

Department of Veterans' Affairs
Ex-Service Organisation (ESO) Round Table

Lovett Tower
WODEN, ACT

Meeting No. 3

26 & 27 November 2009

AGENDA ITEM 9

Research Framework – update

Purpose

To provide information on the DVA Applied Research Program (ARP) and international military research initiatives.

Background

DVA funds a wide range of research regarding the health and wellbeing of the veteran community. Research is supported by DVA through the Applied Research Program (ARP) and DVA maintains up-to-date information regarding international military research. In addition, veteran related research is approved and monitored by the DVA Human Research Ethics Committee. This minute provides information about DVA ARP funded research and international military research.

The Applied Research Program (ARP)

The DVA Applied Research Program (ARP) is the Department's formal research funding program with a budget of over \$2 million per annum. The ARP commissions research on a fee for service basis from universities and leading research centres that can contribute to the development of improved health care and services and a better understanding of DVA clients. This enables the Department to better identify the health and well-being needs of the veteran community.

Two committees oversee the governance of the ARP, the Research Committee and the Research Working Group, and meet four times a year. The Research Working Group advises the Research Committee on new research proposals, which are assessed on established criteria. The Research Committee recommends to the Repatriation Commission those research proposals to be funded and receives advice on other research conducted throughout DVA, however funded.

DVA business areas, with subject matter expertise in the specific research area being investigated, manage individual ARP research projects. Projects have a DVA sponsor (National Manager) and a Project Manager, designated by the Sponsor. The Strategic Research and Development Section administers the ARP and facilitates the management of ARP projects.

All ARP research aligns with the DVA research priorities. The current DVA research priorities below were approved by the DVA Research Committee in early 2008:

1. *Younger veterans and transition* (including specific deployments, multiple deployments, recent war service and peacekeeper issues);

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2. *Veterans physical and mental health needs: a wellness approach* (including early intervention, rehabilitation, compensation, veterans families, women's health and resilience);
3. *Ageing issues for veterans and war widows* (including WWII veterans, Korean veterans, ageing Vietnam veterans, war widows, social isolation, dementia and other aged care issues); and
4. *Promoting the use of DVA data* (including health and welfare status data, comparative data, technology and linkages with third party research).

The strategic aim of DVA research projects is to produce tangible outcomes for the Department and the veteran community and enable the Department to progress policy and service delivery objectives.

DVA is currently undertaking a wide range of research under the four priority areas. There are 29 current DVA ARP projects which fall under the following topics and special interest areas:

- *Women's health* - investigating women in late middle age and the wellbeing of female Vietnam veterans and contemporary veterans;
- *Service use and costs* - investigating progression of disability, rehabilitation, Safety, *Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (SRCA)* and *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA)*;
- *Welfare Australian* - investigating younger veterans transition from the Defence Force (ADF), WWII spouse carers, social isolation and Vietnam era conscription;
- *Physical health military health,* - investigating pharmaceuticals, compensation, rehabilitation and particular deployments;
- *Mental health Disorder (PTSD)* - investigating peacekeepers, Post Traumatic Stress and best practice counselling treatment approaches; and
- *Ageing issues* - investigating falls prevention, dementia and hospital services.

Examples of the types of research undertaken by the ARP includes but is not limited to: cost benefit analysis, outcome evaluative research, health studies, pilot or trial studies, market research, clinical trials, surveys and data linkage.

DVA works collaboratively with a wide range of government and non-government research organisations. DVA has formal research partnerships with the following two centres of excellence:

- ***Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health (ACPMH)***. The centre undertakes world class trauma related research, policy advice, service development and education. ACPMH works collaboratively with DVA to

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raise awareness regarding mental health issues in the veteran and defence communities. DVA provides core funding for ACPMH and funding for research and specialist advice from the ARP program and other sources. The website www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au provides information regarding the research and services provided by the centre; and

- **Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH)**. The centre is an academic collaborative and military partnership which provides research and information to DVA regarding military and veterans' health issues through research, professional development and a think tank. DVA provides annual funding for the general operations, e-health research and think tank. CMVH is a collaborative arrangement between the University of Queensland, the University of Adelaide, Charles Darwin University, Department of Defence and DVA. The website www.cmvh.org.au provides a picture of the role of the centre with regard military health.

DVA disseminates the findings of DVA research on a regular basis. The following strategies are utilized to communicate, promote and progress the findings of DVA research:

- *DVA Research Seminar* - the quarterly seminars showcase recent ARP and DVA research findings. They are held in the Canberra location and video-conferencing is provided to all State locations;
- *Research@DVA newsletter* – the newsletter is distributed quarterly for internal and external stakeholders;
- *DVA Research Register* and consultation with DVA Business areas - the Research Register provides a consistent set of details about all research conducted by DVA or involving DVA clients. Consultations are conducted with DVA business areas to contribute to the improvement of the register and discuss future projects;
- *ARP Annual Report* - provides extensive information about ARP research projects, governance, utilisation of research outcomes by DVA and research partnerships;
- *DVA Intranet and Internet* - the intranet promotes DVA research and research resources for DVA staff. The internet site http://www.dva.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing/research/Pages/index.aspx provides a selection of current ARP research and finalised health research publications. The sites are updated regularly;
- *Academic Journal Publications* - researchers are encouraged to publish findings of DVA research in quality peer reviewed academic journals. Articles are reviewed by DVA prior to publication;
- *EndNote Library of Journal References* - an electronic library of nearly 3500 Australian and international journal references relating to veterans' health and well-being is maintained by the Strategic Research Development Section;
- *Networking* - conducted with relevant Australian and international research organisations;
- *Research Advice to DVA staff* - regarding DVA and international research and DVA research policies; and

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- *DVA Representation* - on veteran and research forums and DVA Scientific Advisory Committees.

Enquires on the Applied Research Program can be made at Research@dva.gov.au .

International research

International military research provides valuable information for the department.

DVA has links with the following international research organisations and forums:

- ***King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR)*** is a joint initiative of the Institute of Psychiatry and Department of War Studies at King's College in London. KCMHR is primarily a research centre with three strands including war and health, war and psychiatry and personnel issues and social policy. The Centre provides short term and long-term perspectives on the physical, social and psychological aspects of military service in the 21st Century. The website www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/ provides further information about the centre.
- ***Millennium Cohort Study*** is the largest prospective health project in military history. It is designed to evaluate the long-term health effects of military service, including deployments. The American Department of Defence recognized after the 1991 Gulf War that there was a need to collect more information about the long-term health of service members and the study was launched by 2001. The website www.millenniumcohort.org outlines further details of the study.
- ***Senior International Forum (SIF)*** is a broad collaborative research forum for the benefit of those who served in or are serving in the armed forces of the member nations. The collaboration provides advancement of international collaborative research efforts between member nations (United States of America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia).

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