



THE BOSUN'S CALL

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



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ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY

VALE

PETER COOKE-RUSSELL 1939 - 2026

*It is our sad duty to advise that
approximately 4pm on
Wednesday April 29,
Peter Cooke-Russell crossed the bar.*

*He was at home with his partner Jenny
and daughter Meredith.*

*Our thoughts go out to them at this
emotional time..*

*Rest easy shipmate,
your watches are done.
Fair winds and following seas*



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The Funeral Service for Peter Cook-Russell will be conducted at the Norwood Park Crematorium 65 Sandford St, Mitchell Canberra, on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at Midday. Those who wish to participate are asked to wear medals.

VALE - Mr Peter Cooke-Russell

In my capacity as the National President of the Naval Association of Australia (NAA) it is my solemn duty to advise that our much loved and respected NAA colleague Mr Peter Cooke-Russell, 'Crossed the Bar' at his Canberra home on Wednesday 29 April 2026.

For all within the NAA he was an oracle on all matters pertaining to the history and functioning of our Association, and the history of our Parent Service, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). He was a most trusted friend and mentor to all within the NAA wherein he was an Icon of all that we espouse. Details of the Funeral Service here in Canberra will be advised in due course.

Some Background Career Information: The impetus of his service to the NAA is undoubtedly borne of his long-term service in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). His sense of allegiance to the Navy and those who have served, manifested itself so admirably within both entities.

All who shared and benefited from his camaraderie and advocacy work have found him to be someone of impeccable personal qualities, possessing a heightened sense of integrity, honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness and, that he gave of himself in a totally selfless and unconditional manner in all that he undertook in the service of others.



Peter Cooke-Russell (far right) at the Last Post Ceremony for Teddy Sheean (AWM 2020)

Mr Peter Cooke-Russell's Naval Career and NAA Service:

Peter was born in Neutral Bay, Sydney NSW on 21st February 1939, he joined the RAN on 25th January 1955. His naval training began at the RAN College in Flinders Naval Depot VIC 1955-56, then in 1957-58 in the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth UK and in 1981, he attended the joint Services Staff College in Canberra. Postings to sea included HM Australian Ships SWAN, WARRAMUNGA,

BARCOO, QUIBERON, PARRAMATTA, MELBOURNE, Commanding Officer of HMA Ships ATTACK, STUART, DIAMANTINA and COOK. Peter completed full-time service in February 1988. Then followed a myriad of RAN Reserve postings until he transferred to the RAN Retired List in 2001.

Peter's service in the NAA began in 1995, and thereafter he has provided exemplary service to the Association, Kindred Veteran Agencies and the editing of Historical Accounts prior to publication.

Positions he held included:

- Federal Secretary 1996-2002
- Secretary Joint Consultative Group Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) 1998-2000
- NAA ACT Section Newsletter 'The Bosuns Call' Editor 1996-2025
- Federal Public Officer 1999-2002
- NAA Representative to National Kindred Organization Committee (KOC) 1997-2014
- NAA National President's Representative to Battle of Australia National Commemorative Council 1999-2015
- Federal Membership Registrar 2002-2017
- National Secretary 2002-2008, 2016-2019
- National Public Officer 2002-2026
- National Vice-President 2008-2011
- NAA Representative to Veteran's Indemnity and Training Association (VITA) 2006
- VITA Secretary 2006-2026
- Vice President National KOC 2012-2014
- Secretary NAA White Ensign Management Committee 2006-2011
- Membership Registrar NAA ACT Section 2009-2010, 2016-2026
- Vice President NAA ACT Section 2007-2008, 2012 and 2013
- President NAA ACT Section 2009-2012 and 2014-2016
- NAA ACT Section Committee Member 2016-2026
- Vice President KOC Canberra 2020-2026

Key NAA Advocacy Achievements in which Peter had a pivotal role included:

