



# National Bosun's Call



Vol 4 No 3

Once Navy, Always Navy

April 2022

## Operation Tonga Assist—2022



Australian Defence Force personnel returned to Townsville, Queensland, on Thursday, 24 March 2022 on board HMAS *Canberra* after deploying to Tonga on Operation Tonga Assist 2022.

Operation Tonga Assist 2022 is the Australian Defence Force contribution to the Australian Government's support to the Government of Tonga following the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano on 15 January 2022 and a subsequent tsunami. HMA Ships, *Canberra*, *Supply* and *Adelaide* all deployed on Operation Tonga Assist. The ships embarked personnel and assets that supported recovery and clean-up operations across Tonga, as well as the delivery of humanitarian and disaster relief stores.

Air support to Operation Tonga Assist 2022 included air reconnaissance to assess damage using P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, and more than 132 tonnes of humanitarian and disaster relief stores was delivered using C-17A Globemaster III and C-130J Hercules transport aircraft.

*Canberra* arrived back in Sydney on March 29 after completing the Australian Defence Force's ship based support to Tonga.

*Canberra* left Tongan waters after a farewell ceremony on March 22 for ADF, Republic of Fiji Military Forces and French Armed Forces in New Caledonia personnel in Nuku'alofa, attended by Tongan Deputy Prime Minister Poasi Tei.

ADF personnel deployed on Operation Tonga Assist 2022 as part of the Australian Government's support to the Tongan Government following the devastating undersea volcanic eruption and subsequent tsunami in mid-January.

During its mission, *Canberra* delivered humanitarian and disaster relief stores relieving HMAS *Adelaide*, which had arrived in Tonga on 26 January, 2022.

"Once our people got onto the ground, they truly understood the devastating effects of the tsunami on the communities," Captain Hutchison said. "The Australian Defence Force and Australia has proven over and over again that we will come to the aid of our Pacific family during any humanitarian assistance and disaster relief situation, as they do for us."

*Photo: Sgt Andrew Sleeman*



National Newsletter of the  
**Naval Association of Australia**

## Pensions and allowances rise

1 April 2022

Veterans' pensions were increased from 20 March 2022 following the latest round of indexation adjustments.

As pension rates are calculated on a daily basis, the pension paid on payday 24 March 2022 will be paid partly at the old rate and partly at the new rate. The first full payment at the new rates of pension were payday 7 April 2022.

The maximum rate of single service pension has risen by \$20.10 to \$987.60 per fortnight and the maximum rate for couples has increased by \$15.10 to \$744.40 per fortnight (each).

The Special Rate of Disability Compensation Payment (T&PI pension) has increased by \$30.90 to \$1,518.80 per fortnight. Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) has increased by \$17.10 to \$839.50 per fortnight and the 100 per cent General Rate of Disability Compensation Payment has increased by \$11.00 to \$540.10 per fortnight.

The pension paid to war widow(er)s has increased by \$20.50 to \$1,004.70 per fortnight (including the energy supplement), while the ceiling rate of the income support supplement has risen to \$297.60 per fortnight.

Payments have also increased for benefits under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA). The weekly MRCA wholly dependent partner payment has increased by \$10.25 to \$502.35. This is paid fortnightly (\$1004.70).

The indexation factor used to index pensions each March and September can be based on either the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index (PBLCI) or Male Total Average Weekly Earnings (MTAWE). For 20 March 2022, the indexation was driven by CPI.

More information on the new pension rates is available from DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372). Current and historical pension rates are available on the [CLIK website](http://clik.dva.gov.au).  
<http://clik.dva.gov.au>

## Cost of living support for veterans and families

31 March 2022

A new one-off payment of \$250 announced in the Budget 2022-23 will be provided to recipients of certain payments made by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and/or Centrelink to help with the rising costs of living.

It will be payable to Australian residents receiving one or more of the following DVA benefits as at 29 March 2022:

- Service Pension, Partner Service Pension, Income Support Supplement or Veteran Payment
- Disability Compensation Payment (separate to the \$6.20 fortnightly payment)
- Special Rate Disability Pension
- Permanent Impairment compensation (including lump sum payments taken in the past)
- War Widow(er)'s Pension or Wholly Dependent

Partner payment (including lump sum payments taken in the past)

- Gold Cards, Commonwealth Seniors Health Cards and Pensioner Concession Cards
- Age Pension paid by DVA
- Education allowance under Veteran Children's Education Scheme or *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* Education and Training Scheme for recipients aged 16 and over.

Only one payment will be made per person, regardless of how many of the above benefits they receive.

If you are eligible, DVA will pay you the Cost of Living Payment from late April 2022. You do not need to make a claim, but you should make sure that DVA has your correct bank account details. You can check your details on MyService or by calling DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

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**Patron In Chief:** HM The Queen of Australia.

**National Patron** His Excellency General The Honourable

David Hurley AC DSC Retd Governor General of Australia

## NEW PENSION RATES FROM 20 MARCH 2022

SERVICE PENSION	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$967.50	\$987.60	\$20.10
Couples (each)	\$729.30	\$744.40	\$15.10
Single person – transitional	\$807.30	\$824.00	\$16.70
Couples (each) – transitional	\$651.20	\$664.70	\$13.50
WAR WIDOWS			
War widow(er)'s pension	\$984.20	\$1,004.70	\$20.50
Income support supplement (ceiling rate)	\$291.40	\$297.60	\$6.20
DISABILITY PENSION			
TPI (Special rate)	\$1,487.90	\$1,518.80	\$30.90
Intermediate rate	\$1,010.40	\$1,031.40	\$21.00
EDA	\$822.40	\$839.50	\$17.10
100 per cent	\$529.10	\$540.10	\$11.00
10 per cent	\$59.84	\$60.94	\$1.10
VETERAN PAYMENT			
Single Person	\$1,047.40	\$1,069.50	\$22.10
Couples (each)	\$816.30	\$833.50	\$17.20
MRCA*			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$984.20	\$1004.70	\$20.50
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,487.90	\$1,518.80	\$30.90

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable.

The first full payment at the new rates was the payday 7 April 2022.

**\*Note that the MRCA payments in the bottom two rows are the fortnightly amounts, not the weekly amounts.**

## Operation Flood Assist 2022

**Last updated: 10:00am Friday, March 25, 2022.**

Defence support to Queensland and NSW governments is being delivered under Operation Flood Assist 2022 and coordinated through Headquarters Joint Operations Command. Deployment of forces is in response to [NSW Government](#) and [Queensland Government](#) requirements coordinated and prioritised through State Emergency Operations Centres.

Defence remains responsive to changing requirements and continues to adjust to meet the needs of affected communities as identified by state governments.

Defence has been supporting Queensland and New South Wales governments under Operation Flood Assist 2022 since February 25.

### Personnel supporting:

At the peak of Operation Flood Assist 2022, approximately 7000 Australian Defence Force personnel were available for tasking in Queensland and New South Wales.

