

29 November 2009

Review Team
Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
Department of Veterans' Affairs

**Legacy Australia Submission
Review of DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services**

1. Legacy Australia, comprising all Legacy Clubs, welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Review, and is particularly appreciative of the extension to the due date for lodgement provided vide the Secretary's letter of 9 November. Individual Legacy Clubs have also welcomed the opportunity to participate in focus group discussions with the members of the Review Team.
2. As advised in Council's letter of 14 October, Legacy's 49 Australian Clubs are essentially autonomous in their operations but work co-operatively at regional, State and national levels. In preparing this submission, the larger Capital City Clubs have been asked to take the lead to provide a submission for each State. These submissions are forwarded at Enclosures 1 to 4. Adelaide Legacy, the sole Legacy Club in South Australia and which includes Broken Hill, NSW, lodged a separate submission on 10 November, which should be read in conjunction with this document.
3. The key focus points contained in the Review discussion paper are addressed directly in the individual submissions and take into account the different requirements, issues and experiences at local, regional and State levels. The aim of this document is to summarise the main points identified by all Clubs, and to provide additional information and feedback from a national perspective.

Legacy's Role in the Veteran Community

4. The nature of Legacy's work in the veteran community, the role of volunteer Legatees and the Legacy service model are comprehensively described in the submission by Adelaide Legacy and will not be duplicated in detail here. However, the following points are noteworthy:
 - Legacy is unique in the ex-service community in that it exists to provide welfare and advocacy support and services to other than its own members.
 - Legacy now provides support to some 115,000 veterans' widow(er)s and 1900 children and adult dependants with a disability.
 - War widow(er)s now outnumber war veterans. Only some 60% of Legacy widows are in receipt of a War Widow's Pension, the remainder mostly relying on the aged or Service pension; nevertheless all are widows of deceased veterans.
 - Although the overall numbers of Legatees and widow(er)s are declining due to ageing, the rate of decline is greater in the former group. While total Legatees now number approximately 6100, only some 5030 of these are active.

- Like most ESOs, Legacy is struggling to recruit new and younger volunteers to replace ageing Legatees.
- While the number of widow(er)s and dependants is declining overall, the number of younger widows and dependants is increasing as a percentage of the total. This trend is expected to continue. This group has and will have significantly different welfare needs from older widow(er)s and dependants, potentially impacting on how Legacy delivers its services in the future.
- The three points above are already contributing to an increasing need for paid staff to support Legatee activities, as is the ever-increasing complexity of technology, legislation, reporting and compliance requirements and administrative processes.
- In 2008/2009, Legacy Australia expenditure on provision of welfare services totalled \$14.9 million. Whilst some Government assistance is provided by way of grants for specific purposes, Legacy's income is largely reliant on public donations raised locally.

It should be noted that while the Legacy service model is consistent across Legacy Australia, operating models between individual Clubs may vary according to their structure and resources. For larger Clubs with sufficient resources, increasing emphasis is placed on a mobile workforce as Legacy widows become more elderly and in need of personal care.

5. To provide a more comprehensive view of Legacy's centres of operation, Annex A details Legacy Clubs by State and Territory, and the number of active Legatees, widow(ers) and dependants by Club. Widow(er) numbers are grouped by age. Most Clubs cover a large area and so have groups or divisions in other locations, which extend their reach within their area of operation.

BEST Grants Scheme

6. Legacy Clubs have applied for funding under the BEST Grants Scheme at different times and in varying numbers since its inception. In the main, the larger Clubs have sought funding for salaries for pensions and welfare support staff, travel expenses and capital items. Some staff positions rely on BEST grants for funding, either fully or partially. This funding is particularly critical for some non-Capital City Clubs, which do not have the same level of resources. Smaller Clubs, which often do not have paid staff and rely solely on Legatees to undertake all pensions and welfare work, generally make application for funding for minor capital equipment; while these applications may be for relatively small amounts, they are vital to the ability of these Clubs to provide services, often in rural and remote localities.

7. The following is a summary of general comments made in State submissions:

- The Scheme provides a valuable source of funding for Clubs to meet operating costs and relieves the burden on individual Legatees by providing additional resources in support of pensions advocacy and welfare activities, particularly in the field.
- Paid staff allow for the development of expertise in specific areas and a professional knowledge base more readily adaptable to increasingly complex and changing legislative and operating environments. Also, oversight of competency levels and workload management is likely to be more rigorous for professional staff due to regulatory and compliance regimes for management of employees.
- The inability to plan beyond the next round of BEST funding creates inefficiencies and can lead to higher than normal levels of staff turnover. A funding cycle of at least 3 years would provide certainty of tenure for staff positions and enable professional training and development to high levels of competency.
- Greater certainty for staff positions and long term programs and services would likewise be provided if BEST funding allocations were to be advised prior to the commencement

of the financial year.

