



# National Bosun's Call



Vol 4 No 1

Once Navy, Always Navy

February 2022

## NUSHIP Arafura launched

The first of 12 Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels - NUSHIP Arafura was been launched at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia on 17 December 2021.

First Assistant Secretary Ships Division, Sheryl Lutz, said the Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels were one of the foundational projects in the 2017 Naval Shipbuilding Plan.

"Luerssen Australia is contracted to build 12 offshore patrol vessels, two at Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia and 10 at Henderson Maritime Precinct in Western Australia," Ms Lutz said.

Building the first two OPVs in South Australia enabled experienced shipbuilders from the Hobart-class destroyer to be retained and then transitioned to the new Hunter-class frigates, setting the foundation for a continuous sovereign naval shipbuilding industry.

The 80-metre long OPVs will primarily undertake constabulary missions and maritime patrol and response duties.



*Arafura-class Offshore Patrol Vessel NUSHIP Arafura at Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia*

They will incorporate state-of-the art sensors and command and communications systems, improving operational capability alongside Australian Border Force vessels, other Australian Defence Force units and Australia's regional partners.

Minister for Defence Peter Dutton said the functions undertaken by the patrol boat were becoming increasingly important.

"As we enter a period of unprecedented regional instability and uncertainty, we again forge ahead with this new capability and with new confidence," Minister Dutton said.

"By 2030, the shipbuilding workforce will grow to over 2000 here at Osborne as part of the 15,000 workers directly employed under the government's Naval Shipbuilding Plan.

"These numbers speak obviously of our commitment to building our Navy's strength to develop our sovereign industrial capabilities and to grow our Naval Shipbuilding Enterprise."



*Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Michael Noonan presents a bouquet to Ms Nova Peris to thank her for accepting the role of Ship's Sponsor.*



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

## \$27 million for new Veteran Wellbeing Grants

**Tuesday, 1 February 2022**

### The Hon Andrew Gee MP

The Australian Government is investing \$27 million to help fund bigger, better and more innovative programs to support the wellbeing of current and former Australian Defence Force personnel and their families.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee said the new Veteran Wellbeing Grants program would help find and develop new ways to help the veteran community.

"I want to see ambitious and innovative ideas from right across the community that are going to make a real difference in the lives of our current and former service personnel and their families," Minister Gee said.

"I have seen firsthand the positive impacts that some of the programs we fund have had on veterans' health and wellbeing and we want more of it.

"We want to see more programs that bring veterans together, improve their mental and physical health, and make the difficult transition from military to civilian life easier.

"There will be scope in the new grants to target larger, longer-term projects with funding of up to \$1.5 million, so groups can back their programs knowing the Australian Government is backing them.

"Funding will continue to be available for smaller, grassroots projects.

"If you're a community group or organisation with a good idea for improving veterans' wellbeing I encourage you to apply for this program so we can provide even more support for the men and women who have served this nation.

"Importantly, we want local projects from local groups that best suit the needs of the defence and veteran communities in those local areas. Experience tells us that those on the ground know what works in their community.

"This Government is committed to improving the lives of our Defence personnel, veterans and their families and we want to give every community group who shares this commitment an opportunity to get involved."

The new Veteran Wellbeing Grants will combine the current Veteran and Community Grants and Supporting Younger Veterans programs as funding streams, with an additional \$20 million in funding.

Applications for the new Veteran Wellbeing Grants program will be available to all community organisations through a competitive grants process run by the Department of Veterans' Affairs which is due to open in March.

More information about the Veteran Wellbeing Grants program will be released on the [Community Grants Hub website](#) when applications open.

## Regional maintenance centre opened in Cairns

The Royal Australian Navy's fleet is expanding and will be able to further sustain its edge at sea with the opening in Cairns this week of the first of four regional maintenance centres.

NORSTA Maritime was announced as the regional maintenance provider to deliver the Regional Maintenance Centre North East in Cairns.

Speaking at the NORSTA Maritime shipyard after the contract signing, Defence Minister Peter Dutton said under the five-year \$70 million dollar contract, NORSTA would coordinate, schedule and manage maintenance for the current and future Navy fleet based in Cairns.

"NORSTA Maritime has an established regional presence and proven ability to coordinate the sustainment and maintenance of naval vessels," Mr Dutton said.

"Regional Maintenance Centre North East will tap

into the talent of the more than 4000 people employed in Cairns' maritime precinct and create additional jobs for local workers," Mr Dutton said.

NORSTA Maritime will build a regional sovereign sustainment capability by developing and maintaining supply chains and nurturing existing regional capabilities, further promoting Australian industry involvement and providing jobs.

