



NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
24 July 2020 10:00am – 12:00pm

ATTENDEES

ATTENDEES	
Members	Representing
Professor Jane Burns	Chair
Dr Andrew Khoo	Psychiatrists
Mrs Anne Pahl	Peacekeepers
Major Benjamin Flink	Reservists
Dr Brad Murphy	General Practitioners
Ms Leanne Galayini	Sons and Daughters
Ms Talissa Papamau	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Adrian Sutter	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Kenneth Foster OAM JP	Vietnam Veterans
Ex-Officio	
Dr Jenny Firman	Chief Health Officer, DVA
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner
Dr Stephanie Hodson CSC	National Manager, Open Arms
A/Prof Andrea Phelps	Phoenix Australia
Mr Paul Way	Director General, DCO
WOFF-AF Fiona Grasby	Warrant Officer RAAF
WO-N Deb Butterworth	Warrant Officer Nacy
BRIG Craig Schramm	Joint Health Command
Secretariat	
Miss Laura Thompson	NAC Secretariat, Open Arms
Mrs Kate Sowerby	NAC Secretariat, Open Arms
Invited Guests	
Dr Anna Colwell	Deputy National Manager, Open Arms
Mr Jon Wauer	Open Arms Assistant Director Strategic Policy
Apologies	
WO Grant McFarlane	RSM-A
RADM Sarah Sharkey	CJHLTH, JHC
Professor David Forbes	Director, Phoenix Australia

Items 1: Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed the committee to the virtual National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting.

A special welcome was extended to Dr Jenny Firman, returning from secondment with the Department of Health. The Chair acknowledged this meeting as Ms Leanne Galayini, representative for Sons and Daughters' final Committee meeting.

The Chair noted that a new process will be proposed to the Minister for appointment vacancies. Open Arms have recommended an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to enable a broader representation on the Committee. The Committee were supportive of this approach, noting that the role specifications need to be clear, to ensure transparency.

Item 2: Open Arms National Manager Update

Presenter: Dr Stephanie Hodson

Trends

- *Demand:* Open Arms has continued to see an increase in demand for services through 2020. Each month since February 2020, Open Arms has reached a new record of unique clients supported in a single month. 10,871 clients were supported by Open Arms in the month of June 2020. Open Arms have prioritised communications ensuring our clients are aware of support available, demand trends support that our message is being heard.
- *Sessions:* Session number trends have also increased significantly. The number average number of sessions per client has also increase which has been noticed in the service. When utilising technology session times tend to be shorter with more regular session held. Technology can be draining and this is a preference we are seeing across the nation.
- *Intake:* The average number of intakes for 2019/20 financial year was 544 per week. In June 2020, the average number of intakes was 640 per week.
- *SafeZone:* To date, there have been 89 calls to the anonymous counselling line. The National Manager noted that limited advertising has been targeted. The counselling line has been successful serving its purpose so far, with callers developing trust and transitioning to in centre Open Arms care; or callers able to explore coping strategies for dealing with stress and support their families.

Trauma Focus

- The National Manager highlighted the continued trauma focus within Open Arms following an issue raised by the Vietnam Veterans Association Australia (VVAA) that the expansion of the service could be resulting in a dilution of trauma skills. While the service is expanding, a focus remains on ensuring the workforce is culturally competent, military aware, and has expertise in dealing with the challenges of military trauma, includes;
 - 'in house' 24 hour call centre staffed with military aware clinicians;
 - close working relationship with Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (Phoenix Australia) with Open Arms leveraging their expertise in trauma-related mental health conditions. This includes monthly trauma focused supervision facilitated by Phoenix Australia and a Practitioner Support Service allowing clinicians to seek input from a multidisciplinary panel of experts; and
 - international research partner within the trauma-related mental health field, currently conducting two trails with a trauma focus: Rapid Exposure Supporting Trauma Recovery (RESTORE), and the Moral Injury Outcomes Scale (MIOS).

COVID-19 Response

- *Support & Outreach:* An SMS was sent to all clients in affected by the current lockdown restrictions on 13 July 2020 offering support. Peer advisors are contacting clients to determine their needs for community engagement and support by way of phone contact or telehealth.
- *Online Mental Health Training:* Open Arm is now providing Suicide Prevention Start online training program to all members of the veteran community. The programs provides skills to recognise and respond to suicidal behaviour.
- *Online Group Treatment Programs:* Four group programs have been developed and are now available as online; Understanding Anxiety, Doing Anger Differently, Pain Management and Trauma Recovery. Group Programs are available for clients living with, or supporting someone with a condition that could benefit from group treatment.
- *Workforce:* The Melbourne office is currently closed. The Regional Director of the Victorian region is focussing heavily on staff connectedness and wellbeing, and had noticed his staff having a more difficult time in the second lockdown in comparison to the first.

Australia War Memorial

- Five of Open Arms' Community and Peer Advisors have shared their experiences of the Australia War Memorial (AWM), including the positive impact on recovery. The stories have been provided to the AWM Director.

ACTION: Open Arms to share stories with the Committee.

Item 3: Open Arms Strategic Focus Document Presentation

Presenter: Mr Jon Wauer

The Committee were provided with a presentation on Open Arms' strategic environment and the key influences that have provided the foundation of the Open Arms Strategic Focus framework.

There have been several influential documents over the last five years that guide the strategic direction, actions and priorities for Open Arms including:

- 2013 – DVA Veteran Mental Health Strategy,
- 2017 – Senate Inquiry into Veteran Suicide – The Constant Battle,
- 2017 – DVA and Defence Joint Inquiry into the Management of Jesse Bird,
- 2017 – Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan,
- 2018 – Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023,
- 2019 – Productivity Committee Inquiry – A Better Way to Support Veterans,
- 2020 – DVA Veteran Mental Health Strategy,
- 2020 – DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy, and
- 2020 – National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan

These documents have underpinned the Open Arms Strategic Focus to ensure the service's efforts are guided by the needs of our clients. The alignment of Open Arms program schedule is responsive to internal and external drivers, and corresponds directly with the Departmental Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and National Action Plan 2020-2023.

Item 4: Open Arms Strategic Focus Discussion and Actions

Facilitated discussion: Prof Burns

The Committee were provided with the draft Open Arms Strategic Focus Document and the Open Arms Strategic Priorities placemat for consultation. Specifically the Committee were asked to identify anything that may not be reflected in the documents.

The Committee's feedback included:

- inclusion of digital innovation,
- inclusion of section on workforce and internal resources,
- inclusion of Mental Health and Wellbeing innovations,
- movement of the Safe Zone support to be reflected under the vulnerable/at risk group rather than general veteran community,
- include supporting/tying with the 'whole of life' care and wellbeing, and
- making stigma reduction and homelessness higher priorities.

Overall the Committee provided positive feedback, especially single page, however noted it was 'a lot to wrap your head around'. It was discussed that the Strategic Priorities placemat should clearly link with the finalised Strategic Focus document.

ACTION: Open Arms to for the document to be considered at the Regional Advisory Forums and outcomes reported at the NAC.

Meeting Closed at: 12:00 pm

Open Action Items after NAC Meeting 20201

Action Item	Description
2020-01	Secretariat to share AWM Peer stories with Committee.
2020-02	Open Arms to for the document to be considered at the Regional Advisory Forums and outcomes reported at the NAC.