

Veterans' Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Establishment

The Veterans' Reference Group (VRG) is established by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Purpose

The purpose of the VRG is to be a reference point between the Tasmanian Government and the veteran community.

Consistent with the definition agreed by all Ministers responsible for veterans' issues in November 2017 and now recognised by all jurisdictions, a veteran is a person who is serving or has served in the Australian Defence Force.

The VRG provides representative advice to Government, assisting in the development and delivery of informed, effective, and evidenced-based policy, programs, and projects for the veteran community.

The scope of the VRG's role also includes advising the Minister in relation to the needs of Tasmanian:

- veterans and for specific groups of veterans with particular needs;
- veterans' families, and for specific groups of veteran family members with particular needs.

Role and Function

The VRG will provide advice, information and insights about issues affecting veterans and families locally and nationally. A particular focus is to be made to matters raised through the Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee convened by the Department of Veterans' Affairs including:

- employment and training for veterans;
- data collection about veterans living in Tasmania;
- health and wellbeing of veterans;
- housing and homelessness of veterans;
- incarceration of veterans; and
- recognition of service including commemorative events and increasing understanding by young people and the community of the role and value of service personal.

Membership

The VRG will consist of individuals appointed by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs because of their specific skills, experience, and knowledge. Appointments are made following a public invitation for expressions of interest.

The composition of the VRG will be sufficiently diverse to enable the VRG to provide informed perspectives on all areas of its scope. In particular, the VRG will include members with knowledge about the needs of and/or experience as:

- Veterans of the Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force, and Royal Australian Navy including:
 - Current serving personnel;
 - 'Contemporary veterans' who have left the ADF recently;
 - Other veterans;
- Parents or family members of a veteran;
- Ex-service organisations operating in Tasmania;
- Providers of mental health support for veterans;
- Other non-government organisations or businesses that work with or for veterans and/or their families.

Members will be appointed for a term of up to three years and may be reappointed for up to a further two-year term at the discretion of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Member Roles

VRG members will provide advice to the Minister on issues impacting veterans and their families to improve the provision of services as well as improving engagement and support.

Represent the VRG at events, forums and consultations as required and reporting back to the VRG on these activities.

When relevant, VRG members may consult with other stakeholders, including individuals and organisations, on issues submitted to them for consideration.

Individual members may be contacted by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) to discuss or seek advice about issues relevant to that member or members.

The VRG may meet with the Minister for Veterans' Affairs as a group or as individual members, as requested.

VRG members may be asked to participate in grants program assessment panels.

The VRG may establish short-term working groups and/or sub-committees to support the delivery of its purpose.

Member Behavioural Expectations

Members of the VRG, in relation to VRG meetings or when representing the group, are required to:

- Maintain the confidentiality of VRG discussions; and
- Work collectively with other members and Government agency representatives in relation to issues of concern and interest to veterans.

Meeting Protocols

Frequency

VRG meetings will be held at least twice a year in person with the capacity for members to join remotely online.

The Chair, with agreement from members, may invite relevant experts to meetings to inform the VRG's work. Relevant experts are expected to maintain confidentiality of VRG discussions.

The Chair, with agreement from members, may call a meeting out of session, to progress VRG work, hear from relevant experts, or enable the VRG to participate in relevant inquiries.

Appointments

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs will appoint a VRG member to the position of Chair.

If the Chair is unable to attend a meeting, a DPAC representative or proxy will assume the responsibilities of the Chair. Proxies are not available to other VRG members.

Other participants at meetings

The Minister and/or representative will attend VRG meetings when possible.

The VRG may invite guest speakers or observers to VRG meetings.

DPAC representatives will attend VRG meetings to:

- Provide secretariat support in relation to VRG meetings, including taking minutes;
- Provide information to VRG members about relevant activities of the Tasmanian Government; and
- Provide advice to VRG members about the roles and functions of Tasmanian and Australian Government agencies and committees in relation to veterans and their families.

Procedures

Members are requested to send agenda items to the Secretariat at least 10 working days prior to a meeting.

Agenda, papers, and other meeting material will be approved for circulation by the Chair and circulated to members at least 5 working days before a scheduled meeting.

Draft minutes will be approved for circulation by the Chair and distributed to VRG members for endorsement.

The VRG may resolve to provide to the Minister, through the Chair, such advice, matters, proposals and/or recommendations that the VRG considers appropriate for the Minister to consider.

The making of a resolution by the VRG does not give rise to any commitment by the Minister or the Tasmanian Government.

The VRG will develop an annual work plan to guide its activities. Items for inclusion on the work plan will be as agreed by VRG members, in consultation with the Minister.

Conflicts of Interest and Other Exemptions

Any member with a conflict of interest regarding a particular issue or agenda item must declare that interest prior to the commencement of related discussions.

A member may, at any time, excuse themselves from being involved in discussions on an issue or agenda item for personal reasons.

Administration

VRG members will be reimbursed for any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses in connection with their membership, including travel, meals, and accommodation.

Review of Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed periodically with input from members. The Minister for Veterans' Affairs has the authority to approve the Terms of Reference.