

Audit report of the 2023–24
annual performance statements

Department of Veterans' Affairs



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT on the 2023-24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Veterans' Affairs

To the Minister for Finance

Qualified Conclusion

In my opinion, except for the possible effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Conclusion section of my report, the 2023-24 Annual Performance Statements of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA):

- present fairly DVA's performance in achieving its purpose for the year ended 30 June 2024; and
- are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the *Public, Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act).

Audit criteria

In order to assess whether DVA's annual performance statements complied with Division 3 of Part 2-3 of the Act, I applied the following criteria:

- whether the entity's key activities, performance measures and specified targets are appropriate to measure and assess the entity's performance in achieving its purposes;
- whether the performance statements are prepared based upon appropriate records that properly record and explain the entity's performance; and
- whether the annual performance statements present fairly the entity's performance in achieving the entity's purposes in the reporting period.

Basis for Qualified Conclusion

Program 3.1: War graves

Performance measures 3.1-1, 3.1-2 and 3.1-3

DVA has reported results for performance measures 3.1-1, 3.1-2 and 3.1-3, as described in Appendix A, that are not based on reliable and verifiable data sources. These are the only measures in the performance statements for Program 3.1 War graves, which is material to Outcome 3 and DVA's purpose. As a result, I was unable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit

evidence that the reported results for performance measures 3.1-1, 3.1-2 and 3.1-3 are fairly presented DVA's performance for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Accountable Authority's responsibilities

As the Accountable Authority of DVA, the Secretary is responsible under the PGPA Act for:

- the preparation of annual performance statements that accurately present DVA's performance in the reporting period and comply with the requirements of the PGPA Act and any requirements prescribed by the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (the Rule);
- keeping records about DVA's performance as required by the PGPA Act; and
- establishing internal controls that the Accountable Authority determines are appropriate to enable the preparation of annual performance statements.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the performance statements

My responsibility is to conduct a reasonable assurance engagement to express an independent opinion on DVA's annual performance statements.

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian National Audit Office Auditing Standards, which include the relevant Standard on Assurance Engagements (ASAE) 3000 *Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information* issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

I plan and perform my procedures to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual performance statements of the entity present fairly the entity's performance in achieving its purposes and comply, in all material respects, with the PGPA Act and Rule.

The nature, timing and extent of audit procedures depend on my judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, in the annual performance statements. In making these risk assessments, I obtain an understanding of internal controls relevant to the preparation of the annual performance statements in order to design procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

Independence and quality control

I have complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, and applied Auditing Standard ASQM 1 *Quality Management for Firms that Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements* in undertaking this assurance engagement.

Inherent limitations

Because of the inherent limitations of an assurance engagement, it is possible that fraud, error or non-compliance may occur and not be detected. An assurance engagement is not designed to detect all instances of non-compliance of the annual performance statements with the PGPA Act and the Rule as it is not performed continuously throughout the period

and the assurance procedures performed are undertaken on a test basis. The reasonable assurance conclusion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Australian National Audit Office

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L Skipper', written in a cursive style.

Lorena Skipper
Executive Director

Canberra

25 September 2024

Appendix A — Referencing for Measures in the Basis for Qualified Conclusion paragraph

In preparing the Basis for Qualified Conclusion, I have used the following referencing system.

<p>Outcome 3: Acknowledgement and commemoration of those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations through promoting recognition of service and sacrifice, preservation of Australia’s wartime heritage, and official commemorations.</p>		
<p>Program 3.1 War graves</p> <p>This program acknowledges and commemorates veterans’ service and sacrifice and promotes an increased understanding of Australia’s wartime history. To meet the Australian Government’s commitment, the Office of Australian War Graves cares for and maintains official commemorations and sites of collective official commemoration to the standards set by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).</p> <p>Key Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and maintain war cemeteries, war plots, gardens of remembrance and memorials to the missing and other individual official commemorations for those eligible veterans who have died as a result of their service to Australia in wars, conflicts and peace operations. • To operate and maintain memorial sites in Thailand, Malaysia and France. 		
<i>Measure number</i>	<i>Performance criteria</i>	<i>Target</i>
2023-24 Performance measure		
Measure 3.1-1	Quality of Service: New official commemorations are completed within published timeframes	>95%
Measure 3.1-2	Quality of Service: Maintain public access to memorial sites in Thailand, Malaysia and France	Unscheduled closures ≤5 days
Measure 3.1-3	Official commemorations are inspected to ensure they continue to meet the CWGC standard	≥95% inspected

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Annual performance statements

Statement by the accountable authority

I, as the accountable authority of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, present the 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements of the department, as required under Section 39(1) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).

In my opinion, these Annual Performance Statements accurately reflect the performance of the department and comply with Section 39(2) of the PGPA Act.



Alison Frame

Secretary

Department of Veterans' Affairs

23 September 2024

Introduction

The DVA Annual Performance Statements 2023–24 present achievements against DVA's purpose, outcomes, key activities, programs, performance measures and targets as set out in the DVA Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24 (PBS) and DVA Corporate Plan 2023–24 (CP).

Changes to DVA's performance measures

The performance measures reported on in the DVA 2023–24 Annual Performance Statements are the same as those published in the 2023–24 CP, with the exception of measure 3.1-1. For this measure there has been a change in methodology – ashes placements placed by crematorium authorities and plaques placed in gardens of remembrance by staff are now excluded from the reported results. The change has been made due to limited information being provided by some cemetery and crematorium authorities.

Changes since 2022–23 reporting

To improve DVA's performance reporting, the 2 war graves measures from 2022–23 (measure 3.1-1 – *95% of official commemorations are inspected at least once annually to ensure they continue to meet the CWGC standards* and measure 3.1-2 – *Percentage of official commemorations that meet the CWGC standard compared to the previous year*) were removed and replaced with new measures related to the timeliness of new commemorations (measure 3.1-1 – *Quality of Service: New official commemorations are completed within published timeframes*) and the public accessibility to 3 memorial sites (measure 3.1-2 – *Quality of Service: Maintain public access to memorial sites in Thailand, Malaysia and France*). These were introduced and published in the 2023–24 PBS and the 2023–24 CP. A measure related to the inspection of commemorative assets was also reintroduced (measure 3.1-3 – *Official commemorations are inspected to ensure they continue to meet the CWGC standard*) after the publication of the 2023–24 PBS to ensure performance information was complete by including a measure related to the inspection of the war graves program. The wording for measures 2.1-1 to 2.5-1 changed slightly from *Quality of Service: The proportion of clients accessing services against the total number of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality*, to *Quality of Service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services*. No other changes were made to the performance reporting suite.

Performance measures changes in the future – post 2023–24

DVA is in a period of substantial change, with more resourcing than it has had in the past. DVA is looking to engage more meaningfully with clients, partners and other providers to create stronger connections so that DVA can work more efficiently to provide veterans and families the supports they need. Also, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide is scheduled to release its Final Report on 9 September 2024. Taken together, DVA has a rare opportunity to marshal this convergence of collective will and resources to reimagine how it supports the veteran community and drive meaningful improvement in supporting veterans and families, which in turn will influence future performance measures. In this context, as part of its annual review, DVA will simplify the performance measures and make them more meaningful.

FIGURE 2: PERFORMANCE REPORTING ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE PORTFOLIO BUDGET STATEMENTS, CORPORATE PLAN AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS

CORPORATE PLAN PURPOSE	Our Purpose			
	The purpose of the Department of Veterans' Affairs is to support the wellbeing of those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation, and families, by:			
PORTFOLIO BUDGET STATEMENTS	ENHANCE WELLBEING		RECOGNITION AND RESPECT	
	Outcomes	<p>Outcome 1: Maintain and enhance the financial wellbeing and self-sufficiency of eligible persons and their dependants through access to income support, compensation and other support services, including advice and information about entitlements.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Maintain and enhance the physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life of eligible persons and their dependants through health and other care services that promote early intervention, prevention and treatment, including advice and information about health entitlements.</p>	<p>Outcome 3: Acknowledgement and commemoration of those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations through promoting recognition of service and sacrifice, preservation of Australia's wartime heritage, and official commemorations.</p>
	Budget programs	<p>1.1 Veterans' Income Support and Allowances</p> <p>1.2 Veterans' Disability Support</p> <p>1.3 Assistance to Defence Widow/ers and Dependants</p> <p>1.4 Assistance and Other Compensation for Veterans and Dependants</p> <p>1.5 Veterans' Children Education Scheme</p> <p>1.6 Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Acts Payments – Income Support and Compensation</p>	<p>2.1 General Medical Consultations and Services</p> <p>2.2 Veterans' Hospital Services</p> <p>2.3 Veterans' Pharmaceutical Benefits</p> <p>2.4 Veterans' Community Care and Support</p> <p>2.5 Veterans' Counselling and Other Health Services</p> <p>2.6 Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Acts – Health and Other Care Services</p>	<p>3.1 War Graves</p> <p>3.2 Commemorative Activities</p>
	Report against performance measures			
ANNUAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENTS	Performance information	<p>Performance criteria</p> <p>Performance measures established to assess that DVA is enhancing the financial wellbeing of eligible persons and their dependants through access to income support, compensation and other support services.</p>	<p>Performance criteria</p> <p>Performance measures established to assess that DVA is enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of eligible persons and their dependants by having arrangements in place for all of our clients to have timely access to high-quality health care, counselling and rehabilitation services.</p>	<p>Performance criteria</p> <p>Performance measures established to assess that DVA cares for and maintains official commemorations and sites of collective commemoration to the standards and acknowledges and commemorates those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations.</p>

How we measure performance

The Annual Performance Statements illustrate our achievements against our purpose set out in the 2023–24 CP. This is done through reporting DVA's actual performance for the year against the performance measures and targets in DVA's PBS and CP and providing analysis of the extent to which the department has achieved its purpose, including factors contributing to the performance result. These Annual Performance Statements were developed in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and relevant Department of Finance guidelines. Refer to page 15–16 of the 2023–24 CP for more information.

