

Review of DVA's Strategic Research Model

Call for Submissions

Submission background and instructions

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is reviewing the Department's Strategic Research Model.

Under the Strategic Research Model, there are four priority domains relating to veteran and ex-service community research:

- Longitudinal research - tracks individuals over time;
- Data analysis and modelling - forecasts trends in client patterns and needs;
- Families - examines physical and psychological well-being of partners and children of veterans; and
- Interventions - examines best practice and the effectiveness of health interventions.

DVA commissions a wide range of research, predominantly into the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. Examples of recently funded research projects include examinations of the health effects of chemical exposure in the defence force, the mental and physical health status of veterans transitioning from the military, the vocational needs of veterans transitioning from the military, and new ways of treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). DVA partners with a range of different organisations and research bodies to deliver these projects. Research projects play an important role in supporting evidence-based policy and program development.

DVA employs a procurement approach for commissioning research projects. That is, business units within DVA identify research needs then DVA procures a contractor to undertake the research project.

To inform the review, DVA is seeking submissions on:

1. how the Department selects research areas/topics;
2. how the Department manages relationships with researchers and research institutions;
3. appropriateness of the current four research domains; and
4. any other matters related to strategic research, including suggested future research topics DVA can examine in the future.

The questions and Terms of Reference are provided below.

[Please limit each response to half a page]

Question 1

What are the strengths and weaknesses in the way DVA approaches external parties to conduct research projects? Are there areas for improvement with these partnerships in the future? (E.g. researchers, research institutions, government departments).

DVA currently has a number of relationships with external research bodies. These are primarily the research bodies that conduct the research that DVA commissions. Your views of how these relationships are managed are being sought. Please indicate what works, what does not work, and how things could be improved. If you do not currently have a relationship with DVA, you could describe what an ideal relationship could be and how a relationship between your body and DVA could be mutually beneficial.

Question 2

DVA research is categorised into four domains, as listed above. Do these domains effectively capture the issues facing veterans and their families? Are the domains still relevant for conducting and categorising research?

The role of the four domains is to help prioritise and categorise research projects within the department.

Question 3

How can DVA ensure the research undertaken is relevant to contemporary issues facing veterans and their families?

DVA conducts research in order to improve veterans' health and wellbeing and increase society's understanding of the challenges veterans face. To ensure we continue to meet this objective your views are sought on issues that are important to veterans. Please indicate areas of interest/concern for the veteran community and suggest how DVA's research can best address these. Please indicate any important topics that you think DVA has omitted from research or any topics DVA is currently investigating that you believe the Department should shift focus away from. For a list DVA's current activities see: <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-dva/publications/research-and-studies/health-research-publications>

Question 4

Are there any additional comments about DVA's Strategic Research Model? (eg governance structures, emerging risks, the responsiveness of DVA research etc.)

DVA Research Strategic Model and Governance Arrangements Review Terms of Reference

The purpose of the review is to undertake an examination of the DVA Research Strategic Model and governance arrangements. Specifically, the Review will:

1. Assess performance of the DVA Research Strategic Model since its implementation on 1 July 2013:
 - a. Strengths and achievements, including whether the four research domains remain relevant;
 - b. Limitations and areas for further improvement; and
 - c. Emerging risks.

2. Review and assess current governance arrangements:
 - a. Respective roles of line management, Research Board and Commissions;
 - b. Research Board – Terms of reference and operations; and
 - c. Framework for Commissions consideration of new research proposals.

3. Identify opportunities to enhance governance arrangements and operations to enable DVA administered research to be responsive to the needs of the Department.

4. Review and assess current research partnerships (internal and external) and provide recommendations on future opportunities:
 - a. DVA business area engagement;
 - b. Assessment of current partnerships (Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Institute of Family Studies);
 - c. Exploration of emerging partnership research opportunities; and
 - d. International collaborations.

The terms of reference were approved by the DVA Research Board on 23 November 2016, with agreement from the Repatriation Commission and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission on 2 February 2017.