### In Queensland

- ADF personnel assisting flood-affected communities in south-east Queensland have gradually begun returning home, with state requests for emergency and recovery assistance concluding on Friday, March 25, 2022.
- At the peak of the operation, more than 1600 ADF personnel were available for tasking to provide community assistance to south-east Queensland.

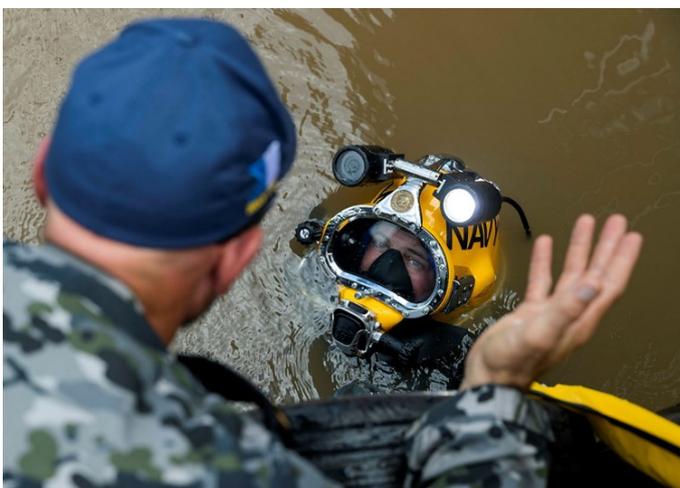
### In New South Wales

- About 4000 ADF personnel will remain on task or available for tasking in northern NSW, assisting with clean-up and disaster relief efforts.

### Tasks planned for Friday, March 25:

#### Queensland:

ADF personnel continuing to conduct clean-up activities and vulnerable persons checks in the Greater Brisbane area including Kedron Brook walkway, Col-



Above: Navy diver Able Seaman Jake Phillips prepares to survey ferry terminal pylons along the Brisbane River as part of Operation Flood Assist 2022.

Photo: Corporal Julia Whitwell



Above and below: RAN sailors remove flood-spoilt soil from the Knox Park playground in Murwillumbah, New South Wales,

Photos : Cpl Jonathon Goedhart

leges Crossing recreational reserve, and Logan.

- All southeast Queensland tasks expected to be complete by the weekend. Some personnel to remain in location.

### New South Wales

- Continuation of support to northern NSW, including Lismore, Ballina, Byron Bay, Casino, Nimbin, Cabbage Tree Island, Coffs Harbour, Evans Head, Pottsville, Mullumbimby, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Woodburn.
- Task units are preparing for potential increased requests for assistance ahead of forecast severe weather in the Lismore area.
- Two MRH-90 helicopters in position in northern NSW to support search and rescue operations from Ballina as required.
- Anticipate handing over jurisdiction of support to Coraki to NSW Resilience.

Sydney basin personnel are postured to provide short notice support ahead of drawdown.

Defence will continue to provide additional support as requested by the Queensland and NSW governments. Defence is ready to support the states as the flood emergency and recovery efforts continue.

For more Operation Flood Assist 2022 imagery, go to the [Defence image gallery](#).



## Australian War Memorial's Last Post Ceremonies



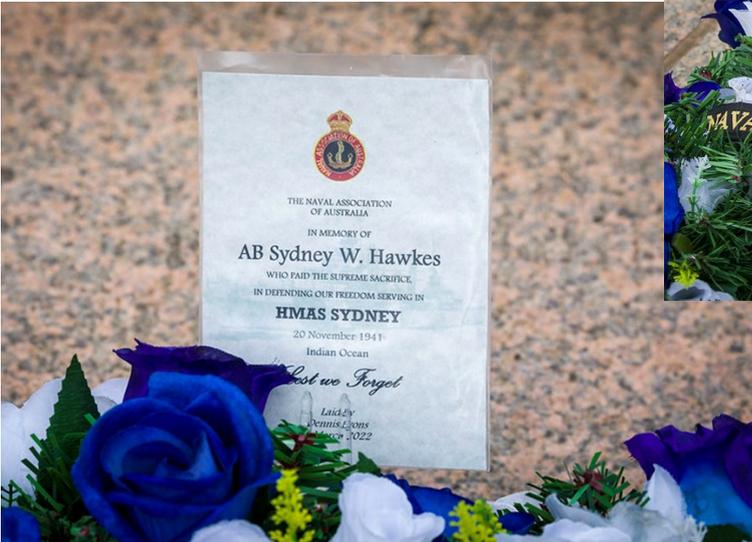
Below: Wreath laid on 1 April in memory of Lieutenant Alan F Kyle DSC RANVR, a Coastwatcher who died on New Ireland, a part of the Bismarck Archipelago Papua New Guinea on 15 February 1942 after it had been captured by the Japanese. Alan Kyle had previous service in the Australian Army Signals Division prior to joining the RAN in Brisbane Naval Reserve Depot, known at that time as HMAS Brisbane prior to being commissioned as HMAS Moreton on 1 October 1942.

Photo: Flickr

**1 March 2022**

Tiger Lyons with RADM Peter Quinn AM CSC RAN on completion of the AWM Last Post Ceremony commemorating the Navy's 121<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Photo: Flickr



Left: Naval Association's wreath in memory of AB Hawkes who was lost with HMAS Sydney. The wreath was laid by Tiger on 1 March

Photo: Flickr

Right: ACT Section Vice President Alex McGown at the AWM Last Post Ceremony on 28 February which commemorated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of loss of HMAS Perth. Peter Eveille (ACT RSL) is on Alex's right and to his left are CAPT Tobias Reid USN, US Naval Attache and CAPT Christopher Leece, Commanding Officer HMAS Perth (IV).

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of loss of the cruiser, USS Houston was also remembered.

Photo: Flickr



## **Recognising their sacrifice**

*Extracts from the report of the inquiry into recognition for members and families of members of the Australian Defence Force who are injured, wounded or killed in or as a result of service*

### **CHAPTER 3 - Preliminary matters**

On 20 January 2021 the Hon. Darren Chester MP, then Minister for Defence Personnel, gave a direction to the Tribunal to hold an inquiry into recognition for members, and families of members of the Australian Defence Force who are injured, wounded or killed in or as a result of service. The terms of reference for the inquiry appear earlier in this report.

The inquiry was undertaken by the following Members of the Tribunal:

- Mr Stephen Skehill (Tribunal Chair)
- Mr David Ashley AM
- Rear Admiral James Goldrick AO CSC RAN (Retd)
- Ms Josephine Lumb, and
- Ms Jane Schwager AO

Major General Simone Wilkie AO (Retd) was part of the originally constituted panel for this inquiry, but withdrew from the constituted panel in April 2021 to attend to a family health issue. The terms of membership of Rear Admiral Goldrick and Ms Schwager expired on 6 July 2021 but they continued on a consultancy basis until the completion of the inquiry.

