

ANNEXURE 1 – ATDP Issue Analysis

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Overall Advocates System

Multiple inquiries and papers, most recently the DVA-commissioned UNSW *Baseline study of current and future availability of ex-service organisation advocacy services* report, demonstrate the importance of advocates, including volunteers, and ESOs in the DVA claims system. The RSL notes that systemic issues need to be addressed to ensure the viability of the Veterans' advocacy space:

- Advocate shortfall:
 - There is no published plan from DVA to address the looming advocacy access shortfall due to the "ageing fleet" of advocates and to incentivise new recruitment
- Administration support:
 - The burden for the onboarding, training and accreditation/currency of advocates falls predominantly on senior volunteer advocates
- Funding:
 - BEST Grants are determined annually, meaning no assurance for funding for ESOs, particularly those with limited resources
 - DVA's annual allocation to VITA indemnity cover means that ESO co-contributions fluctuate annually, creating uncertainty in service planning

Suggested recommendations:

Advocate shortfall:

1. If this is to be left to the prime ESO and VSO providers, then government resources should be provided to assist this effort

Administration support:

2. Dedicated DVA administration support for ATDP

Funding:

3. Provide guaranteed and sustainable needs-based funding to ex-service organisations
4. Ongoing or multi-year funding through BEST Grants could be considered, and would be particularly important for growing and supporting local advocacy services in Tasmania, South Australia, the NT, and the ACT
 - Please note, changes in the way BEST Grant funding statistics are reported and the introduction of service standards may impact on how the BEST Grant process operates - the impact of these changes should be taken into account when considering multi-year funding
5. Provide assurance regarding DVA's annual contribution to VITA

Governance Arrangements

The RSL would like to see clarity on the below governance-related issues, which remain in flux following last year's governance changes:

- Governance Structure:
 - What does the governance structure of the ATDP look like? How will ESOs be involved in this process?
- Curriculum Development:
 - How will the curriculum be developed under current and future governance arrangements?
 - Does DVA/RTO have the expertise to achieve this and what consultation with ESOs and experienced advocates will be involved?
- ATDP Communications:
 - How will DVA/ATDP ensure the voice of ESOs/volunteer advocates be heard?

Course Development

The RSL has several questions regarding the potential introduction of the combined W1/C1 Support Officer Training, replacing the old W1/C1 split training.

- Has any progress been made on the introduction of the new course/model?
- When will consultation with ESOs commence (noting the RSL's eagerness to participate)?
- Have any pilot courses been planned (noting the RSL's willingness to participate, as well as existing relationship with MTS)?

In addition, the RSL would like clarity on previous DVA/ATDP assurances that they were examining:

- Improved course content
- Different modes of delivery (e-learning, mixed modal)
- Quicker training modules
- Training targeted at enticing women and younger veterans
- The possible introduction of a Wellbeing Level 3 course

Training

Issues:

- There are many potential advocates who are waiting for courses to become available, with some having dropped out due to the waiting times posed by the unavailability of courses
 - This includes the need for more Level 3 and Level 4 courses
- There can be difficulty completing Work Experience Logbooks (WELs), especially when there is not access to mentors
- Waiting times to complete ATDP Consolidation and Assessment Training are long
 - Consolidation and Assessment Processes are onerously time consuming
 - WELs are ignored during these processes
- Advocates from some States, and advocates from some rural and regional sub-Branches, must travel for training

Suggested recommendations:

6. Availability of on-line consolidation and accreditation with a more 'user-friendly' approach
7. Professional training coordinators who can take the administrative burden off the existing volunteer trainers
8. Accelerated courses for professional advocates
9. CPD courses which are more diverse and particularly those that are available to level 3s and 4s

Mentors

Issues:

- Discussions with dozens of RSL sub-Banches have shown there is a shortage of mentors available to ATDP-accredited advocates or advocates in training to allow them to attain higher accreditation
- This shortage is particularly acute in regional and rural areas

Suggested recommendations:

- 10.**The RSL requests that DVA/ATDP examine how to facilitate the availability of additional mentors for advocates or advocates in waiting to address these effects
- 11.**The RSL proposes DVA provides funding for additional paid advocates to provide this mentoring
- 12.**The ATDP training program could be revised to enable it to provide face-to-face or online procedural training shortly after an advocate enrols, easing some of the pressure on mentors. The accreditation process can take place once the Workplace Logs are completed (as is currently the case).

Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) and Accreditation

Issues:

- The construction of a robust RPL is important for the future development of ATDP, working within the requirements of the learning modules set by ASQA.
- At present only TIP qualifications are recognised

Suggested recommendations:

- 13.** Broader forms of tertiary education i.e. law, and relevant training, such as that of former DVA delegates, should be recognised
- 14.** Trainees should be given some acknowledgement of prior qualifications at the assessment process
- 15.** Modify what are mainly internal DVA policies regarding the ATDP training and accreditation system to optimise its availability to all advocates
- 16.** Review the way in which the ATDP accreditation system is being applied to other DVA policies, such as the BEST Grant process

Communications

Issues:

- There are limited communications around ATDP governance arrangements going forward
- There are limited opportunities provide policy input/improvements from the advocate community to DVA
- Communications between DVA, the Registered Training Organisation and regional groupings of advocates are marginal and untimely