- DVA's recognising the connection between the presence of Agent Orange matter resulting from the desalination process undertaken by HMA Ships anchored in Vung Tau Harbour during the Vietnam War and the onset of Cancer later in the lives of so many naval and other Veterans

- The prolonged campaign to attain parity with Army for Medallion Recognition of Service by Naval Personnel serving at sea as part of the RAN's commitment to the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR)

National and NAA Awards Received:

- The Centenary Medal in 2001
- NAA Diploma of Merit 2009
- NAA Life Membership 2014
- NAA Meritorious Service Medal 2018

Editing Assistance Provided in the Publications of Naval History Books included:

- 2004-2006 In collaboration with NAA Member Mr Ken Cartwright, 'We Were Cadet Midshipman'
- 2020-2025 In collaboration with Mr Hector Donohue and Mike Turner, 'Australian Minesweepers at War' by H. Donohue and M. Turner and, United and Undaunted: the first 100 years: a history of diving in the Royal Australian Navy 1911-2011', by E.W. Linton and H. Donohue.



Peter Cooke-Russell (far right) at CN's Reception (ADFA 2023)

In addition to Peter's extensive contributions, he had fulfilled the duties of Editor of the indispensable monthly NAA ACT Newsletter, 'The Bosun's Call' from its inception in 1996. In compiling this informative newsletter, he would reach out to Department of Veterans' Affairs, Government and Ministerial Offices and overseas agencies for relevant information and 'articles of interest' to NAA Members and where possible, attain a wider distribution within the Ex-Services Organisation (ESO) readership, Veterans and Government officers.



Peter Cooke-Russell (second from right) at HMAS Canberra Memorial (ACT 2022)

Early in 2024, in addition to The ACT Section Bosun's Call Newsletter, a national publication known as the 'NAA National Bosun's Call' was added to his editorial responsibilities. This has been a very effective and timely means of conveying important and topical information nationally within the Association by hard-copy and electronically. This is particularly helpful where we find that not all members are able to attend meetings and therein it is their means of remaining in touch with Veteran Affairs Issues and 'their Association', the NAA. The effect it has on combatting the detrimental impact of isolation cannot be underestimated.

After 29 years as The Editor, Peter has facilitated a seamless hand-over in December 2025, to a very competent and eager replacement so that this link with our members can be maintained into the future. At a time when we hear so much spoken of veteran's welfare and wellbeing, here we speak not just of some pages taking the form of a newsletter but rather, a most effective means of kinship by which the NAA seeks to identify ourselves and is testament to our efforts to foster and sustain camaraderie with our members on a national basis. The positive effects achieved through Peter's diligence and resourcefulness in producing this newsletter arguably makes this one of his most profound and poignant achievements.

VALE our dearest friend and champion,

Yours aye,

David Manolas
National President

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY 2026

by Michelle Hoare

Serving Australia with pride

Volume 69, No. 8, May 14, 2026

NAVY NEWS



Growing up in Ipswich, Queensland, Commander Anthony Russell always had a strong sense of service, joining Navy in 2014 to give back to Australia, after completing his initial nursing qualifications.

“I was supported by the country to go to university, something I wouldn’t have been able to afford, and I felt a good way to give back would be through service,” he said.

“I had initially planned to do the required service years, then transition to the reserves.”

Now in 2026, and newly promoted, Commander Russell is Commanding Officer of Joint Health Unit in Western Australia, a role he knows comes with significant responsibility to empower those he leads.

This year, the theme for International Nurses Day is ‘Our Nurses. Our Future. Empowered Nurses Save Lives’.

Commander Russell is proud to celebrate International Nurses Day and believes that empowering and supporting nurses directly improves patients’ health outcomes and strengthens healthcare systems.

“Empowering nurses improves our sense of purpose and professional satisfaction,” he said.

“It fosters pride, confidence and growth within the workforce, ensuring nursing remains resilient and patient-centred, now and into the future.

“When nurses are trusted to use their full clinical judgement, advanced skills and leadership capacity, patients benefit from timely access to care, early intervention and more holistic treatment.

