



Advocacy Training and  
Development Program



# Advocacy News

Issue 16 – December 2020

Welcome to the *December 2020 Christmas edition* of the *Advocacy News*

## A message from the SGB Chair

Dear Recipients,

Welcome to the Xmas 2020 Edition of Advocacy News. This year has been a challenging one for everyone from which the ATDP and advocacy community more broadly were not immune. So first up I would like to recognise the extraordinary efforts throughout the period of the COVID-19 pandemic of ESOs, individual advocates and the ATDP volunteers. All of you have gone the extra mile to look after the interests of the veteran and ex-service community at a time when many were in most need of that support. Might I also note the efforts of our partner the Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) in providing information and support services via Open Arms and other means to assist clients in need to support them in their personal challenges faced over the past year.



As for many organisations this year has been one of highs and lows for the ATDP. In many ways, from my perspective, it has been as challenging a year as any since the first meetings of the Strategic Governance Board (SGB) in October 2015. The suspension of "face to face" programs earlier in the year was perhaps the most frustrating of COVID-19 impacts faced by our National Training Manager, Mr Greg Hoving and the training and assessment team. I know face to face suspension, whilst a necessary measure, also created many difficulties within the ESO and advocacy community in respect to keeping trainees engaged and motivated while awaiting programs. Within the Board, 2020 was also somewhat of a watershed year. It was considered by SGB members that the program has reached maturity and it is time to review the ATDP governance arrangements and this process has now been commenced by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. These deliberations are on-going and I will keep you informed when I know more on that front.

Reflecting on the last five years as the SGB Chair I have often mentioned the central role of the ATDP volunteers, who are overwhelmingly drawn from the ESO advocacy community, in the success of the ATDP. In a recent issue of the ATDP Update, I was greatly heartened to see that Liz Cosson AM CSC, the current Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, in an Open Letter also acknowledged the contribution of these selfless individuals who have to date been responsible for the accreditation of over 800 individual advocates. These volunteers who were in the main former TIP trainers brought with them a lifetime of skills and knowledge, an unbridled passion for assisting the veteran

community, and an unwavering commitment to the introduction of a nationally accredited training and development program that reflected the unique requirements of military advocacy.

The implementation of the program challenging enough before COVID- 19 provided an extra, and significant, degree of difficulty. It would be fair to say that when the Advocacy Blueprint was released in late 2015 there were some vocal critics of accredited training for advocates. This included dire predictions that such a model would herald the end of volunteer advocacy. While I consider this was not the majority view, it was nevertheless strongly held by some that a move towards accreditation was neither the right way to go, or achievable within the Australian context.

Five years down the track the evidence is clear, that the ATDP has been an outstanding success in terms of its re-imagination and reinvigoration of the training and development of advocates. The active engagement by the ATDP with the ex-service community on such projects as the Accredited Advocate Register (AAR), which has provided a whole new way for clients to locate accredited advocates and for individual ESOs to manage their advocacy workforce, is just one example of an important bi-products of the decision to transition to an accredited program.

In fact, far from being the beginning of the end for volunteer advocacy, the ATDP has been built on the back of the wide acceptance of the accredited program by large numbers of highly experienced advocates, combined with its unique appeal to younger volunteers who represent the future of volunteer advocacy. The large number of experienced advocates embracing accreditation has also been significant in the critical role they have played in the formal and structured mentoring of trainee advocates who are the future of the program. With an average age of new entrants being in their early 50's, there is great prospect of this new generation carrying on the long established tradition of volunteer advocacy for many years to come. However, we know there is more to be done to support mentors and work is well underway to provide both formal qualifications and on-line training.

The introduction of the accredited program has also seen the increasing participation rate of in advocacy training by women, with training nominations from females last year almost equalling those of males. This reflects positively on the program in that it has successfully supported greater diversity of the advocacy base in alignment with changes occurring in Australian society in general, the ADF, and the veteran/ex-service community more broadly from where these trainees are recruited and nominated for training.

The many other innovations and value adds such as the introduction of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program, updating and expanding the DVA Train on-line learning suite, introduction of Safetalk into our Level 1 Consolidation and Assessment programs to help keep our clients safe, and automated enrolment system on our ATDP website are just some examples of some other wonderful achievements during my time as Chair.

So while consideration is being given to what ATDP governance arrangements are most appropriate to moving forward, you can be assured that the ATDP focus on its original vision outlined in the Advocacy Blueprint “to train and develop selected practitioners to provide high quality advocacy services to current and former ADF members and their dependants, where advocacy services cover rehabilitation, compensation, appeals and welfare (now wellbeing)” will remain a constant. The volunteers that have steered a steady course to date remain committed to working collegiately with the ex-service community and the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the ATDP program

remains innovative in approach, aligned with veteran community expectations, and consistent with contemporary educational approaches to competency based adult learning.

Last but not least, I would like to wish all Advocacy News recipients, members of the Ex-service community, advocates, their family and friends a safe Xmas and happy and prosperous New Year. Until next time.