The inquiry terms of reference invited submissions concerning whether members of the Australian Defence Force who are killed in or as a result of service, or their families, should receive an Australian honour or award or another form of recognition for that service. Unsurprisingly, given the broad nature of these terms of reference, we were presented with a wide range of views concerning possible forms of recognition and the merits and possible risks associated with introducing such recognition, whether operative within or outside the Australian honours and awards system. The following summaries of individual and organisational submissions, both written and oral is representative rather than comprehensive

### **CHAPTER 5 – Background to the inquiry**

From 2009, following the introduction of the Elizabeth Cross in the United Kingdom (itself based in part on older awards in Canada and New Zealand), Defence considered introducing a similar form of recognition for families of veterans killed in or as a result of service. This was primarily in response to submissions from veterans and veterans' organisations seeking such recognition. Some of those submissions also suggested recognition for those wounded by the enemy on warlike operations, or otherwise injured in service, including in peacetime service. In response to these ongoing representations, the issue was brought to the attention of the Chiefs of Service Committee in 2011 and again in 2014. However, on each occasion Defence decided not to implement such recognition.

In its submission to this inquiry, Defence advised that it decided against implementing medallic recognition 'as there was complexity and ambiguity sur-

rounding the intent, implementation and eligibility criteria'.

### **CHAPTER 9 Views of submitters – recognition for service-related death**

#### **One individual's submission extracted**

Commander Jennifer Wittwer RAN urged us to understand that death (or injury) incurred during service should not simply be accepted as a condition of service. Commander Wittwer explained that those who serve generally understand that death or injury may occur as a consequence of their service, but that did not mean that the ultimate sacrifice of a member should not be recognised in some meaningful way. Commander Wittwer believed, like other submitters, that there is a shortfall in the current system of recognition.

#### **The Naval Association of Australia**

In its written submission, the Naval Association explained that its preferred option to recognise death in service would be a device, in the form of a poppy, to be attached to the ribbon of an operational service medal or the ADM, to recognise death sustained in or as a result of operational or non-operational service. Consistent with other submissions that argued that a person's medal set should 'tell the story' of their service, the Association submitted that a device to be attached to a specific operational service medal would provide a direct link to the conflict or campaign in which the person died. The alternative option proposed by the Association would be for recognition in the form of a medal. The Association advised that any new recognition should commence from 3 September 1945, consistent with eligibility for the ADM.

Aside from affixing recognition to particular medals, the Association counselled against the concept of different forms of recognition for death on operational and non-operational service, which would potentially attribute a differing worth or significance between deaths. The Association also advised that death by suicide should be included as satisfying the criteria of service-related death for the purposes of any new award, and that, particularly having regard to sensitivities related to death as a result of psychological injury, receiving such recognition should be by application only. 56,57

The National President of the Association, Mr David Manolas, advised us that the reason recognition as part of the deceased member's medal set had been proposed was due to the meaning and gravitas attached to a veteran's medal set, and that the significance of such measures can be diluted through a less significant object such as a pin. Mr Manolas indicated that the Association would support a meaningful measure, such as a brooch or other emblem, which would add value to the degree of recognition provided to a member.

# Recognising their sacrifice *Continued*

## CHAPTER 10 Views of submitters – recognition for service-related wounding, injury and disease

### The Naval Association of Australia

In its written submission, the Naval Association explained that its preferred option to recognise injury and wounding in service would be a device, in the form of a sprig of golden wattle, to be attached to the ribbon of an operational service medal or the ADM, to recognise injury sustained in or as a result of operational or non-operational service. Consistent with other submissions that argued that a person’s medal set should ‘tell the story’ of their service, the Association submitted that a device attached to a specific operational service medal would provide a direct link to the conflict or campaign in which the person was injured. The alternative option proposed by the Association would be for recognition in the form of a medal. The Association advised that any new recognition should commence from 3 September 1945, consistent with eligibility for the ADM.

Aside from affixing recognition to particular medals, the Association counselled against the concept of different forms of recognition for injury on operational and non-operational service, which would potentially attribute a differing worth or significance between injuries. The submission urged us to take a broad view of the term ‘wounded’, noting past injuries and deaths of sailors due to friendly fire, and of those involved in logistic support roles in Vietnam who subsequently suffered the consequences of exposure to dioxins. The Association also emphasised that, particularly having regard to sensitivities related to death as a result of psychological injury, receiving such recognition should be by application only.

## CHAPTER 11 Our analysis of the views of submitters

The preceding two chapters, while they provide only a summary of representative views put to us by submitters, are a vital element of this report for two reasons:

- having responded to our invitation and having clearly taken considerable time and effort in preparing their often emotional submissions, our submitters deserve to have their views heard, not just by us but also by those who will read and take decisions based on this report; and
- because those submissions disclose the depth and complexity of the issues that are raised by the apparently simple subject of “recognition for members and families of members of the Australian Defence Force who are injured, wounded or killed in or as a result of service” that our terms of reference direct us to consider.

Reading only the written text of those submissions, it was readily apparent to us that they conveyed a wide diversity of views. While the almost universal view was that there is a need for some additional form of recognition beyond that currently provided, there was no clear consensus about to whom and in what circumstances that recognition should be afforded.

Those very few who opposed any new form of recognition argued, in summary, that those who chose to enlist voluntarily assumed the risk of death or injury and that, when that resulted, there should be no different recognition beyond the compensation, health care and similar benefits that were available in civilian employment.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## APPENDIX 6 – Forms of recognition proposed by submitters

### Medal Devices – Concept Images



Poppy for Killed



Wattle Sprig for wounded or injured

Incurred in Non Operational Service



Incurred in Operational Service



Proposed by the Naval Association of Australia

## Recognising their sacrifice *Continued*

(Continued from page 7)

### Recommendations (from the Executive Summary)

#### Recommendation 1

We recommend the institution of the following new forms of medallion and emblematic recognition:

- a) a **Memorial Clasp** – to be posthumously awarded to a member of the ADF or a veteran who dies in or as a result of service. The Clasp is to be attached to the Australian campaign or service medal most relevant to the circumstances in which the death occurred and bearing, at the discretion of the veteran's family:
- the date of death; or
  - the date of the incident leading to death; or
  - no date;
- b) a **Gratitude Clasp** – to be awarded to a member of the ADF or veteran who is seriously wounded, seriously injured or suffers a serious injury in or as a result of service.
- The Clasp is to be attached to the Australian campaign or service medal most relevant to the circumstances in which wounding or injury occurred and bearing, at the discretion of the veteran (or family where posthumous recognition is sought) the date of wounding or injury; or
  - where multiple dates of wounds or injuries have been recognised, the number of such

events recognised; or

- no date;
- c) a **Memorial Star** – A full size brooch-like emblem of a uniquely Australian design that recognises the sacrifice of the family of a member of the ADF or veteran who dies in service or whose death is service related;
- d) a **Gratitude Star** – A full size brooch-like emblem of uniquely Australian design to recognise the sacrifice of the family of the member or veteran who has suffered a serious wound, serious injury or serious disease in or as a result of service; and for veterans awarded the Gratitude Clasp, a lapel pin of separate and appropriate design for everyday wear at the discretion of the veteran.

#### Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Memorial Clasp, the Gratitude Clasp, the Memorial Star and the Gratitude Star be accompanied by a scroll, issued under the authority of the Governor General, to commemorate the sacrifice of the member, veteran or the family, as applicable.

#### Recommendation 3

We recommend that the proposed new forms of recognition be available retrospectively, to recognise death, serious wounding, serious injury or serious disease that is or was brought about in or as a result of service after 2 September 1945

## Defence Honours, Awards and Recognition Policy

Coming soon – the Defence Honours, Awards and Recognition Policy (DHARP) which will provide up to date policy and guidance information regarding honours, awards and recognition.

The Defence Honours & Awards Manual (DHAM) was first published in 2012 to provide a sole reference to information required for the administration of the honours and awards system within Defence. This included not just policy, but also procedures required to support the nomination and processing

of awards. Work on reviewing the DHAM began in 2019 to ensure that Defence honours, awards and recognition policy is in line with the Defence administrative policy framework.

The DHARP brings Defence honours, awards and recognition policy in line with the Defence administrative policy framework.

Please [contact 1800 DEFENCE](#) should you require clarification of honours and awards policy.

We support those who serve or have served in defence of our nation, and their families.

**OPEN**  
Veterans & Families  
Counselling  
**ARMS**  
1800 011 046



**SAFE ZONE  
SUPPORT**

FREE ANONYMOUS  
COUNSELLING LINE  
CALL 1800 142 072

**Defence  
Family  
Helpline**



**1800 624 608**

**Defence  
All-hours  
Support Line**



**1800 628 036**



**ADSO ALLIANCE OF DEFENCE SERVICE ORGANISATIONS**

**22 April 2022**

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **ADSO POLICY OBJECTIVES 2022-2025**

The Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO) welcomes the opportunity to announce its core Policy Objectives (attached) for the period 2022 to 2025. They are intended as a timely reminder to all sides of politics seeking election to the 47th Parliament of Australia that a significant portion of the veterans' community, speaking largely with a single voice, continues to seek redress of a series of key issues that are of major concern, many of which have remained outstanding for far too long.

Some have been the subject of unfulfilled promises, not the least of which includes the fair indexation of the various military superannuation schemes and the inadequacies of veterans' disability compensation payments.

In commenting on the Objectives and encouraging all sides of politics to find legislative ways to redress each issue in turn, ADSO's National Spokesman, Mike von Berg MC OAM, wished to acknowledge that the Government, with the Labor Opposition's support, had taken action on a long-held key Objective, namely, to legislate an Australian Military (Veterans) Covenant that gives formal recognition to the Unique Nature of Military Service. The wording of the Covenant still needs some work to include a non-disadvantage clause so that veterans and their families will not suffer detriment relative to any other section of the Australian community.

Together with all sections of the veterans' community, ADSO is nonetheless disappointed that seemingly all sides of politics have thus far remained completely silent on any veterans-related policies that they plan to address going forward. Policy released by both the Government and the Opposition should at minimum give recognition to the immensity of the advocacy and welfare work, and the vital role the wider ex-service community plays in support of veterans and their families. That community is almost without exception volunteer-based and lacks completely any financial help beyond the meagre amounts available to each Association separately under the DVA Grant-in Aid scheme.

ADSO calls on both sides of politics to acknowledge the contribution of the ex-service entities in the community, including ADSO, by funding their work more appropriately in performing their welfare functions on behalf of Government and DVA, and the broad Australian veterans' community.

ADSO wishes to acknowledge the excellent work of the on-going work of the Royal Commission into

Defence and Veteran Suicide. An interim report due later in the year will likely be revealing as to the extent of the problems at hand.

ADSO's role is to advocate for the wellbeing of the Defence Family and protection of its service entitlements

#### **POLICY OBJECTIVES – 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

The most important duty of any government is the Defence of our nation. Defence is the personification of the social contract our government has with its citizens. In turn, military service to the Nation creates a bond that unites all generations of the Australian Defence Community (ADC). It is for this reason that governments have legislated specific provisions to support our veterans and their families.

ADSO highlights the unique nature of military service. The impact of military service on individuals and their families cannot be denied. This impact places unique demands on the Department of Veterans Affairs which the government of the day is responsible to meet. This responsibility is met through the allocation of financial and manpower resources which are concentrated as demand arises.

We have seen this demand rise dramatically in recent times.

It is the duty of the Federal Government to meet this acknowledged responsibility

##### **ADSO POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES**

These are presented in two Parts:

**Part 1 – Action Policies for the 2022 Federal election; and**

**Part 2 – Other Policies for on-going attention.**

The order of Policies does not signify their relative importance: each is important.

**Part 1 Policies.** Political parties and candidates will be asked to respond prior to the 21 May 2022

*(Continued on page 10)*

## ADSO POLICY OBJECTIVES – 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

*(Continued from page 9)*

Federal election to our requests for a statement of their policies related to ours. ADSO will release their responses publicly in a Status Comparison Table.

Parts 1 and 2 Policies will be pursued in the new Parliament.

**ADSO requests the Government to consider and agree to these policy objectives during the next Parliament of Australia**

### PART 1 – ADSO's ACTION POLICIES FOR 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION.

#### 1. Military Superannuation

##### a. Fair Indexation for ALL Military Superannuation Payments

**Objective:** To have the provisions of the Defence Force Retirement Benefits Fair Indexation Act extended to include all DFRDB, Military Super and ADF Cover payments, including payments paid to under 55-year old superannuants, invalidity benefit pension recipients, and reversionary benefit payment recipients.

**Explanation:** This ensures the purchasing power of the veteran's superannuation payments is maintained which was the intent of the original enabling legislation. CPI is a measure of inflation, not purchasing power, and as such, is not an appropriate index to achieve fair indexation

##### b. MSBS - Access to Employer Benefits

**Objective:** To have all MSBS members under preservation age and no longer serving but with 'preserved benefits' be given the same opportunity provided to all Australians i.e., access to employer superannuation contributions to roll over their full benefit into a compliant superannuation fund of their choice.

**Explanation:** MSBS preserved benefits' (employer contributions are a 'notional' amount) are indexed to CPI and cannot be accessed until the preservation age (earliest age 55). Fairness demands both fair indexation and that portability be a right for veterans in the same way as normal super funds. Given that CPI is about half the average long-term return of Australian superannuation funds this objective will deliver a significant financial benefit to a member's superannuation amount over time.

##### c. DFRDB Commutation

**Objective:** To immediately apply the up-to-date life tables for calculating commutation and fortnightly payments for current and new DFRDB superannuants; and rectify the financial injustices caused by the application of out-dated life tables to superannuants.

**Explanation:** The use of 50+ year old life tables is unconscionable and effectively robs DFRDB superannuants of their entitled level of super payments. In addition, there must be rectification of

the financial injustices caused by the application of out-dated life tables to superannuants.

