DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACCREDITED ADVOCACY REGISTER

The CFMG established a Working Group at its most recent meeting in Melbourne to progress the concept of establishing an Accredited Advocacy Register. The members of this group are Richard Kelloway (SGB), Roger Greene (CFMG), Dennis Mitchell (VITA) and Wayne Stidston (DVA ATDP Secretariat). Since this meeting, Greg Hoving (NTM) has also offered his services to support the Working Group.

The purpose of this paper is to update the Strategic Governance Board (SGB) on the issues under consideration by this group.

There are many benefits to the ATDP of establishing (and maintaining) an Advocacy Register which includes the following:

Why have an ATDP Advocacy Register?

- It differentiates advocates accredited under 10620NAT from other practitioners.
- It provides DVA clients with a means to identify and contact ATDP-trained advocates.
- It empowers DVA clients, providing reliable information regarding the qualifications and currency of advocates.
- It enables ESO’s to verify (possibly upon request) the qualifications held by advocates and (eventually) the currency of advocates.
- It supports the establishment of a Quality Assurance (QA) program, enabling feedback from clients regarding their experiences dealing with the ATDP interface and accredited advocates.
- It provides clients requiring military advocacy services (Compensation or Welfare) with a nation-wide single point of reference.
- It supports the introduction of a range of new technologies to better assist clients to search for accredited advocates. These potentially include targeted solutions supporting access to serving members and younger veterans.
- It has the potential to provide information to clients regarding advocacy services that are available by area (suburb or postcode), expertise, currency or other key search criteria.
- It is a dynamic resource and has the flexibility to be updated and to accommodate additions, deletions and changes as required.
It satisfies a key expectation of both ESOs and DVA clients who support the concept of a national Advocacy Register.

Issues currently under consideration by the CFMG Advocacy Register Working group

- **Advocacy Register design and features.**

The Advocacy Register will need to be contemporary in design and User Friendly. It should provide DVA clients with an appropriate range of search criteria to enable them to access the desired advocacy services.

- **Staged approach to the development of the Advocacy Register**

It may be that the introduction of the Advocacy Register is staged. For example, it could initially only provide a simple search facility enabling the confirmation of a particular advocate’s ATDP qualifications. This functionality could then be enhanced over time as increased capacity enables additional information. NB: It is the strong view of the VITA member on the Working Group that in its initial incarnation, the Advocacy Register should only contain the names of advocates and their level(s) of accreditation.

- **Transition arrangements**

It will take some time before all existing TIP trained practitioners will have an opportunity to have their skills and experience assessed by the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. Therefore, for some time, there will be gaps in ATDP’s ability to facilitate access to accredited advocates in various locations and at higher levels of accreditation. This will have short to medium term impact for DVA clients.

- **Promotion of the Advocacy Register**

Once the Advocacy Register is fully operational it will appear as a selection on the ATDP Website. It will be cross-promoted by links from the DVA Website. It will also need to be promoted via the various ATDP media and ATDP Information Sessions.

- **What information might eventually be available to clients**

Information provided as part of the ATDP enrolment process and at the completion of 10620NAT Units of Competency, and stored in the On-Line Management System (OMS) includes:
(1) Advocates Name  
(2) Advocates Authorising ESO  
(3) ESO Location  
(4) Advocates Units of Competency  
(5) Phone contact(s)  
(6) E-mail contact(s) and;  
(7) Currency *

*(Once the ATDP Professional Development Program is in place in 2018).

Eventually, other information obtained from the advocate/ESO might include;

(1) Days worked  
(2) Hours worked  
(3) ADF Service  
(4) Current availability

- **Privacy Issues**

The ATDP will need to conform with the provisions of the Privacy Act, even if not legally required to do so given its program status. Accredited advocates will therefore need to agree to the inclusion of their information in the Advocacy Register. This will involve contacting advocates who have already successfully completed 10620NAT RPL L1 and L2 to obtain consent to use their information for this purpose; and the addition of an Opt-In or Opt-Out
PROCEDURES WORKSHOP - CONTEXT

Purpose
The purpose of the Workshop is to ensure that the activities being rolled out by the RMGs and CoPs at the regional and local levels in the post-ojuly17 period progress national consistency.