Yours Sincerely,

**Jenny Walker**

Chair, Strategic Governance Board (SGB)

*Advocacy Training and Development Program*

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## Veteran advocacy, tough but rewarding

Roger Greene OAM JP says acting as a veterans' advocate – helping veterans and their families access services and assistance – can be difficult but very rewarding.

Vietnam veteran, Mr Greene, of Greensborough, Victoria, has been a veterans' advocate for more than 30 years, and helps train new advocates. Veterans' advocates support veterans struggling with life and help them access DVA services.

'We're always looking for people who've got an interest in looking after veterans and becoming qualified,' Mr Greene said. 'Unfortunately, more and more veterans are having trouble with the physical and mental impacts of service.'



Mr Greene chairs the Capability Framework Management Group which sets training standards for advocates.

As a trainer he has noticed a 'pleasing' reduction in the age demographic of people training to be veterans' advocates under the DVA-sponsored Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

He said this showed veterans and their spouses from more recent conflicts were stepping up.

The ATDP is accredited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority, the Vocational Educational and Training (VET) sector regulator, and reflects current VET practices. Participants are sponsored by an ex-service organisation (ESO) and work with a mentor following adult training principles – 70 per cent on-the-job, 20 per cent through mentoring and 10 per cent face-to-face. The partnering Registered Training Organisation, Major Training Services, manages the assessment and issue of certificates for the six competency-based units that comprise the Course in Military Advocacy – 10620NAT.

One training stream enables advocates to help serving and ex-serving military members to access health and welfare support. Another stream gives advocates skills to prepare rehabilitation and compensation claims for DVA's assessment and review processes and beyond to the Veterans' Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

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'Since the pandemic isolation measures came into effect, face -to-face training has been suspended so I've stepped back from training delivery and I'm working as an advocate,' Mr Greene said.

'It is particularly timely for people from the later conflicts to step up because I think they do have an obligation to help their mates who are not doing as well as they are.'



Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks said the COVID-19 pandemic had raised some unique challenges but he was delighted that advocacy services were continuing as a vital element enabling DVA service delivery.

'An initial suspension of "face to face" training in March has been extended until at least 1 October,' Mr Spinks said.

'Nonetheless ADTP trainers and assessors have quickly developed online facilitated programs using Webex to deliver well-patronised and -received Wellbeing and Compensation programs.

'Further good news is that much of the Course In Military Advocacy is based upon either workplace learning or online training and trainee advocates have been very active taking non -classroom activities during lockdown ready to move to the next level of training.'

Mr Spinks said accredited advocates had also been active undertaking online continuing professional development as part of their ongoing learning.

'Veterans helping other veterans is a great way to look at the ATDP and the need has never been greater for veterans who have left the ADF recently to get involved,' Mr Spinks said.

Anyone interested in helping their comrades should discuss the opportunity with their ESO.

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## My personal journey as a Veterans' Advocate

**Anthony (Tony) Grice** is an ATDP Wellbeing Advocate Level 2 from Frankston North Victoria and this is his story...

I was on the committee of my ex-service organisation when the president spoke on the matter of only having one welfare officer and one funeral officer to do RSL service. I hastily raised my hand for the position as I wanted to volunteer, but in hindsight I realise I didn't have a full understanding of what I was getting myself into.

While the Training and Information Program (TIP) Levels 1 and 2 were overwhelming over the few days I had to complete them, they gave me a better understanding of my role moving forward. However, the lack of a mentor during my first case led me to seek the help of the Welfare officer in our ex-service organisation. His guidance was well appreciated and a valuable asset, and over the course of many years I was able to grow and develop into the job as a welfare officer, settling into the role well.



Shortly after this my ex-service organisation started taking donations of mobility aids in the hope we could help veterans' and War Widows who did not have a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold card. We have been able to help a number of allied veterans with these mobility aids.

At the time of writing this essay my ex-service organisation has also provided over \$153,000 in items such as hospital beds, wheelchairs, walkers, furniture and mobility scooters, all of which were items that had been donated by our local area.

With the help of the committee we started a veterans' coffee morning each Wednesday between 10am and 12pm. This program has allowed us to connect veterans and their families with a Military Wellbeing Advocate where required in a way that is welcoming and protective of our veterans' privacy and wellbeing. It allows veterans to talk freely without pressure or topic restriction, creating an open and safe conversation space for all members of the group.

Each Tuesday and Friday from 8am to 9am, and then from 9am to 10am respectively, the Frankston RSL runs an exercise group for veterans taught by a professional instructor from the Peninsula Aquatic Recreation Centre. This program is designed to be affordable and accessible for everyone, which was achieved by providing RSL subsidisation and lowering the out of pocket costs for members to six dollars. Without the assistance of our valuable volunteers helping to set up each morning, we wouldn't be able to keep this program accessible for our members who mainly rely on a fortnightly pension.

Last year our ex-service organisation conducted a 'Live Well, Live Safe' education program provided through Mercy Health. This program is designed to enable and empower veterans within their own homes and assist in preventing a need for relocation into a nursing home or alternative care. This program creates a great sense of self, comfort and independence for veterans to achieve a greater overall level of wellbeing, helping to strengthen their support systems within their home. More specifically, the information sessions also offer the opportunity to learn more about what is available in the local community and to support veterans to live safely and independently within their own home for longer.

