



**Government
of South Australia**

VETERANS' HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

2019-20 Annual Report

VETERANS' HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

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To:

The Hon Stephen Wade MLC
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

This annual report will be presented to Parliament to meet the statutory reporting requirements of (the *Public Sector Act 2009*, the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1987* and the *Health Care Act 2008*) and the requirements of Premier and Cabinet Circular *PC013 Annual Reporting*.

This report is verified to be accurate for the purposes of annual reporting to the Parliament of South Australia.

Submitted on behalf of the VETERANS' HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL by:

Geoff Tattersall
Presiding Member

Date: 29 September 2020

Signature



From the Presiding Member

The Veterans' Health Advisory Council (VHAC) is comprised entirely of volunteers appointed by the Minister for Health and Wellbeing all of whom have relevant knowledge and experience in matters relating to veterans' health and wellbeing. It is supported by an Executive Officer who is employed by RSL Care SA for two days per week which is funded through a service agreement with SA Health.

VHAC's principal role is to advise the Minister for Health and Wellbeing on the health service needs, priorities and issues for veterans and for the spouse, widow or widower of veterans and to advocate on their behalf with the Minister. VHAC consults with ex-service and related organisations to get their views when preparing such advice.

A significant focus for VHAC throughout 2019-20 has related to providing advice to the Minister and the Department of Health and Wellbeing (DHW) on the development of a Veterans' Wellbeing Centre at the Repat Health Precinct. This has included consideration of commemorative naming at the Precinct to acknowledge the significant contribution and sacrifice of many veterans who have had an association with the former Repatriation General Hospital. I and VHAC's Deputy Presiding Member, Ilona Horan, have been appointed as Co-Chairs on the steering committee that will oversee the development of the Veterans' Wellbeing Centre including establishing robust governance arrangements.

VHAC has provided advice to the Minister on the potential impact for veterans of the Productivity Commission's Final Report, Review into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans. VHAC is concerned, along with many ex-service organisations, that implementation of some of the Report's recommendations may have a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of many veterans. At the time of writing this report it is still unclear as to the extent that the recommendations will be implemented.

VHAC also provided feedback on the Health Performance Council's consultation draft report, Mental Health in South Australia, and identified the following as the top three indicators that it recommended should be monitored by the Governing Boards of the Local Health Networks.

- The rates of suicide for veterans within one year of discharge from the Jamie Larcombe Centre (JLC) compared with outcomes for the general population.
- The readmission rates for veterans discharged from the JLC including the length of time between admissions.
- The waiting time from presentation at an emergency department to admission to a psychiatric unit. For veterans this would be the waiting time from referral to admission at the JLC.

In formulating its advice to the Minister VHAC consults widely with the veteran community principally through a network of ex-service and veteran related

organisations. A recently established consortium of such organisations has significantly improved the efficiency of the consultation.

I have appreciated the opportunity to meet personally with the Minister on a number of occasions throughout the year to apprise him of matters impacting on Veterans' Health and Wellbeing. I also acknowledge the significant contribution by DHW staff Penny Thyer, Adam Monkhouse and Ryan Jackson whose commitment to the health and wellbeing of veterans has been exemplary.

As was the case for most organisations VHAC's operation has been affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic and the consequential restrictions that were imposed in March 2020. This resulted in a review of priorities including an agreement with DHW that a review of the Framework for Veterans Health Care 2016-2020 be deferred until mid-2021.

The following persons were members of VHAC during the 2019-20 year.

RSL SA Nominations
Mr Geoff Tattersall (Presiding Member)
Ms Ilona Horan (Deputy Presiding Member)
Mr Nathan Klinge
Dr Chris Butcher
Professor Alexander McFarlane
Ms Julia Langrehr (Resigned 24/02/2020)
Dr Paula Dabovich
Mr Bill Denny
Mr Wayne Langford (Appointed 28/08/2019)
VHAC Nomination
Mr Craig Rivett
Ministerial Nominations
Ms Genevieve Rüeger (Resigned 22/08/2019)
Ms Dianne Fairhead
Dr Robert Black

I take this opportunity to thank members sincerely for giving of their time so freely and for the contribution they make both individually and collectively to help improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