For each program, our PBS and CP set out performance measures and targets, which are a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures. For Outcome 1 and Outcome 2, performance is measured by assessing timeliness, quality and client satisfaction. For Outcome 3, performance is measured by assessing war graves and commemorations. This is summarised in the tables below.

TABLE 1: OUTCOME 1 PERFORMANCE MEASURE CATEGORIES

Performance category	Performance measure number
Timeliness	1.1-1, 1.1-2, 1.2-1, 1.3-1, 1.4-1, 1.5-1, 1.6-1, 1.6-2, 1.6-3, 1.6-7, 1.6-8, 1.6-9
Quality	1.1-3, 1.1-4, 1.2-2, 1.3-2, 1.4-2, 1.5-2, 1.6-4, 1.6-5, 1.6-6, 1.6-10, 1.6-11, 1.6-12
Client satisfaction	1.1-5, 1.2-3, 1.3-3, 1.4-3, 1.4-4, 1.6-13

TABLE 2: OUTCOME 2 PERFORMANCE MEASURE CATEGORIES

Performance category	Performance measure number
Timeliness	2.5-2, 2.5-4, 2.6-1
Quality of service	2.1-1, 2.2-1, 2.3-1, 2.4-1, 2.5-1
Client satisfaction	2.5-5, 2.6-3

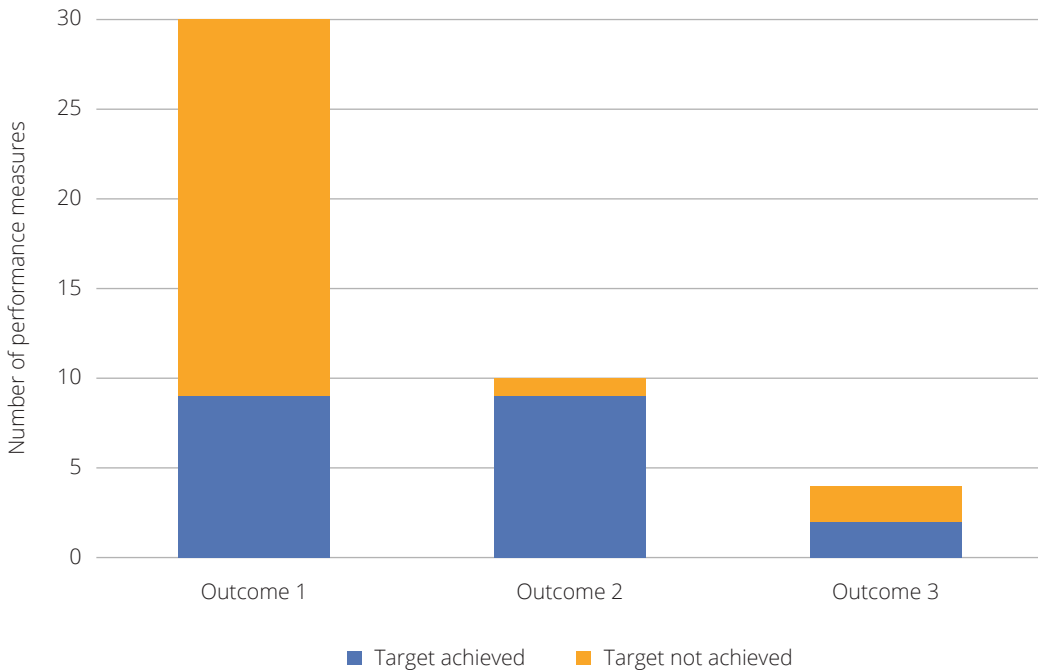
TABLE 3: OUTCOME 3 PERFORMANCE MEASURE CATEGORIES

Performance category	Performance measure number
War graves	3.1-1, 3.1-2, 3.1-3
Commemorations	3.2-1

Overview of performance

Of DVA's 44 performance measures, we achieved the targets for 20 and did not achieve the targets for 24 during the reporting period. Figure 3 provides a snapshot of our overall performance, summarising the number of targets achieved or not achieved across our 3 outcomes.

FIGURE 3: PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT, 2023–24



For Outcome 1, DVA achieved 3 of the 12 timeliness measure targets, 5 of the 12 quality measure targets, and 1 of the 6 client satisfaction targets. Timeliness of claims processing continued to be a top priority for DVA in 2023–24. DVA also experienced a significant increase in the volume of claims received. DVA continued to recruit and train additional frontline staff through ongoing recruitment drives throughout 2023–24, with an additional 398 claims processing staff coming on board through the year. DVA is processing claims at record levels, with significant resourcing being directed towards processing the existing backlog of compensation claims. Improvements in timeliness of claims processing were seen as a consequence of additional resourcing, as well as improvements in training and experience of existing staff and other business improvements.

The recruitment of staff was challenging due to tight labour markets. DVA delivers a comprehensive blended training program (e-learning, classroom, coaching and networking) for claims processing delegates, with an emphasis on on-the-job training. On-the-job training ensures staff members are supported while undertaking different activities, reinforcing their learning and building capability.

For Outcome 2, DVA achieved all 5 quality measure targets, all 3 timeliness measure targets, and 1 of the 2 client satisfaction targets. This reflects DVA's successful delivery of programs to maintain and enhance the wellbeing of veterans and families. Throughout 2023–24 veterans and their families were connected to high-quality, evidence-based and responsive services funded through Outcome 2. DVA ensured clients had timely access to high-quality healthcare, counselling and rehabilitation services; and maintained and developed services that supported the holistic wellbeing of veterans and families. DVA continues to review and improve business practices and enabling systems to ensure programs are delivered efficiently and effectively.

For Outcome 3, DVA achieved 1 of the 3 war graves performance measure targets, as well as the 1 commemorations performance measure target. Each year DVA plans and undertakes a regular program of maintenance and inspections which is managed by the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) field staff in each state. In 2023–24, DVA's results for performance measures 3.1-1 and 3.1-3 are not supported by sufficient evidence due to limitations in the War Graves System and information provided by cemeteries and crematoriums. Performance for these measures in 2023–24 was impacted by resourcing constraints, adverse weather conditions, reliance on cemetery authorities and contractors and a lack of skilled tradespeople. In 2024–25, DVA intends to report on a customer satisfaction-based measure which will enable DVA to more reliably report on the maintenance of commemorations.

In 2023–24, DVA delivered 8 commemorative events and activities that were well received by the Australian and international communities. The department remains committed to caring for and maintaining official commemorations and memorials to required standards.

Outcome 1

Maintain and enhance the financial wellbeing and self-sufficiency of eligible persons and their dependants through access to income support, compensation and other support services, including advice and information about entitlements.

DVA's performance under Outcome 1 is measured by our achievements in 3 categories: timeliness, quality and client satisfaction.

Outcome 1 performance measures and results

Program 1.1: Veterans' Income Support and Allowances

This program delivers means-tested income support pensions and other allowances to eligible veterans and dependants under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA). Income support provides a regular means-tested payment for eligible veterans and their dependants with limited means.

Key activities:

- Provide income and financial support and compensation payments to eligible veterans and families.