##### d. Reversionary Benefits (for widows, widowers, and dependent children)

**Objective:** To redress the reduction of all their benefits, i.e., retirement pay, invalidity pay and reversionary pensions for widows, widowers, and dependent children, resulting from the way those benefits were indexed before 1 July 2014, and continue to be indexed for those aged under 55.

#### 2. Veteran Compensation and Rehabilitation

##### Inadequacies of Veterans Disability Compensation Payments

###### a. Disability

**Objective:** To ensure that those who are disabled in service and their families are not disadvantaged or have additional financial burden upon them. **Explanation:** The Repatriation Principles are based on the needs of veterans. They should be able to live to full capacity and ability as determined by the extent of their accepted service-related conditions.

###### b. Totally and Permanently Incapacitated/ Special Rate (TPI/SR)

**Objective:** To have the 'economic loss' component of the Disability Payment benchmarked in perpetuity to the tax adjusted minimum wage.

**Explanation:** The disability compensation arrangements for Australia's Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI/SR) veterans have declined significantly in relative terms to that of Average Weekly Earnings.

The 'Economic Loss' component of the eroded payment is now at less than 65% of Australia's gross minimum wage.

This decline in compensation for Australia's TPI/SR Veterans is a damning indictment of the Commonwealth's duty to ensuring the enduring care for its Veterans.

#### 3. White Card Mental Health Treatment for All Reservists

**Objective:** To have the Veteran White Card provided to all Reservists (not just those with one day of fulltime service).

**Explanation:** The Veteran white card is available to all ADF Reservists who have completed one day of full-time service but not to Reservists who have not undertaken any period of full-time service. This discriminatory policy applied by DVA denies many Reservists, some with years of part time service, access to the provisions of non-liability health care and specifically mental health care and treatment available with a White Card.

#### 4. Financial Support to Ex Service Organisations assisting veterans and their families.

**Objective:** The Government to acknowledge and financially support accredited Australian Charities

*(Continued on page 11)*

## ADSO POLICY OBJECTIVES – 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION

*(Continued from page 10)*

and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Ex Service Organisations (ESOs) in assisting veterans and their families.

**Explanation:** The dollar value to DVA of ESO's contribution to its service delivery is costly and measurable. We encourage the Government to investigate those costs and reimburse them. The registered ACNC ESOs are strictly controlled in governance and financial accountability, and audit reporting required by the ACNC annually.

ESOs are voluntary organisations that primarily provide social and well-being support to their veteran community and their families. Additionally, many volunteer to assist DVA's service delivery. Some major ESOs act in a voluntary role as advocates for their community to Government and the Parliament singularly or jointly in cooperation with other ESOs such as ADSO.

### 5. Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC)

a. **Objective:** *To have the CSC examined by an independent of government judicial inquiry.*

**Explanation:** The CSC had been expressly excluded from the Terms of Reference of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry.

It should receive the same level of scrutiny as any other financial services entity. Excluding it from the Royal Commission was a failure and a denial of the fundamental right of all Australians: "to be treated honestly and fairly in their dealings with banking, superannuation, and financial services providers

Except for ADF Super, that commenced 1 July 2016, ADF members cannot elect to have their superannuation contributions made to a fund of their choice. Furthermore, the government contributions to the schemes, except for a productivity benefit, are notional so there are no funds that can be transferred to another superannuation fund. This means that current and former ADF personnel do not have the transportability freedom to move their superannuation to another fund should they be dissatisfied with the Trustee's conduct.

In recent years, several issues have arisen in respect to the way the CSC administers the ADF Schemes related to members who are in receipt of invalidity payments (Veteran Beneficiaries). These issues relate to CSC's:

1. Inability to administer the ADF Schemes in accordance with their respective Trust Deeds and governing legislation.
2. Lack of regulatory review of the CSC's conduct to ensure that it is meeting its obligations under its Trust Deeds.
3. Persistent failure to conduct itself honestly, fairly, and transparently in its dealings with its members/beneficiaries and in accordance with Model Litigant Rules.

### b. Veterans' Representation on the CSC Board.

**Objective:** *To seek the appointment of one Director from the Veteran Community*

**Explanation:** In 2020–21 the Board consisted of an independent Chair and eight other directors. The Minister for Finance (the Minister) chooses four directors in consultation with the Minister for Defence.

Of the remaining directors, two are nominated by the President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and two are nominated by the Chief of the Defence Force. Both are serving Officers. ADSO challenges the justification for that membership being filled by serving members and questions why there is no direct representation from the Veterans' community when a majority of superannuates are veterans?

## PART 2 – ADSO's OTHER POLICIES OF ON-GOING ATTENTION POST ELECTION

### 1. Support Retention of a Government Department for Veterans Affairs

**Objective:** *In principle ADSO supports a specific Government department that discharges its statutory responsibilities for the effective and efficient delivery of services to veterans and their families.*

**Explanation:** The Productivity Report into DVA Service delivery (Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans – A Better Way to Support Veterans) made certain recommendations some of which are still current. Additionally, The Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans Suicide provides an opportunity to reset the way the Federal Government provides support to serving and former members of the ADF and their immediate families. It is incumbent on the Government to accept the Commission's recommendations and rejection of any would require compelling reasons that were acceptable to the veteran community as a whole. We await those recommendations related specifically to DVA's structure and operations.

### 2. Amend the Veterans' Covenant

#### a. Veterans' Covenant

**Objective:** *To amend The Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Act to include a provision that the Commonwealth acknowledges that veterans, or their families, will not suffer detriment relative to any other section of the Australian community.*

**Explanation:** The Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and Their Families First) Act 2019 (Cth) has enshrined at Schedule 1 a Veteran's Covenant. It is a "declaration on behalf of the Australian people recognising the valuable contribution that current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families make and have made for our country."

*(Continued on page 12)*

**ADSO POLICY OBJECTIVES – 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION**

*(Continued from page 11)*

Put simply, the Commonwealth commits to supporting veterans and their families and to building greater community awareness of the unique nature of military service. It also promises amongst other things, to support all who have served. This commitment is not always honoured by Australian Government departments and agencies as evidenced in some of the above ADSO policies and the following matters.

**b. Recognition of Military Service**

**Objective:** *To support an independent of government investigation of claims for recognition of military service when warranted by the evidence*

**Explanation:** Every veteran or veteran organisation has the fundamental human right to the truth and to challenge an authority’s decision. In exercising those rights, one faces a complaint/grievance process, that according to the principles associated with Administrative Law, Ministerial Standards and APS Codes of Ethics and Conduct,

is fair and does not deny natural justice. Those principles involve **Integrity, Fairness, Accountability, Transparency, Responsibility, and the Public Interest**. When those principles are breached, they can impact on the correctness of the Government’s decision and processes related specifically to the subject.

The complainant may seek advocacy influence support from any Veteran Advocacy Group whose decision will be considered on the evaluation of the evidence.