Regional Maintenance Centre North East in Cairns is the first of four maintenance centres to be developed at strategic ports around the country. The other three centres will be located in Henderson WA, Darwin and Sydney.

Head Maritime Systems Rear Admiral Wendy Malcolm said the regional maintenance centres would bring together industry and Defence to sustain the significantly larger and more complex fleet resulting from the continuous naval shipbuilding program.

**The Naval Association of Australia Inc**

**ABN 56 653 989 978**

221 Centenary Avenue  
MELTON VICTORIA 3337

Editor: Peter Cooke-Russell Contact [peter.cookerussell@gmail.com](mailto:peter.cookerussell@gmail.com)

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

**National Patron** His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley AC DSC Retd Governor General of Australia



**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP**  
Prime Minister

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

Wednesday 5 January 2022

**NATIONAL CABINET STATEMENT**

National Cabinet met today to discuss our response to COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, new approaches to test, trace isolate and quarantine including the use of rapid antigen tests (RATS) and the vaccine rollout and booster programme.

The Chief Medical Officer Professor Paul Kelly provided an update on the spread of the Omicron variant. Omicron case numbers continue to increase in Australia and globally. Omicron continues to show greater infectivity than the Delta variant, but with less severity.

Since the beginning of the pandemic there have been 612,106 confirmed cases in Australia and, sadly, 2,289 people have died. More than 56 million tests have been undertaken, with 1,643,841 million tests reported in the past 7 days.

Globally there have been over 294.9 million cases and sadly over 5.4 million deaths, with 2.6 million new cases and 7,169 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to surge in many countries around the world.

National Cabinet received a detailed update on Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program from Lieutenant General John Frewen, Coordinator General of Operation COVID Shield.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out continues to expand. To date 43 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in Australia, including 212,497 in the previous 24 hours.

In the previous 7 days, more than 754,500 vaccines have been administered in Australia. More than 94.5 per cent of the Australian population aged 16 years and over have now had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, including 98.7 per cent of Australians aged 50 years of age and over and more than 99 per cent of Australians aged 70 years of age and over.

More than 91.6 per cent of Australians aged 16 years and over are now fully vaccinated including more than 96.8 per cent of Australians aged 50 years of age and over and more than 99 per cent of Australians aged 70 years of age and over.

Over 2.7 million booster doses have been administered. Australia has sufficient supplies of boosters, with nearly 18 million mRNA vaccines in stock in Australia. Yesterday, over 176,000 boosters were administered across Australia. Following the widening of eligibility for boosters on 4 January to those who had their second dose at least four months earlier, over 33.8 per cent of those eligible for boosters have had a booster and 28.6 per cent of Australians aged 70 years of age and over have had a booster in the last 8 weeks since the booster program commenced.

National Cabinet will meet again on Thursday 13 January 2022.

**Rapid Antigen Tests**

National Cabinet noted that COVID-J.9 tests are free and available at state testing clinics for people who have symptoms or are a close contact.

National Cabinet agreed that up to 10 Rapid Antigen Tests over three months (a maximum of 5 in a month) will be made available free through pharmacies to people holding the following cards:

- Pension Concession Card

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

- Commonwealth Seniors Health Care Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold, White or Orange Card
- Health Care Card
- Low Income Health Card

These free tests will become available in the next two weeks. However, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms and close contacts should attend a state clinic for free testing and not go to a pharmacy to receive a free test. Costs for providing these tests will be shared 50:50 between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories consistent with COVID shared funding agreements.

National Cabinet noted the Commonwealth will provide 10 million RATs to states and territories (a combination of predominantly Point of Care Tests and self tests) to assist with testing and laboratory capacity. National Cabinet agreed to fund these in line with the existing National Partnership Agreement on the COVID-19 Response.

National Cabinet received a briefing from Joe Buffone, Director-General of Emergency Management Australia, on behalf of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM). Supply chain issues continue to be one of the main disruptors of broad access to RATs. National Cabinet noted that the Commonwealth is working through the NCM to finalise anti-hoarding measures with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and other major retailers that stock RATs to limit the number of RATs available for sale to each individual.

National Cabinet noted the Commonwealth will prohibit price gouging of and the non-commercial export of RATs, similar to actions taken earlier in the pandemic relating to essential goods such as masks, other PPE and hand sanitiser. As was the case previously, price gouging will be defined as supplying or offering to supply essential goods at a price that is more than 120% of the initial purchase price (a 20% markup) and penalties for not complying with this direction will range up to five years imprisonment or \$66,000.