“This empowerment expands access to health services by allowing nurses to manage complex care, coordinate multidisciplinary teams and lead innovations in patient management.”

‘Empowering nurses improves our sense of purpose and professional satisfaction.’

Commander Russell said ADF nurses working at home and on operations have built up strong reputations as caring, hardworking and highly competent clinicians.

“On deployments, if patients recognised us as Australian, they were instantly at ease knowing that an Aussie nurse was looking after them,” he said.

“We are so well trusted to care for patients amongst our coalition partners, so it was always with a sense of pride that I could tell them that I was an Australian Navy nurse.”

Commander Russell has some words of advice for anyone considering becoming a nurse in the ADF.

“One hundred per cent do it,” he said.

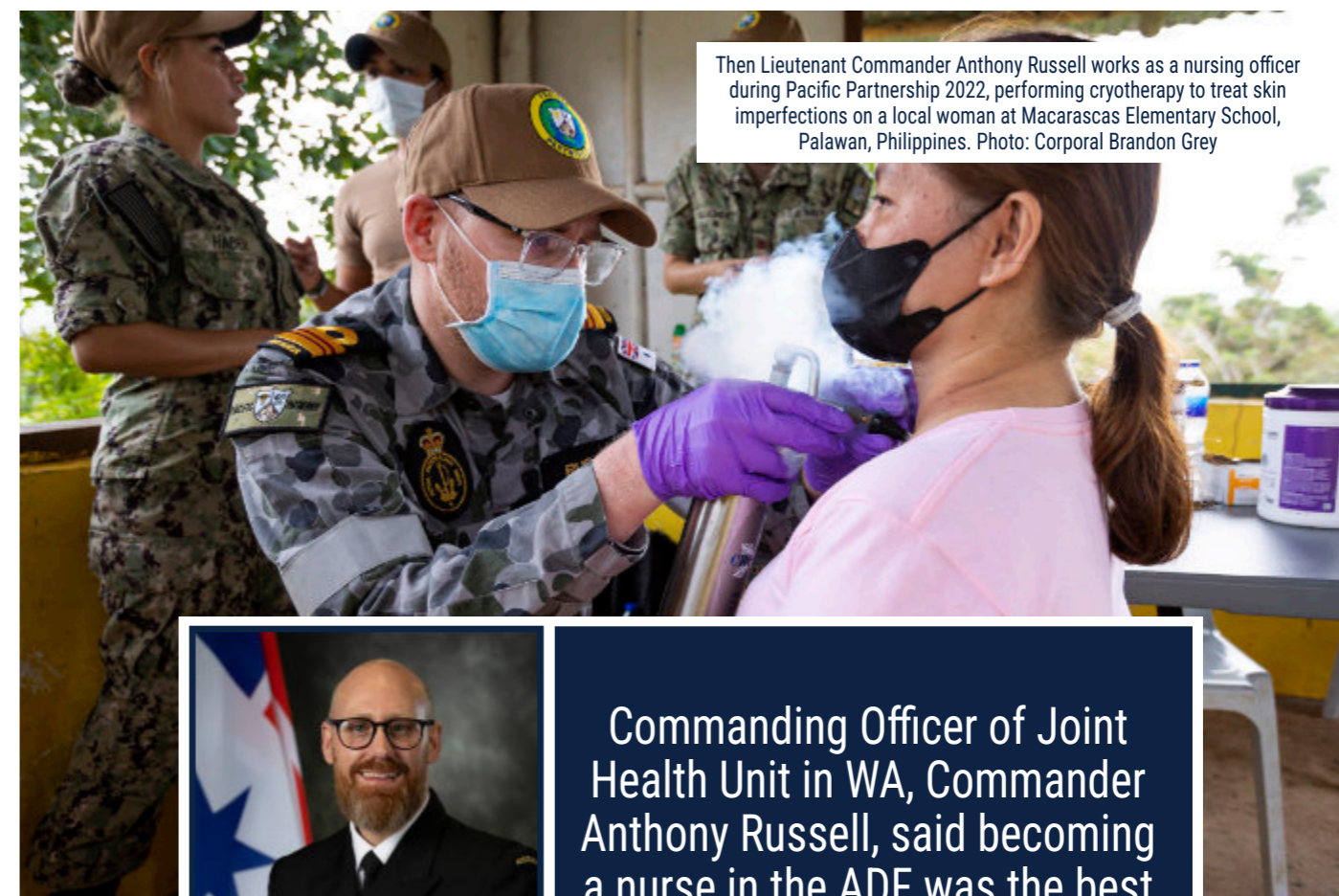
“It was the best decision of my professional life. The diversity of roles, both clinical and non-clinical. The opportunity for professional growth is unlimited. I have travelled the world, literally, while doing something I love.

