



# Advocacy News

Issue 15 – July 2020

**Welcome to the *July 2020 edition* of the *Advocacy News*.**

## 1. A message from the Chair

Dear Recipients,

Welcome to the July 2020 issue of the Advocacy News. This is my second message since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic which has so profoundly impacted everyone in terms of how they go about both their business and day to day lives.



As you would all appreciate the ATDP has not been immune to the impacts of COVID-19 and the pandemic. It has raised some unique challenges for the ATDP which I am pleased to report the ATDP volunteers and our trainee and accredited advocates have responded to in their usual professional and resilient manner.

The ATDP training team were quick off the blocks in March and developed and trialled on-line Consolidation and Assessment solutions to enable the continued delivery of the Wellbeing and Compensation Level 1 Consolidation and Assessment programs. This approach has certainly not been without its challenges however it has enabled participants to complete their Level 1 training and assessments. Whilst this work does not address the complexities of delivering other ATDP Programs it is enabling us to continue with some training and assessment and reduce future unmet demand.

On another positive note, the Course in Military Advocacy is a Vocational Education Training (VET) course based upon adult learning principles so students can continue with 90% of their learning by completing Workplace Experience Logs (WELs) and undertaking on-line training during this challenging period without entering a classroom.

The flexibility we built into the ATDP program some years ago is also paying dividends. The capacity for advocates who have successfully completed workplace and online activities at one level to move onto the next level of training whilst they await their Consolidation and Assessment means that learning progression can continue from one level to the next in spite of the lockdown.

We know from our CPD outreach calls over the past few months that advocates who are already accredited are using this period in a most productive way by undertaking “on line” Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities which form an every expanding component of the suite of CPD offerings.

Our Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Major Training Services have also put the time made available during the current “face to Face” training hiatus to good use. They have almost completed work to update all DVA Train on-line Compensation and Wellbeing learning modules used by the ATDP and to convert them to a technology that meets contemporary standards of access and functionality for digital devices.

On the CPD front there has also been a great deal of activity during the COVID lockdown. Over the past few months our Project Support Officers (PSOs) have been busy contacting advocates to ensure they understand how the program works and to assist them with any enquiries. We have been greatly heartened by advocates’ commitment to lifelong learning as reflected in their overwhelmingly positive response to our phone calls. The approach of our PSO team is about helping ATDP accredited advocates to undertake CPD as we understand they are all very busy people with many competing priorities.

More good news on the CPD front is that further on line opportunities are being explored and we are currently working with Open Arms in relation to adding the START (Suicide Awareness) program to our offerings and with the DVA Aged Care section in relation to the use of eight Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) Webinars for CPD purposes in the 2020/21 CPD Year. Also, in response to requests from Advocates the ATDP are about to add an activity on Changing Modes of Separation to its CPD suite, which also includes an updated module which has been reviewed by Defence on Transition and MEC classifications. Further, the CPD team will be meeting shortly to consider the next steps in CPD development and engagement strategies for the new CPD year.

I can also advise you that an ATDP Strategic Governance Board (SGB) meeting was conducted via the Internet on 1 July 2020. I am pleased to report that it was another collegiate and productive meeting. It was great to once again bring the Board members together and to be able to welcome Mr Don Spinks, the Repatriation Commissioner to the Board as the DVA representative.

It has been some time since the Board met and there was certainly plenty of robust discussion about the program’s achievements and future challenges. Topics discussed were broad ranging and included ATDP governance arrangements, complaints management, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ATDP and our partner Registered Training Organisation (RTO), ATDP Website content and future SGB meeting frequency. An immediate need identified by the SGB was the requirement for clarity on when the resumption of face to face training could again be considered. The Board understands that trainees are keen to complete their Advocacy qualifications and need guidance on the planning of future ATDP programs.

The Department of Veteran’s Affairs has since advised the Board that there will be no resumption of face to face training that is either conducted directly by DVA or is resourced/supported by DVA until 1 October at the earliest. In relation specifically to ATDP the Department recognised its important role in ensuring that in the training of our volunteer advocates, most of whom are veterans themselves, their safety and wellbeing being the primary concern. A review of the ability to resume face to face training post 30 September will be conducted in the last week of August to allow for an informed and timely decision on any resumption of face to face training to be implemented smoothly. As an immediate priority, the department will also investigate whether there are any options that could be utilised in the short term for an expanded online training platform to support both training and accreditation activities while face to face activities are suspended. Whilst we understand that trainees are keen to complete their Consolidation and Assessment activities we

trust you will understand the reasons for the suspension of face to face training programs which I can assure you were not taken lightly.

In respect to this decision I would like to especially acknowledge the on-going patience and perseverance of our volunteer trainers and assessors during what have been very difficult times. I can assure you that their desire to resume their selfless work in assisting the veteran community remains as steadfast as ever and is the cornerstone of the delivery of the program.

In conclusion I am pleased to report that the ATDP program has remained remarkably resilient during these challenging times. Further, I am confident that the lessons learned by the ATDP during the lockdown period and in planning re-emergence will benefit advocates in the future, both in terms of flexibility and access to the full suite of training and assessment materials.

