



Advocacy News! March 2023

Welcome to the first Advocacy News for 2023!

DVA remains grateful to ex-service organisations and advocates for their continuing role in helping veterans and their families' access services and support. We'd like to say thank you - for your Service, your expertise and your time.

The purpose of this newsletter is to assist you by consolidating relevant DVA information for our advocacy community. This newsletter will be issued on a quarterly basis.

Information in this newsletter is sourced from:

[Latest news for veterans | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

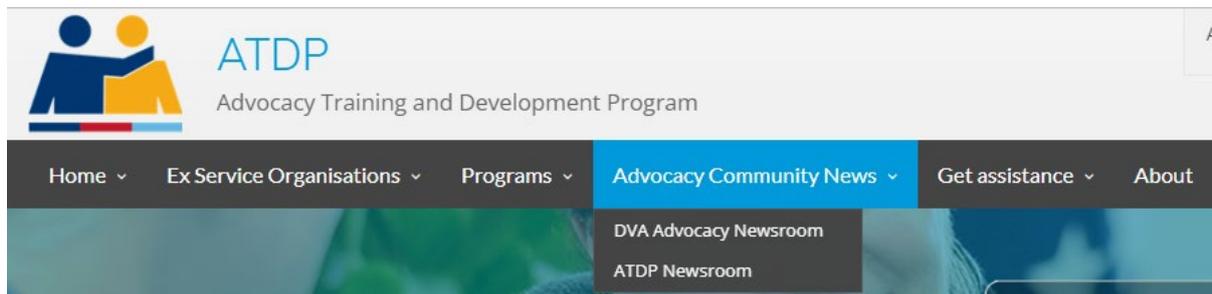
www.dva.gov.au

[DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

[Vetaffairs — Vol 38 No.3 December 2022 | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

[DVA Advocacy Newsroom](#)

In addition, the ATDP team will also be providing regular updates via our website within the Advocacy Community News tab:



The [ATDP Newsroom](#) provides messages about ATDP specific activities and other important information relevant to the provision of the Course in Military Advocacy. This newsroom is supplemented by the ATDP Update Newsletter (last issue Feb 2023). If you have any questions about the training and development available through ATDP please contact ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au.

The [DVA Advocacy Newsroom](#) provides information about changes and updates in government legislation, DVA policies and programs and may include snapshots of articles that you'll find on the DVA website. This newsroom is supplemented by this newsletter.

In order to make this newsletter a success we would love to hear from you regarding articles that you'd like to see. Please provide any feedback and requests for articles to:

ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au.

The Advocacy Training and Development Program team, DVA.



Volunteering as an Advocate!

The Information Pack can be downloaded as a Word Template and customised for your ex-service organisation or Veterans Support Centre to distribute electronically, or as a hard copies.

[Here is the link to Information Pack!](#)

This Information Pack outlines broadly what your volunteer advocates and advocate support officers do to assist your members and clients. You will find out about:

More about our advocates and advocate support officers' roles

The training and support provided by the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP)

What commitments our volunteers are making

The benefits of volunteering as an advocate or advocate support officer

What insurance cover is provided to advocates by the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA)

Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway commences



The Government has announced the commencement of public consultation on a Pathway to simplify veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation.

For more information on the Pathway, and to provide feedback, please visit the

[Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway page of the DVA website](#)

or email legislation.reform@dva.gov.au.

Article Source: [Latest news for veterans | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Advocate Snapshot

The following tables provide a snapshot of the strength of the ATDP qualified free advocacy services available to support veterans and their families. The number of active advocates with ATDP qualifications now sits at 693. These advocates can be found through the ATDP Advocacy Register <https://www.advocateregister.org.au/>.

The first table below shows a split between Wellbeing and Compensation advocates who are listed in the ATDP Advocacy Register.

The last two tables show the Unit of Competencies (Compensation and Wellbeing).

Both tables are displayed by State breakdown.