“I have had the opportunity to develop deep professional and personal relationships. I have developed such great mates and friendships. I can go anywhere in the country and know I have a friend close by.”

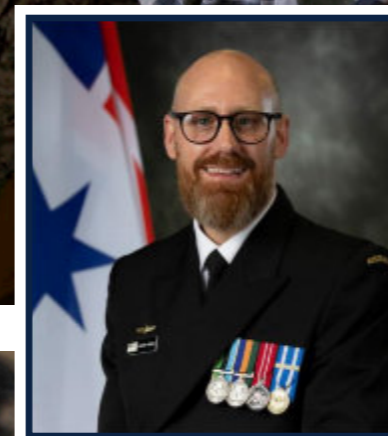
The steady support of family and friends has meant everything.

“I could not do anything in the Navy without the love and support of my husband and my family more broadly. They have been instrumental in my success,” Commander Russell said.

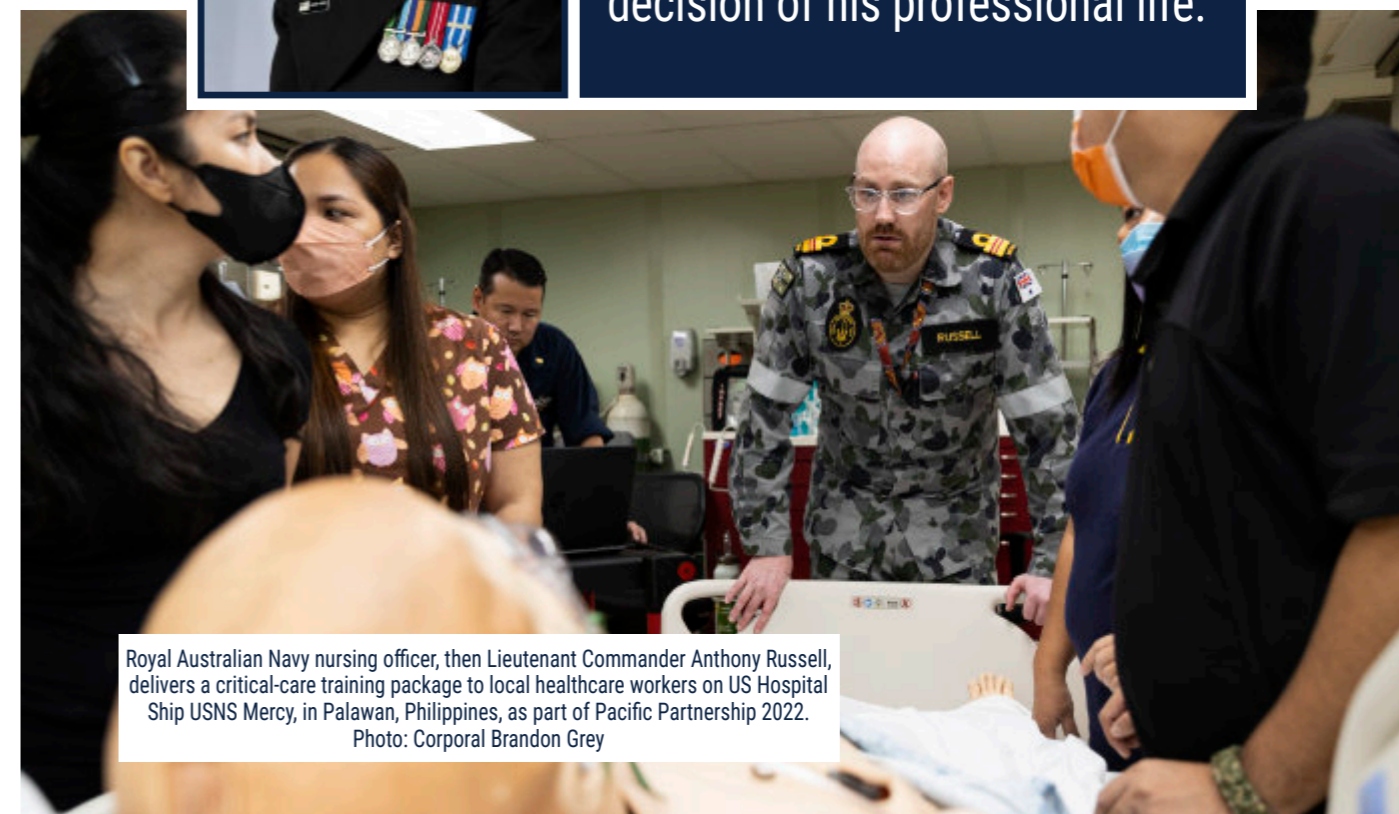
International Nurses Day is celebrated on May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, who is considered to be the founder of modern-day nursing practices.