### **Changes to testing requirements**

National Cabinet agreed changes to testing requirements for all states except for Western Australia including:

- Removing the requirement for truck drivers to have rolling seven days tests.
- Testing will not be required before patients present to hospital.
- Confirmation PCR test will not be required after a positive RAT. Individual states and territories will provide further information on how a positive RAT will be recorded. Anyone who tests positive is encouraged to contact their GP for support as required.
- Testing before interstate travel will no longer be required except for Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, with Queensland and Tasmania to review these requirements in the coming weeks. State testing clinics will not be able to be used for interstate travel purposes.
- A second post arrival test for international travelers will not be required except for Queensland, who will review this requirement when they reach 90 per cent double vaccination rate.

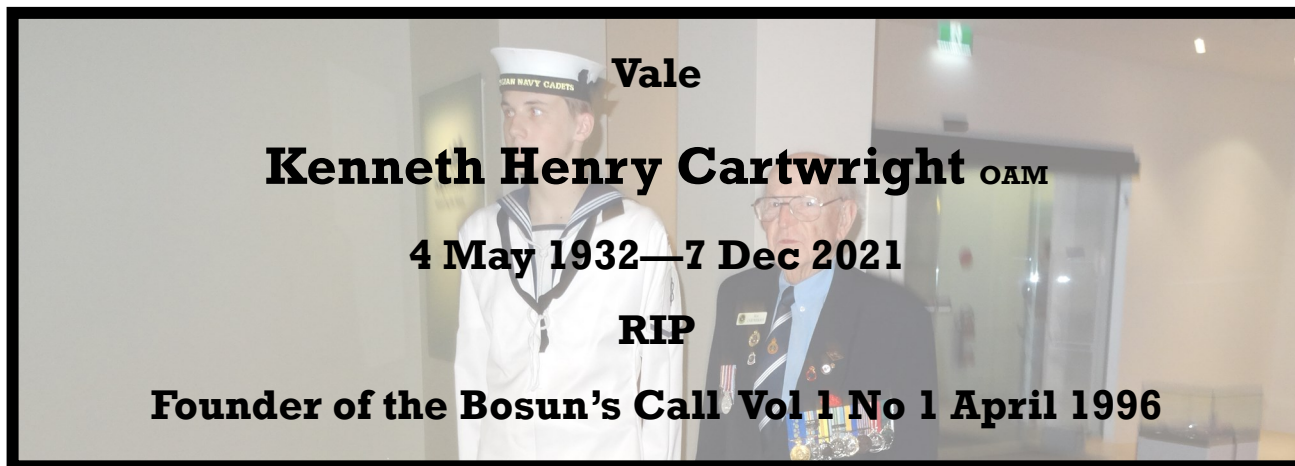
### **Workplace Health and Safety**

National Cabinet noted the impact on business of current state workplace Health and Safety laws that could imply requiring employees to return a negative RAT test in order to present to work. National Cabinet agreed the Commonwealth Attorney General will convene a meeting of relevant ministers from all jurisdictions to consider workplace health and safety requirements with a view to removing any potential obligation to impose testing requirements in workplaces on employees

### **National Return to School Framework**

National Cabinet tasked the First Secretaries Group (FSG) led by Mr Phil Gaetjens, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop a national framework to enable students to return to school on day one of term one, and for schools to stay open with consistent requirements across all jurisdictions to be in place prior to the first day of the first term of school. The FSG will report back to National Cabinet at the next meeting.





## New plaque honours Teddy Sheean VC

A new memorial plaque honouring Ordinary Seaman Edward “Teddy” Sheean VC was unveiled in Shropshire Park in the Tasmanian town of Ulverstone 79 years after his death.

Commanding Officer Navy Headquarters Tasmania Commander Andrew Wright represented Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Michael Noonan at the service to rededicate the memorial.

Commander Wright said Ordinary Seaman Sheean displayed incredible bravery in the action and was thoroughly deserving of Australia’s highest military honour.

“Once he had helped free a life raft, allowing his shipmates to escape the sinking ship, Sheean then returned to his gun to engage the enemy,” Commander Wright said. “Although wounded in the chest and back, the 18-year-old shot down one bomber and kept the other aircraft at bay as his mates made their escape.”

Among the guests at the ceremony were the Tasmanian Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, Guy Barnett, and Sheean family representative Garry Ivory.

Other guests included members of HMAS *Launceston*’s ship’s company, Australian Navy Cadets and members of the local RSL sub-branch.

