Introduction

1. With specific respect to ATDP implementation:

   the SGB-CFMG and ATDP Secretariat have agreed that:

   (i) the Compensation and Welfare Single Training and Development Pathways will be rolled out to Level 2 from 01 July 2016;

   (ii) RMG candidates will be invited to submit an EOI as soon as possible in FY2016-17;

   (iii) RMG Members will be selected as soon as possible after EOI have closed;

   (iv) TIP Chairs for Victoria, NSW and Queensland will mentor RMG Managers until RMGs begin autonomous operation from 01 January 2017; and

   (v) selected, appropriately qualified practitioners will be trained and certified by the RTO as Mentor-Workplace Assessors starting in late August or early September 2016;

   (vi) the RTO will begin RPL, gap training (where required) and certification by Certificate of Attainment of volunteer practitioners from January 2017; and

   (vii) CoP will begin formal operations as soon as Mentor-Workplace Assessors have been certified.

   (viii) the SGB-CFMG and ATDP Secretariat have yet to consider how candidates for RMG Manager will be appointed.

2. This discussion papers outlines the current stage in my thinking on how the RMG and CoP might be operationalised. What follows is not a second blueprint. It is intended to provide points for discussion, facilitating SGB-CFMG agreement of the framework within which operationalisation of the RMGs and CoPs will proceed.

Aim

3. The aim is to stimulate discussion of how RMG and CoP should be operationalised in the period 01 July to 31 December 2016.

Assumptions

4. This paper assumes that those Learning Facilitators who are certified as Mentor-Workplace Assessors:
a. will also be trained to deliver OJT, and will work only at the CoP-ESO level; and
b. will receive further training and assessment before certification as Formal Training Courses Learning Facilitators, and will work predominantly at:
   (i) facilitating face-to-face consolidation courses; and
   (ii) providing on-line mentoring of distance learning trainees.

Intent and Implications of ATDP
5. **Intent.** Stated broadly, the intent of ATDP is continuously improving service delivery by certified advocates to DVA rehabilitation, compensation and welfare clients.

6. **Implications.** Incontestably, the ATDP intent is conjoint with the ‘client-focus’ objective of ‘DVA Towards 2020’. A system of training and development is the ‘means’; but, crucially, high quality service delivery to the client is the intended ‘outcome’.

Adult Learning Principles
7. A key feature of adult learning is the disaggregation and relative contribution of modalities to the learning process:
   a. Formal learning (both on-line and face-to-face courses): 10%;
   b. Mentoring and OJT (conducted at the advocacy-practitioner level): 90%.

Blueprint Framework
8. **RMG.** The Blueprint identifies the following role for RMGs:
   a. day-to-day delivery of training and local administrative requirements in their region;
   b. developing and supporting ‘communities of practice’ to provide a regional support network for their practitioners and trainers;
   c. regional input to the development and delivery of the nationally consistent training programme through representation on the CFMG;
   d. identification and prioritisation of areas with high demand for training and service delivery within their area; and
   e. identification of any other broad training issues which may have regional and/or national significance.

9. **CoP.** The Blueprint identifies the following roles for CoPs:
   a. building strong, supportive networks for practitioners;
   b. engaging and developing volunteerism;
   c. identifying future practitioners and trainers;
   d. fostering the development of the broader practitioner community; and
e. ensuring a clear and regular communication channel from all levels of the programme to its ESOs, practitioners and trainers.

Structural Implications

10. The ATDP intent and implications and adult learning principles, suggest the following respective roles for the RMG, CoP and advocate:
   a. advocates will implement continuously improving client services;
   b. CoP will nurture nationally consistent, client-focused continuous improvement; and
   c. RMGs will provide the means for nationally consistent, client focused, continuous improvement of service delivery across their Regions.