In November of last year, The Frankston RSL and PARC joined together to bring Active Yoga to the Club as part of 'RSLactive'.

When I was first introduced to the Advocacy Training and Development Program, many of my fellow welfare officers and me, who were used to the old system of TIP, were confused as to why the ATDP course had become a new requirement especially considering our previous experience and prior knowledge in advocacy.

On reflection my concerns were unfounded. My choice of career did not require me to stay in school past the age of 15 and I was highly concerned for my ability to complete the required training. Once I had read the introductory email about the Advocacy Training and Development Program I thought I would struggle significantly with the course requirements. And given my level of education, I thought the ATDP course would be better suited for someone with a university level of education.

I kept this thought to myself for a long period of time as I did not want people at my ex-service organisation knowing I had my doubts about completing the course. Up until then, my wife used to help me with lot of things so I could get by, but sadly passed away well before I needed to do my

Military Wellbeing Advocate level 2 course and Mentoring course in Melbourne. So I had to start doing things for myself, which I initially found difficult.

Fortunately my son was a great help, and was willing and able to assist me. He showed me how to use my computer more efficiently to streamline my experience, including using the spell check function before sending off any official work. Hopefully, this essay testifies to the fact that I can use spell check!

When my ex-service organisation president asked me if I was going to sit for the Advocacy Training and Development Program Military Wellbeing Advocate level 2 course and Mentoring course in Melbourne, I said that I would give it a go. I felt confident and prepared.

Because I live a fair way out of the city my ex-service organisation was kind enough to provide me with hotel accommodation for a few nights to attend the course so I didn't need to travel a long way each day. This support was a great help and made a real difference.



On the way from the hotel to the DVA offices in April 2017, the person I was with, and head of the Wellbeing department at our ex-service organisation said to me, "I thought you might pull out of doing the Advocacy Training and Development Program Level 2 course?" I responded that while I had thought about it, I enjoy helping veterans' more and completing the course would help me to do this.

After a talk by the presenter on what we were going to do over the next two days, we were handed our exam papers consisting of 38 Questions and 4 case studies. I took my time to go over the papers first as we were given plenty of time to complete the exam. To my surprise I knew a lot of the answers because of the work I had been doing over the years as a Welfare officer.

On the way home from the course that day, we talked about how we both went, and whether or not we thought we could pass the course. We both thought that the paper work that was put up online made it sound a lot harder than what it was, and that this may have put a few other Welfare officers off from other ex-service organisations wanting to upgrade to the Advocacy Training and Development Program. We spoke to other ex-service organisation Welfare officers before the cut-off date of the 30th of June 2019 and let them know that it wasn't as difficult as it may seem and what the initial course paperwork indicated. After six weeks of doing the ATDP course we both got our papers to say we had passed, and I can tell you that was a great relief for me.

After I was issued with my Statement of Attainment I was also notified that I had to attain 45 points over a 3 year period in the continuing professional development program to remain current as a Military Wellbeing Advocate. The first Module I did was Transition and MEC, and it took me awhile to do it because I was unsure of what I was doing. I have struggled with some of the other items also, but I'm persistent and taking it slow, learning more and more each time I complete a new activity. I think that in the long term, as a Military Wellbeing Advocate, the more I learn, the more I will be able to help a veteran in need.

*“The more I learn, the more I will be able to help a veteran in need”*

I now mentor three Military Wellbeing Advocate trainees and enjoy learning more each day about how better I can help veterans. This year I have joined the Frankston RSL committee in the hope that I can utilise my time, experience and learning through the ATDP to better help veterans in the future.

Kind regards,

**Anthony (Tony) Grice**

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## ATDP Program Support

First up, it is with great pleasure that we would like to introduce the new Program Support Officer for Region 2. Samone Mason is currently under training and will take up the role fully in the New Year. Please make her feel welcome!

The Program Support team are currently working closely with the National Training Manager to provide assistance in planning for programs in the upcoming year. The PSOs back of house involvement includes checking the availability of venue hire and a range of other administrative responsibilities, including monitoring COVID-19 compliance requirements in individual States, before making particular dates live.

Following discussions with the National Training Manager we are giving a high priority to candidates on the Consolidation and Assessment (C&A) Ready list and are looking to make offers as soon as practical in the New Year to start the process of clearing those awaiting these programs.

We currently have the following numbers of candidates on the Ready List:

- 77 x candidates for RPL 1-4
- 73 x candidates for C&A 1-3

To ensure we have enough programs for everyone on the Ready list, we have created the below programs. More programs for the Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) will become available in May and June:

Program	City & Date
Level 1 Compensation CandA	Brisbane - 8 December 2020 - <b>CLOSED</b>
Level 2 Compensation CandA	Perth - 12 January 2021
Level 1 Compensation CandA	Perth - 12 January 2021
Level 2 Welfare CandA	Perth - 12 January 2021
Level 3 Compensation CandA	Brisbane - 19 January 2021
Level 1 Compensation CandA	Adelaide - 2 February 2021
Level 1 Welfare CandA	Adelaide - 9 February 2021
Level 2 Compensation CandA	Melbourne - 16 February 2021
Level 1 Welfare CandA	Brisbane - 23 February 2021
Level 1 Compensation CandA	Sydney - 9 March 2021
Level 2 Compensation CandA	Brisbane - 13 April 2021

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With activities picking back up, this means more enquiries and emails coming through for the Program Support Officers (PSOs). We are focussed on ensuring that there is a smooth resumption of programs in the coming months.