TABLE 4: PROGRAM 1.1 VETERANS' INCOME SUPPORT AND ALLOWANCES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
1.1-1	Timeliness: The percentage of claims processed within 30 days ^{1,2}	≥50% ⁴	56% ³	53%	Achieved
1.1-2	Timeliness: The percentage of change of circumstances processed within 10 days ^{1,5}	≥50% ⁴	51% ³	54%	Achieved
1.1-3	Quality: Correctness rate of processed new claims ^{2,6}	≥95%	97%	93%	Not achieved
1.1-4	Quality: Correctness rate of processed change of circumstances ^{5,6}	≥95%	99%	98%	Achieved
1.1-5	Client satisfaction: The percentage of clients satisfied with the level of customer service they received when accessing their entitlement ^{7,8,9}	≥80%	68%	69%	Not achieved

(PBS pp 33–34, CP p 18)

Program 1.2: Veterans' Disability Support

This program provides compensation in the form of disability pensions and ancillary benefits to eligible veterans for the tangible effects of war or defence service.

Key activities:

- Provide disability support and compensation payments to eligible veterans.

TABLE 5: PROGRAM 1.2 VETERANS' DISABILITY SUPPORT – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
1.2-1	Timeliness: The percentage of claims processed within 100 days ^{1,10}	≥50% ⁴	16%	14%	Not achieved
1.2-2	Quality: Correctness rate of processed claims ^{6,10}	≥95%	94%	90%	Not achieved
1.2-3	Client satisfaction: The percentage of clients satisfied with the level of customer service they received when accessing their entitlement ^{9,10,11}	≥80%	49%	52%	Not achieved

(PBS p 35, CP p 19)

Program 1.3: Assistance to Defence Widow/ers and Dependants

The war widow/ers pension is part of a compensation package provided in recognition of their special circumstances and to compensate a widowed partner of a veteran, where there was a connection between the veteran’s death and their service. Eligible children are also provided with financial support.

Key activities:

- Provide income and financial support and compensation payments to eligible dependants.

TABLE 6: PROGRAM 1.3 ASSISTANCE TO DEFENCE WIDOW/ERS AND DEPENDANTS – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
1.3-1	Timeliness: The percentage of claims processed within 30 days ^{1,12}	≥50% ⁴	40%	31%	Not achieved
1.3-2	Quality: Correctness rate of processed claims ^{6,13}	≥95%	98%	95%	Achieved
1.3-3	Client satisfaction: The percentage of clients satisfied with the level of customer service they received when accessing their entitlements ^{9,14}	≥80%	93%	67%	Not achieved

(PBS p 36, CP p 19)

Program 1.4: Assistance and Other Compensation for Veterans and Dependants

This program delivers other allowances and assistance to eligible veterans and dependants under the VEA and related legislation, including home insurance, funeral benefits, prisoner-of-war ex gratia payments, and payments on behalf of Commonwealth and allied countries. Assistance is also provided to the ex-service community through funding of the Building Excellence in Support and Training grants and the Advocacy Training and Development Program.

Key activities:

- Provide income and financial support and compensation payments to eligible veterans and families.
- Enable veterans and families to access housing-related support via the Defence Home Ownership Assistance Scheme and Defence Service Homes Insurance.

TABLE 7: PROGRAM 1.4 ASSISTANCE AND OTHER COMPENSATION FOR VETERANS AND DEPENDANTS – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
Funeral benefits					
1.4-1	Timeliness: The percentage of claims processed within 10 days ^{1, 15}	≥50% ⁴	89%	94%	Achieved
1.4-2	Quality: Correctness rate of processed claims ^{6, 15}	≥95%	100%	98%	Achieved
1.4-3	Client satisfaction: The percentage of clients satisfied with the level of customer service they received when accessing their entitlements ^{9, 15, 16}	≥80%	90%	86%	Achieved
Defence Service Homes Insurance					
1.4-4	Policyholder satisfaction: The percentage of policyholders satisfied with the service provided when their claim for damage to their home has been finalised ¹⁷	≥90%	88%	86%	Not achieved

(PBS p 37, CP p 20)

Program 1.5: Veterans' Children Education Scheme

Under the Veterans' Children Education Scheme and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme, education allowances are paid to eligible children of Australian Defence Force (ADF) members who have died or been severely injured as a result of service. The schemes provide financial assistance, student support services, guidance and counselling for eligible students undertaking primary, secondary and tertiary full-time study within Australia.

Key activities:

- Provide eligible children of veterans and families with financial assistance and support to access education and skills development.

TABLE 8: PROGRAM 1.5 VETERANS' CHILDREN EDUCATION SCHEME – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
1.5-1	Timeliness: The percentage of claims processed within 28 days ¹	≥50% ⁴	17%	22%	Not achieved
1.5-2	Quality: Correctness rate of processed claims ⁶	≥95%	100%	99%	Achieved

(PBS p 38, CP p 21)

Program 1.6: Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Acts Payments – Income Support and Compensation

This program provides compensation to eligible veterans and dependants under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA), the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) and related legislation. The DRCA (and MRCA for injuries since 1 July 2004) provides coverage for injured ADF members to support their return to health, work and independence. There is also compensation for eligible dependants and MRCA health care and other ancillary benefits.

Key activities:

- Provide income and financial support and compensation payments to eligible veterans and families.

TABLE 9: PROGRAM 1.6 MILITARY REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION ACTS PAYMENTS – INCOME SUPPORT AND COMPENSATION – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022–23 Actual result	2023–24 Actual result	Achieved
1.6-1	Timeliness: The percentage of DRCA liability claims processed (determined) within 100 days ¹	≥50% ⁴	10%	10%	Not achieved
1.6-2	Timeliness: The percentage of DRCA permanent impairment claims processed (determined) within 100 days ¹	≥50% ⁴	18%	14%	Not achieved
1.6-3	Timeliness: The percentage of DRCA incapacity claims processed (determined) within 50 days ¹	≥50% ⁴	38%	46%	Not achieved
1.6-4	Quality: Correctness rate of processed DRCA liability claims ⁶	≥95%	90%	93%	Not achieved
1.6-5	Quality: Correctness rate of processed DRCA permanent impairment claims ⁶	≥95%	96%	96%	Achieved
1.6-6	Quality: Correctness rate of processed DRCA incapacity claims ⁶	≥95%	90%	87%	Not achieved
1.6-7	Timeliness: The percentage of MRCA liability claims processed (determined) within 90 days ^{1,18}	≥50% ⁴	20%	19%	Not achieved
1.6-8	Timeliness: The percentage of MRCA permanent impairment claims processed (determined) within 90 days ^{1,18}	≥50% ⁴	13%	14%	Not achieved
1.6-9	Timeliness: The percentage of MRCA incapacity claims processed (determined) within 50 days ^{1,18}	≥50% ⁴	33%	47%	Not achieved
1.6-10	Quality: Correctness rate of processed MRCA liability claims ⁶	≥95%	89%	84%	Not achieved
1.6-11	Quality: Correctness rate of processed MRCA permanent impairment claims ⁶	≥95%	90%	85%	Not achieved
1.6-12	Quality: Correctness rate of processed MRCA incapacity claims ⁶	≥95%	94%	94%	Not achieved
1.6-13	Client satisfaction: The percentage of clients satisfied with the level of customer service they received when accessing their entitlements ^{9,19}	≥80%	47%	54%	Not achieved

(PBS pp 39–40, CP p 22)

Notes on Outcome 1 tables

CP = DVA Corporate Plan 2023–24; DRCA = *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*;

MRCA = *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*; PBS = DVA Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24;