Please stay safe and I look forward to having some more news on the resumption of the ATDP training program in the October 2020 issue of *Advocacy News*.

### ***Jenny Walker***

Chair, Strategic Governance Board  
Advocacy Training and Development Program

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## **2. Queen's Birthday Honour Awards 2020**

A member of the ATDP family, Chaplain Gary Stone, was recognised in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours and received an Order of Australia Medal in the General Division for service to veterans and their families.

Gary was born, raised and educated in Brisbane and currently serves as chaplain for ex-service members and their families in South East Queensland. He commenced his military training at the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1970 and subsequently had a career as an Army Infantry Officer for 22 years, commanding troops in response to the Fiji Coup in 1987, and with Peacekeepers deployed to the Iran-Iraq war in 1989.



Gary was ordained in the Catholic Church as a married Deacon in December 1994 for chaplaincy to the Army and also saw operational service in Timor as part of UNTAET and also Bougainville in this capacity. Shortly after this, he was asked to also take on Chaplaincy to the Australian Federal Police during the Asian Tsunami response, Timor and the Solomon's crises. Both Gary and his son Michael featured in ABC Australian Story episodes in 2007 and 2009, for their work in Timor and their particular role in saving the life of President Jose Ramos Horta.

Gary has been married to Lynne for over 44 years, and they have four adult children. Gary's eldest son Michael, graduated from the Royal Military College in 1999 and Paul graduated in 2007. In 2001, Gary founded 'Friends and Partners of East Timor', delivering over \$1.5 million in aid over an 18 year period; which facilitated both health and education in remote rural areas of Timor. The RSL awarded their National Peace Prize to 'Friends and Partners of East Timor' in 2006.

In 2014 Gary founded the Veterans Care Association (VCA), which facilitates the delivery of holistic health education which includes spiritually based pastoral care to rehabilitate veterans and support their families.



In 2016, like father, like son, Michael Stone founded the VCA flagship rehabilitative programme, called 'Timor Awakening' for both Australian and Timorese veterans. This program involves nine months of engagement and a two week educational experience in Timor.

Thirteen programmes have now been delivered and are the first programmes of their kind in Australia to integrate healing of moral injury as a component of the holistic healing and rehabilitation of Veterans. Gary said *"We need to move from being part of the problem, to be part of the solution to veteran's health"*.

***Gary and Michael and their team live out the words of Jesus in Luke 10 "bringing good news to the afflicted, new sight to the blind, and liberty to captives"***

#### **What made you want to be an advocate?**

After suffering from PTSD himself, Gary wanted to continue to work and be part of society. Gary engaged in DVA's predecessor of the ATDP, the Training and Information Program (TIP) and Men's Health Peer Education. When TIP was replaced by the ATDP, he felt he had the right amount of expertise, knowledge and compassion to deliver professional frontline support to veterans requiring help with welfare related assistance. Gary successfully undertook Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and became an accredited Welfare Advocate Level 2 in 2017.



He has volunteered at RSL sub-branches, as well as being Chaplain to the RAR Association. Gary said "Through VCA we wanted to equip veterans with 'life tools', by caring, listening and showing by our own lives how you can get healthier and live with purpose in helping others." He hopes he has made significant changes in many veterans' lives. He said however, his biggest achievement is that over the many years he has provided advocacy and support to hundreds of veterans with suicidal ideation, no one has subsequently taken their life.

#### ***What has it meant to you receiving the Order of Australia award?***

Gary described the feeling on receiving the Order of Australia award as humbling and a great honour. To be recognised for the work that he has done with and for veterans, he is very grateful for the ongoing support from his fellow peers over the years. Gary is highly grateful especially to his wife Lynne and sons for enduring the life of 48 years of service in the military which took him away often for long periods of time and finally grateful to God.

When Gary heard the news that he had been nominated, he was overwhelmed by the many congratulations received via emails, letters, phone calls and messages from family, friends, colleagues from Duntroon and people he had served with during his 48 year career in the military. This shows just how connected the widespread military network community is. He is honoured to be part of that community, which he considers to be very caring. “It’s also nice to be appreciated”

Congratulations Gary from all of us at the ATDP on your well-deserved Order of Australia, truly the story of the Good Samaritan.

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### 3. CHANGES TO 10620NAT COURSE IN MILITARY ADVOCACY

The Course in Military Advocacy is a nationally accredited program that was endorsed by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) in April 2017. ASQA is the national regulator for the vocational training and education (VET) sector.

