Additional information regarding Freedom of Information Access Request FOI 4981

The Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) engaged with the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) regarding access request FOI 4981, as the subject matter of the request closely aligns with the functions of that agency.

Some of the documents released under the FOI Act for FOI 4981 refer to an intent and agreement for the DVA to share Veterans' MATES program data with the department for use in specified research. A reading of these documents in isolation risks misinterpretation that University of South Australia (UniSA) passed DVA individual-level veteran information to the department. For example, the wording contained in documents 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 may be misinterpreted as implying that individual-level information was provided to the department, which is not the case.

DVA's agreement with UniSA included provisions that allowed for the conduct of research outside Veterans' MATES program delivery, such as that with the department referenced in the document package.

DVA confirms that the data used for the purposes of the Veterans' MATES program is DVA data. It does not contain non-DVA MBS data (i.e., general Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS)/Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) data).

DVA assures veterans that the UniSA did not have access to PBS or MBS identified data. Certain PBS and MBS items can be accessed by DVA clients through the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS) and Repatriation Medical Fee Schedule (RMFS), often using the same item numbers. RPBS and RMFS data is included in DVA health claims billing data used in the Veterans' MATES program and have been incorrectly confused with general PBS and MBS items.

For further information about the Veterans' MATES program you can contact 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). Further information about DVA's approach to managing personal information via its privacy policy is provided at www.dva.gov.au/privacypolicy.