VEA = *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*

- 1 DVA uses timeliness measures as proxy tools to assess its efficiency. These timeliness measures can give an indication of efficiency over time.
- 2 This measure considers the following claim types under the VEA and the *Social Security Act 1991*: Service Pension, Income Support Supplement, Veteran Payment, Age Pension, Qualifying Service, Gold Card, Orange Card, Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, and Home Equity Assurance Scheme (formerly Pension Loan Scheme).
- 3 Withdrawn, cancelled claims, internally generated transactions and automated transactions such as claims to reinstate payments were incorrectly included in the previously published 2022–23 DVA Annual Report results for measures 1.1-1 and 1.1-2. These transactions are excluded for 2023–24. Clients selected for a pension review were incorrectly excluded from the previously published 2022–23 DVA Annual Report results and are included in the results for 2023–24. Receipts dates were also recorded incorrectly for a small number of transactions due to a system issue. Outstanding reviews, previously not included, are included in the results for 2023–24. The 2022–23 results have been amended so that the exclusions and inclusions are consistently applied and comparable. The results published in the 2022–23 DVA Annual Report were 69% for measure 1.1-1 and 39% for measure 1.1-2.
- 4 All processing timeliness targets for Outcome 1 were set at $\geq 50\%$ in 2022–23 to enable the reader to easily understand and compare the department's performance in processing the different claim types. These targets have been maintained in 2023–24 while the department clears the backlog.
- 5 Change of circumstances includes personal changes relevant to the rate of income support payable (e.g. relationship status, accommodation, financial circumstances).
- 6 Quality correctness rates for claims are based on a random sample of claim decisions extracted from the Quality Assurance Sampling & Recording System for manual checking by a suitably qualified DVA staff member not involved in the decision-making process.
- 7 This measure considers the following claim types under the VEA: Service Pension, Veteran Payment and Income Support Supplement. It also considers Age Pension claims under the Social Security Act.
- 8 The response rate for 2023–24 was 25% (396 clients) for Program 1.1.
- 9 Client satisfaction is measured through an annual independent Client Benefits Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by ORIMA Research, which covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The survey asks clients to rate their level of satisfaction with their experience making a claim, on a scale of 'Very satisfied', 'Satisfied', 'Somewhat satisfied', 'Somewhat dissatisfied', 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied'. Responses of 'Very satisfied', 'Satisfied' and 'Somewhat satisfied' are counted as satisfied for this measure. The overall survey response rate for all Outcome 1 client satisfaction measures for 2023–24 was 19% (4,343 clients).
- 10 This measure considers the following claim types under the VEA: disability compensation payment claims (including initial liability) applications for increase, assessments and reviews.
- 11 The response rate for 2023–24 was 31% (1,220 clients) for Program 1.2.
- 12 This measure considers the war widow/er claims under the VEA. The methodology has been adjusted to be consistent with other timeliness measures. The results now reflect the time taken between the date of receipt and the date of determination. The results had previously been measured as the time taken between the date of registration and the determination date.
- 13 This measure considers death claims under the VEA.
- 14 This measure considers War Widows Pension claims under the VEA. The response rate for 2023–24 was 30% (93 clients) for Program 1.3.
- 15 This measure considers funeral benefits claims.
- 16 The response rate for funeral benefits for 2023–24 was 28% (289 clients) for Program 1.4.
- 17 Policyholder satisfaction is measured through a monthly survey sent to 100 randomly selected policyholders who have recently had a claim finalised (approved). The survey asks respondents to rate their satisfaction with the claims process and outcome. Policyholders responding as 'Very happy' or 'Happy' are considered to be satisfied. The response rate for 2023–24 was 32%. The survey results span 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024. Due to an administration error, closed claim samples from May 2023 were used instead of July 2023. As the results were consistent throughout the year, it would not be expected that this would impact the overall reported result.

- 18 The *Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Act 2019* includes a commitment by the government to deciding a claim under the MRCA within 90 days from when DVA receives the claim, or within 90 days of any requested information being provided, whichever is later. This came into effect on 1 November 2019. The department made system changes in October 2023 to track the time waiting for external information for MRCA initial liability. Work is underway to track similar information for the MRCA permanent impairment and incapacity claims.
- 19 This measure considers the following claim types: MRCA and DRCA initial liability, MRCA and DRCA permanent impairment, and MRCA and DRCA incapacity. The response rate for 2023–24 was 15% (2,345 clients) for Program 1.6.

Analysis of performance against Outcome 1

Outcome 1 provides veterans and their families with access to income support, compensation and other support services. In 2023–24, DVA achieved 3 of the 12 timeliness measure targets, 5 of the 12 quality measure targets, and 1 of the 5 client satisfaction targets.

Timeliness

Timeliness of claims processing continues to be a top priority for the department. In 2023–24, significant resourcing was directed towards processing the existing backlog¹ of compensation claims in an effort to improve timeliness of claims processing.

The 12 timeliness measures provide an assessment of claims processing performance against set targets. In 2022–23, all timeliness targets were set at $\geq 50\%$ to enable the reader to easily understand and compare the department's performance in processing different claim types. These targets were retained in 2023–24 while the department focused on clearing existing claim backlogs. The appropriateness of these targets will be assessed next financial year as part of the department's annual review.

Timeliness improved slightly in 2023–24 from 2022–23, with 3 of the timeliness measures achieved (refer to Figure 4), while claim volumes received by DVA and volumes of claims processed by DVA in 2023–24 have significantly increased across the board. In 2022–23, DVA received 72,201 net claims² and completed 67,814 claims, while in 2023–24 DVA received 89,530 claims and completed 100,697. In 2022–23, DVA made 128,864 compensation decisions, while in 2023–24 DVA made 200,200 compensation decisions – a 55% increase in decisions.

1 'Backlog', as defined in the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report, refers to claims that have been received by DVA but not yet actioned (i.e. allocated to a delegate or claims support officer for processing). Claims currently under investigation are referred to as cases 'on hand'. Time spent waiting to be allocated during processing, including waiting for requested additional information or reports, is all included in total time taken to process.

2 Net claims do not include claims that have been withdrawn. A claim can be withdrawn for a number of reasons. Most commonly, this occurs when DVA combines multiple claims that are lodged online, on the same day, by the same claimant, into a single claim with multiple conditions, with the consent of the claimant.

FIGURE 4: TIMELINESS – THE PERCENTAGE OF CLAIMS PROCESSED

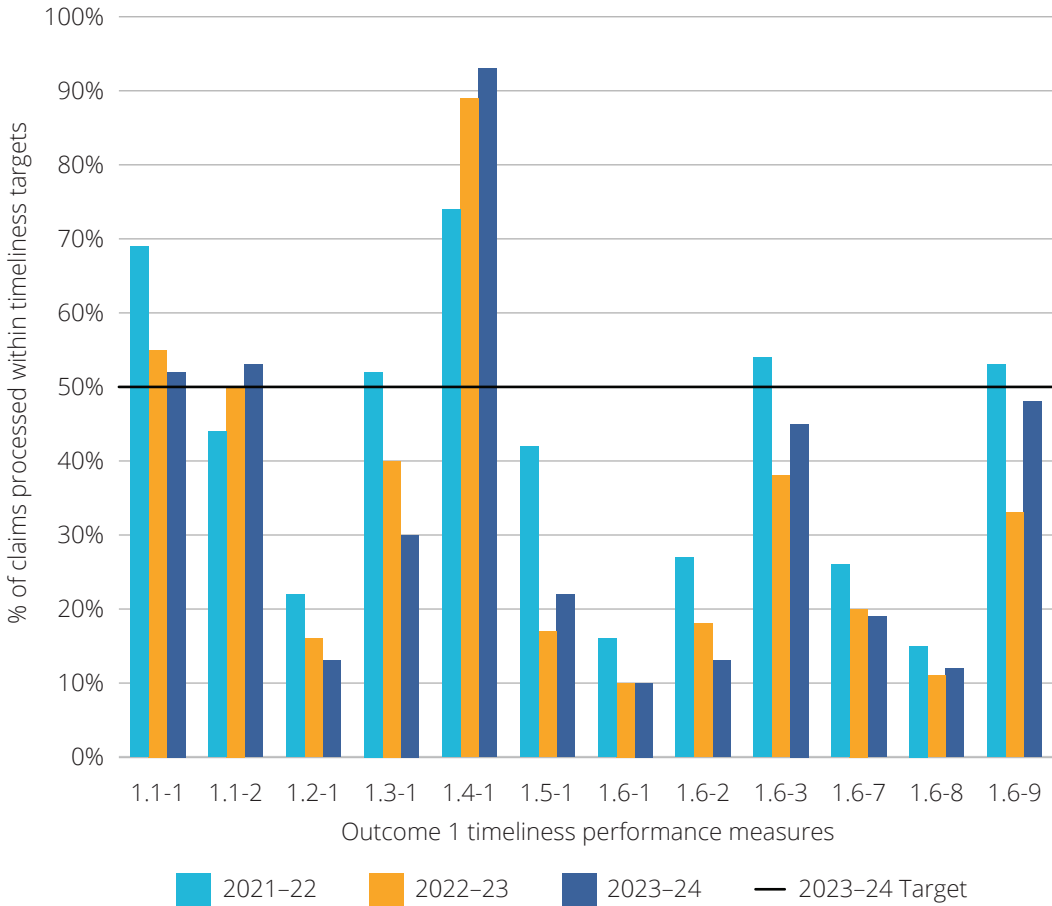


Figure 4 shows the 3-year trend of performance against each of the timeliness measures. Additional claims processing data can be found at Appendix A of this annual report and on DVA's website.

DVA is processing claims at record levels due to the combination of additional resourcing, improvements in training, increased experience of existing staff and other business improvements. The growth in staff numbers and other reforms are having an impact and the renewed focus for DVA is reducing the time taken to process claims.

The backlog of initial liability, incapacity and permanent impairment unallocated claims identified by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report has been cleared and DVA is now managing 'business as usual' levels of these types of claims. DVA receives around 4,000 claims every 2 weeks, and in this 'business as usual' environment DVA aims to register, screen and allocate new claims to an officer for processing within 2 weeks of receipt.