Advocates Numbers by State									
Stream	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	TAS	NT	WA	Total
Both	1	30	18	53	6	5	1	3	117
Wellbeing	1	57	55	96	13	7	1	9	239
Compensation	14	104	57	120	17	7	3	15	337
Total	16	191	130	269	36	19	5	27	693

UoC by State - Compensation									
UoC	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	TAS	NT	WA	Total
Compensation Advocate Level 1	2	35	32	88	11	4	2	12	186
Compensation Advocate Level 2	13	100	57	126	16	9	3	13	337
Compensation Advocate Level 3	2	18	14	37	7	2	0	6	86
Compensation Advocate Level 4	0	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	13
Total	17	158	108	254	34	15	5	31	622

UoC by State - Wellbeing									
UoC	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	TAS	NT	WA	Total
Wellbeing Advocate Level 1	0	10	15	50	11	3	0	6	95
Wellbeing Advocate Level 2	1	73	66	121	15	10	2	12	300
Total	1	83	81	171	26	13	2	18	395

Income support is available

As you may be aware, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) offers a range of income support payments and benefits for veterans who served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families. Additionally, some British, Commonwealth and Allied veterans who served in some past conflicts in which Australia was involved may also be eligible for income support payments and benefits from DVA. Eligibility can differ depending on the type of service the veteran completed and when it was conducted.

As advocates for veterans it is important that you are aware of the types of income support available, and have an understanding of the veteran's service to make sure they receive the support for which they are eligible.

There are a wide variety of income support payments, which include regular payments as well as extra allowances to top up veteran income. Having qualifying service allows the veteran to access a service pension. Information on the service pension and the details of qualifying service can be found at:



<https://www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/income-support/qualifying-service>.

For more information or to better understand the eligibility criteria for income support payments, visit:

www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/income-support and [Social security age pension overview | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

or Ph: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

Article Source: [Latest news for veterans | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Incapacity payments for veterans studying extended

The Australian Government recently passed legislation to extend the Incapacity Payments for Veterans Studying pilot program until 30 June 2023. The extension of this program will help support eligible veterans working towards their goal of securing employment in the civilian workforce.



The program was launched in 2018 to enable incapacity payments to be calculated based on 100 per cent of normal pre-injury earnings for veterans undertaking full-time study, as part of a Department of Veterans' Affairs approved rehabilitation plan.

Hundreds of veterans are expected to benefit from this extension, enabling those who are studying to focus on their rehabilitation, with the knowledge that their income will be equivalent to what they would have earned in the ADF.

For more information on the program visit the [DVA webpage](#).

Article Source: [Incapacity payments for veterans studying extended | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Get support for social wellbeing and employment



Join our trial program to help eligible veterans with tailored support for social wellbeing and employment.

What's involved?

Veterans who participate will be allocated a professional consultant who will develop an activity plan that aligns with their individual goals and needs in their civilian life.

The activity plan will last for three to six months and can include support funded by DVA to:

- build new social connections in your local community
- become job-ready
- change careers or adjust to the civilian workforce
- get a Medicare Card or engage a suitable GP.



PO4470 August 2022

Am I eligible?

You can join the program if you:

- feel you would benefit from the supports available
- have separated from the Australian Defence Force or are in the process of transitioning
- live in Australia
- have no accepted liability or you are waiting on the outcome of your first claim with DVA
- are not already participating in a DVA rehabilitation program
- your service is covered under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)* or the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA)*.

Find out more

To find out more, email NLR@dva.gov.au, or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

We'll send you more information about the program, including what it covers and what it doesn't. We'll also send you a questionnaire to help us work out the types of support services that may suit you.

If you're accepted, your consultant will contact you to help you develop your personal plan.

For more information: [Non-Liability Rehabilitation | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Article Source: [Get support for social wellbeing and employment | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

No changes to fully-funded mental health treatment for veterans

Any veteran who has completed even one day of full-time service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) can access fully funded mental health treatment within Australia. Treatment can be accessed for as long as it is needed, at no cost to the veteran, under Non-Liability Health Care (mental health) (NLHC mental health). Reservists with border protection or disaster relief service or those involved in a serious, service related training accident may also be eligible.

Recent reports have incorrectly claimed that restrictions have been introduced for exercise physiology and other allied health services under NLHC (mental health).



DVA assures veterans, there have been no changes to treatment eligibility for White Card holders accessing care under NLHC (mental health).

DVA continues to provide fully funded mental health treatment to veterans under NLHC (mental health) arrangements. Accessing treatment early for mental health conditions can lead to improved overall health. Conditions treated through NLHC (mental health) do not need to be related to military service, and a claim for compensation is not required to access treatment. However, a Veteran White Card is needed to pay for treatments provided under NLHC (mental health), so it is important to check with each provider that they will accept a White Card before making an appointment.

Read the full story on the [DVA website](#).

For more information about NLHC (mental health) call DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or visit www.dva.gov.au/nlhc-mental-health

Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

Free 12-month health and fitness program

DVA's Heart Health Program improves veterans' physical health through exercise, nutritional education and lifestyle management.

The department has been working with Corporate Health Management (CHM) to deliver a 12-month program to eligible veterans.