Strategic Context

Introduction
ATDP is the advocate training and development stream within the DVA strategic development program detailed in ‘DVA Towards 2020’.¹

Veteran-Centric Reform (VCR)
DVA has set itself the following client-focused strategies:

- We will think of the whole person and their family when considering client needs.
- We will better deliver compensation and rehabilitation support with a strong focus on the accuracy and timeliness of claims processing.
- We will tailor and customise service delivery to respond to emerging needs.
- We will work with Defence, Ex-Service Organisations, providers and other stakeholders to achieve the best health and wellbeing outcomes for clients.
- We will work with clients and stakeholders to co-design cohesive client-centric services.

DVA will implement these strategies constitutes through its veteran-centric reform program.

ATDP Blueprint
Comparison of DVA’s VCR strategies and implementation of ATDP shows the strength of the relationship between ATDP and VCR:

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button in the OMS and supporting documentation to obtain permission from future enrolments. The details of this process and the associated documentation will need to be cleared by the DVA Legal team to ensure it complies with all aspects of the Privacy Act.

• Technologies to be employed

It has become evident to the Working Group that there is a wide range of technologies and different approaches that could potentially be used to facilitate clients’ contact with accredited advocates. These need to be professionally scoped and assessed for practicality and suitability for use by the ATDP.

• Administration requirements

It is likely that there will be a considerable amount of work required to ensure the Advocacy Register remains current and reliable. To a large degree, the ATDP will be dependent upon CoP, VC, ESO’s and individual advocates to advise of deaths, retirements, change of contact details, movement of advocates and closure of Veteran’s Centres and ESO Branches/Sub-branches. Until habitual behaviours change, DVA clients will likely be the initial source of advice to the ATDP that an advocate is no longer practising. This may be a source of unwanted criticism. We will need to establish change request processes to ensure the new information is correct and the Advocacy Register is only changed on the basis of reliable advice. We may need to also put in place a regular records audit process to ensure the accuracy of the ATDP records. NB: It is the view of the VITA representative on the Working Party that any reliance upon CoP, VC or ESO’s updating information is not a realistic expectation at this point in time.

• ESO management of the workload of Advocates

Most Veterans Centres expend considerable effort, and a few ESO Branches/Sub-branches, to manage their volunteers’ workloads. Some concerns are likely if the Advocacy Register is seen to have the potential to direct clients to advocates without their knowledge. We will need to work closely with authorising VC/ESOs to ensure their concerns are taken into account.

• Request for reports and general enquiries regarding ATDP Advocates
It is understood that some ESO’s, especially State Branches/Divisions, have limited knowledge of how many volunteers in Sub-branches/Branches are practising and who is qualified to do so. They will no doubt use the Advocacy Register for this purpose if it has the functionality, or request reports from ATDP if this cannot be easily be done with their level of access. Further, we have recent cases of an individual allegedly requesting information regarding a third party’s advocacy credentials for the purpose of discrediting that person in their attempt to obtain a position within an ESO. We will need to develop detailed policies around access and release of information held in the Advocacy Register.

- **Complaint Management**

When clients use the Advocacy Register they will expect a means of redress if they experience difficulties accessing an advocate or are dissatisfied with the service that has been provided. Traditionally, complaints regarding advocates’ performance have gone directly to ESOs or DVA for resolution. A clear policy will need to be in place as to how these matters will be managed and resolved within the ATDP.

- **Authority to Act**

The Advocacy Register will be able to provide clients with information regarding the qualification of advocates and their contact details. Once the ATDP Continuing Professional Development program is in place, we will also be able to advise clients on the currency of advocates. However, at this stage, we cannot confirm the advocate’s authority to act on behalf of a VC/ESO. Further, it is only the Authorising VC/ESO that possesses real time knowledge of the capacity of an advocate to perform their duties. Those DVA clients relying on the Advocacy Register for information regarding qualified ATDP advocates will need to be aware of its limitations.

**Next steps?**

The CFMG Working Group will develop a consensus to the introduction of the Accredited Advocacy Register and have undertaken to report progress to the CFMG at its September 4-5 meeting. Updates will be provided to the SGB and when a final approach is agreed, it will be referred to the CFMG and SGB for endorsement. It is likely that, given the complexity of the issues, this may take
some months as various options and approaches are fully scoped and investigated.

Update on behalf of the following:

**The CFMG Advocacy Register Working Group**

Richard Kelloway (SGB) – Interim Advocacy Register Working Party Chair

Roger Greene (CFMG Deputy Chair)

Dennis Mitchell (CFMG/VITA)

Greg Hoving (National Training Manager)

Wayne Stidston (DVA ATDP Secretariat)