It is business as usual for the other Program Support Officer tasks despite the recent lockdown in Adelaide.

*From myself and the PSO Team I would like to wish you all a Merry Xmas and happy New Year.*

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## Continuing Professional Development

Hope you are all well and looking forward to Xmas and reconnecting with families and friends. Firstly, I'd like to congratulate all advocates for your valued assistance to the veteran community this year. It's been a year without comparison and the ATDP wasn't immune with the suspension of training in March and state restrictions also taking their toll. Here's looking forward to 2021 which I'm sure will have its own opportunities and challenges!



I was also looking back this week at what I had talked about in the Update at this time in 2019 and it looks like what was relevant in 2019 is still relevant today. My article in 2019 talked about a different way of looking at CPD, which includes breaking it down into achievable parts instead of looking at it as one big project where you start thinking, 'how am I ever going to do that', it's a bit of a sinking feeling, 'I'll never have time to get that project done'. And then, how many times after the project is completed do we have that great feeling of achievement, at looking back at the project and seeing how well it turned out, and remember thinking 'I thought I'd never have the time to get that done'!

So, back to CPD, it's a bit like that "where will I get the time to do that?"

Here's a tip, and you would have used this countless times over your working career - break it down into achievable chunks, work out a plan for how you will get this done. Let's say that we break down CPD into three (3) chunks of four (4) months each year. That would mean you could focus on achieving five (5) points within each of those four (4) months giving you the required 15 points for the year.



For example, (if you have already done your compulsory Update Modules, which are worth five (5) points each, you could do an Online Quiz and attend a CoP in the first block of four (4) months. The next block of four (4) months you could do an online PowerPoint tutorial and view a Webinar or do a Case Study. In the third block you could attend a First Aid course' which will stand you in good stead,



whether it's CPD or not, by learning a valuable new skill. It's up to you how you frame this. The points will add up fairly quickly and it probably won't look as overwhelming as you first thought!

**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)

*"As this is the last article from me this year I wish all advocates a happy Christmas and great new year and a special mention to thank you for your service to veterans' and their families through what has been a most difficult year".*

Regards, **Brett Warner** - CPD Team Leader

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## Government and not-for-profit organisations team up to help veterans find employment

In 2019, the Government committed \$15 million to support three not for profit organisations delivering innovative veterans' employment programs across the country. Veteran wellbeing is at the centre of everything we do, and securing meaningful work is a critical part of ensuring a successful transition.

The Enhanced Employment Support for Veterans Grant Program recipients are Soldier On, Disaster Relief Australia (formerly known as Team Rubicon) and RSL National. This funding is helping these organisations expand their offerings, providing direct support to veterans to translate their existing skills, build new skillsets and find civilian employment. While the planned activities of all grant recipients have been impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, since funding commenced a total of 82 veterans and family members have found paid employment and a further 196 veterans and family members are receiving ongoing employment assistance.



Other milestones include the update and relaunch of The Soldier On Pledge, which is signed by veteran-friendly organisations and signals their commitment to supporting veterans and their families secure civilian careers. This has been signed by 214 organisations, and counting. Soldier On has also delivered employment services in seven locations across the country, and in the last year, provided general support to an additional 734 veterans and their family members.

At Disaster Relief Australia, since funding began, 255 veterans and family member have been trained to deploy and assist communities affected by natural disasters, while a total of 620 veterans and family members have registered as volunteers. RSL National, have expanded their veteran employment

program to South Australia, with Victoria, Northern Territory and Western Australian scheduled to commence shortly.

Despite the hurdles this year has presented, all three not-for-profit organisations are providing continuous and meaningful support to veterans seeking employment. We recommend all advocates familiarise themselves with the offerings of Soldier On, Disaster Relief Australia and RSL National and make contact should they want to find out more information.

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## Planning Ahead

In late 2019, a staff member in the *Office of Australian War Graves* (OAWG) received a call from a man whose father was a veteran of the Second World War. His father had just died and he'd left among his important papers the OAWG's brochure about official commemoration and a note directing his family to 'call Kerry at War Graves' upon his passing.

The veteran's son was confronting what many of us will face at some point in our lives: negotiating



loss and bereavement. It can be a truly overwhelming time for loved ones who are simultaneously grieving and having to manage arrangements for a final farewell. But for this son, his father was well prepared. He had spoken with DVA staff and established that he was eligible for official commemoration. That is, he knew that the Government would pay for an ashes placement site, a plaque at the site of his burial or a plaque in a Garden of Remembrance because he had spoken with 'Kerry', who had sent him information about what he was entitled to. As such, he was able to make an informed

choice about his final resting place and how that place would be marked and left a clear list of instructions about this.