Since late 2023, DVA has been implementing a strategy of redeploying and retraining a large proportion of the workforce to move them from working on the unallocated claims to making determinations. In addition, DVA has increased resourcing through ongoing recruitment drives. With the onboarding of new staff, DVA has taken some experienced staff offline to train the new staff in their respective roles. This took away some capacity to process claims before new staff had the full capability to assist with increasing determinations.

While the average days to determine claims is expected to remain high while DVA processes the oldest claims, timeliness is starting to improve for some claim types.

In a post-backlog operating environment, for liability claims received from 1 December 2023 and determined by 30 June 2024, the average time taken to allocate across all Acts and claim types was 7 days, and the average total time taken to process (including time taken to allocate) was 60 days.

Excerpts from statistics in Appendix A have been included in Tables 10 and 11 to provide the reader with a more complete picture of the operating environment in 2023–24 and impacts on timeliness of claims processing.

Table 10 provides a snapshot of major claim types received by DVA in 2023–24 and the percentage increase in volume since 2022–23. This demonstrates the significant increase across claim types received by DVA in the last 12 months. Similarly, Table 11 provides a snapshot of the volume of determinations made by DVA across claim types and the significant increase since 2022–23. Even with the increasing number of claims being received, additional resourcing and productivity improvements have resulted in a growth in determinations.

TABLE 10: VOLUME OF CLAIM TYPES RECEIVED BY DVA

Claim types received by DVA ^{3,4}	2022–23 volumes	2023–24 volumes	% increase since last FY
Dual Act DRCA/VEA compensation claims ⁵	2,741	4,342	37%
DRCA only liability claims ⁶	2,169	2,623	17%
DRCA permanent impairment claims ⁶	12,939	18,591	30%
DRCA incapacity compensation claims ⁶	463	483	4%
MRCA only liability claims ⁷	20,499	25,658	20%
Tri-Act initial liability claims (MRCA/DRCA/VEA) ⁷	13,847	16,023	14%
MRCA permanent impairment claims ⁷	13,172	20,480	36%
MRCA incapacity claims ⁷	2,631	2,999	12%

FY = financial year; DRCA = *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*; MRCA = *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*; VEA = *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*

3 While this table captures claim types across different Acts, it is not inclusive of all claim types received or processed by DVA. The claim types not included consist of war widow/er and dependant claims and funeral benefits claims. In addition, claim types that are not 'compensation' claims such as income support and education schemes payments are not included.

4 The table shows net claim numbers. This does not include claims that have been withdrawn. A claim can be withdrawn for a number of reasons. Most commonly, this occurs when DVA combines multiple claims that are lodged online, on the same day, by the same claimant, into a single claim with multiple conditions, with the consent of the claimant.

5 Extracted from Appendix A, Table A6.

6 Extracted from Appendix A, Table A8.

7 Extracted from Appendix A, Table A10.

TABLE 11: VOLUME OF DETERMINATIONS MADE BY DVA

Determinations made by DVA ³	2022–23 volumes	2023–24 volumes	% increase since last FY
VEA disability compensation payment claims ⁵	5,706	7,555	24%
DRCA liability ⁶	9,057	12,061	25%
DRCA permanent impairment ⁶	7,388	12,149	39%
DRCA incapacity ⁶	443	549	19%
MRCA liability ⁷	30,713	45,260	32%
MRCA permanent impairment ⁷	9,495	17,375	45%
MRCA incapacity ⁷	2,705	3,156	14%

FY = financial year; DRCA = *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*; MRCA = *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*; VEA = *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*
Refer to footnotes on page 47

For Veterans' Children Education Schemes (measure 1.5-1), DVA processed 22% of claims within 28 days, compared with 17% in 2022–23. Despite the improvement, the claims processing timeliness target was not achieved for 2023–24. This is attributed to the 54% increase in the volume of claims received throughout 2023–24, along with the 28% growth in the number of clients supported under the schemes, which resulted in increased workloads to maintain benefits. Recruitment of additional staff in August 2024 will expand processing capacity and is expected to better support timely processing of claims in 2024–25.

For VEA war widow/er claims, 31% were processed within 30 days, which was below the target of ≥50%. Meeting timeliness targets remains a challenge for this claim type even though submitted claims are allocated to a delegate immediately. This is due to difficulties obtaining medical records for deceased veterans, such as coroner reports or death certificates. These delays are usually lengthy, affecting overall timeliness outcomes. All claims of this type were allocated within 2 weeks of receipt for the entire financial year.

Timeliness outcomes across VEA disability compensation payment, DRCA initial liability and MRCA initial liability claims processing (measures 1.2-1, 1.6-1 and 1.6-7 respectively) have been impacted by the combination of the claims backlog and incoming claim volumes exceeding available capacity to process claims, including causing delays in starting claims. This has resulted in performance across these timeliness measures falling short of the target. The actual timeliness performance results for these measures were 14% for VEA disability compensation payments (measure 1.2-1), 10% for DRCA initial liability claims (measure 1.6-1) and 19% for MRCA initial liability claims processing (measure 1.6-7).

While overall time taken to process is expected to remain high with DVA's focus on determining the oldest claims, we are starting to see some early signs of improvement for a post-backlog environment. Specifically, for VEA disability compensation payment claims received from 1 December 2023 and determined by 30 June 2024, the average total time taken to process was 86 days. For DRCA initial liability claims in the same period, the average total time taken to process was 74 days, and for MRCA initial liability claims, the average total time taken to process was 58 days.

Likewise, permanent impairment claims processing timeliness has been impacted by the claims backlog and incoming claims volumes exceeding available capacity for processing, resulting in a performance result of 14% for both measures 1.6-2 and 1.6-8.

The build-up of claims experienced by DVA over the past few years has caused a delay in the commencement of permanent impairment claims being processed (measures 1.6-2 and 1.6-8). This, in turn, has extended the period of time taken to process each claim. Claims are currently being actioned earlier, and this will lead to a reduction in the time taken to process those claims in the future.

For measures assessing timeliness of incapacity claims processing, the performance results for 2023–24 were 46% (DRCA) and 47% (MRCA) – both below the target of $\geq 50\%$. While the targets were not achieved this year, these performance results represent an improvement in claims processing timeliness for incapacity claims since 2022–23 of 8% for DRCA and 14% for MRCA.

Incapacity claims are being allocated within the expected timeframe to a claims support officer to complete the start-up process. This approach has been successful, and an increase in claims support officers has resulted in improvements in timeliness, although not yet enough to meet our targets.

DVA achieved timeliness targets for new claims being processed within 30 days (measure 1.1-1), change of circumstances processed within 10 days (measure 1.1-2) and funeral benefits processed within 10 days (measure 1.4-1). Performance results for these measures were 53%, 54% and 94% respectively. For these 3 measures, individual claims or changes that are not processed within the target timeframe are usually a result of the requirement to seek further information from the client to finalise. A number of strategies were implemented in 2023–24 that enabled DVA to meet these performance targets, including:

- proactive revision of work priorities in the system to enable newly submitted claims to be processed within 30 days
- actively monitoring older work on hand and completion of new claims, and utilising temporary working groups for defined periods to improve claims processing timeliness
- implementing a claims screening team to pre-screen claims ahead of allocation to a claims processing delegate
- screening staff now being accredited in processing simple claims (for qualifying service), freeing up delegates to concentrate on processing more complex claims (service pension claims)
- prioritising financial hardship cases
- identifying skills gaps of delegates and implementing cross-skilling to enable claims delegates to process different claim types.

In relation to measures 1.6-7, 1.6-8 and 1.6-9, DVA is committed to processing all MRCA claims within 90 days. For these types of claims, the time taken to process a claim is affected by the significant amount of time spent waiting for external information such as medical evidence. For measure 1.6-7, it is estimated that this amounts to 30–50% of the total time taken to process the claim. In October 2023, DVA made system changes to track the time waiting for external information for MRCA initial liability. Excluding these external wait times, from March 2024 to June 2024, DVA processed 48% of its MRCA initial liability claims within 90 days. This performance is better than the reported result for 2023–24 of 19%. However, similar information is currently unavailable for MRCA permanent impairment and incapacity claims.

Quality (correctness rates)

The quality assurance program identifies errors in claims processing that are analysed to demonstrate trends and seek to drive improvements to the quality of decisions being made. This occurs through engagement with claims processing staff, providing enhanced learning and development opportunities and making improvements to policy and procedures.

The quality (correctness rate) of processed claims was affected by an increase in overall claims processing volumes and claim complexity (multiple conditions being claimed and/or multi-Act eligibility), as well as an influx of new staff throughout 2023. The additional new staff increase DVA's overall capacity to process more claims, and new staff are assisted to build their proficiency through structured induction and on-the-job training. DVA is enhancing and formalising this training to certificate-level courses. Errors in this context include decisions that are beneficial to veterans.

