



Advocacy News

April 2022 - Issue 20

It is already April 2022, and this year has been busy for everyone working to help veterans and their families, but also dealing with COVID, and for some, floods. Our thoughts are with anyone affected.

Ex-service organisations (ESO) play a key role in connecting veterans and their families with Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) services and support through providing high-quality wellbeing advocacy and claims assistance services. We also understand and greatly appreciate that many advocates may also take on broader roles supporting veterans and their families, or furthering veteran-specific interests.

For all of this, and your continuing commitment to helping veterans and their families – thank you.

This issue contains several articles of general interest to those who help veterans and their families, and some information about the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

If you have any questions about the training and development available through ATDP please contact the team through ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au

The Advocacy Training and Development Program team, DVA.



Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

As the highest form of public inquiry, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide will focus its inquiry on systemic issues that may be contributing to defence and veteran suicide.

The Royal Commission began its first substantive hearings in Brisbane in December 2021 and recommenced this year in Sydney in February.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs understands this is a difficult time for many people who may already be sharing their stories, or thinking about doing so. It is important for all veterans and their families to know that if they need support during this time they can continue to contact Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (www.openarms.gov.au) for free support and counselling (available 24/7 on 1800 011 046), or for those who wish to remain anonymous, Safe Zone Support on 1800 142 072.

Engaging with the Royal Commission and support available

Submissions to the Royal Commission are currently open until Friday 14 October 2022, according to the Royal Commission website. This is an opportunity for people to contribute to the important work of the Royal Commission by sharing their thoughts and experiences. Submissions can be made anonymously as contact details are not required. A submission can be completed online via the 'Make a submission' link on the home of the Royal Commission's website, or by calling 1800 329 095 to request a mailed submission form.

The Royal Commission has staff available to provide counselling and support services for people calling or engaging with the Royal Commission.

There is also a legal advice service for people wishing to engage with the Royal Commission. The Defence and Veterans Legal Service (DAVLS) is a free, national service that provides independent information and legal advice to assist Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans, and their families, carers and supporters. Visit the DAVLS website at www.defenceveteranslegalservice.org.au or call 1800 331 800 to find out more.

The Australian Government can also provide legal financial assistance to individuals and entities to assist with meeting the costs of legal representation associated with engaging with the Royal Commission. For more information on this scheme visit the [Attorney-General's Department website](#) or call 1800 117 995.

For immediate help in a crisis, people can also contact: Lifeline Australia on 13 11 14, Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636, the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467, Defence All-hours Support line on 1800 628 036 or Triple zero.

Building Excellence in Support and Training grants - 2022-23 grant round

The 2022-23 Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program grant opportunity opened for applications on 6 April 2022, and will close at 9pm on 11 May 2022.



BEST grants assist the veteran and Defence communities by providing a contribution towards support and resources to Ex-Service Organisations for claims advocacy and/or welfare work. It is part of DVA's support for Ex-Service Organisations that deliver services that respond to the needs of veterans and their families.

This year, for the first time, the BEST program includes new service standards for claims advocacy. Successful applicants funded under the 2022-23 BEST program will need to commit to the new service standards. These standards will help ensure that veterans and their families receive high-quality claims advocacy services.

The new standards reflect the existing expectations of BEST grant recipients, including the expectation that advocates are suitably qualified through the Advocacy Training and Development Program.

The Grant Opportunity Guidelines, available at GrantConnect (www.grants.gov.au), provide details on what eligible applicants should do to apply for grant funding.

Ex-Service Organisations that provide advocacy support are encouraged to apply for funding.

A few numbers about ATDP

The Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) is continuing to make advocate training and development available to ESO advocates.

The steady increase in the number of active advocates with ATDP qualifications has continued over the past year and now sits at 713 qualified advocates available to support veterans and their families. These advocates can be found through the ATDP advocacy register (advocateregister.org.au). More than 800 advocates have been trained over the life of the program and some have retired. It is pleasing to see new people willing to learn the skills needed to help veterans and their families with wellbeing and claims advocacy - currently over 250 people are enrolled for either Wellbeing or Compensation Level 1.

The table below shows that more than half of the individual advocates are able to provide wellbeing advocacy. Over a hundred of the more than 700 individual advocates work for more than one ESO advocacy service, and some work for more than three ESOs.

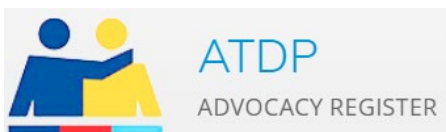
Compensation Levels 2, 3, and 4 are for providing different types of advocacy and this table shows a C4 (AAT) advocate can also provide C2 (Primary claims) and C3 (VRB) services. Each level will appear separately in searches of the advocacy register to give suitable options for people searching for advocacy services.