Then Lieutenant Commander Anthony Russell works as a nursing officer during Pacific Partnership 2022, performing cryotherapy to treat skin imperfections on a local woman at Macarascas Elementary School, Palawan, Philippines. Photo: Corporal Brandon Grey



Commanding Officer of Joint Health Unit in WA, Commander Anthony Russell, said becoming a nurse in the ADF was the best decision of his professional life.



Royal Australian Navy nursing officer, then Lieutenant Commander Anthony Russell, delivers a critical-care training package to local healthcare workers on US Hospital Ship USNS Mercy, in Palawan, Philippines, as part of Pacific Partnership 2022. Photo: Corporal Brandon Grey

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHES VETERANS COLLEGE

Griffith University has stepped up its support for current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families through the establishment of the Griffith Veterans College.

Launched in early May, the College builds on the success of the Griffith University Veterans Program, which has supported more than 1,400 participants since its establishment in October 2023.

These students have consistently achieved academic results above the broader student population.

Led by Director and former Air Commodore Dave Paddison, the College brings together admissions, academic success, wellbeing, and career development into a single coordinated home for veteran students and, according to the university, is a first-of-its-kind model in the Australian higher education sector.

“Veterans bring extraordinary skills, discipline and life experience to our campuses, and they deserve a higher education experience that recognises that from day one,” Paddison said.

“The opening of the Veterans College is the natural next step in Griffith’s commitment to this community.

“It gives our veterans and their families a clear front door to the University, staffed by people who understand military service, who can translate that service into academic and career pathways, and who walk with them during their studies.”

At the heart of the College is support available to the students, including Griffith’s Veteran Direct Application pathway, allowing current and former ADF members to apply fee-free whilst converting military service into an academic selection rank and credit toward their degree.

The College also expands opportunities in research and partnerships, strengthening the University’s contribution to improving outcomes for veterans and their families.

Through multidisciplinary research and collaboration with external stakeholders across government, industry, and ex-services organisations, the College helps translate evidence into practice and foster coordinated, evidence-informed support.