When it was originally endorsed, the Course in Military Advocacy consisted of six individual Units of Competency in two streams:



#### Rehabilitation and Compensation Stream

- **MILADC004** Advocate on behalf of members of the military community before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- **MILADC003** Advocate on behalf of members of the military community before the Veterans’ Review Board
- **MILADC002** Provide military rehabilitation and compensation advocacy services
- **MILADC001** Provide military rehabilitation and compensation advocacy services under supervision

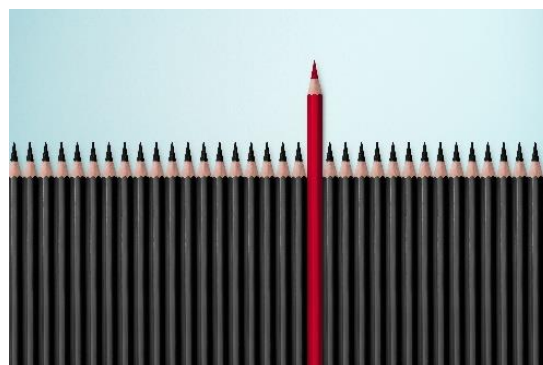


#### Welfare Stream

- **MILADW002** Provide military welfare advocacy services
- **MILADW003** Provide military welfare advocacy services under supervision

Changes in the Military Advocacy landscape have necessitated some amendments to the accredited Course. The major changes identified resulted from:

- feedback from the veteran community, particularly young veterans, resulting in a change in terminology from welfare support to wellbeing support;
- the change in legislation from the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) to the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA); and
- the requirement to include applications for DRCA reconsiderations in the MILADC003 unit of competency.



The ATDP forwarded an Application to Amend an Accredited Course to ASQA in early April 2020. ASQA approved the application and endorsed the amended Course in Military Advocacy effective from 28 April 2020 for a period of five years.

The Course in Military Advocacy now consists of:



#### Rehabilitation and Compensation Stream

- **MILADC004** Advocate on behalf of members of the military community before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- **MILADC005** Advocate on behalf of members of the military community for a merits review of a primary decision
- **MILADC002** Provide military rehabilitation and compensation advocacy services
- **MILADC001** Provide military rehabilitation and compensation advocacy services under supervision



#### Wellbeing Stream

- **MILADW002** Provide military wellbeing advocacy services
- **MILADW003** Provide military wellbeing advocacy services under supervision

Note that each of the units of competency in the amended version of the Course have been endorsed as equivalent to the previous units, so there is no need for Advocates holding Statements of Attainment for the previous versions to do anything.

Advocates currently under training or enrolled for training under the ATDP will automatically be enrolled in the new unit of competency where relevant (for example, those enrolled for Welfare Level 1 will automatically be enrolled for Wellbeing Level 1).

You may also have noted a change to the numbering for the Level 3 Compensation Advocate unit of competency because, as mentioned, the name of the unit was changed significantly and ASQA policy was to issue a new unit number. The Level 3 Compensation unit is now **MILADC005**. Again, those holding the previous MILADC003 do not need to do anything as the units are equivalent.

***“those holding the previous MILADC003 do not need to do anything as the units are equivalent”***

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## 4. Continuing Professional Development

**Welcome** to the second Advocacy News of 2020 and what a year it's been so far. Programs are still postponed, which we know will be the case until at least 1 October, but this affords us an opportunity to review CPD and make any needed changes to the program.

‘A wide variety of people, such as teachers, military officers and non-commissioned officers, health care professionals, lawyers, accountants and engineers engage in professional development. Individuals may participate in professional development because of an interest in lifelong learning, a sense of moral obligation, to maintain and improve professional





competence, to enhance career progression, to keep abreast of new technology and practices, or to comply with professional regulatory requirements' (Wikipedia 2020).

Just like with those professions, ATDP advocates are required to understand complex and constantly changing legislation and policy that necessitates that their learning must continue beyond completion of a particular Unit of Competency.

All advocates who have been issued a Statement of Attainment and who are not actively engaged on an ATDP learning pathway have a CPD obligation. The intent of the ATDP's CPD program is to support accredited military advocates to maintain an appropriate level of knowledge for the provision of advocacy services to veterans and their families after gaining their qualification – with the objective of allowing advocates to further develop their baseline skills and knowledge.

The ATDP encourages all advocates at all levels to understand both streams of advocacy available within the program – Wellbeing and Compensation, noting that contemporary advocacy is essentially focussed upon the wellbeing of veterans and their families. Consistent with this whole of person approach, CPD provides opportunities for professional growth across a wide range of knowledge and experience levels.

The accumulation of points is only the means by which advocates keep track of how their continuing development is progressing. However, this score is incidental to the principle objective of maintaining and increasing knowledge and skills of advocates.

A key feature of the CPD program is that it is designed to complement an ESO's own training and development activities and thereby allows an advocate to maximise opportunities for personal and professional growth and enhance their ability to assist veterans and their families.

#### **The objectives of the CPD program are:**

- To help maintain and enhance the skills and knowledge gained in the Course in Military Advocacy;
- To ensure changes in legislation are known, new topics explored and updated content made available to assist advocates do their work in what is a dynamic working environment;
- To be flexible in the CPD options on offer to meet the needs of accredited advocates;
- To help support compliance with the eligibility requirements for professional indemnity insurance under VITA;
- To be consistent with the objectives of ATDP's internal quality assurance and quality control programs; and
- To support a professional and contemporary approach to the training military advocates.

#### **The point's system**

As mentioned, like other professional development programs, the ATDP CPD program is a point's based system. Other programs might refer to it as a point's accrual or continuing renewal units or renewal points system, but it all means the same thing in the end; it's a way to measure your participation in professional development activities in order to maintain your qualification or registration.