- Deposit of grant funds as soon as possible after 1 July is essential for some Clubs to eliminate cashflow problems.
- The Grant application and agreement forms could be simplified for more efficient and cost-effective administration. In the case of the smaller grants in particular, the requirement for audited financial statements imposes a costly overhead for some Clubs, which may exceed the benefits.
- The provision of quarterly statistics has generally been considered appropriate, and these are statistics collected for Legacy's own purposes. Again, some smaller Clubs without administrative support encounter difficulties meeting this requirement. The impact of the recent decision by DVA to move to six monthly reporting is yet to be assessed.
- Legacy is supportive of initiatives to provide for greater transparency, accountability and productivity measures within a DVA funding model, assuming a reasonable balance can be achieved between compliance costs and benefits received.

8. In general, the additional funding from the BEST Grant Scheme is central to the operation of many Legacy Clubs and is greatly appreciated. In an environment where there is ever-increasing competition for public donations, Legacy is working to improve the efficiency of its operations and its capacity to fundraise. Also, the balance of paid staff and volunteers is changing; this trend will continue and must be funded. However, in the absence of a significant rise in income from donations, Government assistance via grant schemes will become increasingly important in the provision of Legacy's advocacy and welfare services – particularly for smaller and regional Clubs – with the decline in active Legatee numbers.

9. While BEST grants are now provided for welfare support as well as for pensions advocacy, feedback within ESOs is that the grants remain generally weighted more to advocacy functions. Legacy supports greater emphasis being given to applications in support of welfare functions.

10. The submission by Melbourne Legacy at Enclosure 2 highlights concerns and issues related to the application of the BEST Grants Scheme in Victoria, and argues that Victorian Legacy Clubs in general, and Melbourne Legacy in particular, have been disadvantaged in the grant process in favour of the Veterans' Support Centres (heavily concentrated in regional areas).

Partnership Opportunities and Veterans' Support Centres

11. Legacy supports, in principle, increased partnership opportunities within the ESO community, including the sharing of resources and facilities under joint ventures, but would caution against a 'one size fits all' approach. Of paramount importance is recognition that each ESO exists to serve the unique needs of its client group. In Legacy's case, a whole-of-life continuum of care is provided for the widowed spouse and some dependants from the time of the veterans' death, ensuring a close and enduring bond between Legatee and dependants of the deceased. Initiatives to centralise or co-locate DVA-funded services must take account of the unique *raison d'être* of each ESO and in no way compromise its primary relationships, advocacy role and ability to provide for the ongoing welfare of its constituents.

12. Partnerships between ESOs already do exist in many areas, by mutual consent at the local level. Legacy's view is that such partnerships provide the most benefit in regional areas where ESOs resources are limited, ensuring the cost-effective and practical use of local facilities for the maximum benefit of all ESO clients.

13. Notwithstanding the above, there are differing views amongst and within Legacy Clubs with regard to extending a Veterans' Support Centre model, with concerns centred on how

they are structured and implemented, and their accountability to all stakeholders. In theory, such centres provide a practical and sensible option, with scope to reduce duplication and create efficiencies. In practice, however, and as they exist in their current form, the experience of Legacy in Victoria has given rise to some issues and concerns:

- Co-operation between Veterans' Support Centres and local ESOs is almost entirely dependent on the goodwill of individuals and the calibre of relationships at the local level.
- Melbourne Legacy's efforts to obtain pensions statistics and information from Veterans' Centres in respect of Legacy Clubs in Victoria has proven to be a difficult and labourious process with highly unsatisfactory results.
- Where ESOs use Veterans' Centres, this does not relieve them of their responsibility to follow up on claims on behalf of their clients as part of the continuum of care.
- ESOs are generally reluctant to transfer their duty of care, particularly in the case of vulnerable individuals.
- Veterans' Centres, on their own, do not facilitate the 'whole of life' approach to advocacy and welfare support.
- Mobility of aged, frail and disabled clients is of concern in physically accessing Centres.
- In the interest of effective personal service, some Legacy Clubs prefer to call on their own resources in their own local area rather than use Veterans' Centres. Certainly, some Legacy Clubs view them as a centre of 'last resort'.
- Accountability of Veterans' Centres is of concern, as are privacy issues.
- There is evidence that Legacy in Victoria has been disadvantaged in apportioning funds in favour of Veterans' Centres, leading to the perception that ESOs are being 'pushed' into this model.

