

Female Veterans and Families Forum

The first Female Veterans and Families Forum (FVFF) was held in Canberra on 6 December 2016, with Minister Tehan attending along with female veterans and representatives from veterans and family groups. The forum provides a platform for female veterans, partners and other family members to raise issues directly with the Government and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and for Ex Service Organisations to be included to the input of information on matters relating to Veterans and their families.

More than 9,000 women currently serve in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), which is around 16% of the total permanent ADF so there is a focus on the health and welfare of female veterans and improving access to services and information.

The second FVFF was held in October 2017 and was attended by P.V.A. National Secretary Rona Lunney and National Board member from W.A Bev Benporath.

Rona and Bev spent a very long but productive day listening, contributing and presenting on a range of issues based on effects of Military service on "The Family". Rona was in the working group navigating the issues relating to "better response to emerging needs in a veteran families" and Bev was in the group working on issues that would "improve support relating to Veterans Aged Care".



There were two other topics, "how might we support Veterans families experiencing domestic violence" and the other "how might we support the Veteran family at risk of intergenerational mental health issues". After the groups had explored the issues round their topic they were asked to come up with a business plan to present to the Shark Tank. The plan needed to express the topic for presentation, the areas to be addressed from the group knowledge and the mechanism that could be used by Government, DVA and other ESOs to deliver better services to Veteran families.

Once each of the groups had presented their ideas and a question and answer time concluded on each Liz Cosson from DVA responded to the workshop acknowledging that changes were needed and some of the ideas would be able to be taken on board and implemented with minimal cost.

For example a booklet for Veterans and families with the facts relating to moving into a care facility or residential accommodation as to regards the level and type of support still offered and available to Veterans, and relating this also to The Governments' "My Aged Care" package.

An overview from the day demonstrated that Families are important and should be visible. The Engage website can give up to date information, it is where you can find out information that you may need to know. DVA can show people how to navigate this site. DVA now acknowledges that transition should start from day 1 of enlistment and information sharing from ADF and DVA should make claims easier in the future. Support services need to do more for veterans and family.

Attending this type of event presents a wonderful opportunity for us to listen to the ideas being expressed, make connections with other groups and allows us enhance our knowledge and understanding of many of the issues facing Military families.