*By Petty Officer Ian McGiffen  
17 December 2021*

The Memorial service and unveiling of the plaque for Teddy Sheean at the Naval Memorial Park in Ulverstone on 1st December 2021 was attended by over eighty members of the Naval Association of Australia (NAA) with members attending from Georgetown, Launce-

*Commanding Officer Naval Headquarters Tasmania Commander Andrew Wright and Commanding Officer HMAS Launceston Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Graney at the Teddy Sheean VC memorial in Ulverstone, Tasmania.*

ton South and the host Sub-section Devonport/ Ulverstone. This was an excellent service arranged by the NAA Devonport/Ulverstone Sub-section.

This service incorporated the Navy Day Celebrations and also the unveiling of the refurbished “Corvettes Corner” which had been refurbished by the Devonport/Ulverstone Sub-section. The Naval Ode was recited by the NAA Tasmania Section President Mr Brian Ellis. Those attending included the Tasmanian Government Veteran Affairs Minister Mr Guy Barnett MHA and also the nephew of Teddy Sheehan Mr Gary Ivory.

The Commanding Officer, Tasmania Naval Headquarters, CMDR Andrew Wright was the guest speaker for the occasion and representatives of the three local Government areas were also in attendance. The Commanding Officer HMAS Launceston, a Tasmanian, and three of his crew were also in attendance along with Australian Navy Cadets from local units which lent a real navy theme to the day.

*By Gordon Fuller  
South Launceston Sub-section  
National Vice President  
16 January 2022*



## HMAS Adelaide departs Sydney for Tonga



*HMAS Adelaide departs Fleet Base East at Garden Island, Sydney. Defence is pre-positioning HMAS Adelaide to Brisbane to provide additional HADR support if requested by the Government of Tonga.*

*Photo: ABIS Susan Mossop*

The Australian Defence Force is supporting the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) as it coordinates Australia's support of Tonga following the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano on Saturday, January 15.

On January 17 and 18, two Air Force P-8A Poseidon flights and one C-130J Hercules departed RAAF Base Amberley and RAAF Base Richmond to conduct aerial surveillance over the central islands of Tonga.

The Government of Tonga requested the flights to help determine the extent of the damage, particularly in more remote locations, and inform their future disaster support requests.

HMAS Adelaide departed Fleet Base East in Sydney to pre-position in Brisbane, ready to provide additional humanitarian assistance and disaster

relief (HADR) support if requested by the by the Government of Tonga.

HMAS Adelaide arrived in Tonga on January 26 with 250 pallets of humanitarian supplies and over 600 personnel and equipment to support engineering, medical and logistic taskings.

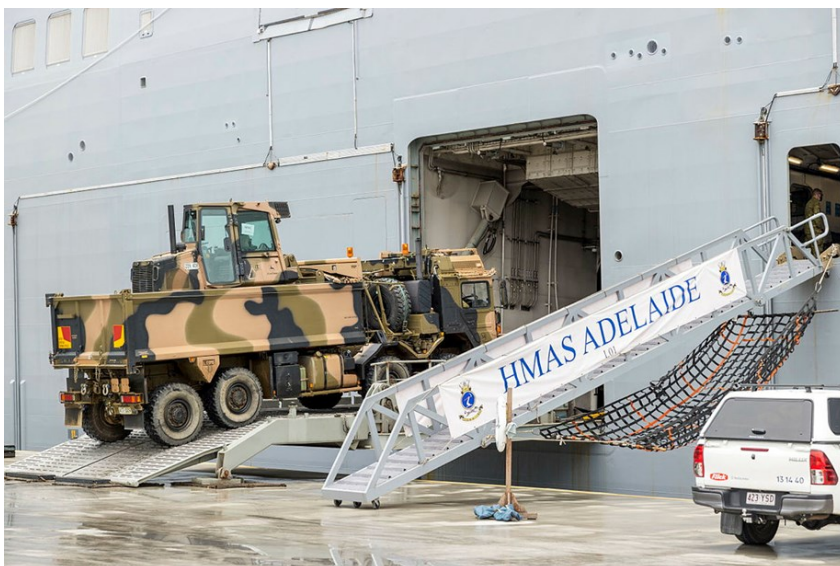
The crew conducted a COVID-19 safe and contactless unload of 88 tonnes of humanitarian supplies onto Vanu Wharf in Nuku'alofa, and is awaiting further requests from the Government of Tonga.

If required, Adelaide can produce more than 20,000 litres of fresh water and enough electricity to power a small town. The ship also has a 40-bed hospital with operating theatres and a critical-care ward.