ATDP		Levels of Statement of Attainment (SoA) by state - as at 8 Feb 2022														
Region		C1	C2	C3	C4	W1	W2	C1/W1	C1/W2	C2/W1	C2/W2	C3/W1	C3/W2	C4/W1	C4/W2	Totals
2	ACT	2	14	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
2	NSW	18	65	7	2	5	55	3	2	0	17	0	2	0	2	178
1	NT	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
1	QLD	26	58	18	2	18	82	5	6	2	30	0	14	0	1	262
3	SA	9	5	5	0	3	9	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	36
3	TAS	2	4	2	0	1	7	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	19
3	VIC	16	39	4	2	7	52	1	0	0	11	0	5	0	3	140
2	WA	9	11	4	0	4	8	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	42
Totals		83	198	41	7	39	216	10	8	2	70	0	23	0	6	703

Total with C3 (VRB)	64
Total with C4 (AAT)	13
Total with any Wellbeing	374
Total individual advocates	703

ATDP quick notes

- It would be prudent for managers of ESO advocacy services to assess their risks – including for insurance - more frequently than once a year, and to ensure that the framework of support they provide for their advocates is fit-for-purpose and robust. Advocates can be exposed to difficult circumstances when helping some veterans or family members so this support framework might include supervision, counselling, and a feedback process.



- Just a friendly reminder that the Authorised Person of your ESO needs to login to the Advocacy Register at least once every six months and confirm their details are correct. This way the search function on the register remains valid so veterans and their families are able to find advocacy services in their area.
- We have adjusted the existing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process to make it easier, more cost effective, and quicker to complete
 - RPL is now conducted one-on-one remotely with an assessor – no need to travel, no costs for ESOs.
 - More than one unit of competency can be completed in the single RPL process – saving time.
 - Assessors provide the relevant ATDP assessment quiz which the candidates complete and return to the assessor for marking – when marked the assessor and candidate can discuss next steps which might if necessary include the assessor setting training or additional activities to meet any competency gaps.
 - A candidate can choose at any stage to be nominated for the training pathway.
 - Advocates still need to be nominated by their ESO through the Advocacy Register, complete any pre-requisites, and provide evidence of meeting all the relevant competencies of the *Course in Military Advocacy*.
- ATDP's remote assessment has been working well and while initially implemented as a flexible approach to the limitations posed by COVID-related restrictions it has proved popular enough for us to continue using it for future assessment activities. ESOs and advocates report cost savings and convenience. In the period August to December 2021, 105 advocates were assessed online.
- The Australian Skills Quality Authority has reaccredited ATDP's *Course in Military Advocacy* for a further five years, and has confirmed the ESO advocacy sector's need for the Course including the curriculum, pre-requisites, and assessment of the units of competency (UoC).



- ATDP's contracted Registered Training Organisation (RTO) will soon conduct a revalidation of the delivery of *Course in Military Advocacy* by contacting some students and their ESOs. If asked by the RTO please complete the survey or respond openly to any questions they have.

- ATDP provides training for mentors who help new trainees from nomination to successful completion of a UoC.
 - All nominations for training, RPL, or mentor training are still made by ESO authorised persons through their ESO's account in the ATDP Advocacy Register.
 - The ATDP advocacy handbooks can be found on the DVA website [Advocacy handbooks | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)
-



Australian Military and Veteran Families Study

DVA is partnering with the Department of Defence and the Australian Institute of Family Studies to conduct a new study to better understand the experiences of families of serving and ex-serving personnel.

If you know of any young families where at least one member has transitioned in the last 5 years, we are seeking their participation. They must either have children under 18 or are expecting or planning children. Even if they have separated we still want to hear from them.

This is an excellent opportunity for eligible families to share their experiences and have a say in a study that will help to shape decisions at DVA to better support them.

More information can be found on the AIFS website at [Australian Military and Veteran Families Study | Australian Institute of Family Studies \(aifs.gov.au\)](#).

If you are aware of any young families who may be interested in the study, we encourage you to pass on the information contained in this article. They can register their interest by emailing amvf-study@aifs.gov.au or calling (03) 9214 7984.

The goal is to interview families of current serving ADF members and former serving ADF members over the coming months, with the final report expected late 2022.

Changes to lodging reviews and appeals via the ESO Portal

The ESO Portal will shortly be updated to remove the option to request a section 31 review of *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA) decisions. The option to lodge an appeal to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) for relevant VEA decisions will remain.



This change will ensure that the appeal pathway offered to representatives is in line with the relevant provisions of the VEA, which set out that the single appeal pathway for VEA compensation decisions is to the VRB.

These changes will take place from mid-April and will not impact any other functionality or business conducted via the ESO Portal.

The DVA Review and Appeal team will continue to screen all cases which have been appealed to the VRB in order to consider whether a different decision can be made prior to the VRB's consideration. Advocates are also still welcome to discuss the merits of the matter at hand with the DVA Review and Appeal team while the matter is being prepared for the VRB.