Recognition of Service matters are handled by the Minister for Defence Personnel with advice from the Department of Defence’s Nature of Service Branch and other relevant parties. Experience to date demonstrates that little, if any, weight is placed on either the word of the complainants or their supporting professional associations. This is evidenced in the Ethicos – Howard Whitton Report that reviewed the Department of Defence’s and the Government’s approach in determining the nature of service of Rifle Company Butterworth 1970 – 1989 .

<i>Contacts</i>		
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**Improve your digital savviness**

**DVA News 24 March 2022**

There are various initiatives out there designed to improved people’s computer skills. This can be very important because if you’re not comfortable with computers and being online it can limit your ability to engage with the community and government services.

Even a basic awareness of computers and the digital world can be immensely liberating.

Two government initiatives could be a good place to start.

**Be connected**

Be Connected is an Australian Government initiative committed to increasing the confidence, skills and online safety of older Australians. It aims to empower everyone to use the internet and everyday technology to thrive in our digital world.

Its online resources over:

- being safer while online
- talking to or seeing family and friends who live far away
- finding new friends who share interests and hobbies
- connecting with old friends

- keeping up to date with what’s happening in communities and around the world
- shopping and selling online, safely and securely.

Be Connected is not just a website, it’s a national movement working across Australia, within communities, to help people with their digital skills. Its Network Partners are the local arm of Be Connected. They offer in-person help and support.

Be Connected also supports families to mentor a relative or friend to help them be more connected online.

**Tech Savvy Seniors**

Tech Savvy Seniors is a joint program between Telstra and the NSW, Queensland and South Australian governments. It is intended to help you build the skills and confidence to use computers, tablets and smartphones. It includes free or low-cost face-to-face training, how-to guides and training materials in 15 languages.

Learning online skills will help you:

- keep in touch with family and friends
- access government, health and other essential services

discover more about the things you love.



## Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

14 April 2022

The Chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide says the 12-month extension of the inquiry, announced this week, is vital to thoroughly investigate the complex factors that contribute to deaths by suicide.

Commissioner Nick Kaldas made the comments on the final day of a two-week public hearing at the Rex Hotel in Canberra.

"We requested this extension to give us the opportunity to thoroughly review the complex matters before us – the breadth of which is now more apparent," Commissioner Kaldas said.

"It affords us adequate time to conduct more hearings and private sessions, to engage with stakeholders and to pursue and analyse data from Defence and DVA that has up to this point, been difficult to obtain."

Commissioner Kaldas acknowledged serving and ex-serving members and their families may view the extension as "yet another delay".

However he stressed that the Commission's interim report would be handed down in August, as scheduled, and include recommendations for immediate action on critical issues.

The Commission may also make other recommendations, as necessary, without waiting for its final report in June 2024, Commissioner Kaldas said. "This inquiry is urgent. The terrible toll of suicide is always front of mind and we Commissioners are determined to do all we can to improve, and indeed save, lives – as quickly as possible."

During the eight-day hearing, the inquiry heard from 37 witnesses, including those with lived experience and representatives from Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Commission heard evidence about DVA claims processing, including first-hand accounts from those who have navigated the process.

The Canberra hearing also looked at the importance of families in supporting serving and ex-serving ADF members and the challenges of transition to civilian life.

The next public hearing will be held in Townsville from 20 June 2022.

Any current or former ADF members who wish to share their experiences are being encouraged to [make a submission- external site](#).

The Royal Commission has so far received 1,419 submissions. Every contribution is carefully reviewed and will inform both the interim and final reports.

## Changes to DVA Veterans' Home Care Program - Lawn Mowing Services.

The DVA Veterans' Home Care Program (VHC) provides veterans and war widow(er)s help at home. These services are to help clients stay independent, not to solve complex care needs which are met by My Aged Care or the NDIS.

The Repatriation Commission has recently agreed to the provision of non-safety related lawn mowing services (i.e., routine mowing) under the program. Additional lawn-mowing must still fit within the 15 hours per year service limit for home and garden maintenance. All other home and garden maintenance services, including general garden clean-up, still needs to be safety-related and is included in the overall 15 hour limit.

This should be welcome news to beneficiaries who live in their own homes. If you have a Gold Card, you are eligible. If you have not used this service before, simply call the VHC Assessment Agency directly on [1300 550 450](tel:1300550450) to get started.

*Copied Canberra Legacy Newsletter April 2022*

## What is the Heart Health Program

The Heart Health Program is a free, year-long program. It can help you improve your physical health through:

- practical exercise
- nutritional education
- lifestyle management

The goal of the program is to help get you started with a daily routine of exercise and balanced nutrition. The program is delivered by [Corporate Health Management \(CHM\)](#).

### Who can access it

You can access the Heart Health Program if both of the following apply:

- you are a returned veteran or peacekeeper
- you have not yet taken part in the program

An [eligibility checker](#) is available on the [Heart Health Program website](#).

You will need medical clearance from your general practitioner (GP) before you can begin. You may not be eligible for the program if you either:

- are not a returned veteran
  - do not have operational or peacekeeping service
- You can find information about [managing injuries and maintaining health](#) on our website.

We cannot pay the travel costs to attend program sessions

## From The Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter—April 2022

### PSK Financial Services Article

#### New super rules to benefit older Aussies and low-income earners

#### **Budget 2021 superannuation enhancements passed by Parliament**

The Federal Parliament recently passed new legislation that will bring into effect changes to super.

The changes were first proposed in the May 2021 Federal Budget and are set to benefit people in their 60's and 70's, as well as low-income earners.

The following changes will come into effect from 1 July 2022:

- Partial removal of the work test for those aged 67 to 75.
- Non-concessional contributions bring-forward age limit increased to age 75.
- Downsizer contribution eligibility reduced to age 60.
- Increase in the maximum First Home Super Saver Scheme withdrawal amount to \$50,000.

Removal of the monthly minimum threshold for Superannuation Guarantee (SG) contributions. Some of these amendments require supporting regulations (or amendments to existing regulations) to become effective. These regulations are yet to be introduced.

#### **1. Partial removal of the work test for those aged 67 to 75.**

*Please note that enabling regulations will be required to give effect to this measure.*

The existing work test requires you to be in paid work for a minimum of 40 hours over a consecutive 30-day period during a financial year before you're able to make voluntary super contributions.

The work test and the work test exemption will no longer be required from 1 July 2022 for individuals aged 67 to 75 who make or receive salary sacrifice or non-concessional contributions.

The work test and exemption will still be required for individuals in that age range who wish to claim a tax deduction for their personal contributions. Under the new rules, the work test can be met in any period in the financial year of the contribution. This is different to the current rules, where the work test must be met prior to contributing.

If you've made a contribution and have not met the work test, you will be ineligible to claim a tax deduction for the contribution. The contribution will be classified as non-concessional and will count towards your non-concessional contribution cap. The existing upper age limit on making voluntary contributions (within 28 days of the end of the month where the member reached age 75) remains unchanged, with the exception of when

making downsizer contributions.

