REVIEW OF VETERANS’ ADVOCACY TRAINING – SUMMARY PAPER

Purpose

This document identifies some of the underlying themes from the Review of Veterans’ Advocacy Training, which is being led by Brigadier William Rolfe AO, (Ret’d).

Key Components

The Review has identified an approach to future advocacy training. Transition to this approach would be required over a period of time. The approach revolves around four key components:

- development and content of the programme of instruction (training programme);
- support and development of the trainers;
- support and development of pensions and welfare officers who are being trained (practitioners); and
- how the training programme operates.

Suggested Improvements

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Training Programme</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<td>The training programme should be re-developed and managed by the Department with the expert assistance of the ESO community, TIP and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).</td>
<td>Consultation indicated that the current training is not targeted towards meeting national goals in a structured, consistent manner, and that it is not in-line with adult education principles.</td>
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<td>A clear, overarching set of training goals should be identified to drive the development of the training programme.</td>
<td>The programme should be improved to give practitioners a clear, structured learning and development path through their training, with appropriate on-the-job training (OJT) &amp; mentoring included.</td>
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<td>It should be nationally consistent, in-line with adult learning principles and revolve around assessed competency standards.</td>
<td>The quality of training and currency of content was also seen as inconsistent.</td>
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<td>It should provide the necessary measures and assessment data to allow the regular review of the programme’s success and quality.</td>
<td>DVA is best placed to identify, develop and review the training content through consultation with TIP, internal stakeholders, the ESO community and RTO training expertise.</td>
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<td>The programme should provide a clear training and development path from novice practitioner to senior levels. This should be supported by formal on-the-job training (OJT) and mentoring by the practitioner’s parent ESO.</td>
<td>Parent ESOs were also seen as not always having access to adequate training and resources to allow them to provide the required OJT and mentoring.</td>
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<td>It should include training to support parent ESOs in their role of providing OJT and mentoring to practitioners.</td>
<td>Whilst it is seen as essential that the quality of training should be ensured through appropriate competence assessment, views on formal accreditation of the programme varied. As long as the programme redevelopment work ensures that the training programme is best positioned to allow accreditation, an informed decision as to whether or not to formally accredit the programme will be best made once the programme development is well underway.</td>
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<td>Based on these principles an accreditation ready programme would be developed and implemented over the transition period.</td>
<td>Improvements in the efficiency of course</td>
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<td>A decision as to whether to formally accredit this programme would be taken during this period. This decision would be taken once the full impacts of accreditation on the overall training goals are understood.</td>
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wherever appropriate, consolidation of course delivery locations and exploration of opportunities to share content and/or training between practitioners and Departmental staff. development and delivery will lead to savings in the administration costs of this training.

**Trainers**

- Trainers would be selected from TIP volunteers, DVA staff, including Veterans’ Review Board (VRB) officers (to provide expert knowledge where appropriate) and contracted RTO staff as required.
- A train-the-trainer programme would be developed and implemented to ensure trainers are competent in both their training and their practitioner assessment skills.
- It is expected that this programme would provide formal accreditation for trainers. Transitioning to a formal accreditation programme for a training body with a significant number of volunteers will however take some time.
- Increased use of non-volunteer trainers would mitigate the effects of declining training volunteer numbers and any difficulties experienced in retaining current volunteer trainers.

  Fulsome training and competence assessment of trainers, with a longer term implementation of formal trainer accreditation, would ensure that trainers were able to provide the best quality training.

  Some younger volunteer trainers may also derive vocational benefit from this train-the-trainer programme, making volunteering to deliver training more attractive.

**Practitioners**

- All practitioners would be assessed for competency based on the training they have undertaken. Assessment tools could range from simple recognition of prior learning and task assessment journals for novices through to more detailed assessment tools, aligned with formal industry standards, for senior practitioners such as those appearing at the AAT.
- Stricter selection criteria for trainees should be applied by parent ESOs to improve the capacity and commitment of those who undertake training and to improve their likelihood of progressing to using their training to effectively benefit the veteran community.

  Competence assessment linked to a clear training roadmap would ensure that practitioners can derive most benefit from their training and so best assist the veteran community.