Now to a simple guide on how the points system works for the ATDP and what your obligations are.

***'As mentioned above, it's a points system for the ATDP. An advocate must accrue a minimum of 45 CPD points over a three (3) year rolling period, including at least 15 CPD points in each CPD year to remain 'Current'.***

Once an advocate has been issued their Statement of Attainment (SoA) after completing their Unit of Competency, they are then considered 'Current' for the subsequent year for CPD (Year 1). Being considered 'Current' is recognition that the advocate is completely up to date because they have attained their SoA.

However, even though you are considered 'Current' you still need to do CPD and achieve 15 points as a minimum, or pro rata\* if you attained your SoA during the year.

But what happens if you don't achieve 15 points for the year and only achieve five points? What this means is that you will be 'In arrears'. However, if you are 'In arrears' you can still make up these points.



For example, if in 2019-20 you were In Arrears because you only achieved 5 points the previous year (2019-20), you would then need to get 25 points in the following year (2020-21), 10 points for 2019-20 and a further 15 points for the current year and you would then be up to date and 'Current' again for the year after that (2021-22).

If you didn't make up points and you are 'In arrears' for three consecutive years, you will be considered 'Not Current'. If an advocate becomes 'Not Current' they will lose their ATDP accreditation and be removed from the Accredited Advocate Register. Once an advocate becomes Not Current the only way to regain accreditation is by Recognition of Prior Learning process to provide a full demonstration of compliance and therefore competency.

### **Currency of courses**

CPD activities are constantly reviewed and updated as the need is identified. However, for certain external courses and qualifications such as First Aid (Mental Health) the specified period of currency is subject to external regulation. To remain certified the advocate may need to undertake periodic refresher training. (Eg a person completing a First Aid qualification remains qualified for three (3) years before they need to do a refresher or the course again). Therefore, an advocate can complete courses or qualifications of this type more than once to maintain currency and be awarded CPD points on each occasion. The currency of courses or activities will be displayed against the CPD activity in the CPD portal and the participants CPD profile.

### **Update Modules**

An advocate who has obtained a qualification at Level 1 or 2 via Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) must complete four compulsory core Update Modules before they are allowed to commence any other CPD units/activities. Advocates that complete training via the Learning Pathway do not need to do these 'Catch Up' units as they are included in the ATDP curriculum. The fourth core module will be either Compensation or Wellbeing. A wellbeing advocate will be required to complete the Compensation elective unit and vice versa.

Once the modules are completed you may undertake other relevant activities which could be either core or elective activities. Core activities are those activities that are directly related to the Unit of Competencies and include the Update Modules and pre-approved programs. Elective activities include the completion of online PowerPoint tutorials, webinars and other non-core activities. For those who have undertaken training via the Learning Pathway (i.e. Completing Workplace Experience Logs and Consolidation and Assessment) you will already be familiar with the content in the Update Modules and go straight to selecting from the Elective units.



### **Can I still do CPD if I don't have a Statement of Attainment?**

If you don't have a Statement of Attainment you can still do CPD. However, until you have been issued with a SoA this is only for your reference and you can't gain CPD points. Likewise, any advocate can do the Update Modules as many times as they like, however each module completed can only attract CPD points once.

### **Advocate phone calls**

The ATDP has been conducting outreach to advocates via phone to talk about CPD, discuss what is on offer and what is new, and answer your questions and also to update our records. Pleasingly advocates have been generally very accepting of CPD and understand the importance of doing it. This is not always the case and we understand that it is something that places extra demands on advocates' already very precious time.

There was also feedback that advocates would like to see a greater number and variety of activities and in response we are working on adding additional activities including webinars, courses, case studies and quizzes. If you have any ideas about what could be included as a CPD activity please let us know as we have a dedicated team of volunteers working on CPD development and any ideas are most welcome.

**Further help?** If you are having problems in meeting your CPD obligations or you have any general questions relating to CPD, please contact the CPD Team at [cpd@atdp.org.au](mailto:cpd@atdp.org.au)

**Brett Warner**

Team Leader CPD

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## **5. COVID-19 Update**

***DVA has advised the ATDP there will be no face to face training that is either conducted directly by DVA or is resourced/supported by DVA until 1 October 2020 at the earliest.***

***The advice below was received by the ATDP from DVA on 3 July 2020 regarding DVA Travel principles during COVID-19.***

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DVA has developed a transition blueprint which sets out a high level outline of how we will emerge from COVID-19. Central to this blueprint is the need to ensure that staff and veteran wellbeing, as well as operational requirements, are considered. As part of that planning, DVA has decided there will be no face to face training that is either conducted directly by DVA or is resourced/supported by DVA until 1 October 2020 at the earliest.

The current health situation requires the Department to take a measured and cautious approach to the resumption of any activities where our staff, contractors and veterans conduct face to face meetings or training activities and that is reflected in our current guidance and operations. A review of the decision with regard to any DVA conducted or funded face to face training will be undertaken

in the last week of August. This will allow for informed and timely planning for activities that are forecast for post 1 October.