While we can't be sure, it may be that he and his wife had discussed whether to accept the offer of official commemoration, and decided that when her time came she would join him at rest. Perhaps they had also discussed the funeral or memorial service: should it include a favourite poem, hymn or song; would they like the Returned and Services League (RSL) to contribute through a poppy ceremony and the playing of The Last Post. They may have settled on a private grave or niche placements alongside other family, but taken up the offer of official commemoration as a plaque placed within an Australian Government Garden of Remembrance.

Regardless of the form of official commemoration the veteran chose, he joins more than 325,000 Australian veterans who have died after their service of causes related to it. These official commemorations are cared for by the OAWG in perpetuity.

If a veterans service-related condition has changed or if they have a new condition, we suggest that they approach DVA for advice as a claim or re-assessment may be beneficial — not just as it may relate to official commemoration, but because they may have additional entitlements for support. **Ring or email DVA (1800 555 254 or [generalenquiries@dva.gov.au](mailto:generalenquiries@dva.gov.au))** and ask us to send

them some information about official commemoration and ask if their entitlements include funeral benefits.

If they use **MyService**, they can opt in for official commemoration if they are eligible. If they are not entitled to official commemoration, the OAWG can provide them with permission to use the relevant service badge on a privately arranged memorial in advance of their passing. This letter of permission can be left with their important papers.

It's true that planning for these eventualities is not an enjoyable or indeed easy process; however, the more thought we all give to these necessary arrangements, the easier we will make it for our loved ones. And in doing so — we leave nothing to chance!

DVA has a Planning Ahead booklet designed to help veterans and their families prepare for bereavement. It's available on our website or if you are unable to download or print a copy, or you'd like to speak to a member of the OAWG team, contact DVA for assistance.

\* **Image** – Planning Ahead Booklet (*PDF on the DVA website*)

<https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/vetaffairs/vetaffairs-vol-36-no1-autumn-2020/planning-ahead>

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## State-based Concessions

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) issued cards, such as a Veteran Gold Card are often used by State, Territory and local governments to provide *their own* concessions to veterans, such as reductions on water rates or electricity bills. DVA cards are also used at the discretion of private businesses to offer a range of discounts, under the Veterans' Benefits Program which is administered by the Australian Partners of Defence (APOD). APOD provides a closed membership website where Veteran Card holders can search for offers from businesses in their local area.

Given these governments and organisations bear the cost of those concessions and set out their eligibility rules in legislation, DVA does not have the authority to change their eligibility rules.

DVA can liaise with staff from other organisations to explain DVA entitlements, offer a letter of confirmation for proof of veteran entitlements or liaise with Services Australia about any systems issues.

State and Territory governments are familiar with Centrelink clients and can recognise a Pensioner Concession Card (issued to those in receipt of Commonwealth income support) but may not be so familiar with a DVA Card.



DVA is liaising with other governments and organisations to help them clarify their websites when it comes to veteran eligibility and streamline verification letters. It is unfortunate and frustrating for veterans and their families, but sometimes different IT systems do not talk to each other smoothly.

If a veteran believes they are eligible for a state-based concession, they should contact that state in the first instance. If they are rejected by the online verification system, they can **contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (838 372)** and ask DVA to check their details and ensure they are correct.

The variety of concessions and eligibilities is extensive across governments and organisations. More information about what is available can be found on the DVA website at: [www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/discounts-and-concessions](http://www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/discounts-and-concessions) and on the APOD website at: [apod.com.au](http://apod.com.au).

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## What services are available to Commonwealth and Allied veterans?

In general, the compensation, treatment and income support entitlements available under the legislation administered by DVA are provided to veterans of the Australian Defence Force and their dependants. This is because a principle underlying the Australian military compensation system is that each country should be responsible for providing entitlements for those who serve in its armed forces, even if they later choose to live in another country.



However some Commonwealth and Allied veteran are eligible for certain benefits. Generally, this applies to veterans of the armed forces of Commonwealth and Allied countries who incurred danger from hostile forces in the Second World War, the Malayan Emergency (from 29 June 1950), Confrontation with Indonesia and the Vietnam War (up to 11 January 1973). If they meet income and assets and residency requirements, veterans with this service may receive the Service Pension from DVA. There is no eligibility for the service pension for service with Commonwealth or Allied forces after 11 January 1973.

Generally, Commonwealth and Allied veterans are not eligible for treatment or compensation (e.g. disability pension) from DVA. However, eligibility may apply under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) where a veteran was domiciled (that is, had their permanent home) in Australia immediately before enlisting in the Commonwealth or Allied force and serving in a defined conflict. This very rare circumstance applies mostly to Australians who were abroad at the outbreak of the Second World War and enlisted in Allied forces, but it may also apply to service in the conflicts listed in Schedule 2 of the VEA (e.g. Korea, Vietnam, and the first Gulf War). Veterans with this type of service and domicile may also qualify for the Gold Card. There is no VEA coverage for veterans domiciled in Australia before serving in Commonwealth or Allied forces after January 1997, and no equivalent coverage under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004.