  It will also assist in recognising and recording skill and knowledge levels to allow the veteran community to best identify who to approach for assistance. It may also allow DVA to consider links between competence assessed advocates and claims processing priorities.

  Maximising the number of trainees with the necessary capacity and commitment to provide pensions or welfare assistance to the veteran community would better share the load across trained practitioners, as well as improving the efficiency of the training system.
## How the Programme Operates

- The operation of the training programme will be improved through a re-examination, and subsequent clear specification, of the roles of those involved in that administration.

- This development and implementation of a new operational model is separate to the re-development of the training programme described previously.

- Three possible operational model options are provided and these are discussed in more detail at Attachment A. The options are:
  1. Revitalise the current TIP structure.
  2. DVA administration of the programme.
  3. Market-based administration of the programme.

- These models reflect differing levels of involvement of the three key providers, DVA, TIP and an RTO. The most efficient, and effective balance of these three may vary as the new programme matures.

- It is likely that a final decision on the preferred operational model would be best made once significant progress on the re-development of the training programme had occurred.

Streamlining the operation of the training programme is likely to lead to a more effective and efficient working relationship between the ESO community, DVA and the training deliverer.
The operation of the training programme was discussed frequently during the consultation. It was noted that the relationship between the three stakeholders (TIP, the ESO community and DVA) could be improved to provide a more efficient and effective training system.

Three options for the operational model are provided:

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<th>Option</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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| **A - Revitalise the current TIP structure** | The current state and national TIP structures could be retained and TIP would be responsible for administering the day-to-day, operational duties of running the training programme. These duties would include:  
- organising the training schedule in consultation with the ESO community and DVA;  
- selecting, organising and maintaining the trainers and delivery of the training packages; and  
- creating and maintaining a register of attendees and the training competencies they have acquired.  
Strategic and implementation plans for this work could be developed in consultation between TIP, DVA and the ESO community, with RTO assistance as required. |
| **B - DVA Operation of the Training Programme** | DVA would take on the operational duties of running the training programme, including:  
- organising the training schedule in consultation with the ESO community;  
- organising and supporting the trainers. DVA would encourage current TIP training volunteers to continue their valued work and would be responsible for engaging more volunteer trainers. These trainers would be supplemented with DVA and RTO staff where required; and  
- creating and maintaining a register of attendees and the training competencies they have acquired.  
Depending on available resources and strategic priorities, DVA’s level of involvement in delivering the training could vary from undertaking all training, with the assistance of an RTO, through to just providing train-the-trainer support for volunteer and RTO trainers. |

The current programme takes significant operational work, in the main by volunteers. These volunteers could otherwise be involved in delivering training and or practitioner support to the veteran community.  
The structure leads to significant double handling of work as operational and expenditure management duties are undertaken and approved within TIP but that work must then be forwarded to DVA for all payment actions, travel and accommodation arrangements etc.  
The current working relationship between TIP, the ESO community and DVA could be improved through better codification and delineation of roles and responsibilities and broader representation of training issues to the ESO Round Table.  
Centralisation of the operational duties would lead to a flatter structure with DVA staff undertaking administrative roles, thereby allowing volunteers to focus on training and practitioner activities.  
Double handling of operational work would be minimised and communication required for course development etc. would be streamlined. |
## C - Market Based Operation of the Training Programme

An approach to market would be undertaken to engage an external organisation to take responsibility for the programme’s operational duties. DVA would have contractual management responsibility.

The contractor would be responsible for:
- selecting, organising and maintaining the trainers. Current TIP training volunteers would be encouraged to continue their valued work and the RTO and DVA would be responsible for trying to engage more volunteer trainers. These trainers would be supplemented with DVA and RTO staff where required;
- organising the training schedule in consultation with the ESO community and DVA;
- day-to-day administration of the training programme; and
- creating and maintaining a register of attendees and the training competencies they have acquired.

Operational duties would be centralised within an organisation that has specific expertise in training. This could lead to further efficiencies and programme improvements.

There would be an apparent separation between DVA and the provision of training.