



A Message from the Chair

As we come to the end of another busy year, I thought it timely to reflect on the progress made in the professionalisation of the training and development of advocates since the first Advocacy Training & Development Program (ATDP) Strategic Governance Board (SGB) meeting in October 2015.

In a few short years ATDP volunteers working collaboratively with Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), Department of Defence representatives and the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) have made some quite extraordinary progress in terms of the implementation of the Advocacy Training and Development Program Blueprint.

The challenges overcome during this time, and the achievements to date, are in no small part due to the hard work and commitment of a relatively small group of ATDP volunteers. These volunteers undertake a variety of roles that are pivotal to enabling the ATDP to deliver accredited training and assessment opportunities to both experienced TIP trained advocates and new trainees.

ATDP volunteers are drawn almost exclusively from the ex-service community and in most cases are experienced practising advocates with caseloads and commitments similar to those whom they assist in undertaking formal accreditation. Without the combination of their willingness to go the extra mile for their colleagues and on-going “skin in the game” the achievement of our goal of introducing a more contemporary approach to training and developing advocates would simply not have been possible.

It is no easy task to select from the many achievements and milestones which their efforts, working with the ex-service and serving community have made possible, and choose just a few to highlight. However, here are a few milestones which perhaps highlight the progress made to date.

The establishment of a three-tiered ATDP governance structure, including the formation of the Strategic Governance Board (SGB), Capability Framework Management Group (CFMG) and the Regional Implementation Groups (RIGs) which involved the recruitment of around 60-70 ESO volunteers in late 2015 and early 2016 provided the foundations for the establishment of the new program. The structure included the appointment of a National Training Manager and establishment of a national training and assessment team drawn largely from experienced and suitably qualified former Training and Information Program (TIP) presenters. Their willingness to make the transition to a fully accredited mode of training and assessment was to their great credit and one of a number of lasting legacies of the former Training and Information Program (TIP) which preceded the ATDP.



*Jenny Walker
Chair, Strategic Governance Board
Advocacy Training and Development Program*

The design and adoption of a “single learning pathway” was also a major early achievement of the ATDP in terms of addressing the need for national consistency in the training and development of advocates. The single learning pathway included multiple entry points and incorporated Adult Learning principles which are based upon contemporary research indicating 70% of a person's learning at work is internal and experience-based, 20% comes from interacting with fellow employees (mentors) and 10% only is the result of formal training.

The successful submission to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) for the registration of the Course in Military Advocacy (10620NAT) with its associated six units of competency in April 2017 was another very important milestone for the ATDP. In preparing our submission over a six-month period in late 2016, the evidence gathered from the extensive consultation with the ex-service community during the Rolfe review played an important role. It helped reinforce the need for an enterprise unit in military advocacy as the best way to serve the needs of our constituency.

The preceding and subsequent development and piloting of straightforward Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes for all advocacy levels within 12 months of receiving ASQA accreditation was also an impressive achievement. The willingness of so many former TIP trained advocates to “step up” and have their skills and knowledge assessed according to national standards is to their great credit and speaks to their understanding of the importance of formal accreditation of advocates. Their endorsement in this strongest of possible ways was critical to us moving forward with confidence as to the future.

The training of more than 400 experienced advocates around metropolitan and regional Australia as ESO Mentors and the subsequent development of electronic Workplace Experience Logs (WELs) for use by mentors and mentees has also been another example of cooperation between the ATDP and members of the ESO community in providing support for new trainees undergoing workplace experience around the country. These arrangements underpinned the introduction of the Welfare and Compensation Level 1 & 2 Consolidation and Assessment activities for trainee advocates who are the future of advocacy services. The ATDP and its volunteers are committed to continue to work with experienced ESO mentors and the broader ex-service community through mentoring workshops and other means to provide whatever further assistance they require to assist next generation advocates to build their skills and knowledge base.

The development and successful launch of the Continuing Professional Development Program (CPD) on July 1 2018 was another ground breaking achievement for the ATDP, embracing as it does the principal of lifetime learning and providing a simple basis for advocates to demonstrate currency for the purposes of professional indemnity. The extremely positive reception and high participation rate amongst ATDP accredited advocates with CPD obligations has been nothing less than extraordinary.

As you would understand there is little point accrediting advocates if clients cannot easily locate them. Accordingly, in late 2017 the ATDP commenced working with ESOs to develop the Directory of Advocates (DoR) in order to address this need. A facility to be known as the Accredited Advocates Register (AAR) with enhanced search functionality and ESO record management capability is to be released shortly.

Looking to the future is paramount for the effective training and development of advocates. The inclusion of program content in early 2018 addressing matters that were considered high priorities for younger veterans such as suicide awareness, community reintegration, transition and medical employment classifications and restoring wellbeing has also been an important step forward in ensuring the program remains relevant in a contemporary context. The challenges in this space are

ongoing and I am pleased to advise newsletter readers that we are currently working closely with the ADF Transition Team to reflect changes they have introduced to transition arrangements to better serve the needs of all transitioning members.

So what is still left to do? Well despite the huge body of work that has already been completed there is still much on the agenda in 2019. We will complete the design of the Compensation Level 3 & 4 learning pathway, including Consolidation and Assessment activities, which will finalise the initial ATDP curriculum development. We also have a number of other innovative projects in scope to further improve the program. These will include expanding CPD options to be added to our existing module, more updated on-line resources for use by trainees and experienced advocates alike, updating existing e-learning packages and improved opportunities for advocates to develop specific skills needed to better address client needs in specific community settings.

Another high priority for the ATDP Training and Assessment team will be the completion of the RPL of any remaining TIP trained Level 2 advocates prior the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) professional indemnity cut-off date of 30 June 2019. I would encourage any ESO wishing to nominate their existing Level 2 advocates for RPL to do so as soon as possible so that the ATDP training team can include them into the first six-month program for next year. You can do this by following the links at www.atdp.org.au.

I think most of the recipients of the ATDP newsletter would agree with me that the challenges faced by the broader ESO community in general and advocates in particular in 2019 will continue unabated. It is a given that the release of the Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study recommendations and finding from other reports and reviews will include changes which will seek to further improve the delivery of advocacy services into the future.

However throughout all these changes our responsibilities and commitment to meeting the on-going and emerging needs of our clients will remain a constant for both the ATDP and the ESO and Defence community which it proudly partners. Finally, I would like to thank you for your support for the program over the past few years and on behalf of everyone involved with the ATDP would like to wish you, your families and loved ones a Merry Xmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Walker
Chair, Strategic Governance Board
Advocacy Training and Development Program