



Australian Government

Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling

**NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
CANBERRA – 30 March 2022**

ATTENDEES	
Members	Representing
Professor Jane Burns	Chair
Major Benjamin Flink	Reservists
Mr Max Ball	Vietnam Veterans
Dr Bradley Murphy	General Practitioners
Ex-Officio	
Dr Jenny Firman	Chief Health Officer, DVA
Dr Grant Pegg	National Manager, Open Arms
Ms Helen Braun	Assistant National Manager, Open Arms
Professor David Forbes	Director, Phoenix Australia
WO-N Deb Butterworth	Warrant Officer, Navy
WO Grant McFarlane	Warrant Officer, Army
WOFF Janet O'Dea <i>representing WOFF - AF Fiona Grasby</i>	Warrant Officer, RAAF
Mr Paul Way	Director General, DCO
BRIG Isaac Seidl <i>representing RADM Sarah Sharkey</i>	Director General, JHC
Secretariat	
Ms Caitlyn Clitheroe	NAC Secretariat, Open Arms
Invited Guests	
Ms Leanne Cameron	First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Division (MHWSD)
Ms Rachel Farrell	Assistant Secretary Mental and Social Health Programs (MSHP), MHWSD
Mr Kerry Buchholz	Director Clinical Programs and Policy, MSHP, MHWSD
Mr Bucky Toller	AD Health Campaign and Brand, Strategic Communications Branch, MHWSD
Ms Tess L'Estrange	Director Strategic Communications, MHWSD
Mr James Wilkinson	Director Systems and Data Management, Business Operations, MHWSD
APOLOGIES	
Members	Representing
Dr Andrew Khoo	Psychiatrists (Deputy Chair)
Mrs Anne Pahl	Peacekeepers
Ms Talissa Papamau	Contemporary Veterans
Mr Adrian Sutter	Contemporary Veterans

VACANT	<i>Sons and Daughters</i>
VACANT	<i>Partners and Families</i>
Ex-Officio	
Mr Don Spinks AM	Repatriation Commissioner, DVA
Ms Gina Craig	Director General, DMFS
Ms Gwen Cherne	Veteran Family Advocate

Items 1 & 2: Welcome, Apologies, Acknowledgements and General Business

- The Chair opened the meeting acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal People.
- The Chair acknowledged the service of all current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members, and their families.
- The Chair acknowledged Australia's Vietnam veterans, noting that Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms) is their legacy.
- Apologies were accepted from the attendees.
- The Chair welcomed the Committee to the first National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting of 2022, noting this meeting was the first face-to-face meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Chair sought conflicts of interest from the committee, with the following identified on the Declaration of Interest forms submitted; No conflicts of interest were declared.

Minutes from Previous Meeting

**Draft minutes from September 2021 were circulated to all NAC members for review and comment.*

- All members agreed to draft minutes, no changes required.

Correspondence

- Nil.

Item 3: Open Arms National Manager's Update

Presenter: Dr Grant Pegg, National Manager Open Arms

- The Chair welcomed the new National Manager of Open Arms, Dr Grant Pegg who introduced himself and provided an update.
- Dr Pegg described his background and his interest in the health profession and public service.
- He reported his observations on the 40th anniversary of Open Arms –VVCS, reflecting on the nature of the workforce as highly skilled and dedicated.
- He described the rapid expansion of Open Arms with 37 sites, 40,000 clients and 1300 Outreach Program Counsellors and the 24/7 contact centre.
- He also described the national reach of Open Arms and the response to disasters such as the floods, where staff were personally affected.
- He also noted the impact of COVID in being a catalyst to facilitation of tele-health, with attendant platform/IT issues.

- Dr Grant also noted that similar to mainstream services, tele-health will remain an element of service delivery for Open Arms.
- Dr Pegg noted that after rapid expansion, it was now time for consolidation.
- Priorities: 40th anniversary - telling our story; property and staffing.
- Limitations on employing counsellors.
- Peer-lived experience workforce- strong engagement with opportunity to expand and strengthen.
- Strategic refresh for the group.
- Looking forward to feedback.

