analytics;
- independently audited data and security standards;
- significant stakeholder engagement; and
- grounded in behavioural theories and models.

Ms Roughead also provided an update on the achievements from 2020, with a large focus on how to ensure Veterans' health was supported during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This pushed forward the e-delivery of correspondence, which resulted in the successful delivery of 50,000 messages to general practitioners.

Item 5: Post Inpatient Continuation of Care

Presenter: Dr Andrew Khoo, Psychiatrist

Dr Andrew Khoo led a discussion on the continuation of care for individuals following their discharge from inpatient care. Dr Khoo noted the limited evidence available to compare discharge models due to the lack of reporting outcomes.

Key areas of concern for the committee included:

- risk for individuals who are required to tell their story multiple times, to each new doctor;
- the sense of abandonment following inpatient care;
- inadequate communication of discharge plan to the individual or their care team; and
- ensuring the family/carers are being supported.

The Committee highlighted that this is a key quality of the Open Arms service. Once an individual tells their story once, they aren't required to tell it again. This ensures continuation of care following discharge from the military, as well as discharge from inpatient care.

The National Manager noted the positive impact we have seen from the Community and Peer Program, particularly in Townsville. Peers connected with individuals prior to their discharge and were an early link to someone trusted.

The Committee noted the importance of supporting family members and carers during this time. Mrs Anne Pahl raised the burnout being felt by many veteran community organisations, and the need to look after our workforce and support their wellbeing.

ACTION: Add Workforce Wellbeing to the 2021 agenda.

Item 6: Web Forums Discussion

Discussion: All members

As announced in the 2020/21 Budget announcement Open Arms will be receiving \$5million, with a portion dedicated to developing web-based forums to support clients. To assist in shaping the direction of this initiative, Open Arms requested a workshop for the NAC to discuss. Key themes from the discussion are highlighted below.

The National Manager provided a brief introduction advising the main objective of the web forums is to build a community through commonality. The forums will bring together individuals that have shared experiences, creating a support network of others who have an understanding of each other's situation.

Human-centred Design

All members of the Committee agreed the most important step required to develop this initiative is to take a 'human-centred' design approach by:

- consulting with the community to identify target groups;
- validating with target groups (is this a resource they will use?);
- utilise lived experience throughout the entirety of process; and
- acknowledge the diversity amongst target groups, and that one size will not fit all.

Development

During the development stage, the below were noted as items to consider:

- creating a user friendly environment;
- offering via multiple channels (e.g. facebook, whatsapp, etc);
- ensuring flexibility of usage;
- careful not to limit the resource by set topics;
- creating a backbone that can move in different directions as needed by the user; and
- suggestion to utilise a public speaker to present on a particular topic, providing direction for the audience to organically develop the conversation following.

Item 7: Strategic Focus Document Endorsement

Discussion: All members

Ahead of the meeting all members were provided with a copy of the Open Arms Strategic Focus Document. All members provided their endorsement of the document with the minor amendment to ensure the acknowledgement of origins is included.

Item 8: Joint Transition Authority Presentation

Presenter: CAPT Mark McConnell, Director of Joint Transition Authority - Engagement and Programs.

The Chair invited CAPT McConnell to present to the Committee with an update on the work of the Joint Transition Authority.

CAPT McConnell described the transformation of the Defence transition process from an entitlements model, to the needs based model used today which includes:

- integrated support to the member and family throughout their transition;
- discussions regarding transition commencing early in an individual's ADF career;
- alignment of all aspects of transition with clear integration and assurance across whole of government, through the Joint Transition Authority;
- connection of members to GPs in civilian life; and
- streamlined health assessment approach following separation.

The Joint Transition Authority intend to improve the journey of transitioning veterans and their families by integrating and synchronising with the whole of government.

Moving forward the Joint Transition Authority will undertake consultation to refine the functions. Consultation will occur with veterans, their families, and Defence stakeholders. This work will build on the Feasibility Study undertaken in the first half of 2020.

Item 9: Meeting Summary & 2021 Forward Plan

Presenter: Chair

The Committee were provided with a draft schedule for 2021, pending release of the Parliamentary Sitting Calendar. The Chair requested input from the Committee regarding the locations for 2021 meetings, should travel be possible.

The Committee agreed the following three locations:

- Brisbane/Sunshine Coast
- Canberra
- Perth

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate finalised 2021 Meeting Dates following release of 2021 Parliamentary Sitting Calendar.

Meeting Closed at: 16:30

Open Action Items after NAC Meeting 2020/4

Action Item	Description	Status
2020-03	Open Arms to circulate revised NAC Terms of Reference and draft EOI out of session for Committee endorsement.	NFA - Closed.
2020-04	Open Arms to invite BRIG Wade Stothart to present on the Joint Transition Authority.	Closed.
2020-05	Open Arms to provide an update to the NAC on what the increase in fees paid by DVA means for Open Arms' Outreach Program Counsellor (OPC) network.	Open.
2020-06	Add workshop Web Forums to next meeting agenda.	Closed.
2020-07	Add discussion on post-inpatient continuity of care to next meeting agenda.	Closed.
2020-08	Open Arms to circulate Social Media Pack to NAC members.	Closed.
2020-09	DVA Claims to present at 2021 meeting.	Open
2020-10	Include workforce wellbeing as 2021 agenda item.	Open
2020-11	Circulate 2021 Meeting dates, following release of Parliamentary Sitting Calendar.	Open