



Australian Government

Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling

NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE & STAKEHOLDER MEETING

18 March 2021 1:00pm – 3:00pm

ATTENDEES	
Members	Representing
Professor Jane Burns	Chair
Dr Andrew Khoo	Psychiatrists
Mrs Anne Pahl	Peacekeepers
Dr Brad Murphy	General Practitioners
Major Benjamin Flink	Reservists
Ms Talissa Papamau	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Adrian Sutter	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Kenneth Foster	Vietnam Veterans
Ex-Officio	
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner, DVA
Dr Stephanie Hodson CSC	National Manager, Open Arms
Professor David Forbes	Director, Phoenix Australia
WOFF Glen Lyons	On behalf of Warrant Officer RAAF
WO-N Deb Butterworth	Warrant Officer, Navy
BRIG Craig Schramm	On behalf of Surgeon General ADF, JHC
WO Grant McFarlane	Warrant Officer, Army
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate, DVA
MAJGEN Stuart Smith	Commissioner for Defence Engagement, DVA
Secretariat	
Miss Laura Thompson	NAC Secretariat, Open Arms
Invited Guests	
Leanne Cameron	First Assistant Secretary,
Rob Swanwick	Open Arms Strategic Engagement Manager
Apologies	
Mr Paul Way	Director General, DCO
WOFF-AF Fiona Grasby	Warrant Officer, RAAF
RADM Sarah Sharkey	CJHLTH, JHC

Items 1: Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed the Committee and invited guests.

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.

Apologies were accepted from Mr Paul Way. WOFF Glen Lyons was in attendance on behalf of WOFF-AF Fiona Grasby and BRIG Craig Schramm on behalf of RADM Sarah Sharkey. Conflicts of Interests were declared via the Conflict of Interest form.

Item 2: Open Arms National Manager Update

Presenter: Dr Stephanie Hodson, National Manager Open Arms

Trends

Dr Hodson provided the Committee with an update on client trends including number of clients per month, peer support clients and sessions, and monthly call volume. It was noted that following a long period of growth, monthly statistics have plateaued and are remaining more consistent. Some notable statistics included:

- an increase of 9.5% in counselling clients when comparing February 2020 with February 2021;
- more than 250 additional clients accessed Peer Support services in February 2021 when compared with February 2020; and
- the highest number of calls received within a single month was November 2021, with a total of 9,233 calls.

#Check5 Campaign

An overview was provided on the Open Arms #Check5 Campaign over the Christmas/New Year holiday period. Following a number of fatalities in the Veteran community in November 2020, Open Arms worked with Ray Martin from the Operation Compass Townsville Suicide Prevention Trial to create a suicide prevention campaign for this often difficult period. The grassroots campaign was very successful with a reach of over 1.1million. Open Arms intends to do a second push of the campaign over the ANZAC Day period.

SafeSide Framework for Recovery-Oriented Suicide Prevention

The Committee were advised of the new SafeSide Framework for Recovery-Oriented Suicide Prevention (SafeSide) being implemented nationally in Open Arms to enhance the clinical ability to manage risk. Training in SafeSide is being provided to all mental health clinicians working with Open Arms, including the OPC network.

Item 3: NAC Membership Discussion

Led by: Dr Stephanie Hodson, National Manager Open Arms

Noting the continuation of the Departmental 'National Consultation Framework Review' the National Manager advised that we will be unable to seek nominations for NAC vacancies via this approach.

The Committee recommended a nomination for the Sons and Daughters representative be sought from the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) and the Development Opportunities Section of Legacy Australia.

The Committee also recommended a nomination for the Partners and Families representative be sought from Partners of Veterans Association (PVA) and the War Widows Inc.

ACTION: Secretariat to request nominations from the above mentioned organisations.

Item 4: NAC Meeting Schedule Discussion

Led by: Chair

Following the release of the 2021 Parliamentary Sitting Calendar advice from the Committee was sought regarding proposed amendments to the 2021 meeting dates and locations.

The Committee agreed the preference was to meet in Canberra during a sitting week. As such Brisbane and Canberra were swapped with the first face-to-face meeting to be held in Brisbane, and the second in Canberra.

ACTION: Secretariat to circulate revised schedule for 2021.

Meeting Closed at: 3:00 pm

Action Items after NAC Meeting 2021/1

Action Item	Description	Status
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.
2020-09	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.	Closed.
2021-01	Secretariat to request nominations for vacancies form AVCAT, Legacy Australia, PVA and War Widows Inc.	Open.
2021-02	Circulate revised 2021 meeting schedule.	Open.