For further information, or to discuss any appeal matters, please email APPEALS@DVA.gov.au.

DVA and ESOs working together to support ESO advocacy services

DVA's aim is to continue to make advocate training and professional development available to ESO advocates through the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP). The training is to help an advocate to become competent to begin work as an ESO advocate, while the professional development available to advocates helps them maintain and improve the skills and experience gained through their training.

DVA continues to explore and implement improvements to the ATDP to ensure the program remains relevant and meets the needs of ESOs and advocates in providing high-quality services to veterans and their families. This includes working with ESOs to consider how

flexibility in the structure, delivery, and support of the program can support the services ESOs deliver while maintaining ATDP's training standards and ESOs' service delivery standards.



The ATDP Context, Structure, and Roles outlining how the program is currently managed can be found on the ATDP website ([ATDP - Context, Structure and Roles.pdf](#))

DVA's goal of supporting veterans and their families is strengthened by supporting ESOs delivering free advocacy services. This support includes:

- advocate training and development through the ATDP,
- funding for ESO advocacy services through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) grant program, and
- a subsidy for the ESO-run Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) for ESO advocates' professional indemnity insurance.

ESOs remain responsible for the management and coordination of their advocacy services through their internal structures, and for liaising with each other about advocacy.

The ESO-run advocacy Communities of Practice and the different types of veteran centres demonstrate the benefits of sharing information and resources. The ATDP and the contracted Registered Training Organisation (RTO) help people to gain a Statement of Attainment for units in the *Course in Military Advocacy*, and ESOs help them be good advocates. The support ESOs give their advocates can include supervision, pastoral care, professional development, and workload management.

What you need to know about Provisional Access to Medical Treatment

Compensation payments are available for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), but did you know personnel who served as a reservist or in a cadet position may also be eligible? Entitlements are dependent on the legislation covering their service and the type of service they undertook.



Claims for compensation can be submitted online to DVA through MyService, by calling 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372), by completing an appropriate claim form, or through an advocate.

To help with streamlining the process, there are three key steps that will help the veteran to prepare to claim:

- Get a medical practitioner to confirm the veteran's diagnosis in writing,
- Supply the documents required, and
- Check if the veteran is already eligible for free healthcare through DVA.

If you are assisting a former serving ADF member to submit a claim under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) or the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA), make sure they are aware that while waiting for the claim to be determined, they may be able to access treatment for certain conditions through the Provisional Access to Medical Treatment (PAMT) program.

Under the program eligible claimants are able to receive medical and allied health treatment on a provisional basis for one or more of the 20 most commonly accepted conditions.

Eligibility for the PAMT program is open until 30 June 2024. Access to treatment under the program can continue either until 31 December 2024, or when the claim is determined, whichever occurs first. If the claim is accepted veterans can continue to receive treatment for their accepted conditions under DVA's normal treatment arrangements.

More information on the PAMT program is available [here](#) and for further information about compensation claims available, please visit the [DVA website](#).

Technology-Facilitated Abuse

A person who is violent or abusive may also use technology to assert power. Technology-facilitated abuse is any behaviour that uses technology to harass, monitor, stalk, impersonate or make threats in order to control, frighten or humiliate someone.

A 2020 survey conducted by The Women's Services Network, or WESNET, found that 99% of domestic violence practitioners surveyed had clients who had experienced some form of technology-facilitated abuse.

Technology-facilitated abuse can take many forms, including:

- stalking or monitoring someone's online behaviours
- online harassment or cyber bullying
- sharing or threatening to share an intimate image of someone without their consent
- fake social media accounts used to harass someone or post negative comments about them online
- taking over internet accounts and locking them out
- using digital technology to track someone's physical location through a phone or device – this can escalate to physical violence.

You can find out more about technology-facilitated abuse through the [eSafety Commissioner](#).

The [Women's Technology Safety & Privacy Toolkit](#) can be provided to anyone who may need support. You can also share the [online safety tips](#) from 1800 RESPECT.

Finally, there are a range of family and domestic violence and support services available. These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or www.1800respect.org.au/

Mensline Aust: 1300 789 978 mensline.org.au/

Open Arms – Veteran & Families Counselling: 1800 011 046 or www.openarms.gov.au/

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au/

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au/



ATDP Flexibility



Various COVID-19 restrictions on travel and gathering have forced us to look at new ways of working to continue supporting ESO advocate training. The ATDP has adapted by using online assessment for the wellbeing levels 1 and 2, and compensation level 1, 2 and 3 units of competency and a refinement to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. These changes have been met with a positive response from ESOs, trainees, and advocates.