Commander Joint Task Group 637.6 and Commanding Officer HMAS Adelaide, Captain Stuart Watters, said all support to Tonga will align with agreed Tongan COVID-19 protocols.

"The ADF takes COVID-19 safety seriously and is fully complying with Tonga's requirements," said Captain Watters

For imagery of ADF support to Tonga visit: <http://images.defence.gov.au/>



*Australian Defence Force vehicles are loaded onto HMAS Adelaide at the Port of Brisbane before departure on Operation Tonga Assist 2022.*

*hoto: Corporal Robert Whitmore*



## Joint media release — Construction begins on permanent Nowra Wellbeing Centre

**Tuesday, 11 January 2022**

**The Hon Andrew Gee MP**

Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel  
Federal Member for Calare

**Senator Jim Molan AO DSC**

Senator for New South Wales

Construction has begun on a new purpose built, state-of-the-art facility to permanently house the Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre, providing an expanded range of health and wellbeing services for our local veterans, current serving Australian Defence Force members and their families.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee visited the site at 124 Wallace Street today to officially launch the building works.

"This is a momentous day for the Defence and veteran community here in Nowra and the surrounding region," Minister Gee said.

"RSL LifeCare, with the support of RSL NSW, has been doing a great job running the Nowra Wellbeing Centre out of their temporary premises and has already made a real difference in the lives of current ADF members, ex-service personnel, and their families.

"This new, permanent home will take those services to the next level. It will be a place of healing and connection, and a hub for accessing health, education and employment support.

"The facility has been carefully designed with a mix of communal, recreational and clinical spaces to meet the needs of veterans and their families.

"It is part of the Australian Government's \$43.2 million investment in a network of Wellbeing Centres across the country and demonstrates our commitment to providing local services to support veterans, defence personnel and their families wherever they live."

Senator for New South Wales Jim Molan said the new centre was a much needed addition to the region.

"The Nowra Wellbeing Centre will provide critical services to more than 7,000 local veterans and their families in the Shoalhaven and neighbouring local government areas, as well as personnel from nearby HMAS Albatross and HMAS Creswell,"

Senator Molan said.

"Being in the military is tough, and life after the military can be difficult to navigate. Having local support networks and a place where you can come together with others who are in a similar position is just so important."

RSL LifeCare Board Member and navy veteran Trevor Robertson said this Centre is the result of significant planning and consultation with local ex-service organisations and the veteran community to deliver a one-stop shop for service delivery that is veteran-centric and community driven.

"The Nowra Veteran Wellbeing Centre will provide critical services to over 7,000 veterans and their families in the Shoalhaven and neighbouring local government areas, including education, health and ADF transition support and it will be an essential resource for the community for generations to come", Mr Robertson said.

"I would like to thank the DVA and the Federal Government for their support of the Veteran Wellbeing Centre model and RSL NSW, our partner charity, for supporting us in the delivery of services to veterans and their families."

RSL NSW President Ray James said the League has observed an increased need for support services this year and he expects this continue with the pressure of COVID-19 restrictions, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, and the ADF's withdrawal from the conflict in Afghanistan last year.

"I take this opportunity to reassure veterans and their families across the Shoalhaven that local support and services are available to them at the Nowra Veteran Wellbeing Centre."

Construction on the Nowra Veteran Wellbeing Centre is expected to be finalised by mid-2022.

For more information on the National network of Veteran Wellbeing Centres, visit the [Veteran Wellbeing Centres page](#)

**Media contacts**

Minister Gee office: [0459 966 944](tel:0459966944)

DVA Media: [02 6289 6466](tel:0262896466)

Office of the Hon. Andrew Gee, Canberra ACT.

## \$7.5 million for veteran wellbeing in Tasmania

**Thursday, 23 December 2021**

The Morrison Government has today announced an additional \$2.5 million for Tasmanian wellbeing services for veterans and their families, bringing the total support for Veteran Wellbeing Centres in Tasmania to \$7.5 million.

This funding will deliver a Veteran Wellbeing Centre for Burnie and enhanced services in Launceston,

as well as localised wellbeing services across Tasmania. There are almost 9,000 veterans and their families who are supported across Tasmania, with many living in the mid-north and North West of the state.

Federal Member for Bass Bridget Archer said a Federal investment of \$250,000 for the Launceston RSL Sub-Branch will further develop their existing Veterans Support and Wellbeing Hub.

## Hats off to historic family find

A piece of family military history, uncovered during restoration works at a Brisbane railway station, has been returned to its rightful owners.