11. Discussion of the structural implications of the RMG and CoP follows.

RMG

12. Amalgamating RMGs’ Blueprint roles, its primary responsibility will be coordination of training and development resources. Unpacking the Blueprint suggests the following operationalisation framework (subparas refer to para 8 above; emphasis added):
   a. ensuring resources are available to enable delivery of formal training courses (subparas a. and d.);
   b. ensuring ESOs needs for nationally-consistent certified Mentor-Workplace Assessors are readily available to support their practitioner advocates (subparas b., c., d., and e.); and
   c. ensuring nationally-consistent, client-focused advocacy services across the Region (subparas c. and e.).

13. Membership. The preceding amalgamation of the roles suggests that, amongst its up to eight Members each of whom must meet more than one of the relevant Mandatory Selection Criteria (to ensure overlapping expertise and Group resilience), each RMG will need the following representation to ensure it fulfils its designated roles:
   a. a Manager;
   b. the RMG’s ASO;
   c. at least one representative formally certified and practising as a Formal Training Course Learning Facilitator;
   d. at least one representative formally certified and practising Compensation Mentor-Workplace Assessor;
   e. at least one representative formally certified and practising Welfare Mentor-Workplace Assessor;
   f. three representatives from Regional CoP/ESOs including:
      (i) a certified Level 2 Welfare Advocate,
(ii) a certified Level 3 or 4 Compensation Advocate, and
(iii) at least one younger veteran.

14. **Selection of RMG Members.** The discussion paper on the selection process for RMG Members has not yet been completed.

**Selection of RMG Manager.**

15. The Job Description for the three RMG Managers (Attachment A) suggests that the person’s primary skill set will be in management.

16. **Critical Skills.** Given the fundamental importance of culture change and development of praxis across the advocacy-base, crucial skill sub-sets will be:
   a. change coordination,
   b. negotiation or conflict resolution, and
   c. quality assurance.

17. **Relative Importance.** If adopted, the RMG constituency suggested at para 13, would ensure that the RMG is well-versed in the following skill sets, and that they are therefore of significantly less importance in selection of the RMG Managers:
   a. adult learning,
   b. OJT and mentoring, and
   c. Rehabilitation\(^1\), Compensation and Welfare Advocacy.

18. **Selection of Manager.** Yet to be developed is a discussion paper on the process by which the Manager is to be selected. The discussion paper will need to address the practical consideration of how a person with professional experience across a wide range of management disciplines might be attracted into an unpaid appointment. Two broad options are open:
   a. election by the RMG Members from amongst those appointed; or
   b. selection of the Manager through an independent process.

**CoP**

19. Challengingly, despite its being the ATDP level at which the most operational and organisational flexibility is required, the CoP is the key to success of the Program.

20. **Confronting Complexity.** This complexity is best confronted by, first, identifying and agreeing what each CoP is to achieve. Para 10 has already suggested that the CoPs’ required primary outcome is to ‘nurture nationally consistent, client-focused continuous improvement’.

21. **Achieving Outcomes.** Achievement of this outcome will necessitate CoPs working with:

\(^1\) Noting here and at para 13 above that Rehabilitation is not an independent training pathway, and has yet to placed in either the Welfare of Compensation Pathways.
ADVOCACY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

22. **Top Down-Bottom Up.** This does not suggest that the RMG’s role is merely to monitor quality. The Blueprint identifies that high quality service delivery is the intended outcome. The means of ensuring it is achieved must engage the tasks at para 8; namely:

a. Regional administration and Formal Training Course delivery;

b. CoPs that network Regional Advocates (practitioners) and Learning Facilitators (trainers);

c. National consistency;

d. Regional responses to training demand and service delivery; and

e. significant training issues communicated to the CFMG.