Building on this success, DVA will continue to investigate ways of meeting ESO needs while maintaining the training standards required by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), as delivered through the ATDP including:

- Refreshing the ATDP Continuing Professional Development (CPD), including considering what long-term advocates need from CPD and the type and availability of activities that contribute to CPD.
- Continuing development of an online introduction to advocacy training package. This will cover the fundamentals of Wellbeing Level 1 and Compensation Level 1 for those considering undertaking advocacy work, or those who wish to support veterans and their families without wanting to undertake full advocate training.
- Continuing work on the introduction of a Wellbeing Level 3 to the *Course in Military Advocacy*

These changes are in response to your feedback about the program.

How much should you insure your house for? Defence Service Homes Insurance Scheme

If the worst happened, would you have enough home insurance cover to start from scratch? This is particularly important for those veterans and Australian Defence Force (ADF) members living in areas such as northern Australia, which are at high risk of cyclones and other natural catastrophes.

If you don't, you're not alone. Most Australians have inadequate protection, with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission stating that up to 80% of homeowners are underinsured.

Eligible veterans and serving personnel can now receive an online quote for their home building insurance through DSH Insurance's [online quoting tool](#) and check if they are underinsured or can compare rates with their existing policy.



DSH Insurance National Manager Leona Hardman says the tool helps customers determine how much their home should be insured for, reducing their risk of underinsurance in the event of an unforeseen incident.



‘Estimating the numbers when it comes to home building insurance can be overwhelming,’ Ms Hardman says. ‘It can be easy to over or underestimate your insurance needs. This new online tool will help remove some of the stress that can be associated with this important risk assessment.’

The online tool tailors your policy by asking a series of questions about such things as the location and features of your home, leaving no room for assumptions. It also confirms eligibility and provides accurate estimates in minutes. Explore our convenient, easy-to-use [quoting tool](#) today!

What is on offer?

DSH Insurance is committed to putting our veterans and their families first. We offer no excess on claims (other than for earthquake and some accidental damage) including flexible payment options not offered by many.

Plus, we’ll repair your home if it’s damaged or destroyed by an incident we cover including temporary accommodation for those covered incident should your home become unliveable while being repaired.

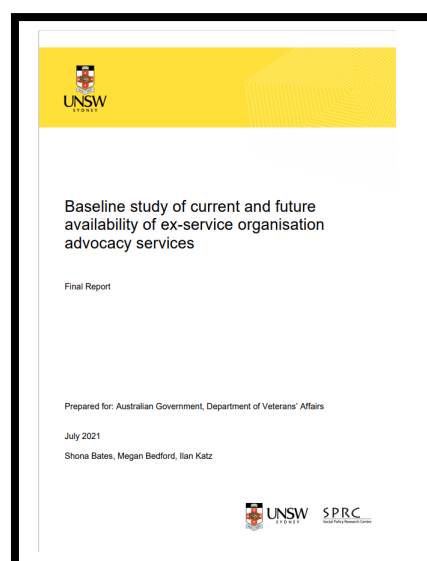


For more information on DSH Insurance products, visit www.dsh.gov.au/insurance or call 1300 552 662.

Advocacy capacity research project - release of report

The *Baseline Study of Current and Future Availability of Ex-Service Organisation Advocacy Services Research Project* was commissioned by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) to collect data on the capacity of the ESO advocacy workforce. The report on the independent research was released in full in 2021 and is available on the DVA website www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/veterans-advocacy-research-project

The research included a literature review, a survey of ex-service organisations (ESOs), a survey of advocates, and interviews with key stakeholders.



The surveys conducted at the end of 2020 included responses from nearly 600 advocates with and without qualifications through ATDP, and nearly 60 ESOs.

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 *June 22 edition*. If you have anything you would like to submit please send it to

ATDP.Communications@dva.gov.au

Looking forward to receiving your articles.

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

ATDP contact details

General enquiries: Advocacy Training and Development Program - ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au

Websites: Department of Veterans' Affairs - www.dva.gov.au
 Advocacy Training and Development Program - www.web.atdp.org.au

Region 1 (Qld & NT)	Region 2 (NSW, ACT & WA)	Region 3 (Vic, Tas & SA)
Dr Bob Grandin Regional Manager rm1@atdp.org.au	Lorraine Grey Regional Manager rm2@atdp.org.au	Roger Greene Regional Manager rm3@atdp.org.au Mob: 0411 431 189
Amanda Williams Program Support Officer 1 ps01@atdp.org.au Work: (08) 8290 0283 Mobile: 0484 820 620	Samone Mason Program Support Officer 2 ps02@atdp.org.au Work: (02) 6276 4828 Mobile: 0484 076 849	Philip Boys Program Support Officer 3 ps03@atdp.org.au Work: (08) 8290 0273 Mobile: 0484 594 791
Elizabeth Owen Program Support Team Leader elizabeth.owen@dva.gov.au Mobile - 0484 093 016		

Feedback

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