Veterans from the UK, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand may be able to access treatment from DVA for conditions which have been accepted as service-related by the country they served with through reciprocal treatment arrangements. Second World War allied veterans may also receive the Veteran Orange Card, which gives access to discounted medicines under the Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

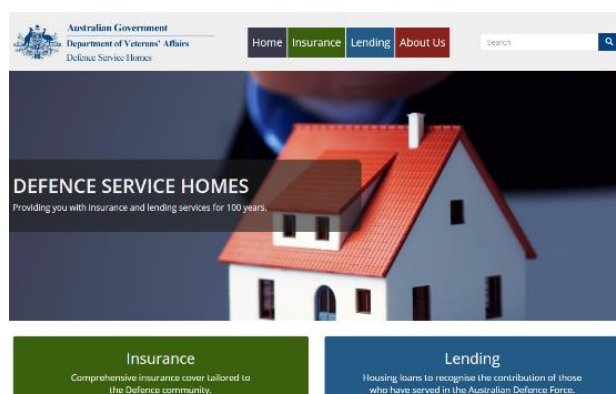
Non-liability health care arrangements, which provide access to treatment for mental health conditions, cancers and pulmonary tuberculosis regardless of whether or not they are related to service, are open only to eligible veterans of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), except for those Commonwealth or Allied veterans covered by the domicile provisions described above. Commonwealth and Allied veterans are not eligible for the Veteran Payment, which provides support to veterans who are awaiting the outcome of claims for mental health conditions.

Finally, where a veteran served with Allied forces, but also had served with hostile forces that were engaged in operations against Australia while the veteran was serving with them, the veteran ceases to be eligible for any entitlements from DVA.

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## ***Defence Service Homes Insurance - Reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding your interests - Information to help you prepare for summer***

While much has disrupted our everyday lives lately, one thing has held true – DSH Insurance is committed to prioritising our policyholders' needs. We were there for you during the bushfire crisis earlier in the year, helping those living in communities that were directly impacted. We were there during the many storms across the country over the summer period – mobilising our resources and answering your questions regarding claims.



As Australia deals with the challenges of Coronavirus, DSH Insurance's priority is clear: to support you in any way we can. Over the last few months, we've had conversations with many of you over the phone, by email and through social media – wherever and whenever you have wanted to connect, we've been here for you. We have put in place arrangements to ensure the health and safety of our policyholders, staff, loss adjusters and building contractors, and our team continues to work at full strength, providing policyholders with prompt responses to queries.

### **Have you got an action plan for this summer?**

We believe in supporting our policyholders not just in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster and on the road to recovery, but by assisting you to put in place plans to help safeguard your home and family should a natural disaster occur.

DSH Insurance has developed a [\*Natural Disasters – Homeowners Information Pack\*](#) which provides information and action plans for different types of natural disasters as well as [\*useful links\*](#) for emergency situations. We encourage our policyholders to follow the suggestions and advice in the pack to help ensure you and your family are well-prepared for the coming summer.



## You are at the heart of everything we do

As part of our ongoing journey to serve our policyholders better we recently redesigned our website to provide an enhanced user experience. The website has a new look and feel, improved navigation and better search functionality so information is easier to find.



DSH Insurance offers competitive premiums on comprehensive home building insurance tailored for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and veterans who have at least one day of service (including reservists and widow(er)s of those ADF members).

We can also provide access to other insurance products, including contents, landlord and car insurance. These products are underwritten by QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and no eligibility requirements apply.

To get a quote now, please call [1300 552 662](tel:1300552662)



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

*Please consider the relevant Product Disclosure Statements and the Supplementary Product Disclosure Statements before deciding if the insurance product is right for you. This material does not take into account your personal needs, objectives and financial circumstances. Contents, car, landlords, caravan, motorcycle and boat insurance issued by QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited. Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme ABN 97 191 187 638 (DSHI) is an authorised representative (no. 269 008) of QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited ABN 78 003 191 035, AFSL 239545*

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## Veterans' Advocacy Research Project

Ex-service organisations (ESOs) and veterans' advocates were recently invited to complete online surveys, as part of a research project being undertaken by the University of NSW that aims to help both ESOs and DVA understand the future capacity of the advocacy workforce.

Many ESOs and advocates have already responded, and have provided vital information about their current capacity to support veterans and their families, and their plans for providing these services in the future.



The surveys will close soon, and ESOs and advocates that have not yet completed the surveys are encouraged to do so.

The researchers are conducting two online surveys, one aimed at ESOs and the other at advocates.

ESOs were provided with a link to the ESO survey by email. The survey asks them about their current capacity to support veterans and their plans for the future of their advocacy workforce.

***ESOs that provide advocacy services but have not received an invitation to complete the survey should email [shona.bates@unsw.edu.au](mailto:shona.bates@unsw.edu.au)*** Some firewalls are also preventing the survey from reaching recipients, so ESO contacts should also check their junk folders.