23. **What might a CoP look Like?** Before considering each of the preceding outcomes, what might constitute a CoP must first be established. Importantly, there can be no one single model. Some identified models include, illustratively:

a. the state-wide network established by Legacy NSW;

b. state-wide formal but virtual CoP such as RSL Welfare and Pensions Forum, Australian Veterans Law Advocacy Network (AVLAN), and the Association of Ex-Service Advocates Australia;

c. Regional Veterans Centres established in Victoria predominantly under a state-wide MOU;

d. sub-Regional hub-and-spoke Veterans Centres such as the Central Coast & Hunter Veterans Support Group(Ourimbah), Northern Rivers (Lismore) and the Mid North Coast Veterans Centre (Coffs Harbour), and the Peninsula Young Veterans Well-Being Centre - some of which have an MOU in place and coordinate BEST Grant applications, disbursements and reconciliations;

e. suburban Veterans Centre such as those established in Bundaberg, Townsville, Wagga, East Sydney, and the Sydney Northern Beaches;

f. formal and informal on-line exchanges of information between TIP Trainers (viz., ATDP Learning Facilitators) and trainee-advocates;

g. on-line (some closed, some informal) issue-specific potential CoP such as those accessed by younger veterans posting queries and information on Facebook and Twitter (including, for example: Aussie Vets PTSD Group; DVA Claims, Cards & Payments Veterans Information Group; Australian Military Toxic Exposure; Peer2Peer; Invisible Wounds Australia; Wounded Heroes; Children of Vietnam Vets); and

h. other on-line Groups with the potential to become nation-wide information distribution points such as (the multi-ESO) Alliance of Defence Service
Organisations (ADSO), (the multi-Service) Women Veterans Network Australia, Soldier On and Australian Defence Force and Veterans Alliance Forum.

24. Returning to the outcomes outlined at para 22 from the perspective of a CoP:

a. **Regional Administration:**
   
   (i) The CoP will be responsible for collating local demand for resources and communicating them to the RMG.
   
   (ii) Local demand will include formal training related to ESO service demand, and training and certification of Mentor-Workplace Assessors.
   
   (iii) With oversight by the RMG Manager, the ASO will have day-to-day responsibility for applying allocated resources to achieve this outcome effectively and efficiently.
   
   (iv) The RMG will investigate demand, prioritise resource requests, prepare business cases and forward to the CFMG for national prioritisation, SGB consideration and resource allocation by DVA.

b. **Formal Training Course Delivery:**
   
   (i) ATDP implementation will transform training into adult learning and transfer learning and development facilitation to the CoPs.
   
   (ii) Additionally, sustaining high standards of service delivery is expected to necessitate a higher average number of cases per practitioner, reducing the total number of advocates.
   
   (iii) As a result, the number of formal courses is also expected to reduce. In turn, sustaining high standards of formal learning facilitation is expected to reduce the number of Formal Training Facilitators.
   
   (iv) This suggests that, under ATDP, Formal Training Facilitators will become a national resource.
   
   (v) This analysis also suggests that Formal face-to-face Learning Facilitation will be conducted in central locations with trainee-advocates travelling.
   
   (vi) A CoP therefore has only one responsibility in respect of Formal Training delivery: to forecast demand so that gaps in service delivery do not occur at the ESO level.
   
   (vii) National ESOs with significant liquidity and Victorian veterans centres that have access to the Patriotic Fund, should be reasonably expected to fund the cost of travel, accommodation and incidentals for their trainee-advocates.
   
   (viii) On the other hand, DVA has long encouraged establishment of veterans centres and significantly fewer personnel will undertake formal training courses under ATDP, suggesting that BEST Grant eligibility might be amended to fund trainee-advocates from veterans centre that have
committed to operating as CoP. This would facilitate formal training for smaller (typically rural/remote) branches and sub-branches, as well as encouraging formation of veterans centres and energising their transition into CoP.

c. Regional Networking:

(i) The TIP-ESO experience has demonstrated indelibly that communication of critical information is a major failing that ATDP must remedy.

(ii) Establishment of formal Regional networks is therefore mandatory. Use of ICT will therefore also be mandatory.

(iii) Only through full utilisation of contemporary ICT will simultaneous dissemination of information between a RMG, its CoPs, all ESOs, all advocates, and all Regional Mentor-Workplace Assessors be possible.

(iv) CoPs will have a crucial role in their Region’s network as they will be the node to which Advocates’ and ESOs demands will first be passed.

