

8 November 2023

Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO BOX 9998
Brisbane QLD 4001

Dear Department of Veterans' Affairs

RE: Research and Evaluation Strategic Partnership Consultation Questions

Suicide Prevention Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the design of a new approach for the DVA's research, evaluation, and data analysis activities. Suicide Prevention Australia is the national peak body for the suicide prevention sector. With over 430 members representing more than 140,000 workers, staff, and volunteers across Australia, we provide a collective voice for service providers, practitioners, researchers, local collaboratives, and people with lived experience.

Please find below brief responses to the consultation questions Suicide Prevention Australia is best placed to respond to:

1.1. What are your views on the key priority areas for research? Are there any priority areas that we should add/or change?

Suicide Prevention Australia agrees that suicide should be a key priority area but suggests the priority area is revised to include aftercare and veteran families.

2.2. What are the benefits and challenges of combining research and evaluation work?

A challenge of combining research and evaluation work is that two different teams would need to be engaged. This requires a team for research and a separate team to undertake evaluation

3.1. How do we ensure a wide range of organisations are involved in funding, research and evaluation in relation to veterans?

The DVA should invite a broad range of veteran organisations and specialist services to participate. The DVA could directly approach these organisations or consider open tenders.



4.1. To what extent would organisations undertaking research and evaluation expect access to DVA and Defence data? For DVA and Defence data, would there be a benefit in developing a curated data set available for research and evaluation?

Ideally, organisations undertaking research and evaluation should have a curated data set that has been de-identified. The contents of the data set would vary based on the research goals but generally, data that includes information on the determinants of suicide could allow researchers to determine trends and develop strategies to support veterans. In addition, there are currently gaps in the veteran population data collected by PHNs. Addressing this gap, would help inform suicide prevention responses and allow PHNs to craft evidence-based strategies to support veterans.

5.1. In your experience with research participants and/or the veteran community, what are the critical areas of concern when it comes to privacy?

A key area of concern is de-identifying personal information. Data needs to be de-identified to protect the privacy of research participants and the veteran community. Data is adequately de-identified when there is no reasonable likelihood of re-identification occurring.

5.5. What approaches could research, and evaluation organisations take to gain community support for research, and the use of data for research?

Data collected has to be purpose built.

5.6. What can DVA do to help the community feel as comfortable as possible with participating in research and knowing their DVA data may be used in research? What about the use of data from non-DVA sources

The DVA could ask a well-respected community member who will take a compassion-based and trauma informed approach to talk to their local community about participating in research.

6.1. How could DVA draw on a partner's research, evaluation and academic expertise?

Build strong relationships with partner organisations and establish trust.

6.2. What sort of mechanisms would bring these together most effectively?

The DVA should ensure that all project teams include people with lived experience, clinicians, family members and representatives from relevant services.



7.4. Does the sector have the capacity for large and/or specialised research and evaluation projects?

Yes, the sector is very capable and can undertake these types of projects.

12.1. Would research and evaluation organisations be interested in leveraging other research mechanisms e.g., NHMRC, Australian Research Council (ARC) and international organisations? What would the pros and cons be of doing this?

Suicide Prevention Australia through the National Suicide Prevention Research Fund should be provided with the funds to administer this project on behalf of Veterans Affairs.

If the Department of Veterans' Affairs requires any further information please contact Christopher Stone, Suicide Prevention Australia's Director of Policy and Government Relations, chriss@suicidepreventionaust.org.

Yours sincerely



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