In 2023–24, DVA achieved the $\geq 95\%$ quality (correctness rate) targets for 5 of 12 measures under Outcome 1. This includes change of circumstances requests (measure 1.1-4), funeral benefits (measure 1.4-2), war widow/er claims (measure 1.3-2), Veterans' Children Education Schemes (measure 1.5-2) and DRCA permanent impairment (measure 1.6-5). DVA came within 2% of achieving the quality targets for 2 other quality measures – income support new claims (measure 1.1-3) and MRCA incapacity claims (measure 1.6-12).

DVA did not achieve targets for the following measures: VEA veterans' disability support claims (measure 1.2-2), DRCA and MRCA liability claims (measures 1.6-4 and 1.6-10 respectively), DRCA and MRCA incapacity claims (measures 1.6-6 and 1.6-12 respectively), MRCA permanent impairment claims (measure 1.6-11) and income support new claims (measure 1.1-3). A Recruitment and Training Taskforce is being established which will help improve the quality of processed claims.

Client satisfaction

Client satisfaction for measures 1.1-5 (income support), 1.2-3 (disability support), 1.3-3 (war widow/ers), 1.4-3 (funeral benefits) and 1.6-13 (safety, rehabilitation and compensation – DRCA and MRCA) is measured through an annual independent Client Benefits Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by ORIMA Research. For these measures, analysis of results was conducted for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The level of satisfaction reported is an annual figure. Clients were either selected at random or as a census of all clients within a program. In 2023–24, DVA achieved the client satisfaction target of $\geq 80\%$ for 1 out of 5 measures (measure 1.4-3, funeral benefits). Key factors influencing client satisfaction were time taken to process claims and whether benefits received were in line with clients' expectations.

This year the Client Benefits Client Satisfaction Survey was completed by 4,343 clients, representing a response rate of 19% for the survey overall. This is a reduction in response rate compared to prior years (26% in 2022–23 and 31% in 2021–22) but is a higher total number of respondents (3,369 in 2022–23).

Younger clients continued to report lower satisfaction rates than older cohorts, although the satisfaction rating differences between these cohorts are narrowing significantly, with a general overall improvement in satisfaction ratings. DVA is continuing to invest additional resources to improve the time taken to process all claim types and to further improve communication with clients.

The Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance policyholder satisfaction target of $\geq 90\%$ (measure 1.4-4) was not achieved, with the final performance result being 86%. For this measure, consistent with the 2023–24 PBS and previous financial years, policyholder satisfaction was measured through a monthly survey sent to 100 randomly selected policyholders who recently had an approved claim finalised. The survey asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with the claims process and outcome, with responses of 'very happy' or 'happy' considered satisfied. The survey period spanned 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, with an average response rate of 32% for 2023–24. To address the low survey response rate, as per the 2024–25 PBS, DSH Insurance will implement a new performance measure for 1.4-4 from 2024–25. The new performance measure will provide better insights into policyholder satisfaction and is aligned to published insurance industry standards for measuring performance.

Outcome 2

Maintain and enhance the physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life of eligible persons and their dependants through health and other care services that promote early intervention, prevention and treatment, including advice and information about health service entitlements.

DVA's performance under Outcome 2 is measured by its achievements in 3 categories: quality of service, timeliness and client satisfaction.

Outcome 2 performance measures and results

Program 2.1: General Medical Consultations and Services

DVA has arrangements in place with medical and allied health practitioners in both the public and private sectors to deliver a comprehensive range of services throughout Australia, provided in hospitals, in providers' rooms and in the homes of veterans and families. To ensure that eligible veterans and dependants are able to access necessary services, DVA will either pay for travel to the nearest service provider or pay a provider to travel to other locations to provide services to eligible veterans and dependants.

Key activities:

- Work with medical, dental, hearing and allied health providers throughout Australia to ensure veterans and families have access to a comprehensive range of services.

**TABLE 12: PROGRAM 2.1 GENERAL MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS AND SERVICES
– PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS**

No	Performance measure	Target	2022–23 Actual result	2023–24 Actual result	Achieved
2.1-1	Quality of service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services ¹	<1% ²	0%	<1%	Achieved

(PBS p 49, CP p 23)

Program 2.2: Veterans' Hospital Services

This program provides access to inpatient and outpatient hospital services for eligible veterans through arrangements with private hospitals, day procedure centres and mental health hospitals, as well as all public hospitals operated by the state and territory governments.

Key activities:

- Make arrangements with public and private hospital service providers throughout Australia to ensure veterans and families have access to a comprehensive range of services.

TABLE 13: PROGRAM 2.2 VETERANS' HOSPITAL SERVICES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
2.2-1	Quality of service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services ¹	<1% ²	0%	<1%	Achieved

(PBS p 50, CP p 24)

Program 2.3: Veterans' Pharmaceutical Benefits

The Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme provides clients with access to a comprehensive range of pharmaceuticals and wound dressings for the treatment of their healthcare needs, including items available to the broader Australian community under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Key activities:

- Provide eligible veterans with access to a broader range of medicines and wound care items at a concession rate.

TABLE 14: PROGRAM 2.3 VETERANS' PHARMACEUTICAL BENEFITS – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
2.3-1	Quality of service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services ¹	<1% ²	0%	<1%	Achieved

(PBS p 51, CP p 24)

Program 2.4: Veterans' Community Care and Support

DVA manages community support and residential aged care programs for clients, including the Veterans' Home Care program and the Community Nursing program, which aim to support people to remain independent in their homes and improve their quality of life and health. This program also provides subsidies and supplements for DVA clients living in residential care facilities.

Key activities:

- Provide a range of care and support in the home to assist eligible veterans and families to remain independent for longer.

TABLE 15: PROGRAM 2.4 VETERANS' COMMUNITY CARE AND SUPPORT – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
2.4-1	Quality of service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services ¹	<1% ²	0%	<1%	Achieved

(PBS p 52, CP p 25)

Program 2.5: Veterans' Counselling and Other Health Services

This program provides a wide range of mental and allied health care services, including counselling and referral services for veterans and their families. The program also supports eligible veterans and their families with funding for aids and appliances, and travel for treatment.

Key activities:

- Provide veterans and families with access to mental health care services, including primary prevention through counselling and complex care coordination.
- Support veterans with travel for treatment and provide access to aids, appliances and modifications to support independent living.
- Provide veterans with access to allied health services, including access to telehealth services.
- Provide access to Open Arms including individual and family counselling, after-hours counselling, group program interventions, and peer support.

TABLE 16: PROGRAM 2.5 VETERANS' COUNSELLING AND OTHER HEALTH SERVICES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
Access to services					
2.5-1	Quality of service: The proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services ¹	<1% ²	0%	<1%	Achieved
Travel					
2.5-2	Timeliness: Target percentage of claims for reimbursement processed within 28 days ³	≥95%	100%	100%	Achieved
Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling Services					
2.5-4	Percentage of clients allocated to an Open Arms clinician within two weeks of initial intake ⁴	≥65%	92%	88%	Achieved
2.5-5	Client satisfaction ⁵	≥80%	91%	90%	Achieved

(PBS pp 53-54, CP p 26)

Program 2.6: Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Acts – Health and Other Care Services

DVA arranges for the provision of rehabilitation, medical and other related services under the DRCA, the MRCA and related legislation. The services include payment for medical treatment, rehabilitation services, attendant care and household services.

Key activities:

- Provide veterans with access to medical management, psychosocial and vocational rehabilitation programs and support for employment.

TABLE 17: PROGRAM 2.6 MILITARY REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION ACTS – HEALTH AND OTHER CARE SERVICES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
2.6-1	Timeliness: The percentage of rehabilitation assessments completed within 30 days of assessment referral ^{3,6}	≥75%	99%	99%	Achieved
2.6-3	Client satisfaction: An annual survey of client satisfaction with the rehabilitation program ^{7,8}	≥75%	70%	68%	Not Achieved

(PBS p 55, CP p 26)

Notes on Outcome 2 tables

CP = DVA Corporate Plan 2023–24; PBS = DVA Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24