In relation specifically to ATDP and its important role in training our volunteer advocates, most of whom are veterans themselves of course, their safety and wellbeing is our first concern. As an immediate priority, the department will investigate whether there are any options that could be utilised in the short term for an expanded online training platform to support both training and accreditation activities while face to face activities are suspended.



I trust that you realise this decision was not taken lightly and with careful consideration of the implications for the excellent work done by all those involved in ATDP over a number of years.

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## 6. ATDP Training Update

At this point in time (30 June) we don't have any programs scheduled and the earliest they may now be scheduled is after 1 October.

The slow-down in nominations over the past 4 months has been beneficial from an administrative point of view because it has allowed the Program Support Officers (PSOs) to perform much needed housekeeping duties such as making outbound phone calls to those who have a CPD obligation.

We have also been performing a number of other important tasks such as helping to link advocates who are not already attached to an ex-service organisation within our systems.



With many people being at home, it has proved a perfect time for trainees to work on their Workplace Experience Logbooks or do eLearning modules. If you have any questions you would like to ask us or encounter any problems, please contact our Program Support Officers who are here to help you. Their contact details appear at the end of this newsletter.

We have recently had a change in personnel at ATDP. Karolyn Traise has now left ATDP and Elizabeth Owen will be stepping into the RIG 2 role temporarily. We thank Karolyn for her work and time at the ATDP and wish her all the best for the future.

Stay safe and warm this winter month.

***Elizabeth Owen***

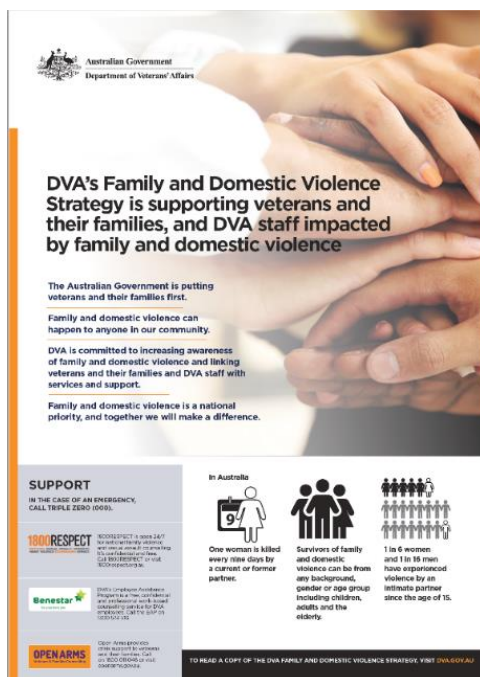
Program Support Manager

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## 7. Family and Domestic Violence Strategy launched

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester launched the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020-25 in May, which aims to help our veterans, their families and DVA staff affected by family and domestic violence. Putting our veterans and their families first is an ongoing commitment that the Australian Government has made.

A large part of this commitment is to support veterans and their families through times of hardship. Unfortunately, family and domestic violence can impact anyone in our community, and the Government is determined to ensure veterans and their families can access support when affected by this complex issue. DVA has listened to veterans and their families and developed this strategy with partners across the Australian Government that publicly affirms our support and ongoing commitment to reducing the prevalence of family and domestic violence in Australia.



The strategy outlines the support veterans and their families can access through DVA and its external providers, such as financial assistance, counselling and crisis accommodation. It also includes support for DVA staff who are affected by family and domestic violence.

The Council for Women and Families United by Defence Service will be a key partner in the implementation and ongoing performance of the strategy and will provide a strong voice on behalf of those who may feel unheard.

Family and domestic violence can happen to anyone in our community and remains a largely hidden issue. Violence, intimidation or disrespectful behaviour in the home, workplace or wider community is totally unacceptable.

The strategy is an integral part of the Fourth Action Plan of the Australian Government's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22,

which provides a long-term plan of action for this important and complex issue.

The ***DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020-25*** can be found on the DVA website at [dva.gov.au](http://dva.gov.au).

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## 8. Veterans can access Personal Monitoring Technology through DVA

DVA has a range of personal monitoring technologies available to eligible veterans and widow/ers.

Accessing and installing a personal monitoring system may be suitable for older veterans and widow/ers if they are self-isolating to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.

DVA veterans and widow/ers can access fully-monitored 24-hours a day, seven days a week personal response systems in their home or as mobile pendant personal response devices that are designed



to keep them safe at home and when out and about. The initial and ongoing costs are covered by DVA if these devices are arranged through DVA. Personal response devices can be tailored to an individual's needs, giving the person being monitored the comfort that assistance is never far away and reassuring family and friends that their loved one is able to access help easily, if it is needed

Technology has greatly improved these devices. Some have additional features like built-in fall detector capabilities and GPS tracking that works where there is a mobile signal

When a device is activated, these systems are supported by an emergency response centre, with someone who will talk directly with the person, if they can. As the emergency response centre is given the person's location they can arrange for the appropriate emergency service to attend. The emergency response centre can also notify a user's nominated family or friends to inform them of the situation.