Training Information Program (TIP)

14. All Legacy Clubs report that, overall, they find the Program invaluable. It is highly effective as a formal training resource, providing relevant information and tools delivered by experienced practitioners. Other comments are summarised as follows:

- The development of a separate training module for compensatory claims for War/Defence widow(ers) is considered essential and is most welcome, particularly with respect to claims under MRCA.
- The development of further training specific to widow(ers)' compensation and welfare is recommended.
- Training courses are most effectively delivered via the greater use of blended learning services, with a combination of e-learning and 'classroom' training viewed as the ideal.
- The greater emphasis on e-learning will provide more flexibility in the delivery of training and its implementation across the full TIP curriculum is supported.
- Satisfaction with the administration and accountability for the implementation of the TIP program varies between States.

15. There has been some discussion throughout the review process with respect to a possible two-tier practitioner accreditation system as proposed by the Dunt Report. This is yet to be considered by Legacy as a whole, and views vary between Clubs and Legatees. Generally, measures to enhance competency in a cost-effective manner are supported. However, Legacy would be concerned to see a second-tier accredited practitioner system introduced which would be wholly or partially independent of ESOs. There is considered that there is a risk that such a system would compromise the continuum of care and close personal bonds Legacy provides to its widow(ers), and would result in a reduction over time of expertise within the organisation with regard to cases which are not straight forward or which are subject to appeal.

Veterans and Community (V&C) Grants

16. Legacy Clubs (including Widows Clubs) have received grants for a variety of initiatives through this scheme, and it is of particular benefit to smaller Clubs for projects they could not otherwise fund through donations.

17. The V&C Grants are generally considered to be a valuable avenue of funding for very specific initiatives, which do not meet the criteria for other, more restrictive grant schemes. Also, the greater frequency of rounds each year provides for requirements that may present at reasonably short notice. For this reason, flexibility of the grant administration process is considered essential.

Tools to Support Grants Management Processes

18. This aspect of the Review is not addressed in any great detail in the State submissions, however the following comments have been made:

- The VPAD system is directed more at veterans' claims than widow(er)s claims, and is therefore not very useful to Legacy advocates. Some Legatees have developed their own systems.
- The system is unsatisfactory for the extraction of data for management reporting; for example, VPAD shows only claims completed and not the result. This is of particular concern to Clubs where claims have been processed via the local Veterans' Centre and the results have not been advised.

19. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that the use of VPAD is not consistent and the technology could present challenges to elderly Legatees, and to those with only basic computer and keyboard skills and little experience with management information systems. Again, advances in technology and the introduction of electronic systems contribute to the need for paid staff and the ability to attract younger Legatees.

Conclusion

20. There are a number of challenges which confront Legacy and other ESOs, including:

- ageing volunteer bases;
- difficulty in attracting new and younger volunteers;
- younger volunteers whose availability is restricted due to paid employment;
- ageing clients requiring greater levels of personal support;
- increased competition for donations;
- ever-increasing complexity in legislation, reporting and administrative requirements;
- changes in technology;
- structural issues.

All of these factors contribute to a growing recognition of the need to replace or support volunteers with paid staff, and implement appropriate technology, structures and systems. An appropriate balance must be achieved between paid and unpaid representatives, in order to ensure that volunteers are free to focus on their primary roles and are adequately supported. This will continue to present funding issues, and government grants will continue to be of invaluable assistance.

21. Grant administrative processes must also achieve a balance between cost-effectiveness and accountability and the value of the benefit to each recipient organisation. Whilst the need for greater transparency and responsibility for expenditure is agreed, application forms and

reporting requirements have become more complex with each iteration. This imposes an administrative burden on some organisations for which they are not adequately equipped.

22. Legacy as an organisation is committed to provide a 'whole-of-life' continuum of care to its widow(er)s and dependants, and takes very seriously its responsibility to adequately support its highly dedicated Legatees and staff in their carrying out their work. These considerations are paramount and integral in preparing this submission.

23. Legacy welcomes and is highly appreciative of the opportunity to contribute to the Review, and to inform the Review Team of aspects of Legacy's role and work which might contribute to outcomes for the benefit of the veteran community as a whole. This Council and Legacy Clubs are open to discuss any of these issues further as required.

Enclosures:

1. Brisbane Legacy – Submission to DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
2. Melbourne Legacy - Submission to DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
3. Perth Legacy – Submission to DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services
4. Sydney Legacy - Submission to DVA-funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services

