



# DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

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*Patron:* His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd)  
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

File: 57.01

27 March 2008

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Griffin,

### **Response to the Discussion Paper on the Consultative Forum (CF) for the Family Study Program (FSP) and the Vietnam Veterans' Family Study (VVFS)**

Thanks for your letter of 21 February, asking DFWA to comment on the Discussion Paper.

DFWA believes that most of the initial resources and urgency should be directed at completing the VVFS because Vietnam Veterans and their families form the largest cohort and time is slipping away for that group. In general, DFWA supports the COVVHS group's submission for that particular study.

Other deployment-specific studies may be needed to run almost in parallel, to test any hypotheses as they emanate from the VVFS. By running one or two parallel studies it may be possible to confirm and ameliorate, in a more timely fashion, any universal problems which are identified by the VVFS and which may be relevant to families affected by current and future ADF deployments.

To avoid "cross-contamination" between the various studies it would be preferable to have separate Consultative Forums for each study although that should not prevent some ESOs ( and their representatives) being members of more than one Consultative Form as the more recent deployment studies will have some commonality. A practical consequence could be that, when several studies are being conducted at the same time, the associated Consultative Forum meetings could be held on the one day and at the one venue with the composition for each

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meeting changing slightly. Once experience has been gained it could be possible to merge some of the study CFs.

Once general hypotheses have been developed from the initial series of studies and confirmed to be generally applicable, it may be possible to look only for any significant *differences* in each future ADF deployment to determine whether additional full family health studies are needed. You may wish to obtain independent medical scientific advice on this point.

DFWA's answers to discussion paper questions are attached.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Jamison".

David Jamison  
National President

**1. What Type of CF?**

To avoid “cross-contamination” of results, it would be best to establish a separate CF for each study.

**2. How will members be selected?**

Given that the CFs’ primary roles will be to monitor and recommend adjustments to the primary scientific work to be undertaken in each study, members should be selected on the basis of good general knowledge of veteran’s issues and some understanding of the principles of medical scientific research, as well as more obvious skills such as an ability to think clearly and communicate well with both the veterans and the scientific communities.

It is probable that most of the best qualified members will be found from within the current organized ESOs and veterans’ families groups.

**3. Should representatives from the consultative forum that was formed for the feasibility study be appointed to the new CF?**

Yes: for the Vietnam Veterans Family Study. No: for any studies of other deployments, for which other members with more relevant experience should be sought.

**4. Possible Roles and Responsibilities and Terms of Reference for the CF**

**Roles and Responsibility**

DFWA sees no problems with what is proposed.