#### **2. Non-concessional contributions bring-forward age limit increased to 75 years.**

The cut-off age for accessing the bring-forward rule will be increased from 67 to 75 years. This means that many individuals aged 67 to 74 years (inclusive) who were not previously able to bring forward non-concessional contributions cap amounts due to their age, may now do so from 1 July 2022.

Existing restrictions on the full availability of bring forward contributions will continue to apply to people with a total super balance over \$1.48 million.

#### **3. Eligibility age for downsizer contributions reduced to age 60.**

Individuals aged 60 or older (no upper age limit) at the time the contribution is made can now make downsizer contributions from 1 July 2022. The maximum downsizer contribution amount of \$300,000 per eligible person and other eligibility requirements are unchanged.

#### **4. The maximum First Home Super Saver Scheme (FHSSS) withdrawal amount increased to \$50,000.**

The FHSSS is a scheme that allows first home buyers to save part of their home purchase deposit in the concessional taxed superannuation environment. The maximum FHSSS withdrawal amount will be increased from 1 July 2022 from the current limit of \$30,000 (plus notional earnings, less tax) to \$50,000 (plus notional earnings, less tax).

#### **5. Minimum monthly threshold for Superannuation Guarantee (SG) contributions removed.**

From 1 July 2022, there will no longer be a minimum monthly threshold for an eligible employee to qualify for SG contributions. This means that even where an eligible employee earns less than \$450 in a calendar month, there is now an obligation on the employer to make SG contributions.

**To discuss further or to arrange a time to review your current financial position please contact Paul Messerschmidt at PSK Financial Services on 0414 811 777, 02 9895 8800 or [paulma@psk.com.au](mailto:paulma@psk.com.au)**

Paul Messerschmidt of PSK Financial Services Group Pty Ltd trading as PSK Private Wealth ABN 24 134 987 205 is an Authorised Representative of PSK Advisory Services Pty Ltd - AFSL 234656. Any advice included in this document has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Before acting on the advice, you should consider whether it's appropriate to you, in light of your objectives, financial situation or needs

## Australia to build additional submarine base

7 March 2022

**Joint media release:**

### Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP

A new submarine base will be built on the east coast of Australia to support the nation's new nuclear-powered submarines, providing deployment opportunities in both the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The new Future Navy Base will add capacity and capability to Fleet Base West in Western Australia, home of the Navy's Collins-class submarines, which will also receive significant funding to support Australia's nuclear-powered submarines and enable regular visits from the United States and United Kingdom's nuclear-powered submarines.

The Department of Defence estimates that more than \$10 billion will be needed for facility and infrastructure requirements to transition from Collins to the future nuclear-powered submarines, including the new east coast submarine base.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the decision to establish an east coast submarine base has been underway for many years and would enhance Australia's strategic deterrent capability in the Pacific Ocean.

"Australia faces a difficult and dangerous security environment and we must continue to invest in growing the capability of our ADF to ensure we keep Australians safe," the Prime Minister said. "Under our AUKUS partnership with the United States and the United Kingdom we will have access to the best technology in the world to support our efforts to deter threats against our national interest in the Indo-Pacific.

"This new 20-year investment is vital for our strategic capabilities, but it will also provide long-term economic opportunities at both our submarine bases on the east coast and on the west coast. Our investments will also flow into our operations in Western Australia, with significant funding flowing to upgrade facilities there for our future submarines and to support our allies in the United States and United Kingdom. Fleet Base West will remain home to our current and future submarines, given its strategic importance on the Indian Ocean."

**Following significant work by the Department of Defence, which reviewed 19 potential sites, three preferred locations on the east coast have been identified, being Brisbane, Newcastle, and Port Kembla. The locations were selected on submarine basing criteria, which included access to exercise operating areas, proximity to industrial infrastructure, and significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.**

Minister for Defence Peter Dutton said the Australian Defence Force had not constructed a major



new base since Robertson Barracks in the 1990s, and an extensive process would now begin.

"We took the important decision in 2021 to pursue nuclear-powered submarines with the support of our American and British partners, in response to the changing strategic environment," Minister Dutton said. "Nuclear-powered submarines have superior characteristics of stealth, speed, manoeuvrability, survivability and endurance when compared to conventional submarines.

"With the ability to operate from both coasts, this will make our nuclear-powered submarines more responsive and resilient to meet the strategic environment. Today's announcement will ensure Australia has the infrastructure and facilities ready to support those submarines when they enter service. A new Navy base on the east coast will also have significant advantages for training, personnel and for Australia's defence industry."

Navy's current fleet of Collins-class submarines and other maritime capabilities will be able to be operated out of the new east coast base, which will provide critical support to the ADF's undersea capability. Defence will engage with state and local governments to determine the optimal site, which will be informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce. This initial work is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

*There will probably be a whole lot of jockeying and positioning from the various interests promoting each site, along with equally fervent opposition to the idea of having nuclear reactors with highly enriched uranium anywhere near affected communities, no matter how impeccable the safety records.*

*In the midst of these busy, noisy voices, it will be worth keeping in mind Australia's dangerous international environment and the contribution that the submarines—and the other faster-moving technologies in the [AUKUS arrangement](#)—will make to keeping Australians safe and deterring war.*

**Michael Shoebridge ASPI**

## Operation Tonga Assist—2022



*Tonga's Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni (centre) and Australian High Commissioner to the Kingdom of Tonga, Rachael Moore (centre left), talk with military personnel from the Royal Australian Navy, French Armed Forces and the Republic of Fiji Military Force*

*Photo: Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman*

A farewell ceremony at Tonga's Vuna Wharf was held on March 16 to thank personnel from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), French Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC), and Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) who have been operating together from HMAS *Canberra*.

Operation Tonga Assist 2022 delivered more than 370 tonnes of equipment, supplies and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief stores to Tonga following the January 15 eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano and subsequent tsunami.

Australian High Commissioner to Tonga Her Excellency Rachael Moore said the team's considerable efforts had made a difference to the people of Tonga in their time of need.

"We help each other out in the Pacific. Australia is proud to work alongside our Pacific family to contribute to the Government of Tonga's timely and effective response," Ms Moore said.

"Recovery will take time and commitment. While we are saying goodbye to HMAS *Canberra*, the Australian Government will work with friends and partners in support of the longer-term effort."

HMAS *Canberra* arrived in the Tongan capital of Nuku'alofa on 1 March to deliver 150 tonnes of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief stores and transfer command of the local ADF Joint Task Group from HMAS *Adelaide*.

Commander 1st Division Deployable Joint Force Headquarters Major General Scott Winter said he was proud of the achievements of all ADF personnel.

"In a highly challenging environment, the team came together along with other members of the Pacific family to provide immediate aid and support

to the Government and people of Tonga." Major General Winter said.

"HMAS *Canberra* also supported Tonga's COVID-19 response, transporting vaccines and medical teams to Eua and Southern Ha'apai islands. It has been incredibly rewarding to see the way in which the people of Tonga took our troops into their hearts, even when under great strain following the eruption and tsunami.