The Heart Health Program is fully funded by DVA and aims to help you increase your physical health and general wellbeing. The goal of the program is to help veterans build their own daily routine for exercise and a balanced diet that will continue long after the program is complete.

Read the full story on the [DVA website](#).

Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

A new Toolkit to improve understanding for veteran homelessness

The Assistant Minister for Veterans' Affairs Matt Thistlethwaite has joined with representatives from the community housing industry sector, government and the veteran community to launch a range of veteran-specific community housing resources for providers.

DVA partnered with the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) to develop the resources, which provide an overview of the veteran experience of homelessness, including risk and protective factors for homelessness, service needs and available referral pathways, and how to tailor support for veterans and families.

A key component of the resources is a toolkit containing factsheets and training materials to better equip community housing providers to take into consideration the unique life experience and challenges that veterans face.

An industry standard of providing housing services to veterans has also been introduced to the sector as part of the launch.

As the peak industry body representing 170 not-for-profit community housing providers in Australia, CHIA's knowledge and connection to providers across Australia will ensure that these resources are up to date, relevant and linked with the industry.



The veteran homelessness toolkit further progresses the Albanese Government's commitment to address veteran homelessness. The Government is establishing the \$10.0 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, which will provide a sustainable funding source to increase housing supply and improve service delivery. The Housing Australia Future Fund includes \$30.0 million to build housing and fund specialist services for veterans who are experiencing homelessness, or are at risk of homelessness.

Veterans who are struggling with their living situation or are at risk of homelessness are encouraged to contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling on 1800 011 046 who will work with them to access the most appropriate care.

To download a copy of the toolkit, visit the [CHIA website](#). For more information, visit the [homelessness support webpage](#) on the DVA website.

Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#) and [ATDP](#)

Supporting veterans to downsize their homes

The Australian Government is making some changes to make it easier for veterans and their partners who receive income support payments to sell and buy a principal home.

From 1 January 2023 onwards new rules were applied for when veterans and their partners sell their principal home and use the proceeds to buy a new one. For eligible veterans and war widows, the proceeds from the sale of their principal home will be exempt from assets testing for up to 24 months, to allow more time to purchase or build a new home. Additionally, the proceeds from the sale will be deemed to be earning income at the lower rate of 0.25 per cent.



The changes will make it easier for veterans and families to downsize their homes by reducing the impact of selling and buying on their income support payment rates.

For more information: [Selling your home | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#) or

Ph: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

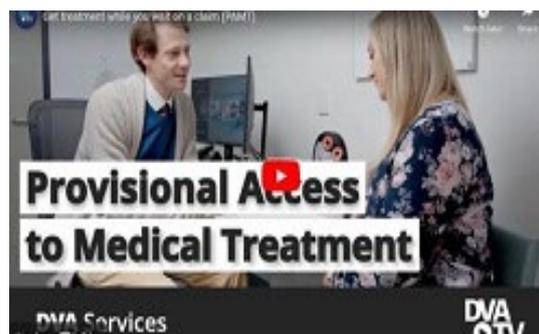
Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

Receive healthcare while your claim is processed

Accessing timely and quality healthcare can make a big difference to a person's wellbeing. The last thing anyone wants is to wait for treatment while their healthcare claim is being processed. DVA recognises that your health should not wait. The sooner you receive treatment, the sooner you can get better.

This is why DVA has implemented the Provisional Access to Medical Treatment (PAMT) program. You can find out more in this [DVA TV video](#).

Read the full story on the [DVA website](#).



Article source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#) and [ATDP](#)



Keeping you up to date with claims processing information

DVA is committed to providing the veteran community with information on claims processing to provide greater transparency on our progress in addressing the claims backlog. So, each month the department will publish information on processing times on the DVA website – see [Claim processing times | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#). This data includes claims lodged and claims determined as well as average claims-processing timeframes.

Wait times for processing claims vary according to the type of claim submitted and individual claim complexity.

Over recent years, we have seen a doubling of claims received by the department. Presently, for some claim types, we are receiving more claims each month than we are deciding. However, with additional resourcing we should see this turn around as we are able to process more claims. We are also implementing processes to ensure claims are actioned as quickly as possible once they are allocated to a decision-maker.

You can assist with the processing of your claim by providing all required information when you lodge your claim. This includes medical evidence with a diagnosis of your condition and a statement as to how your condition is related to your service. Providing these documents upfront can save time later.

