



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

## **Businessline**

**Action Required:** For information only

**To:**

*Assistant Secretary, Client Coordination & Support*  
*Assistant Secretary, Client Access & Rehabilitation Branch*  
*Assistant Secretary, Business Improvement & Quality Assurance*  
*National Manager, Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling*

**Distribute to:**

Directors, Coordinated Client Support  
Directors, Rehabilitation Services

**For information:**

Secretary  
Deputy President  
Deputy Secretaries  
First Assistant Secretaries  
Deputy Commissioners

**SUBJECT:** The Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package. Communicating changes to veterans and families currently receiving the Family Support Package (FSP) and those now eligible to receive the Acute Support Package (ASP).

**Purpose:** To guide relevant staff in Rehabilitation Support and Coordinated Client Support Branch in managing expectations of veterans and families currently receiving support through the FSP and preparing them for transition to the ASP.

**Key Points:**

- The Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package replaces the existing FSP with the Acute Support Package which is available to more families, expands support services and allows families greater flexibility and choice.
- The *Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package Bill 2022* received Royal Assent on 7 October 2022.
- The ASP will be effective from 14 October 2022.
- The ASP replaces the existing FSP. There will be no grandfathering arrangements for veteran families receiving the existing FSP. This means that veteran families currently receiving existing FSP support whose plans extend beyond 14 October 2022 will need to transition to the ASP.
- This Businessline provides information about the changes, and messaging which may be used when communicating with veterans and families.

**Informing veterans and families receiving existing FSP support:**

- Under the ASP, all ASP clients will be managed by Service Coordination (SC) staff, removing the need for Rehabilitation Support staff to manage some clients. However, Rehabilitation Support staff will play a crucial role in assisting their current clients through the transition process.
- Veteran families will have greater choice and more flexibility in how they spend funds available to them in their ASP plan to build their capacity to deal with their challenging circumstances.
- It is recommended that Rehabilitation Support and Service Coordination staff commence discussing the transition with veterans and families receiving FSP as soon as possible.
- Key messages have been prepared to assist staff to explain the upcoming changes to the ASP. These are at Attachment A.

**Background:**

The Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package received Royal Assent on 7 October 2022 and commenced 14 October 2022.

Further information about the ASP is at Attachment B.

**Legislation:**

- The following Legislative Instruments have been made under each Act which contain additional eligibility criteria and caps on the total support that can be provided, while removing existing caps on individual service types:
- Veterans' Entitlements (Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package) Instrument 2022
- Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) (Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package) Instrument 2022
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package) Instrument 2022.
- These instruments are available at: [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au).



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14 October 2022

**Attachments**

- A – Key Messages – Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package (ASP)
- B – Further information on the Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package (ASP)

## **Key Messages – Defence, Veterans’ and Families’ Acute Support Package (ASP)**

The following key messages are designed to assist Service Coordination and Rehabilitation Support staff to explain the Defence, Veterans’ and Families’ Acute Support Package.

### Why is the Family Support Package (FSP) changing?

The FSP is changing as a result of legislation passed by Parliament that creates a new program – the Acute Support Package (ASP) – to replace the existing FSP. The new program will be available to more veteran families who will benefit from support to help them adjust to new and challenging life circumstances. The ASP provides greater flexibility in the supports and services you can access.

### What are the changes?

The major changes the ASP introduces are:

- Veteran families under all three Acts will now be eligible if the working age veteran is eligible for certain payments and they or their family members are experiencing new and challenging life circumstances, impacting the functioning of the family.
- Veterans are no longer required to have warlike service or be participating in rehabilitation.
- Working age widowed partners of veterans under all three Acts will now be eligible if the veteran’s death was related to service, including suicide.
- You will no longer have prescribed limits on specific services. Instead an annual financial cap will apply across all services, giving you greater flexibility on how the package funds are spent.
- You will have access to a range of health, wellbeing and skills-based supports to equip your family to manage independently into the future.