Personal response systems can be prescribed by an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or a registered nurse following an in-home fall and cognitive assessment. The prescribing health provider will organise the supply and installation through a DVA-contracted supplier and will provide all training in the use of the device and equipment.

For more information go to the [DVA website](#) or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

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## 9. Navigate DVA Aged Care Services with two new books

At Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) we understand that as we get older we may need a little assistance to do some of the tasks that we used to take for granted.

DVA has a comprehensive range of services that can provide you the support you need to keep you active, independent and living in your home. So, whether it's a hand with household tasks such as vacuuming, washing or preparing meals, assistance with your medication or wound care. Or you may need to access equipment or home modifications to help you move about your home easily, DVA has services and programs that may be able to help.



To make it easier for you to locate and access the DVA support you require, DVA has developed a book:

- ***A veteran's guide to living independently – Accessing DVA services***

This book details the services, eligibility requirements and how to access each service.

DVA has also developed a book to help you understand the support DVA can provide as you move into an aged care home:

- ***A veteran's guide to moving into an aged care home – Accessing DVA services***

This book steps you through the process of moving into an aged care facility, outlines the support and services DVA can provide as you consider aged care homes and once you have moved in.

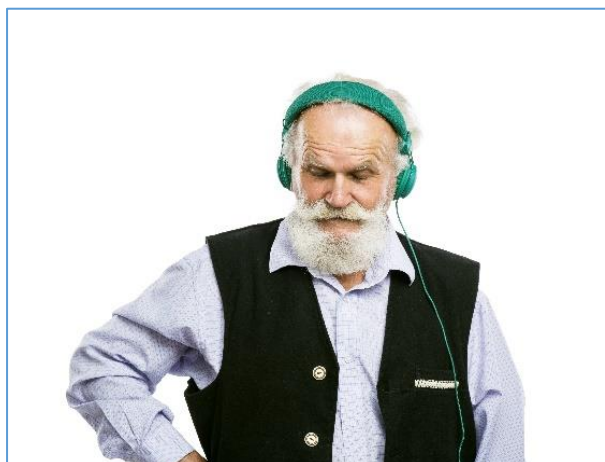
These books are available for you to download or order a hardcopy on the DVA website [www.dva.gov.au/ac](http://www.dva.gov.au/ac) or by calling the **DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**.

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## 10. A guide to better hearing

Did you know that hearing loss and tinnitus are two of the most common conditions experienced by former Australian Defence Force members?

Living with hearing loss or tinnitus can be difficult, as it can affect your quality of life, relationships and your ability to rest and sleep well. These conditions affect everyone differently and at times it can be frustrating and isolating.



As clients of DVA there are a number of options available to help with hearing loss and tinnitus.

Veteran Card holders with a Gold Card or a White Card with accepted conditions of hearing loss and/or tinnitus can access a range of hearing services and devices to meet their clinical needs at no cost, this includes your assessment, fitting, training and the maintenance and repairs of items prescribed.

### **Getting help is easy**

DVA has developed a helpful guide that will assist you in preparing for your hearing appointment. The Veteran's guide to better hearing has helpful checklists to assist you in preparing for your appointment, and what you should ask when you're at the appointment.

For more information on how DVA can support you and to download a copy or order a hard copy of *The Veteran's guide to better hearing* go to <http://www.dva.gov.au/hearing> or call **1800 VETERAN (1800 838372)**.

To make an appointment with a hearing provider in your local area, visit the Hearing Services Program website, provider locator [www.hearingservices.gov.au](http://www.hearingservices.gov.au) or call **1800 555 726**.



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## 11. Assisting veterans in transitioning to civilian employment



The objective of the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program is simple – to increase employment opportunities for veterans. The program achieves this by raising awareness with employers, both private and public sector, of the untapped value and unique experience in our veteran community.

Increasingly, organisations are receiving the message veterans are good for business, which is recognised annually at the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards.

The 2020 Award winners were announced on 15 May via social media, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison surprising two of the winners with a video conference to congratulate and announce their win in person. To date the video has been viewed by over 79,000 people, and can be watched [here](#).

The Awards are an opportunity to celebrate the organisations who employ and support the veteran workforce, as well as the veterans who are making a significant contribution as an employee or entrepreneur.

The program also provides helpful tools and resources to assist veterans in making the transition to civilian employment. The Veterans' Employment Toolkit has been developed to help veterans prepare for the next step in their career, providing information on how they can translate their military skills and adjust to the civilian workforce. It also includes useful tips to help with the transition process, as well as practical advice for writing a resume and job application, and preparing for an interview.

To complement the toolkit, the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program website has recently been revamped, to make it easier for veterans and employers to access the information they need.

Each year, around 5,500 people leave the Australian Defence Force. The challenge is ensuring veterans are well-equipped to make this step, and also ensure organisations interested in employing veterans are able to attract them. The Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program is dedicated to assisting veterans and employers in this journey.