Geoff Tattersall

Presiding Member

Veterans' Health Advisory Council

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Overview: about the agency

Our strategic focus

<p>Our Purpose</p>	<p>The Advisory Council is established in relation to Veterans and the spouse, widow or widower of Veterans to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advise on their health service needs, priorities and issues; 2. Advise on the delivery of health services; 3. Advocate on their behalf with the Minister.
<p>Our functions, objectives and deliverables</p>	<p>The functions of the Advisory Council in regard to Veterans and the spouse, widow or widower of Veterans are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Act as an advocate to promote their health interests; 2. provide advice to the Minister about any aspect of the provision of health services; 3. provide advice or assistance to the Minister in relation to the development or implementation of systems or mechanisms designed to support the delivery of health services or programs; 4. assist the Minister and the Department in the provision of information to, and to consult broadly with Veterans in relation to health services provided by incorporated health services in the State; 5. consult with other bodies that are interested in the provision of health services to veterans; 6. provide advice to the Minister about any matter referred to it by the Minister or the Chief Executive; 7. give advice to the Minister on the development and management of health services and on the resources made available for these services and in so doing, reflect the views of Veterans; 8. provide advice to the Minister on the non-clinical commitments to veterans and war widows, as recorded in the 1995 'Record of Ongoing Commitments' between the Commonwealth of Australia and the State. These non-clinical commitments are as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the continuing work of voluntary bodies, including Ex-Service Organisations, is encouraged; b. Ex-Service Organisations and communities are welcome to visit the former Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park and areas of significance; and

	<p>c. The Chapel and Peace Garden are maintained at the former Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park;</p> <p>9. Provide advice to the Minister when the agreement between the Department and the Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs is renegotiated.</p>
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Our organisational structure

In accordance with the Rules as amended in July 2019 the Advisory Council comprises no more than 15 Members appointed by the Minister of which 10 may be nominated by the Advisory Council 1 by the RSL and 4 by the Minister.

Changes to the agency

During 2019-20 there were no changes to the agency's structure and objectives as a result of internal reviews or machinery of government changes.

Our Minister



Hon Stephen Wade MLC is the Minister for Health and Wellbeing in South Australia.

The Minister oversees health, wellbeing, mental health, ageing well, substance abuse and suicide prevention.

Our Executive team

The Advisory Council does not employ staff. Its membership consists of volunteers appointed by the Minister one of whom is appointed as the Presiding Member.

Legislation administered by the agency

The Advisory Council does not administer legislation.

The agency's performance

Agency contribution to whole of Government objectives

Key objective	Agency's contribution
More jobs	Not Applicable.
Lower costs	Not Applicable.
Better Services	VHAC provides advice to the Minister on the provision of health services to veterans and to the spouse, widow or widower of veterans.

Agency specific objectives and performance

Refer Presiding Member's Report

Corporate performance summary

Not Applicable

Employment opportunity programs

Not Applicable

Agency performance management and development systems

Not Applicable

Work health, safety and return to work programs

Not Applicable

Executive employment in the agency

Not Applicable

Financial Performance

Not Applicable.

The Veterans' Advisory Council is a non-incorporated Health Advisory Council. It does not control assets, incur expenditure or receive revenue.

Risk management

Risk and audit at a glance

The Veterans' Advisory Council is a non-incorporated Health Advisory Council. It does not control assets, incur expenditure or receive revenue.

Fraud detected in the agency

Not Applicable

Strategies implemented to control and prevent fraud

Not Applicable

Public interest disclosure

Number of occasions on which public interest information has been disclosed to a responsible officer of the agency under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*:

Nil to Report

Note: Disclosure of public interest information was previously reported under the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 1993* and repealed by the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018* on 1/7/2019.

Reporting required under any other act or regulation

Act or Regulation	Requirement
Health Care Act 2008 Part 4 Health Advisory Councils, Division 3 Related Matters, Clause 22 Annual Report	A HAC must, within 3 months after the end of each financial year, deliver to the Minister a report on the operations of the HAC during that financial year.

Reporting required under the *Carers' Recognition Act 2005*

Not Applicable

Public Complaints

Number of public complaints reported

Nil to Report

Audited financial statements 2019-20

Not applicable

The Veterans' Advisory Council is a non-incorporated Health Advisory Council. It does not control assets, incur expenditure or receive revenue.