LEGACY STATISTICS AS AT 31 MAR 09

CLUB	ACTIVE LEGATEES	WIDOWS											DEPENDANTS	
		Under 60	60 to 64	65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 & over	Unkn	TOTAL		Newly Enrolled		Prim 2ndy Tertry	All Disabled Dep
									2009	2008	2009	2008		
ACT (1)														
CANBERRA	192	45	41	60	106	229	1210	24	1715	1760	87	77	19	15
NSW (20)														
ALBURY	98	16	17	25	36	131	852	52	1129	1184	53	46	9	11
ARMIDALE	87	7	4	15	16	65	358	22	487	505	16	23	6	5
BRISBANE WATER	72	22	28	54	105	341	2713	0	3263	3434	127	140	12	57
COFFSHARBOUR	28	9	9	14	37	87	553	19	728	759	30	30	8	8
COOLANGATTA/T HEADS	33	9	18	35	76	162	820	20	1140	1167	57	68	4	13
FARNTH COAST (LISMORE)	156	16	14	30	82	199	1514	0	1855	1912	70	62	10	15
GOLBURN	38	4	6	8	20	44	214	1	297	305	7	15	0	3
GRAFTON	28	11	6	13	25	66	353	0	474	493	18	18	2	0
HUNTER	50	7	5	9	26	64	422	4	537	554	30	39	0	9
INERELL	35	2	2	5	15	43	225	0	292	302	11	14	0	6
LACHLAN	57	2	6	12	20	67	379	10	496	516	13	23	0	2
NEWCASTLE	147	42	47	49	119	333	2194	173	2957	3285	47	91	7	16
ORANGE	144	5	15	16	27	85	634	30	812	854	23	26	5	3
PIMHASTINGS	46	13	17	20	38	120	678	0	886	923	40	60	2	13
QUEANBEYAN/EDENMONARO	72	8	8	14	69	102	263	6	470	472	19	21	1	1
SYDNEY	603	171	160	264	609	2085	13500	0	16739	17553	674	812	107	363
TAMWORTH	93	10	7	25	22	92	609	33	798	870	47	38	0	7
TAREE	102	15	14	21	31	115	774	0	970	979	40	48	2	20
WAGGA WAGGA	185	16	16	24	66	163	902	71	1258	1299	41	88	6	25
WOLLONGONG	156	34	38	47	130	370	1991	85	2695	2800	92	100	13	10
NT (1)														
NTH TERRITORY	26	9	7	7	16	21	78	8	146	149	2	8	0	0
QLD (10)														
BRISBANE	198	247	213	324	501	1455	8830	546	12176	12394	565	625	75	151
BUNDABERG	47	15	21	16	41	101	430	2	626	660	36	44	8	5
CAIRNS	37	14	45	36	60	243	408	15	821	992	6	10	14	9
FRASER COAST & COUNTRY BURNETT	85	29	25	35	55	155	597	0	896	923	51	51	15	2
GOLD COAST	39	29	37	49	94	216	1258	27	1710	1805	78	68	9	12
IPSWICH	50	17	21	24	52	97	461	73	745	744	40	22	2	11
MACKAY	29	11	14	11	21	69	383	45	554	570	18	10	3	2
ROCKHAMPTON	29	16	25	26	49	97	718	30	961	1000	34	28	4	0
TOOWOOMBA	33	25	17	29	47	128	763	12	1021	1055	51	76	14	0
TOWNSVILLE	93	47	16	53	53	131	721	21	1042	1062	50	86	26	16
SA (1)														
ADELAIDE	495	147	135	189	425	1264	8640	31	10831	11,170	402	462	36	127
TAS (2)														
HOBART	73	27	30	51	80	295	1244	103	1830	1895	81	74	8	0
LAUNCESTON	69	18	27	51	77	254	1274	187	1888	1868	79	81	5	0
VC (12)														
ARARAT	42	1	4	1	11	24	183	32	256	258	18	11	0	0
BALLARAT	108	11	20	35	66	230	820	60	1242	1357	25	40	1	3
BENDIGO	190	16	15	23	109	242	1432	251	2088	2161	104	103	1	5
COLAC	25	1	0	0	0	31	178	34	244	250	10	5	1	0
GEELONG	62	30	10	22	55	160	1606	98	1981	2030	96	78	8	9
HAMILTON	44	3	4	6	18	97	378	0	506	498	22	15	2	0
MELBOURNE	552	151	193	247	556	1926	13944	3428	20445	21169	878	863	48	331
MLDURA	44	4	4	5	14	48	447	49	571	600	2	5	0	2
MORNINGTON PENINSULA	108	31	28	30	97	229	1464	524	2403	2493	169	124	6	17
SHEPPARTON	79	13	1	16	63	82	533	24	732	728	24	18	2	1
WARRNAMBOOL	66	3	4	5	13	57	349	170	601	623	25	27	1	15
WIMMERA	64	1	2	5	6	48	462	27	551	549	11	18	2	1
WA (2)														
FREMANTLE	26	97	21	3	1200	849	250	0	2420	2375	70	96	9	0
PERTH	170	78	84	111	257	559	3609	1002	5700	5807	388	392	26	29
TOTAL	5305	1555	1501	2170	5711	14021	82678	7349	114985	119111	4877	5279	539	1350