Item 4: Open Arms Accreditation Presentation

Presenter: Mr Kerry Buchholz, Director Clinical Programs and Policy, MSPRGMS

- The Chair welcomed Mr Kerry Buchholz, Director of Clinical Programs and Policy from the Mental and Social Health Programs Branch to present an update on Open Arms Accreditation and process.
- As part of the accreditation process the accreditors wish to speak with a range of stakeholders.
- In the last accreditation cycle, Anne Pahl, Jane Burns and Ken Foster met with the accreditors to discuss the role and function of Open Arms.
- For committee action: nominations from NAC members are sought to meet with the accreditors in 2022.
- The Chair invited members to be interviewed, with volunteers comprising:
 - Prof David Forbes,
 - Mr Benjamin Fink and
 - Mr Max Ball

Item 5: Open Arms Data and Insights Presentation

Presenter: Mr James Wilkinson, Director Systems and Data Management, BOPSEUDO

- The Chair welcomed Mr James Wilkinson, Director Systems and Data Management from the Business Operations Branch to present an update on Open Arms data.
- Data is being increasingly used in Open Arms to inform service delivery.
- Kylie Howlett (Director, Systems and Data Management, Business Operations) presented on Open Arms data and insights
- In this item strategic advice is being sought from members, in particular:
 - Does the committee see any gaps in the current data sets or see any potential future opportunities?
 - Is there any particular data the committee would like to see?
 - Are there any areas of data you have seen today that you would like us to dive deeper into?
- Prof Forbes noted the Phoenix report in 2015 report on outcome measurements.
- Mr Ball commented on the need data and communications about waiting times of former serving vs current serving members and families.
- Mr Ball provided feedback about the perception former serving facing war trauma cannot access services
- He also commented on the importance of drilling into quality of care and outcomes.
- He gave an example of a client seeing 30 different clinicians and re-telling their story each time.
- There was a query re collection of data re referral source.
- The new intake form, linked to Open Arms Risk Assessment will provide greater visibility.
- Dr Murphy asked whether Open Arms staff could email addresses separate to DVA, as in @openarms rather than @dva.
- Ms Cameron replied that it was not possible in terms of ICT configuration, as Open Arms is not a separate entity to DVA.

- Mr Finks asked for a framework around the data in terms of trends and how to use data to inform surge capacity.

Item 6: Open Arms Communications Discussion

Led by: Mr Bucky Toller, AD Health Campaign and Brand

Ms Tess L'Estrange, Director Strategic Communications

- The Chair welcomed Mr Bucky Toller, AD Health Campaign and Brand and Ms Tess L'Estrange, Director Strategic Communications from the Communications Branch to present an update on Open Arms communication strategy.
- In this item strategic advice is being sought from members, in particular:
 - Are there any tactics that you think we could consider for better engaging the trusted advisor audience?
 - Which veteran cohorts do you think we need to engage with directly and what are some recommendations for ways to engage with them?
 - What other audience insights might we consider in developing our new strategy?
 - What messaging has the most impact on yourself as a consumer?
 - What website enhancements might you recommend to further support service provision?
 - What recommendations might be offered for pursuing a history of Open Arms?
 - What do you feel the narrative of Open Arms is
 - Does the committee support pursuing a market research project in the upcoming financial year?
 - Is Open Arms currently recognised as a service of trust amongst your cohorts?
 - What improvements would you recommend to the current communications approach?
 - Is the Open Arms brand recognisable amongst our target audience?
 - Are we partnering with the right organisations to benefit our brand and message?

This consultation will be ongoing and form part of the revised Strategic Communications Plan for Open Arms.

Item 7: Regional Advisory Forum Update

- This paper was for noting only.

Item 8: Other Business

- Nil.

Meeting Summary

- The Chair thanked the members for their contributions and closed the meeting.