The survey aimed at advocates is anonymous and asks advocates about the services they currently provide and their plans for the future. No individual data will be provided to DVA – the information will be consolidated and de-identified by the research team before being analysed. It will help determine whether there will be sufficient advocates available to help veterans and their families in the future.

Advocates should have received a link to the survey from their sponsoring ESOs. **Advocates who have not received the link can still participate – a link to the survey is available on DVA's website <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/veterans-advocacy-research-project> or can be requested by emailing [shona.bates@unsw.edu.au](mailto:shona.bates@unsw.edu.au)**

It is vital that as many ESOs and advocates participate in the project as possible, in order to help ESOs and DVA identify and plan for the future needs of veterans and their families.

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## Supporting you when the unexpected happens!

South-east Queensland experienced a wild start to the summer storm season, affecting many. At Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance, our first priority is safety of our policyholders, so if your home has been affected due to the 31 October hail storm, our crew are on the ground to assist.

Our staff and partners managed 200 calls within first 24 hours of the hail event—with immediate assistance provided to over 100 policyholders and our make safe contractors and builders attending worst affected policyholder

properties. Timely assistance was provided to our ADF members, veterans and their families during this time with over 357 claims lodged and over 1,000 calls received in that very first week. This work ensures claims are managed efficiently so that policyholders are back in their homes as soon as possible.



Maintaining your property is your first line of defence against extreme weather conditions. With summer fast approaching, now is the time to take care of the gutter clearing and yard tidying that you've been putting off, get out there today and [be summer ready with our top tips](#).

DSH Insurance's comprehensive Home building insurance covers your building, including permanent fixtures and fittings, from a range of damaging events and unlike other insurers we don't charge excess (other than for earthquake damage and some accidental damage). With over hundred years of Defence expertise, our team doesn't make assumptions rather focuses on individual needs and requirements and makes insurance an easy journey for you – from getting a quote through making a claim.

With a 'Defence first' approach, we run almost like any other insurer but keep the needs and expectations of our ADF members, veterans and their families' front of mind. We're Government owned but self-funded with revenue generated invested back into DSH insurance, not paid to our shareholders, so we continue to meet your needs.

Visit our [website](#) or call **1300 552 662** for more information.

We can also provide access to other insurance products, underwritten by QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited and no eligibility requirements apply.



**Disclaimer:** Please consider the relevant Product Disclosure Statements and the Supplementary Product Disclosure Statements before deciding if the insurance product is right for you. This material does not take into account your personal needs, objectives and financial circumstances. Contents, car, landlords, caravan, motorcycle and boat insurance issued by QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited. Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme ABN 97 191 187 638 (DSHI) is an authorised representative (no. 269 008) of QBE Insurance (Australia) Limited ABN 78 003 191 035, AFSL 239545

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## When is a war widower's pension granted?

Sadly, coping with the loss of a loved one is difficult, and everyone grieves differently. Understanding



what benefits are available will help advocates to keep families informed and may include the granting of a War Widow(er)'s Pension (WWP) under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA). The WWP is to compensate widowed partners of veterans who have died as a result of war service or eligible defence service. Some partners are automatically eligible for the WWP upon the death of their partner, and for others, more information is required by DVA to confirm

their eligibility.

A partner is automatically eligible for the WWP when a veteran was an ex – POW, in receipt of Total and Permanent Incapacity (TPI), Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA), or Intermediate Rate. When the partner is receiving a DVA payment already, the WWP can be automatically granted and

paid. However, when the partner is not in receipt of a DVA pension payment, the Department may not know about them or have enough information to enable payments to be made. Advocates and family members are encouraged to contact DVA and let them know about any surviving partner, in case they are not known to the Department.

For the purposes of a WWP, a partner includes a person who was legally married to or, was in a de facto relationship with the veteran immediately before the veteran's death and has not since remarried, married or entered into a de facto relationship with another person. Partners are sent a D9216 "Pension Payment Details for Widow or Widower of a Deceased Veteran" form, inviting the partner to submit a claim and provide the information needed to confirm their identity.

Advocates can also print this form from the DVA website <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/forms>



**Form ID: D9216 – ‘Pension payment details for widow or widower of a deceased veteran’**

Where the veteran was not in receipt of TPI/EDA/POW/INT disability pension, but it is believed the death was service related, DVA requires information to link the cause of death to the veterans' service. This information is submitted on either the D2663 "Claim for Pension by a Widow, Widower or other Dependant of a Deceased Veteran" for those where eligibility falls under the VEA; or D2053 "Claim for Compensation for Dependents of Deceased Members and Former Members" where the eligibility falls under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA). Other services that might be available to War Widow(er)'s include Family Support Package (MRCA) and Open Arms Counselling Service.

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## DVA online services are changing

The need for better online services has never been more important and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) is responding. Veterans and their families will be able to manage more of their DVA business using our online portal, MyService as a result of ongoing improvements made this year and planned throughout 2021.