"I am looking forward to working closely with His Majesty's Armed Forces in the coming months, to continue develop mutual understanding, build partner capacity and enhance resilience across our Pacific community."

HMAS *Canberra* Commanding Officer Captain Jace Hutchison said the ship facilitated multiple air and amphibious operations while in Tonga.

"Embarked CH-47 Chinook and MRH-90 Taipan helicopters airlifted stores such as food and farming supplies and personnel including Army engineers, Government of Tonga medical teams and telecommunications technicians," Captain Hutchison said. Hundreds of personnel were transported ashore to conduct recovery tasks ranging from debris clearance to simple repairs to community property."

Captain Hutchison said local communities appreciated the assistance provided by the ADF, FANC and RFMF.

"The people of Tonga's warmth and appreciation was obvious every time we hit the ground. Food was offered and there was always a smile on the faces of those we met. That hospitality meant a lot to us," Captain Hutchison said.

The farewell ceremony at Vuna Wharf was conducted according to strict Government of Tonga COVID-safe protocols.

## Attitudes changed over a long career

15 April 2022

Chief Petty Officer Sharon Brown has witnessed a significant change in attitude towards women in her 42-and-a-half-year naval career.

In 1980, Chief Petty Officer Brown was in the first cohort of Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) recruits to train and graduate with their male counterparts.

WRANS merged into the Royal Australian Navy in 1984 but women could not serve at sea until the following year. Even then, it was optional and excluded combat duties.

Chief Petty Officer Brown's first sea-going experience was in 1985 in HMAS *Jervis Bay* GT203, a training and troop transport vessel.

"Prior to this, any sea posting opportunity was voluntary, so it was a major step towards fulfilling permanent sea-going obligations, Chief Petty Officer Brown said. "It was also my first experience of life at sea as a member of a ship's company."

Nearly a decade later, she was one of the first females posted to a warship, serving in HMAS *Sydney* from 1992-1994.

One of Chief Petty Officer Brown's career highlights was meeting Prince Philip during a winter ceremonial parade at HMS *Raleigh* while she was on Exercise Long Look 1997. That meeting only lasted a few minutes, but Chief Petty Officer Brown said the prince was very interested in the jobs of the RAN personnel and why they were at *Raleigh*.

Two years ago, Chief Petty Officer Brown was part of a project team involved in selling two guided-missile frigates to the Chilean Navy.

"It was a great way to experience how their supply chain works, which is totally different from the Australian Navy," she said. "This was one of the most rewarding experiences, as it was sort of my last hurrah before retiring."

Growing up in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray, Chief Petty Of-

ficer Brown worked in catering after completing grade 12 at school. Seeking a challenge, she applied to study physical education for the three military services.

She enlisted in the WRANS as a stores victualler but changed to stores naval when the two trade branches amalgamated in 1992. The trade is now known as maritime logistics – supply chain.

Chief Petty Officer Brown was attracted to Navy because of the job stability, steady pay cheque and other benefits like training.

"Navy is more of a business now than it was when I first joined – instead of working nine to five, it's 0800 to 1600 with 24/7 recall," she said. "The days are still long but the benefits of allowances, medical, dental, etc, and the rewards, such as helping the community, are good. No matter who you are, we are part of a unique community that has an unbroken, silent bond and special camaraderie."

Chief Petty Officer Brown said there were plenty of opportunities in Navy, but her advice to anyone considering joining was to choose wisely.

"Do not give up on your goals, and don't be afraid to accept a challenge – you might regret it later if you don't take it," she said. "Sometimes we make wrong choices to get to the right place. We all make mistakes but, if we dwell on the mistakes, we may miss the miracles."

Chief Petty Officer Brown will retire in June. She plans to travel Australia and the world and do geocaching. She also hopes to publish a nearly completed travel book on the preparation required to walk the 800km Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route across northern Spain, also known as the Way of St James.

*By Corporal Veronica O'Hara*



*Chief Petty Officer Sharon Brown stands next to the historic HMAS Penguin bell in Sydney.*

*Photo: Able Seaman Benjamin Ricketts*

## DVA services during east coast flooding

10 March 2022

To all of those affected by the terrible flooding in south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales, please know that DVA and other Government agencies are here to support you in any way we can.

### **DVA offices**

Due to the floods there have been some temporary office closures. Online and telephone services remain operational.

**Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling** offices in Aspley, Brisbane, Ipswich were closed to the public. These sites are now open. Unfortunately, Lismore remains closed.

**VAN offices** in Maroochydore and Broadbeach are now open. The only VAN office still closed is Lismore. We are working to open a temporary site as soon as possible.

VAN sites co-located with Services Australia in Robina and Tweed Heads are currently open.

Anyone who requires assistance can call **DVA on 1800 VETERAN** (1800 838 372) or lodge enquiries through [MyService](#).

### **Counselling**

Counselling support is available through [Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling](#) (1800 011 046) and [SafeZone](#) (1800 142 072) – both of which are available 24/7 for the veteran community.

### **Emergency accommodation**

In many flood-affected areas, there is a severe shortage of rooms, which is unfortunately making it hard for Open Arms to find crisis accommodation. If you need somewhere safe to stay, please head to your closest evacuation centre.

### **Payments**

Services Australia is the main Australian Government agency responsible for providing immediate financial assistance to people affected by the floods in New South Wales and south-east Queensland. This includes members of the veteran community.

There are two payments available:

- The **Disaster Recovery Payment** is a lump-sum payment for anyone who has been significantly affected by the disaster.
- The **Disaster Recovery Allowance** is a short-term payment to help those who have lost income as a direct result of the disaster.

Claims can be made through [MyGov](#).

Visit the Services Australia website for more information on financial support available in your area:

[South-East Queensland local government areas](#)

[Northern NSW local government areas](#)

Please delay applying for a payment if the need is not urgent.

Services Australia Mobile Service Centres are

moving to flood-affected areas. The [Services Australia website](#) shows where you can find them. Further information is available on the [Services Australia website](#).

### **DVA enquiries**

DVA is playing its part with some financial support, assistance with health treatment, home care, counselling and replacement of lost cards and rehabilitation appliances. Veterans who require assistance with DVA services and support can call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or log in to [MyService](#).

The department has sent SMS messages to veterans in the affected areas and we will continue to reach out to those affected by the floods.

Please remember that DVA's number-one priority is, and has always been, the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. DVA is here to support the veteran community during this challenging time, and the months of clean-up to follow.

### **Defence Service Homes Insurance**

DSH Insurance has confirmed that flood cover is an automatic inclusion in their home building insurance policy.

## DVA CONTACTS

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

### **PHONE NUMBER:**

Telephone:  
[1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372)

International callers:

[+61 2 6289 1133](tel:+61262891133)

### **POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:**

Health Approvals & Home Care Section department of Veterans' Affairs

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](mailto: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](http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim)

Claim Enquiries: 1300 550 017  
(Option 2 Allied Health)