The toolkit and website can be accessed at [www.veteransemployment.gov.au](http://www.veteransemployment.gov.au)



## 12. DVAs Education Schemes

DVA's Education Schemes are available to assist eligible dependent children of veterans throughout their schooling years, with the provision of financial support and other benefits.

A student may be eligible for a range of benefits under the Education Schemes, such as education allowances, special assistance, rent assistance, and additional tuition. Tertiary students can also receive fares allowance, and Student Start-up and Relocation Scholarships.

Eligibility for Students is determined under two Legislative Instruments: VCES is established under the [Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 \(VEA\)](#); and MRCAETS is established under the [Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 \(MRCA\)](#).

To be eligible a student must be under 25 when they apply, be in full time study and be dependent on a veteran who meets either the VCES or MRCAETS eligibility.

Under the VCES, to be eligible a student must be dependent on a veteran in receipt of disability pension at the special rate (commonly known as T&PI), the extreme disablement adjustment (EDA) rate or at an increased rate because of multiple amputations, or multiple amputations and blindness; or the student must be the child of a current or former ADF member whose death was war or defence caused; or a veteran who was an Australian prisoner-of-war and is now deceased.



To be eligible under MRCAETS the student must be dependent on a veteran eligible for, or who was eligible for the Special Rate Disability Pension (SRDP); suffers an impairment that constitutes 80 or more impairment points; or whose death was related to service.

### ***Education allowance payments***

Payments for primary school students and most secondary students are made to the person entitled to be paid Family Tax Benefit (FTB) on the student's behalf (normally a parent or guardian). Payments for tertiary students are made directly to the student.

Once a student turns 16, they have the option to receive FTB from Services Australia, or receive an increased amount of education allowance from DVA. They are unable to receive both payments, but a student receiving FTB will continue to be eligible for other benefits under the Schemes, such as guidance, counselling and additional tuition. If the student becomes ineligible for FTB, they can contact DVA about returning to the Education Schemes.

### ***Contact Details***

More information is available from the Education Schemes Team via [educationschemes@dva.gov.au](mailto:educationschemes@dva.gov.au) or **1800 555 254**.

## 13. Support for ex-ADF members at risk of homelessness

DVA is concerned about any instance of homelessness among former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families. Any veteran who finds themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness can contact **DVA** on **1800 555 254** or **Open Arms** on **1800 011 046** to get the help they need.

DVA and Open Arms will work with the individual to help them access a range of supports, including:

- Crisis payments and crisis accommodation
- Referrals to local homelessness support services
- Information about Centrelink support and a network of other organisations that can assist them.



Open Arms also provide counselling and case management support to help individuals address the issues that contributed to the crisis as part of their Crisis Accommodation Program.

<https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/crisis-accommodation>

For further information you can visit the DVA website homelessness support, or call **Open Arms** on **1800 011 046** to confirm eligibility for the Crisis Accommodation Program. Once eligibility is confirmed, short-term (up to five days) accommodation will be booked as near as possible to their current location.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/income-support/help-buy-property-or-find-accommodation/homelessness-support-0>

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## 14. Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and National Action Plan

Reducing the risk of suicide and improving the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and their families is at the forefront of the new four-year Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and National Action Plan launched in May 2020.

Veterans, current serving members, families, government, researchers, peak health bodies, service providers and ex-service organisations (ESOs) all collaborated on the design of the Strategy and Action Plan.

The Strategy recognises that good mental health is supported by whole of life wellbeing. Over the course of this four-year strategy, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) will drive a series of



changes to enable a shift from an illness focus to a wellness focus. This move will better ensure DVA has the appropriate services available to support transitioning Australian Defence Force (ADF) members, veterans and their families to live healthy and productive lives. DVA recognises that collaborating with advocates and ESOs is key to building a connected and coordinated system to support veterans and families. The Strategy and Action Plan confirm DVA's commitment to enhancing partnerships with advocates and ESOs, and aim to encourage the advocacy system to support wellbeing and promote the benefits of veterans and their families connecting to ESOs and other support services.

The Strategy builds on the work already underway with the announcement earlier this year by the Prime Minister of the establishment of a powerful new independent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention to inquire into all suspected veteran and ADF suicides and their causes.

DVA will continue to work closely with advocates and ESOs to ensure veterans are serving, living and ageing well, with access to appropriate, integrated and effective services and support across the domains of wellbeing.

To download the Strategy and Action Plan, visit [www.dva.gov.au/mental-health-strategy](http://www.dva.gov.au/mental-health-strategy)

*If you need help or someone to talk to, contact **Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling** on **1800 011 064** (available 24/7).*

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## 15. Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance

DSH Insurance provides competitively priced home building insurance and claims support tailored to all Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and veterans who have served one day (including reservists and widow(er)s of those ADF members).

DSH Insurance has a 100 year legacy of Defence-focused insurance expertise and understands the ADF lifestyle and the needs and expectations of ADF members and veterans. By working with ADF members and veterans to understand their insurance requirements, and adding value through our personalised approach, DSH Insurance provides comprehensive home building insurance cover as well as support to ensure policyholders receive the settlement they are entitled to should they need to make a claim. This provides peace of mind for our policyholders, including ADF members who are deployed and their remaining family.