Students enrolled through the Veterans College have access to: Credit Pathways that recognise service by translating military training and experience into accelerated degrees; career support throughout their studies, helping them translate military experience into meaningful career pathways both within Defence and civilian opportunities afterwards; academic support tailored to individual needs, including learning assistance, writing skills development, and assessment guidance; and scholarships specifically available for veterans to ease financial barriers and support their academic journey.

They also have access to accessibility and disability support services, with customised assistance based on individual requirements; and mental health and wellbeing support to ensure a smooth transition into academic life – and back into the workforce – through ongoing care and guidance.

“What makes this model work is that it is integrated and continuous,” Paddison said.

“A veteran transitioning out of service is often navigating a career change, a health journey, a family adjustment and a return to study all at once.

“We don’t hand them off between disconnected services. The Veterans College is one team, supporting one veteran, across the whole journey.”

The opening of the Veterans College responds directly to Recommendation 83 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which calls for Defence training and experience to be translated into recognised academic and employment pathways.

Griffith University Vice Chancellor and President Professor Carolyn Evans said the veteran cohort has notably higher representation across equity groups than the general student population, yet consistently outperforms academically when given the right support.

“Around three per cent of Australians have served in the military, and they are significantly underrepresented in higher education,” Evans said.

“Behind every statistic is someone who served their country and now wants to build the next chapter of their life. The Veterans College is here to help them achieve that goal.”

The impact of Griffith’s veteran support is reflected in the experiences of those who have come through it.

Bachelor of Design student and former ADF member Tim Bresolin said the program had reshaped his trajectory after leaving the military with injuries.

“Landing upon the Griffith Veterans Program has been a life changer,” Bresolin said.

“Now I can pursue a career with linear fundamentals and world-class teachers, and network and build a portfolio.”

The former ADF Combat Engineer said the support from the program has made study so much more attractive.



Griffith University has stepped up its support for current and former Australian Defence Force members and their families through the establishment of the Griffith Veterans College.
Credit: Griffith University



Griffith Veterans College

Admissions and ranking

As a veteran, you can benefit from a direct application pathway and admission ranking based on service, making it easier to enter a range of undergraduate degrees.

Accelerate your degree

Our team can help you apply for credit based on your service and other prior experience, so you can potentially graduate faster and reduce the cost of your degree.

Career guidance

Whether you are currently serving or transitioning out, we can provide expert advice as you make important decisions about your career.

Dedicated support

As part of the college, you'll be supported by a dedicated team, many of whom are veterans themselves, who understand your experience and your goals.

For more information visit:
www.griffith.edu.au/veterans-college

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

HMAS SYDNEY IV
APRIL 1980
Naval Historical Society of Australia



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

IMPROVED MRCA CLAIM PROCESS

20 April 2026

In just under 3 months the veterans' compensation system will be easier to navigate.

The current three Act system will be simplified so that all new compensation and rehabilitation claims lodged on or after Wednesday 1 July 2026 will be determined under a single ongoing Act – an improved version of the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA).

As part of the transition from 3 Acts to one, the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related claims) Act 1988 (DRCA) will close to new compensation and rehabilitation claims on Tuesday 30 June 2026.

Veterans can be assured that under 'grandparenting' arrangements payments already being received before 1 July 2026 will continue uninterrupted and be indexed as normal.

There is an exception for [clients receiving DRCA incapacity payments](#), who will transition to the more generous MRCA incapacity payments from 1 July 2026.

The move to the improved MRCA as the single ongoing Act will also see eligibility for various entitlements that had operated differently across the 3 Acts standardised from 1 July.

As part of this transition [clients with open VEA and DRCA rehabilitation plans](#) will move to the MRCA from 1 July 2026, while students receiving [support under the VEA will transfer to the MRCA education scheme](#).

While DVA cannot provide individualised claims advice, a range of resources are available on the DVA website to help the veteran community understand the changes from 1 July.