During the works at Shorncliffe train station, all construction was brought to a halt as a large collection of mid-20th century objects were discovered – including a long-lost sailor's cap, dating from 1945-1950, unearthed during an archaeological dig.

Faded and tattered after being buried under the station master's building, the cap was revealed to belong to Royal Australian Navy stoker Ernest "Gus" James Hodgess.

Senior Heritage Consultant Dr Xavier Carah, of Niche Environmental and Heritage, the company engaged for the heritage work, recognised instantly that it was a Royal Australian Navy hat, and found a way to make contact with the family.

"Often when you find personal items, it's quite difficult to work out who it came from. Even with a name, it would be difficult to find the individual," Dr Carah said. "There were a few clues that helped narrow down the hunt for its rightful owner: World War II, some letters in a name and the deduction that it most likely belonged to a local on leave. A military historian reached out and said that they could help find the owner."

The family was found, and on December 2, Queensland Rail presented the hat to Gus Hodgess' son, former Navy paramedic Jamie Hodgess, who was accompanied by his nephew, Australian Army petroleum operator Warrant Officer Class Two Stuart Hodgess.

Warrant Officer Hodgess said his grandfather was a Korean war veteran. "He served on the minesweeper HMAS *Warrnambool*. It struck a mine in 1947 off the Great Barrier Reef near Cape Grenville, injuring some aboard with two dying of injuries later. My grandfather was able to swim back and forth, saving those on board. I'm very proud of him and the legacy I stand on."

Before the presentation, the hat had been cleaned, stabilised and boxed by a conservator.

"This is a monumental event for not only my family, who are all ex-serving military personnel, it is also incredible to receive this in a special casing and have it back to where it belongs," Warrant Officer Hodgess said.

Unable to attend the hat presentation because of border closures, Navy Warrant Officer Paul Bodensteiner, who followed in his uncle's footsteps to join the Navy as a paramedic, said his grandfather was his inspiration to enlist.

"I was following in the footsteps of my grandfather and my uncle when I signed up. I was actually living with my grandfather when I joined the Navy in 1989," Warrant Officer Bodensteiner said. "I have always looked up to him, hearing stories about when he went to sea and when he went to Korea. He never told me much about the *Warrnambool*, but when I was on the new *Warrnambool*, he opened up a little more. He kept it close to his chest. He would always get me to wear his medals on Anzac Day, even from a young age, and it's incredible to have another piece of his military history back with our family."

It is not just the family that are happy to see the sailor's hat find its way home. Dr Carah is also pleased with the outcome.

"It's very rare to get this opportunity in cultural heritage management," Dr Carah said.

"There's a desire to repatriate items to the owners or decedents of the owners. To get the opportunity to return it to its owners is remarkable. We don't often get that opportunity."

Gus Hodgess is succeeded by three generations of Royal Australian Navy and Australian Army members, including members who are still currently serving.

As for the hat, it is with Jamie Hodgess, along with other memorabilia from Gus Hodgess' Navy service.

By Captain Thomas Kaye  
14 December 2021

**Editor's Note:** HMAS *Warrnambool* was lost whilst minesweeping on 13 September 1947. Four sailors were lost with *Warrnambool*. Their names were added to the Roll of Honour in the Australian War Memorial on 6 March 2013.

Former Navy paramedic Jamie Hodgess, left, and his nephew Army petroleum operator Warrant Officer Class Two Stuart Hodgess with the Navy hat that belonged to Jamie Hodgess' father, Gus. Photo: Lance Corporal Christopher Smith





## Rehabilitation pilot starts soon

23 December 2021

The Australian Government is establishing a pilot program of Non-Liability Rehabilitation, offering eligible veterans social wellbeing and employment support – without the need for an accepted compensation claim with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Early access to rehabilitation can help veterans to improve their health and wellbeing. Under the new pilot program, a qualified professional rehabilitation consultant will help participants create an individual plan that aligns with their personal rehabilitation goals. The plan will last 3 to 6 months, and may include support in the following areas depending on the individual's needs:

- Social wellbeing: building new social connections in the local community
- Employment support: assistance with becoming job-ready, changing careers, or adjusting to the civilian workforce.
- Medical Management: obtaining a Medicare card or engaging a suitable General Practitioner.

The pilot commences on 1 January 2022 and is due to run for two years. An evaluation of the program's outcomes in 2024 will inform future policy design.

For more information on the pilot and how you can participate, visit [Non-Liability Rehabilitation | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](https://www.dva.gov.au/non-liability-rehabilitation)

## Boost in support for older Australians to access Government

22 December 2021

The Pension Loans Scheme is being renamed to the Home Equity Access Scheme, as announced recently by the Minister for Social Services, Anne Ruston.