Our veterans, ADF members and their families are at the heart of everything we do. Established more than a century ago as part of repatriation activities for soldiers returning

### Key features of DSH Insurance's Home Building Insurance:

- flood and accidental damage
- storm damage to fences
- fusion of electric motors that are part of your home, regardless of age of the motor
- a tailored claims process supported by a broad network of loss adjusters and contractors
- temporary accommodation should your home become unfit to live in
- no excess (other than for earthquake damage and some accidental damage), and
- flexible payment options at no extra cost.

from the First World War, the War Service Homes Scheme (WSHS) built homes for returned soldiers and provided loans so soldiers could purchase them. As the Commonwealth had a financial interest in the homes built by the WSHS, borrowers were required to take out insurance through the War Service Homes Insurance Scheme (WSHIS) to protect their properties against fire and other risks. Over the years WSHS and WSHIS have evolved and are now collectively known as DSH.

Administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), DSH Insurance is self-funded through the premiums paid by policyholders with no funding received from the Government. Unlike other insurance entities, DSH Insurance doesn't exist to make a profit, but rather the revenue generated from premiums is invested back into DSH Insurance. This allows DSH Insurance to provide high quality insurance products and services at a competitive price.

As part of our ongoing commitment to prioritising the needs of our veterans, ADF members, and their families, from 1 January 2020 DSH Insurance expanded its eligibility requirements to include all current and former members of the ADF with at least one day of service, regardless of their type of service. This change has created opportunities for over 300,000 additional veterans and ADF members to access our home building insurance.



DSH Insurance insures anywhere in Australia and can provide access to a range of other insurance products including contents, landlord and car insurance. These complementary insurance products are underwritten by QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and no eligibility requirements apply. DSH Insurance is also able to refer policyholders to DVA programs and services if required.

Find out more by visiting [www.dsh.gov.au](http://www.dsh.gov.au) or phoning 1300 552 662.

***Our 100 year legacy, strengthened by our core values of honesty, trust, care and commitment always safeguards your interests.***

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## 16. Open Arms expands services

With an unprecedented start to the year, the bushfires and COVID-19 Pandemic have taught us how important it is to look after our own health and wellbeing and that of members of the veteran community who may be finding these events particularly difficult.

To support veterans and their families during this time, Open Arms has remained open for business and has also adapted their services to make them more accessible for current and future clients, including expanding their telehealth options.

Open Arms has also introduced a new online suicide prevention training program—Suicide Prevention Start, in partnership with the RSL and LivingWorks, and a number of introductory online

[Group Programs](#) including *Doing Anger Differently*, *Understanding Anxiety*, *Sleeping Better*, *Recovery from Trauma* and *Managing Pain*.

They have also added to the self-help resources available on their website [openarms.gov.au](https://openarms.gov.au) and created a dedicated [COVID-19 page](#) with articles written with the veteran community in mind. This, on top of proven tools available on the [High Res app](#) make Open Arms a key referral point for anyone in the veteran community.

If you or someone you know wants someone to talk to, even just for a chat, **Open Arms is available 24/7 by calling 1800 011 046**. This service is free and confidential and there is always a team member, who understands the military experience, available to answer your call.

**OPEN ARMS**  
**Veterans & Families Counselling**  
> A service founded by Vietnam veterans,  
now for all veterans and families

If anonymity is a concern, veterans and their family members can also call SafeZone Support on 1800 142 072. Here, specialised counsellors can offer support without knowing who is on the other end of the phone. It's up to the caller to decide how much or how little information they share and calls are not recorded.

**#StrongerTogether**

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## 17. Do you have an advocacy story you would like to share?

Do you have a story about how you assisted someone with their claim, or with a wellbeing issue which you would like to share with your fellow advocates? Human interest stories are always the most widely read and if they are related to advocacy, then that's what **Advocacy News** is all about.

If you do we would like to hear from you with a view to publishing your story in this newsletter. We don't need long articles, say up to 400 words, but longer if you want. We will help with the editing and will make sure you are happy with it before we go to print.

The next edition of the Advocacy News will be the **October 2020 edition**. If you have anything you would like to submit please send it to [ATDP.Communications@dva.gov.au](mailto:ATDP.Communications@dva.gov.au)

Looking forward to receiving your articles.

***Ed note; The ATDP reserves the right to publish, or not to publish, individual articles.***



## 18. Feedback

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about this newsletter, please send an email to

[ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au](mailto:ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au)



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## 19. SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

Please share this newsletter with anyone you know who may be interested. Let us know if you would like to be *added* or *removed* from the distribution list by sending an email to

[ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au](mailto:ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au)

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## 20. ATDP contact details

**General enquiries:** *Advocacy Training and Development Program - [ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au)*  
**Websites:** *Advocacy Training and Development Program - [www.web.atdp.org.au](http://www.web.atdp.org.au)*  
*Department of Veterans' Affairs - [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)*

| Region 1<br>(Qld & NT)   | Region 2<br>(NSW, ACT & WA)  | Region 3<br>(Vic, Tas & SA)   |
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