For a list of useful documents to support your claim, please visit

[‘Making a claim for a service- related condition’ page on the DVA website.](#)

There are a range of services and supports available to you while you are waiting for a claim to be processed. These include:

- Provisional Access to Medical Treatment
- Non-liability Health Care
- Veteran Payment (while we assess your claim for a mental health condition)
- 24/7 access to Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling – 1800 011 046.



Claim processing times

Last updated: 16 March 2023

As more veterans access our services, we have seen a big increase in the number of compensation claims. We are working on reducing wait times. Find out what to expect.

**The published processing times on the website is the average for all of the claims decided in the period indicated. It is not a maximum processing time.*

Article source: [Keeping you up to date with claims processing information | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Phoenix Australia: VA Practitioner Support Service

The DVA Practitioner Support Service is a free, nation-wide service, funded by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide expert multidisciplinary support and guidance to health practitioners, support organisations and others working with Australian veterans with mental health problems.



Free consultations are available to all Australian practitioners and organisations with queries about veteran mental health. The DVA Practitioner Support Service involves the Health Professionals Advice Line, GP Advice Line and the General Advice Line.

Ex-service organisations (ESOs) are eligible to receive free advice/consultation from Phoenix Australia on trauma related mental health concerns.

No query is too simple or too complex, and mental health does not need to be the primary focus of your work with a client. We have a multidisciplinary team of expert consultants in veteran and military mental health who can respond to your enquiry. We will use the information you provide to direct your enquiry to the most appropriate team member to ensure that their expertise is matched to your needs.

Call 1800 VET 777 or visit

<https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/treatment-and-support/dva-practitioner-support-service/> to learn more about the service or make an enquiry.

Article Source: [ATDP](#)

Do you provide care or support to a veteran?

Across Australia, there are more than 2.65 million unpaid carers. That's one in nine people!

If you are a carer of a veteran, the Australian Government's Carer Gateway can help.

The Carer Gateway was designed by carers for carers, and provides free services and support for unpaid carers supporting a family member or friend with a disability, medical condition, mental illness or who is frail due to age. Services available include tailored support packages, counselling, coaching, peer support, help with accessing emergency respite and online skills courses.



Read the full story on the [DVA website](#)

Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

Increase to Totally Incapacitated payments

The Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) veterans' payment increased by \$1000 per year from 1 January 2023.

This increase to the TPI payment ensures veterans who are severely impacted by their Australian Defence Force (ADF) service are supported, and is paid to severely disabled veterans who are unable to have a normal working life because of a permanent incapacity resulting from their war or Defence service.



The Australian Government has committed \$97.9m in funding over four years to increase the TPI payment to \$1617.16 per fortnight (including the Energy Supplement); an increase of \$38.46 per fortnight. The increased amount appeared in veterans' bank accounts from 12 January 2023 (partly at the old rate and partly at the new rate as the 12 January 2023 payday is for the period 28 December 2022 to 10 January 2023). The first full payment at the new rate took effect on 25 January 2023.

For current rates: [Rates for the Disability Compensation Payment and War Widow\(er\)'s Pension | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Article source: [Increase to Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Payments | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

\$3.5 million available to Commemorate Veterans' service

The 2023–24 Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grants program is now open and has \$3.5 million available for projects and activities that commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australia's service personnel. Grants are open to a wide range of applicants, including ex-service organisations, community groups, schools and local councils.



There are two categories:

Community Grants: amounts to a maximum of \$10,000 for local, community-based projects and activities

Major Grants: amounts between \$10,001 and \$150,000 for major commemorative projects that are significant from a national, state, territory, or regional perspective.

Read the full story on the [DVA website](#).

Article source: [\\$3.5 million available to commemorate veteran service | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

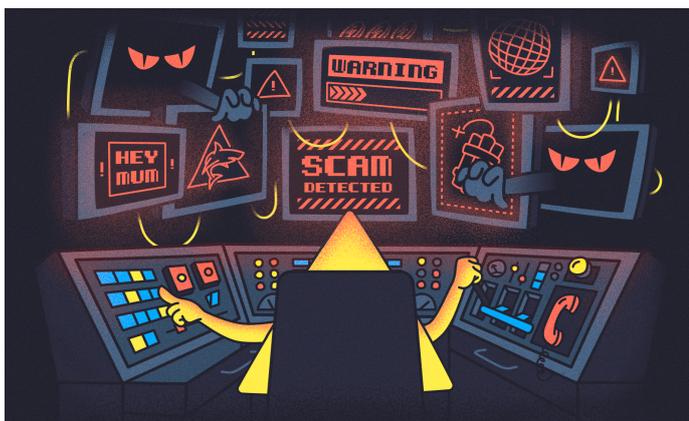
Be on the alert for online scams

During Scams Awareness Week (November 7-11), we encouraged our veteran community to be on alert for online scams targeting your personal information and banking details. Protecting your personal information on social media is pivotal to preventing being scammed or having your identity stolen.