The interest rate for the scheme is also being reduced to provide a boost in support for older Australians, including those in the veteran community.

The interest rate reduction from 4.50 per cent to 3.95 per cent per annum is great news for those considering accessing the scheme, lowering borrowing costs and allowing them to use the scheme for a longer amount of time.

The newly named Home Equity Access Scheme supports older Australians who are over the Age Pension age to access a voluntary non-taxable fortnightly loan from the Government up to a maximum value of 150 per cent of the rate of the Age Pension. The scheme allows participants to use their home as equity in order to access a loan.

To be eligible for the Home Equity Access Scheme, retirees must have reached Age Pension age, own real estate in Australia and meet residency and certain other requirements, but do not need to be receiving a pension payment.

For more information on the scheme, visit [dva.gov.au/financial-support/income-support/support-when-you-cannot-work/pensions/pension-loans-scheme](https://dva.gov.au/financial-support/income-support/support-when-you-cannot-work/pensions/pension-loans-scheme)

## MyService lets you access DVA services only online

### Claiming made simple

Apply for free mental health treatment  
Access support for a service-related condition or injury  
Upload supporting information with your claim quickly and easily.

### Easy access

Access your digital DVA Veteran Card  
View your accepted conditions  
Lodge and track the status of your claims.

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



## New Exchange Opportunity

Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) Commandant, Commodore Peter Leavy and Superintendent United States Naval Academy (USNA) Vice Admiral Sean Buck have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to begin an exchange program for midshipmen.

The exchange program will involve six-month semester exchanges between the military academies in Canberra and Annapolis, Maryland.

Vice Admiral Buck emphasised the importance of the program in strengthening ties between the US and Australian militaries and developing cultural competence as a core enabler to future operational capability.

"The men and women of our militaries are going to serve together, and this agreement will allow them to develop the professional and personal relationships they will use throughout their career," Vice Admiral Buck said.

Commodore Leavy echoed his sentiments highlighting the importance of the exchanges in contrib-

uting to the foundational education that ADFA delivers for its trainee officers.

"We have 15 countries represented within ADFA and opportunities such as this are valuable in developing an international joint cohort amongst our midshipmen and officer cadets," Commodore Leavy said.

It is anticipated the exchange program will commence with the first four USNA midshipmen arriving in Australia to undertake six months of study at ADFA in July 2022. The first ADFA trainees are expected to travel to the US in January 2023.

"This signing is an important milestone in the academy's history. It will provide our members with an opportunity to forge personal and professional relationships at the very start of their careers," Commodore Leavy said.

"We look forward to receiving the first US midshipmen in July next year."

*By Wing Commander Jade Deveney*

*8 December 2021*



*At the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding: Front Warrant Officer Andrew Jocumsen, Commodore Peter Leavy, Colonel James Murray, Standing: Andrew Nealy, Professor Michael O'Donnell, Group Captain Jeff Howard, Captain (USN) Matt Ort and Lieutenant Colonel Dave*

## APS Veteran Employment Pathway: Continuing to Serve

21 December 2021

Secretary Liz Cosson AM CSC recently welcomed the first participants in the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (DVA's) Veteran Employment Pathway Program.

While the program will formally commence in February 2022, the Secretary, along with the DVA Veteran Employment Pathways manager, Mick Barnes, welcomed Adam, Alaric, Jason, Erika and Andrew to the program early.

The Veteran Employment Pathway Program is a collaboration between DVA, Department of Defence and the Australian Public Service Commission. The program aims to support veterans into employment in the Australian Public Service (APS) including a development program to kick start their public service career. The program provides targeted support for participants' transition from a military background to a career in the APS, supported by the APS Academy. This pathway has

been designed to ensure long-term success, with participants continuing in their roles as ongoing staff at DVA and Defence after completing the program.

To help participants transition to the APS culture and way of working, participants will take part in:

- formal learning and development,
- be offered a mentor,
- have access to an internal buddy,
- have access to peer networks, and
- have access to family inclusion activities.

There are many benefits to an APS career, and veterans bring with them unique experiences and valuable skills that can be applied to many roles across the APS.

Applications for the 2022 Veteran Employment Pathway Program have already closed, however other opportunities to work at DVA can be found on the DVA website: [dva.gov.au/about-us/](https://dva.gov.au/about-us/)

## Backing local communities to honour the service of Australians

Friday, 28 January 2022

**The Hon Andrew Gee MP**  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel

Scores of ex-service organisations, clubs, schools and community groups will share in more than \$1.1 million to help them honour the service and sacrifice of Australian servicemen and women.