This includes:

- more than 20 fact sheets and summaries for particular groups, including VEA veterans and their partners, DRCA veterans, and the children of veterans
- scenarios that demonstrate how the improved MRCA may impact individual circumstances
- frequently asked questions

Help is also available to make a claim. You can:

- use MyService to lodge your claim
- request an online or in person meeting with a Claims Lodgement Assistant
- request a 1-1 appointment with a Veteran Support Officer
- visit a DVA office or VAN location in your state or territory
- find a free, trained and qualified advocate near you via the DVA Advocacy Register at <https://www.advocateregister.org.au>.

The Making a Claim guide is available on DVA's website at www.dva.gov.au/claimguide.

You can also call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or email primary.claims@dva.gov.au.

Workers at the Todd Pacific Shipyards in Seattle left a bottle of 6 year old MacNaughton Canadian Whiskey wrapped in pipe insulation in the forward starboard leg of the main mast of HMAS Sydney (IV) while she was under construction.

It remained undetected throughout the ship's service in the Royal Australian Navy with Sydney (IV) being decommissioned in November 2015.

In 2017 a former worker at the Todd Shipyard alerted staff at the Birdon Company in Henderson who located the, now 41 year old, Whiskey while they were scrapping the ship.



HMAS Sydney (IV) enters the water for the first time on 26 September 1980



HMAS Sydney (IV) enters Sydney Harbour for the last time while flying its decommissioning pennant.



Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs

DVA Contact Numbers

Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: 1300 550 017

Provider enquiries: 1800 550 457

Transport bookings: 1800 550 455

Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC): 1800 552 580

Hearing or speech impairment assistance

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the [National Relay Service](#) (NRS):

Talk To You (TTY) users phone 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 838 372

Speak and Listen users phone 1800 555 727 then ask for 1800 838 372

Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 1800 838 372

Information on health services may be obtained from DVA. The contact numbers for health care pro-viders requiring further information or prior financial authorisation for all States and Territories are listed below:

TELEPHONE: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

INTERNATIONAL CALLERS: +61 2 6289 1133

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Health Approvals & Home Care Section

GPO Box 9998

BRISBANE QLD 4001

DVA WEBSITE: <http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/allied-healthprofessionals>

DVA EMAIL: For prior financial authorisation: health.approval@dva.gov.au

The appropriate prior approval request form can be found at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/servicesrequiring-prior-approval>

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

For information about claims for payment visit: www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim

CLAIM ENQUIRIES: 1300 550 017 (Option 2 Allied Health)

Claims will take a variety of times to complete based on whether or not the claim is prioritised for allocation to a decision maker and the complexity of the claim itself. For example, if the service of the individual crosses two or more Acts or contains a lot of health conditions and injuries or both. This results in some claims being decided faster than the average time, while some claims take longer.

For any condition, to make the claiming process smoother, follow these 3 steps:

- Step 1: Get your medical practitioner to con-firm your diagnosis.
- Step 2: Supply the documents you need to;
- Step 3: Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment.

CLAIMS PROGRESS

As at 31 October 2025, DVA had 89,597 claims on hand, comprised of 22,820 unallocated claims and 66,777 claims being processed.

In the financial year to date (FYTD) (1 July 2025 to 31 October 2025):

DVA received 39,032 claims

DVA made 36,099 determinations

For all claims on hand including older claims being processed the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 333 days, up from 304 days in the previous FYTD. The median TTTP was 271 days.

There have already been some significant improvements in processing timeframes for new IL claims received and determined within the last 12 months.

For claims received within the last 12 months, the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 110 days. The median TTTP was 96 days.

OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

Open Arms provides mental health and wellbeing support to anyone who has served at least one day of continuous fulltime service in the ADF and their immediate families.

1800 011 046



Free and anonymous counselling line for all current and ex-serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1800 142 072

DEFENCE FAMILY HELPLINE

Available 24/7 or online at www.defence.gov.au/members-families/defence-helpline.asp. Staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

1800 628 036

DEFENCE ALL HOURS SUPPORT LINE

24/7 confidential telephone service for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families to facilitate access to ADF or civilian mental health services.

1800 628 036