In November we made the management of income support payments online simpler. MyService users can claim for Service Pensions and Veteran Payment, request a lump sum advance, and advise DVA of any change in their circumstances related to their income support payment. Veterans, their families and representatives who use MyAccount to manage their income support needs will now need to use MyService. These functions are no longer available in MyAccount.

From December, eligible Veteran Card holders will see two new services available in MyService: book transport and claim for travel reimbursements for approved medical treatment.

With the ongoing expansion of MyService, changes have been made to the landing page to make it easier navigate. MyService can also be used to lodge claims, check claim progress, update personal and contact details, and view a digital version of the Veteran Card.

Over the next year, MyAccount services will move into MyService so there is a single, modern, online platform for those who want to manage their DVA business online. This will provide a simple and accessible way to interact with DVA, and it will allow us to respond efficiently to the change online needs of the community.



Through the Veteran Centric Reform – Putting Veterans and Their Families First Program, DVA has already made a noticeable and positive impact for veterans and their families. DVA's systems and services are continually being improved to enable more efficient services for veterans and their families.

*For more information on DVA's transformation, please visit the DVA website via the following link; [dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/transforming-dva](https://dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/transforming-dva)*

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***Please see below previous messages from DVA senior leadership in regards to ATDP and advocates.***

## ***Message to ATDP volunteers from Liz Cosson AM CSC, Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs***



The Government has announced the 2020-21 Budget which includes targeted support for mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and their families, and provides for those transitioning to support them into meaningful employment. The budget also includes an interim response to the Productivity Commission Report, A Better Way to Support Veterans. While it does address a number of recommendations from the Productivity Commission report, the Government has advised a final response to this report, the Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study and the Committee's report on Transition from the Australian Defence Force will now be provided in the 2021-22 Budget.

As you know, in March 2020, the Government deferred handing down the 2020-21 Budget to allow more time for the economic and fiscal impacts of the coronavirus to be better understood. In the end, given the events of the last six months, the budget handed down this week has a focus on economic recovery and mental health support.

I thought it important to assure you I remain committed to continuing to provide support to Ex - Service Organisations so they can assist veterans, particularly in expanding the importance of wellbeing advocacy, and we will be working to develop and improve how this support is provided. For many years DVA has supported the ongoing role of ESO advocacy through BEST grants and the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

DVA is already working with ESORT to review the overall BEST grants program. I appreciate this is an important piece of work. I also want to acknowledge the success of the ATDP, which has been possible due to the support of the many ESO volunteers who have worked tirelessly in professionalising and accrediting advocate training. I believe that creating professional standards for advocates will build on the success of the ATDP and so should also be a consideration for the BEST review. Doing so will ensure DVA's support is directed to meeting the changing advocacy needs of veterans across Australia.

Without doubt the single most important factor in the extraordinary success, or more correctly, successes of the ATDP program and more broadly veterans advocacy, has been (and remains) the support and expertise provided by volunteers.

I know that amongst the ATDP volunteers and advocacy community more broadly there has been some frustration in regards to the suspension of 'face to face' training, including ATDP consolidation and assessment programs, as part of DVA's broader COVID – 19 response. I understand that since the initial suspension of training in April 2020 that the ATDP Training and Assessment team has been responsible for the development and implementation of the on-line delivery of Level 1 and more recently some Level 2 consolidation and assessment activities. I warmly commend them for their initiative and ground breaking work in moving to this new mode. Online delivery methods open up new opportunities for volunteers in rural and remote areas to access training which is a great step forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all of the ATDP volunteers for their on-going patience and perseverance during what has been a particularly challenging year and their commitment to providing support to our veteran community.

***Liz Cosson AM, CSC***

Secretary

*Department of Veterans' Affairs*

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## **COVID-19 Update – Message from Don Spinks**

***DVA has advised the ATDP that face to face assessment can recommence.***

As a result of the lifting of the majority of state border restrictions and at the request of some from the veteran community, DVA has undertaken a review of the current suspension of face to face training for ATDP and agreed to lift the suspension and is planning for face to face training to recommence soon.

When the decision was made in August to extend the suspension until 1 January 2021, it was in the context of the health situation at the time – and it is great to see the situation has improved significantly since then. To ensure the wellbeing of those individuals undertaking the training there will need to be careful planning to ensure that program resumption is done in line with State restrictions and careful





program scheduling will need to be done so that COVID plans are in place before any training can resume.

There have been important learnings from the period that we now anticipate emerging from in terms of how we connect and communicate. This has been the case within the Program, DVA more broadly and of course within the wider community. Despite the easing of restrictions, DVA has received feedback from a number of ESOs that they have appreciated the opportunity the suspension has provided to look at more flexible ways to deliver the training and assessment functions. We want to take this time to acknowledge the work of our ex-service organisations and particularly the advocate community, for their on-going patience and perseverance during what has been a particularly challenging year and their commitment to providing support to our veteran community.

**Don Spinks AM**

Repatriation Commissioner

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

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 **February 2021 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.

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

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## 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)



# ATDP contact details

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Department of Veterans' Affairs - [www.dva.gov.au](http://www.dva.gov.au)

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## 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)

tell us what you **Think**