(v) The ASO will be central to receiving, collating and communicating CoP demands or queries, and forwarding the data to RMG Members for prioritisation.

(vi) CoP and ESOs will expect timely consideration of and response to the matters they raise – another reason for full utilisation of ICT. This suggests that RMGs’ operational procedures will include on-line decision-making.

(vii) Possession of sound inter-personal skills by CoP leaders and ASOs will also be crucial.

d. Learning Facilitation:

(i) With 90% of learning done by the Advocate in the workplace and (most probably) at home, quality assured and nationally consistent Learning Facilitation by Mentor-Workplace Assessors is crucial to Program success.

(ii) The suggested RMG constituency at para 13 is intended to facilitate Regional oversight of quality service delivery and national consistency.

(iii) Achievement of quality service delivery and national consistency will, however, be a responsibility of each CoP.

(iv) These realities suggest that the RMG Compensation and Welfare Mentor-Workplace Assessors must be sufficiently experienced and professionally credible in the eyes of their CoP peers to be able to mentor and assess effectively.

(v) To be able to mentor and assess within a CoP, each CoP must be led by at least one trained and certified Mentor-Workplace Assessor.
(vi) Whether a CoP needs more than one Mentor-Workplace Assessor will depend primarily on three considerations: the number of trainee-advocates undertaking learning facilitation, the level of learning facilitation each trainee needs, and the geographic area across which the Mentor-Workplace Assessor must practice.

(vii) Of these issues, the Mentor-Workplace Assessor to trainee advocate ratios are the most easily determined. A recommendation by the RTO on that ratio is proposed.

(viii) Operational quantitative and qualitative data will need to be sampled on a case-by-case basis until collated data enable credible benchmarks to be established.

(ix) In the interim, for discussion, a geographic boundary equivalent to one to two hours travel by car is suggested, with mentoring beyond that boundary normally undertaken on-line.

e. National Consistency:

(i) From the CoP perspective, what constitutes national consistency will be established by the CFMG; however, this does not suggest uncritical acceptance by CoPs.

(ii) As the CoPs are networks of practising advocates, they will have a clear idea of the practicalities of achieving nationally consistent standards of service delivery.

(iii) The arbiter is the central ATDP requirement of continuous improvement.

(iv) Achievement of continuous improvement will necessitate routine, active and effective engagement between the CoP and RMG Mentor-Workplace Assessors respectively to communicate and validate the service delivery standards advocates are achieving.

(v) The outcome of the validation process will be the information needed to mentor, gap train, and seek RTO certification.

(vi) The CoP Mentor-Workplace Assessor will implement the activities at subpara v.

f. Regional Prioritisation:

(i) Each CoP’s Mentor-Workplace Assessor will have a crucial responsibility in establishing Regional resource allocation priorities.

(ii) As they will be the interface between ESOs and the RMG, Mentor-Workplace Assessors will need judgement and robust inter-personal skill.

(iii) Unless prepared and able to assess ESO demands impartially and to judge finely the merits of each demand, ATDP as a system will be quickly overwhelmed by unsupportable resource demands.
(iv) This suggests another essential requirement for CoP Mentor-Workplace Assessors: current and through knowledge and ability to communicate ATDP national-level operational objectives.

(v) Again, routine, active and effective two-way communication between CoP Mentor-Workplace Assessors and the RMG is elementary.

g. Quality Improvement:

(i) Continuously improving service delivery by ESO advocates will mark ATDP operational maturity.

(ii) Operational maturity will, however, only have been achieved when continuous improvement is ATDP system-wide.

(iii) Again, noting the work that is being done to create a National On-Line Management System, this preceding realities underscore the crucial need for a comprehensive ICT network connecting all parties engaged in ATDP.

What’s Next?

25. The challenges CFMG now faces are to:
   a. discuss this paper to finalisation and
   b. combine each Panel’s efforts to operationalise the agreed policy.

26. For consideration, a Working Group of Panel Leaders and the CFMG Chair be formed to identify operationalisation actions, resource requirements and timeframe.