The *Saluting Their Service* program ensures Australia's wartime history is preserved and those who have served during wars, conflicts and peace operations are appropriately remembered.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel Andrew Gee today announced the 82 successful recipients in the latest funding round, which cover a wide variety of projects put forward by groups from right around the country.

"Our nation owes an enormous debt of gratitude to all those Australians who have served our nation, defending our freedoms, values and way of life, and this funding is just one of the many ways we honour that debt," Minister Gee said.

"I am very pleased to see such a wide range of projects being supported, including everything from concerts and documentaries, to new memorials and restoration of existing memorials.

"Large or small, all these projects represent Australia's unwavering commitment to always remember and reflect on all that our service personnel have done for our country.

"Something as simple as a memorial flagpole at a school can be a powerful reminder of our nation's service history and can help encourage the next generation to take on the sacred responsibility of remembrance.

"The funding is part of the Australian Government's \$32 million investment in Veterans' Affairs grant programs this year."

The next round of the *Saluting Their Service* program is open, and applications can be submitted until 8 February 2022.



## Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War

Wednesday, 12 January 2022

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Andrew Gee, announced that the Australian Government has committed \$6 million to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War in 2023 to ensure this important milestone is marked with appropriate respect and appreciation for all those who served and those who gave their lives in Vietnam.

"Australia owes our Vietnam veterans an enormous debt of gratitude," Minister Gee said. "Almost 60,000 Australians served in the Vietnam War, 521 lost their lives and more than 3,000 were wounded. We honour and remember the service and sacrifice of each and every one of them. Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam conflict will be an important opportunity for Australians to express the pride, gratitude and respect of the nation.

"The Vietnam War and its aftermath exacted a

heavy toll on all those who served and their families. The treatment of our diggers upon their return home by some of their fellow Australians remains a source of hurt and pain for many. The 50 year commemoration is another important step in helping to heal the wounds that were inflicted back in Australia.

"I will be working closely with the Vietnam veteran community to ensure the funding announced today delivers a program of events that honours all Australians who served in the Vietnam conflict.

"The centrepiece will be a national commemorative service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra.

"We owe the men and women who served in Vietnam nothing less than a commemorative program that reflects their extraordinary service and sacrifice. Our country will always be grateful for it and we will never, ever, forget it," Minister Gee said.

**Office of the Hon. Andrew Gee, Canberra ACT.**



## New round of vocational scholarships open for veterans

10 February 2022

Veterans and young Australians can apply for scholarships of up to \$13,000 to cover the costs of an eligible vocational education and training (VET) qualification and internship.

The Australian Government has recently announced Round 4 of the Commonwealth Scholarships Program for Young Australians, which includes former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) who have transitioned in the past two years.

Round Four of the Commonwealth Scholarships Program for Young Australians is now open for those living in ten selected regions, with up to \$5,000 on offer per year for two years, along with an additional \$3,000 if they also complete a 20-day paid internship.

'Transitioning from the military to civilian life can be a difficult time and these scholarships will help give veterans additional skills and qualifications on top of their valuable military experience,' said Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Andrew Gee.

'Australian businesses already recognise the significant benefits that former ADF personnel can bring to a workplace, and further expanding training and employment opportunities for our ex-service personnel is a win for veterans, business and the Australian economy.'

Applicants – whether people aged 15–24 or former ADF of any age who have transitioned in the past two years – are eligible, but must not be in full-time work or study at the time of applying. Their intention must be to gain an eligible VET qualification at one of the following levels: Certificate III, Certificate IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma.

Minister for Employment, Workforce, Skills, Small and Family Business, Stuart Robert, himself a veteran, said better supporting young people and those transitioning from military service will strengthen Australia's workforce.

'These kinds of opportunities will help build our workforce,' Minister Robert said. 'We're already seeing hundreds of thousands of Australians upskilling or reskilling thanks to programs like this, as well as JobTrainer, and TAFE and apprenticeship funding.'

Host employers can receive \$1,500 per intern hosted.

To be eligible, applicants must live in the following regions:

- New South Wales – Grafton (including Coffs Harbour) and Gosford
- Northern Territory – Alice Springs
- Queensland – Maryborough and Townsville

- South Australia – Port Pirie
- Tasmania – Burnie
- Victoria – Shepparton
- Western Australia – Wanneroo and Armadale

Applications close on 11 March 2022.

For more details on how to apply, visit the Department of Education, Skills and Employment website.



## 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)

International callers:

+61 2 6289 1133

### 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)