- 1 Complaints are registered in the Client Feedback Management System when they are received by DVA.
- 2 DVA is measuring the proportion of clients who have registered a complaint in relation to unmet access and/or quality compared to the total number of clients accessing services.
- 3 DVA uses timeliness measures as proxy tools to assess its efficiency. These timeliness measures can give an indication of efficiency over time.
- 4 The intake process is not systemised and is a manual process. Some clients are not captured in the reported results if they are not allocated to an Open Arms clinician within 14 days. Although this does not affect the reported results this year, changes will be made to calculate the result off the allocation date in future to ensure all allocations completed in the relevant reporting period are captured and reported.
- 5 Client satisfaction is measured by a questionnaire. Satisfaction questionnaires are offered by clinicians at the end of an episode of care. The survey asks clients ‘How satisfied are you with the counselling provided to you?’ and responses are rated on a scale of ‘Very satisfied’, ‘Satisfied’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Unsatisfied’ or ‘Very unsatisfied’. All clients who answer ‘Satisfied’ or ‘Very satisfied’ are counted as satisfied. The questionnaire is not compulsory for clients to complete. The final result for 2023–24 was 90% based on a total of 449 survey responses. In 2023–24 there were 29,295 episodes of care closed.
- 6 This measure is a calculation of percentage of rehabilitation assessments undertaken during 2023–24 that were conducted by rehabilitation providers within 30 days of the assessment being requested by DVA. The assessment date is recorded in DVA systems by a delegate based on the assessment date reported by the provider.
- 7 Client satisfaction is measured through a monthly independent survey by ORIMA Research of DVA clients who have recently completed the rehabilitation program. Client satisfaction for this measure is calculated through the responses to 7 questions in the survey, which assess participants’ overall views of the program as well as the rehabilitation plan commencement, implementation and closure process. The 2023–24 performance result is based on rehabilitation case closures from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Survey participation is voluntary. Neutral responses do not contribute to the achievement of the measure. The response rate for 2023–24 was 21%.
- 8 The 2023–24 performance result is based on rehabilitation case closures from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. This reporting period has been changed since the 2022–23 Annual Performance Statements (in 2022–23 it was based on case closures from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2023) to bring the rehabilitation client satisfaction survey into alignment with other DVA satisfaction surveys.

Analysis of performance against Outcome 2

The 2023–24 reporting period showed DVA continued the journey to shift from an ‘illness model’ to a ‘wellbeing outcomes’ approach that empowers veterans to achieve greater independence for themselves and their families. DVA is committed to understanding veterans’ wellbeing needs, connecting them and their families to relevant services and supports, and enabling them to make informed decisions based on what matters to them. DVA’s achievement of this is measured through the quality, timeliness and client satisfaction results for the services provided under Outcome 2.

For Outcome 2, DVA achieved all 5 quality measure targets, all 3 timeliness measure targets and 1 of the 2 client satisfaction targets. This reflects DVA’s successful delivery of programs to maintain and enhance the wellbeing of veterans and families. Throughout 2023–24, veterans and their families were connected to high-quality, evidence-based and responsive services funded through Outcome 2. DVA ensured clients had timely access to high-quality healthcare, counselling and rehabilitation services; and maintained and developed services that supported the holistic wellbeing of veterans and families. DVA continues to review and improve business practices and enabling systems to ensure programs are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Quality of service

The quality of service for most of DVA Outcome 2 measures is assessed by comparing the number of complaints registered by clients to the number of clients who accessed services. In 2023–24, DVA achieved all of the quality of service targets, including for access to general medical consultations and services (measure 2.1-1), access to veterans’ hospital services (measure 2.2-1), access to veterans’ pharmaceutical benefits (measure 2.3-1), access to veterans’ community care and support (measure 2.4-1) and access to veterans’ counselling and other health services (measure 2.5-1). This reflects DVA’s ongoing commitment to providing high-quality services and supports to veterans and their families.

DVA recognises that health providers are key partners in optimising health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans through the delivery of quality services. We are actively engaging with providers to create greater awareness of DVA services, programs and entitlements available to veterans and families beyond the Medicare Benefits Scheme and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

DVA delivers high-quality booked car with driver services through a strong vetting and contract management process in conjunction with a robust veteran-centric feedback management framework, where experienced program managers engage with clients and contracted providers in a sensitive manner to resolve any issues of concern (measure 2.5-1).

DVA assists veterans to live safely and independently by providing aids, equipment and modifications through the Rehabilitation and Appliance Program (RAP). As most RAP schedule items are accessed through DVA contracted suppliers, DVA has put in place robust contract management, including compliance and quality assurance activities, to ensure that suppliers’ service delivery standards are maintained (measure 2.5-1).

Through DVA’s administration of the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the Veterans’ Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre continued to provide doctors and veterans with 24/7 access to information and approvals related to access to subsidised medicines. The clinical appropriateness and conditions of supply of items available on the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule were regularly reviewed to ensure medicines available are safe, effective and meeting the unique needs of veterans (measure 2.3-1).

There has been a net improvement in the quality of veterans' hospital services since 2022–23 (measure 2.2-1). For veterans' hospital services, the number of complaints received in 2023–24 declined, while the number of veterans and dependants issued a Veteran Gold or White Card increased, alongside the existing ageing Veteran Gold Card population. DVA has established strong partnerships with contracted private hospitals, day procedure centres and state and territory departments of health for the provision of public hospital services. DVA works collaboratively with hospitals to help ensure veterans receive high-quality clinical services in a timely manner. DVA also supports the hospital arrangements by providing complementary programs to support veterans on discharge from hospital – for example, Veterans Home Care Program, the Community Nursing Program, and the Rehabilitation Appliances Program.

Hospital Programs is an established program, with clients able to access hospital services provided by contract private hospitals, day procedure centres and all public hospitals in Australia. The demand for service is based on a client's clinical need, with DVA providing comprehensive access to hospital services which are relatively standard across the industry.

For DVA's Veterans Home Care Program and Community Nursing Program, regular meetings with service providers helped to maximise quality of services for clients, as maintaining good relationships with providers ensures issues are managed promptly for community support and residential aged care programs (measure 2.4-1).

Timeliness

DVA can reimburse some travel costs where veterans have paid to travel to medical appointments or to get medical evidence. In 2023–24, DVA reimbursed all eligible travel claims within 28 days, achieving the performance measure target (measure 2.5-2). Factors influencing this positive outcome in 2023–24 include the implementation of streamlined processes, efficient communication with veterans and healthcare providers, and prioritising travel claims processing through a dedicated team in DVA solely responsible for promptly handling travel reimbursements.

Open Arms has been the Commonwealth's response to veteran mental health support for over 40 years. Founded by Vietnam veterans, Open Arms is a nationally accredited mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential mental health support. In 2023–24, 88% of Open Arms clients were allocated to an Open Arms clinician within 2 weeks of their initial intake (measure 2.5-4). The target of 65% has been consistently exceeded each month over the financial year. This achievement highlights that the current number of clinicians aligned to Open Arms is meeting the needs of the Open Arms client base. In 2023–24, Open Arms enhanced its Model of Care and risk analysis frameworks, enabling efficient allocation processes at a regional level.

Timeliness of rehabilitation assessments made within 30 days of referral for assessment (measure 2.6-1) remains above the target of 75%. Factors which may have contributed to this achievement include:

- continued flexibility in the facilitation of assessments, with remote support options assisting with the timeliness in assessment coordination
- continued support and training resources for rehabilitation providers, ensuring a clear understanding of the requirement to undertake rehabilitation assessments within agreed timeframes.

Client satisfaction

Open Arms continues to exceed the 80% target for client satisfaction, with a result of 90% in 2023–24 (measure 2.5-5). This result was calculated from 449 client questionnaires received. A total of 10,631 surveys were distributed via email, by post and in person following an episode of care. There were a total of 29,295 episodes of care this financial year. A client may not receive a survey for administrative reasons – for example, when the closure of an episode of care occurs while services are continuing. The client satisfaction survey is a voluntary system and there is no process to follow up with clients to encourage or increase participation and completion. Positive client feedback post case closure has increased since the transition to an episodic model of care, with a focus on targeted clinical intervention.

In 2023–24, the 75% target for client satisfaction with the rehabilitation program (measure 2.6-3) was not achieved. The overall percentage of client satisfaction was 68% – a result similar to the 70% score achieved in the 2022–23 reporting period. In 2023–24, the response rate for the rehabilitation client satisfaction survey was 21%. Efforts to increase the response rate continued throughout the year, including the increased use of SMS and email reminders by ORIMA Research. Additional information will be collected in the next reporting period, which is expected to increase insight about rehabilitation client satisfaction.

From 1 June 2024, DVA transitioned to an enhanced rehabilitation model with 15 national providers. This improved model included giving providers and clients greater autonomy through amendments to plan funding arrangements; simplifying the provider network through improved contractual arrangements; improving guidelines for providers and staff to support nationally consistent service delivery; introducing a self-assessment up front where clients can consider their own needs before engaging in the rehabilitation program; and introducing regular opportunities for clients to provide timely feedback to DVA during the delivery of their rehabilitation plans. These changes will be relevant for surveys completed during the 2024–25 reporting period for measure 2.6-3.

Outcome 3

Acknowledgement and commemoration of those who served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations through promoting recognition of service and sacrifice, preservation of Australia's wartime heritage, and official commemorations.

DVA's performance under Outcome 3 is measured by our achievements in 2 categories: war graves and commemorations.