### How long can I access support?

- The amount of support available to each family will depend on their circumstances and their needs and will be assessed by a trained DVA staff member. It can change over time to respond to the changing needs of families.
- You can access support for up to two years for general ASP supports, and supports for children until they go to high school.
- You can access support in time periods determined with your DVA Service Co-ordinator and recorded in your support plan.
- You will be able to access supports for one single unbroken period if required. However, most families will likely access support in shorter periods, coming on and off of support as needed.
- It is expected that widowed partners will access support in a continuous period given their circumstances.

### What do the changes mean for me?

The changes mean there will be:

- more services to choose from, to best support your family; and
- one cap on funds for your family’s plan as a whole and no more individual financial caps on certain types of services.

### How much support can each family access?

For families of a living veteran, services are available to the limit of:

- \$7,500 for the first year and \$5,000 for the second year for any ASP supports
- \$10,000 each year for per child under school age for supports for the child
- \$5,000 each year per child primary school age, for supports for the child, until the child goes to high school.

For a widowed partner, services are available to the limit of:

- \$27,835 each year for two years for any ASP supports
- \$10,000 each year for per child under school age, for supports for the child
- \$5,000 each year per child primary school age, for supports for the child, until the child goes to high school.

### More information

You can go to <https://www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/support-families/defence-veterans-and-families-acute-support-package> for more information about Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package.

**Further information on the Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package (ASP)**

**Eligible families**

Families who will be eligible are:

- Widowed partners, where:
  - they are under 65 years at the time eligibility is determined; and
  - they are a War Widow under the VEA, a Wholly Dependent Partner under the MRCA or a widowed partner of a DRCA veteran whose death was related to their service; including suicide; and
  - the veteran's death was less than two years ago.
- Veteran families, where:
  - The family is experiencing new and challenging life circumstances that give rise to the need to support the family unit; and
  - The veteran is under 65 years of age at the time eligibility is determined; and
  - The veteran is eligible for Incapacity Payments under DRCA or MRCA, SRDP under MRCA, or a Special or Intermediate rate of Disability Compensation Payment, or Veteran Payment under the VEA.
- The package is designed to support families who are experiencing crisis – these are new and challenging life circumstances that give rise to the need to support the family unit. Situations of crisis are about more than an event, they are about the impact on a family's ability to function. The circumstances of each family will be considered by experienced staff at DVA.
- The sorts of circumstances that may impact a family and lead to a crisis may include but are not limited to:
  - mental and physical health episodes including attempted suicide;
  - substance abuse issues;
  - family and domestic violence incidents, including child abuse;
  - homelessness;
  - family conflicts and family breakdowns;
  - sudden, significant events such as loss of employment or death in the family;
  - at risk of disengagement with the community (particularly young people);
  - at risk of engagement with the criminal justice system;
  - other instances identified at the professional judgement of DVA social workers.

**Services available**

The ASP creates equity by making all services under the program available to all recipients (household services are currently only available to widow(er)s) and introduces a range of health, wellbeing and skills-based supports to equip families to manage independently into the future, such as:

- child care (including home based care, centre based care, family day care, occasional care and outside school hours care);
- counselling for adults and children (including financial counselling and other life skills counselling and clinical counselling where required);
- household assistance (including meal delivery, meal preparation, cleaning and household and garden maintenance);

- services to build capacity (including in relation to financial literacy, relationship skills, cooking lessons and mental health first aid);
- wellbeing, academic and extra-curricular support for children (including in relation to tutoring, music lessons and sporting activities);
- transport for children to attend school and services provided through the program if required.

No impact on taxable income status or income support payments

Defence, Veterans' and Families' Acute Support Package payments are exempt from income status in the income test in the Social Security Act, where payments are made directly to the individual for the purpose of procuring support services under the program. Payments will also not be considered taxable income.

More information

More information about Acute Support Package will be available on the DVA website.