Social media channels are where you connect, chat and celebrate with your family and friends. Stay in control of your social media by choosing what things you share, and who gets to see them.

Your personal information that can be stolen from social media includes:

- the time you made the post,
- your location when you made the post,
- links to your social media profile,
- personal details about yourself, including contact information, birthday or gender,
- links to the friends or other people you've connected with,
- links to the friends or other people that are tagged in the post,
- identified faces of people in a photo or video, and links to their social media profiles, and
- locations from a photo or video.



The NSW Department of Education has a great resource to help you update and upgrade your [social media privacy settings](#) to prevent identity theft and scams.

Recent media reports on data breaches and scams, such as the Optus data breach, have highlighted the importance of maintaining your online security. Identity theft can happen to anyone, and it pays to be vigilant and know how much information you are giving out publicly. Many scams occur through online and email activities, so if you are not expecting a request to update information or to receive a refund or a prize, do not give out your personal information until you are sure it is legitimate.

Any SMS received from us will have 'DVA' written in the sender identification and we will never ask for your client details via SMS or email. If you get a SMS asking for your client details, myGov or MyService sign in details, do not open the SMS and don't click on any links.

You can call us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) to check that we sent you the message if you are concerned.

The Australian Competition and Consumers Commission's [ScamWatch](#) website provides advice and information on what to do if you think you have been scammed and resources to help you secure your online activities. Additionally, the [Be Connected](#) website has been established especially for those over the age of 50 to assist in navigating online safely and securely.

Article Source: [Be on the alert for online scams | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

Workforce Incentive

The Workforce Incentive measure will encourage and support people who receive income support payments to re-enter the workforce or to increase the number of hours they work. The changes will benefit veterans and their partners who receive service pension, income support supplement or age pension from DVA and have their payments reduced to nil because they exceed the relevant income limit.

Under the new rules, if a person's income becomes less than the income limit within two years, they won't have to submit a full application to have their payments reinstated, and can resume receiving their pension more easily. Eligible veterans and their partners will also be able to keep their Pensioner Concession Card for two years.

The Workforce Incentive changes will take effect from 1 January 2023, and will apply to eligible people whose income support payment was reduced to nil with effect from 9 October 2022 or after.

Participating in work improves the quality of life for veterans, not only by getting a higher income, but through keeping mentally active, developing stronger social connections and remaining physically fit. Additionally, businesses will benefit from the skills and experience of older Australians, particularly to help meet the current labour and skills shortages in Australia.

The Australian Government values the contribution that all senior Australians have made, and continue to make, to our economic and social wellbeing, and will support those veterans and pensioners who wish to contribute to the workforce. If a veterans' employment status or other circumstances change, DVA need to be informed by:

- ringing us on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)
- using MyService
- visiting any of our offices
- writing to us at GPO BOX 9998 BRISBANE QLD 4001

For more information about Workforce Incentive, call DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



Article Source: [DVA e-news – January–February 2023 \(campaign-archive.com\)](https://campaign-archive.com)

Suicide Awareness Training for Veteran Advocates

It is a sad fact that suicide within the ex-service community is more prevalent than in the general population. Many suicides in the community can be prevented through suicide awareness education and activities.

Veteran advocates are in a unique position to support people who might be at risk of self-harm or suicide. When an ex-service man or woman is in contact with other members of the ex-service community, it provides them with a network of support that can help to protect them against suicide.

If you're engaging with someone who seems to be feeling hopeless, or is expressing suicidal thoughts, there are things you can do to help.

Open Arms offers a variety of free training opportunities that can equip you with the knowledge to reduce the risk of suicide, and protect those at risk. They equip participants with the skills to recognise the warning signs for suicide, and learn intervention strategies to help family, friends, co-workers or others in the veteran community.

Suicide intervention workshops are delivered around the country. You can visit <https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/treatment-programs-and-workshops/suicide-intervention-and-mental-health-literacy-workshops> to find one appropriate for you, or call Open Arms on 1800 011 046.

For immediate help when life may be in danger, call 000.



Suicide alertness for everyone
- safeTALK



Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training - ASIST



Mental health first aid

Feedback

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about this newsletter, please send an email to ATDP.Communications@dva.gov.au

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