Program 3.1: War Graves

This program acknowledges and commemorates veterans' service and sacrifice and promotes an increased understanding of Australia's wartime history. To meet the Australian Government's commitment, the OAWG cares for and maintains official commemorations and sites of collective official commemoration in accordance with general principles set by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

Key activities:

- Provide and maintain war cemeteries, war plots, gardens of remembrance and memorials to the missing and other individual official commemorations for eligible veterans who have died as a result of their service to Australia in wars, conflicts and peace operations.
- To operate and maintain memorial sites in Thailand, Malaysia and France.

TABLE 18: PROGRAM 3.1 WAR GRAVES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022-23 Actual result	2023-24 Actual result	Achieved
3.1-1	Quality of service: New official commemorations are completed within published timeframes ¹	≥95%	Not applicable (new measure for 2023-24)	58%	Not achieved
3.1-2	Quality of service: Maintain public access to memorial sites in Thailand, Malaysia and France	Unscheduled closures ≤5 days ²	Not applicable (new measure for 2023-24)	Achieved – 4.5 days of unscheduled closures	Achieved
3.1-3	Official commemorations are inspected to ensure that they continue to meet the CWGC standard	≥95% inspected	Not able to report ³	90%	Not achieved

(PBS p 59, CP p 27)

Program 3.2: Commemorative Activities

Commemorative activities are delivered to enable the community to better understand, acknowledge and commemorate the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have served Australia in wars, conflicts and peace operations.

Key activities:

- Deliver domestic and international commemorative events to enable the community to better understand, acknowledge and commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who have served Australia in wars, conflicts and peace operations.

TABLE 19: PROGRAM 3.2 COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES – PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND RESULTS

No	Performance measure	Target	2022–23 Actual result	2023–24 Actual Result	Achieved
3.2-1	Commemorative event quality: Commemorative events are conducted to commemorate veterans’ service in a dignified, solemn and respectful manner ⁴	The number of discrete complaints is less than 1% of the estimated audience for any one event	0%	<1%	Achieved

(PBS p 60, CP p 28)

Notes on Outcome 3 tables

CP = DVA Corporate Plan 2023–24; PBS = DVA Portfolio Budget Statements 2023–24

- 1 The completion timeframes differ for each commemoration type (graves – 240 days; ashes placements – 120 days; and garden of remembrance plaques – 90 days). DVA writes to eligible families to find out if they would like to have a commemoration installed for their loved one. Installations of commemorations are undertaken by contractors, who issue an invoice when the installation is complete. The invoice date is taken to be the completion date. The time taken to install a commemoration is calculated as the time between when the department receives the acceptance advice from the family and when the contractor issues an invoice. This measure excludes ashes placements placed by crematorium authorities and plaques placed in gardens of remembrance by staff. Commemorations that are not installed are not captured by this measure, as assessment of timeliness is undertaken at the time of completion of the commemoration.
- 2 Unscheduled closures are directly reported to DVA by the site managers, and the public are notified of the site closure through social media and online channels, as well as being reported on through this measure. This measure has been removed for the 2024–25 Portfolio Budget Statements and 2024–25 Corporate Plan.
- 3 Due to limitations of the data source, a result for this measure was not reported in 2022–23. For 2023–24, inspections were carried out in accordance with business plans and evidenced by photos. For maintenance purposes, when an inspection is undertaken the condition of all commemorations is assessed against general principles provided by the CWGC. Non-CWGC commemorations are assessed against the CWGC general principles for structural integrity and legibility of inscriptions. The CWGC Conservation Policy provides guidelines and instructions for operators on assessing the condition, standards of care, structural repairs, changes to planting, landscaping or layout and alterations to structures and built features and is available at <https://www.cwgc.org/media/cdmpkqyk/conservation-policy-2020.pdf>. The policy for headstone cleanliness and legibility can be found at <https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/sustainability/headstone-cleanliness-legibility/>. To move away from the inherent system limitations, in 2024–25 the department will use a satisfaction-based measure, which can be found in the 2024–25 Portfolio Budget Statements and 2024–25 Corporate Plan.
- 4 Complaints are registered in the Client Feedback Management System. The estimated broadcast viewing audience figures sourced from the ABC are combined with the estimated onsite physical attendance figures to determine the total estimated audience for each commemorative service.

Analysis of performance against Outcome 3

DVA achieved 2 of the 4 performance measure targets for Outcome 3. DVA was unable to achieve the remaining 2 performance measure targets.

War graves

In 2023–24, despite significant efforts to improve reporting on war graves, the results for performance measures 3.1-1 and 3.1-3 have been hampered by inherent and historical data integrity issues and limitations in the War Graves System.

In 2023–24, DVA incorporated a new measure which looks at DVA's timeliness in installing commemorations (measure 3.1-1) and reports on the number of days taken between the start (when an offer is accepted by the veteran's family) and end date (when the commemoration is installed). Performance was not achieved in 2023–24 due to factors including resourcing constraints, adverse weather conditions, reliance on cemetery authorities placing ashes and plaques in a timely manner and promptly notifying DVA of placement, lack of skilled tradespeople, and contractors' conflicting schedules. To improve timeliness in the future, DVA has introduced a process of regular follow-up with relevant contractors or authorities on overdue commemorations. While photo evidence is routinely requested by DVA to support the reliability of the reported result, this is not always available to be provided. Very limited information is also provided by some cemetery and crematorium authorities, which impacts the accuracy of reported completion timeframes for ashes placements and lawn graves for performance measure 3.1-1 (less than 7%). Consequently, DVA changed the methodology for this measure so that ashes placements placed by crematorium authorities and plaques placed in gardens of remembrance by staff are now excluded from the reported results. This measure also does not report on new commemorations which were unable to be installed. In 2024–25, DVA is intending to report on a customer satisfaction-based measure which will enable DVA to more reliably report on the maintenance of commemorations.

To assess public accessibility to the 3 overseas interpretive centres managed by DVA (the Sir John Monash Centre in France, the Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre in Thailand, and the Sandakan Memorial Pavilion/Park in Malaysia), measure 3.1-2 was introduced. Public accessibility is assessed by monitoring the number of unscheduled closure days for each site per year, with the target of ≤5 unscheduled closure days per year. This was a new measure introduced under Outcome 3 in the 2023–24 reporting period. The measure was achieved in 2023–24, with the following number of unscheduled closure days per centre:

- Sir John Monash Centre: 2 days
- Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre: 2.5 days
- Sandakan Memorial Park: 0 unscheduled closures.

The Sandakan Memorial Pavilion has been closed to the public for a rebuild since 27 September 2023. As this is a scheduled closure, it has not impacted the performance result for measure 3.1-2.

Through measure 3.1-3, we assess the OAWG's ability and capacity to care for and inspect all commemorative assets, in line with general principles set by the CWGC. This measure was reintroduced after publication of the 2023–24 PBS as part of the 2023–24 CP. OAWG manages a program through which a target of 95% of official commemorations in Australia and the region are inspected annually and maintained accordingly. This financial year, OAWG achieved a 90% inspection record due to some resource constraints at the start of the reporting period. Inspection effort in Tasmania was also redirected away from the many commemorations located in the garden of remembrances, as the garden was closed to the public. Efforts were redirected to fewer commemorations located throughout the state since they had not been inspected in 3 years.

The resourcing constraints at the start of the reporting period have been rectified. OAWG is confident of maintaining commemorative assets well and will accordingly move to a satisfaction-based performance measure from 2024–25.

Commemorative activities

On 18 August 2023, a National Commemorative Service to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was successfully delivered at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra. It was a day to commemorate the service of some 60,000 Australian men and women who served in the Vietnam War and the sacrifice of their families. The service was live broadcast by the ABC. It was attended by approximately 2,197 people and had an estimated broadcast viewership of 134,000. Two complaints relating to the National Commemorative Service were received by DVA.

On 25 April 2024, 2 Anzac Day commemorative services were held at Gallipoli (Türkiye) and 2 were held near Villers-Bretonneux (France) to honour the service of all Australian service men and women who have served our nation in times of war, conflict and peace operations, ensuring their commitment and sacrifice is remembered by us all. The Dawn Services were also live broadcast by the ABC. DVA also supported Anzac Day services in Thailand and Malaysia. These smaller services were not broadcast. Anzac Day services were also held by the OAWG in Isurava (Papua New Guinea).

The 2024 Anzac Day services were conducted in a safe, solemn and dignified manner in all countries. The Dawn Service near Villers-Bretonneux was attended by 1,901 people and had an estimated broadcast viewership of 336,000. The Dawn Service at Gallipoli was attended by 1,647 people and had an estimated broadcast viewership of 462,000. No complaints relating to the Anzac Day services near Villers-Bretonneux or at Gallipoli were received.