



National Bosun's Call



Vol 2 No 9

Once Navy, Always Navy

October 2021

Nuclear-powered submarines?

There's much we don't yet know about how we will acquire our new submarines. Even the Government and Defence don't know, which is why they have launched a task force, led by Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead, to consider the way ahead, reporting back in around 18 months.

There appear to be just two contenders – the US Virginia-class SSN and the British Astute-class SSN, both in-service and in current production.

Of the Astutes, seven are planned, with four in service and two under construction. Boat number one, HMS *Astute*, was laid down in 2001 with the last, HMS *Agincourt*, to be commissioned in 2026.

Of the Virginias, 66 are planned, with 19 completed and 11 under construction. The first boat, USS *Virginia*, was laid down in 1999. No date has been set for the last, but, assuming it happens and the current production schedule is maintained, it's likely to be in the late 2030s with service life through to the 2060s.

On the face of it, the Virginias seem the best boat for Australia, with live production in the period Australia stands up its line and significant commonality of combat system and weapons with the Collins boats.

On the other hand, the Astute's Thales and Atlas sensors have significant commonality with Collins.

Both are bigger subs than what has gone before – Astute is 7,700 tons submerged and Virginia 8,700 tons submerged – as against 3,300 tons for a submerged Collins and around 5,000 tons for the never-to-be Attack-class.

Neither is cheap. The target for the Virginia was

US\$2 billion per boat, as against US\$3.5 billion for its predecessor, the Seawolf-class, cancelled after just three. The last of the Astutes, according to a UK audit office report, costs around £1.64 billion.

Which bring us to an issue recently canvassed – leasing. Defence Minister Peter Dutton acknowledged on September 21 he's amenable to leasing, which isn't a new idea.

Here's analyst Professor Ross Babbage in a paper published by the Kokoda Foundation in 2011:



USN Virginia Class Submarine

“A variant of this military off-the-shelf (MOTS) approach with yet other potential advantages would be to enter into a long-term leasing arrangement with the USN whereby the RAN simply operated ten or twelve Virginia boats for a specified number of years (say 25) with the USN contracted to provide all, or most, of the logistic support within its own supply system.”

The big question is: will this approach get Australian submariners into nuclear submarines a decade or

more sooner than waiting for Australian-manufactured boats?

With AUKUS comes reports from the UK that Britain will base some of its Astute-class nuclear attack submarines in Australia under the agreement to achieve a persistent presence in the Indo-Pacific.

The Times newspaper quoted unnamed UK government sources saying AUKUS opened opportunities for basing in Australia which could include deep maintenance, so boats did not need to return to their home port in Faslane, Scotland, for upkeep.

This is still a long way off, with The Times report saying this would happen once Australia began

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National Newsletter of the
Naval Association of Australia

Nuclear-powered submarines?

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building a fleet of nuclear boats.

The report seems to indicate this would be more like extended deployments down under, rather than permanent basing of RN boats and their crews in Australia.

It would surely follow that this applies just as well to US submarines, which currently make only occasional port visits.

Yet even with Australia's new submarine as much as two decades away, the decision to go nuclear may already have produced results by boosting the study of nuclear engineering.

The University of NSW, which launched Australia's only nuclear engineering program in 2014, announced a \$1 million donation from the Sir William Tyree Foundation to support 20 domestic students' study for a master's degree in Nuclear Engineering from UNSW's School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering.

Defence will certainly need engineers with nuclear qualifications for its new submarines.

But the Sir William Tyree Foundation, named after New Zealand-born engineer and industrialist William Tyree (1921-2013), sees Australia moving to nuclear energy.

"This gift builds on the foundations laid down to develop a high-tech nuclear industry in Australia which will be essential if we choose to adopt nuclear energy as one of the options available to our country as it deals with climate change," said Robyn Fennell, Tyree's daughter and foundation chair.

The government, of course, has ruled out any move to domestic nuclear power. But then again, up until the Prime Minister's announcement on September 16, successive governments had also ruled out nuclear-powered submarines.

*By Max Blenkin | Canberra | 30 September 2021
Australian Defence Magazine*

Will Saab expertise bolster the Collins upgrade program?

Now that the Future Submarine program has been scrapped in favour of a nuclear-powered alternative, as announced in September by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, increasing attention is being focused on the Life of Type Extension (LOTE) program (Project CN62 – previously Sea 1450) covering all six of the RAN's Collins-class fleet.

Aimed at avoiding a capability gap prior to the entry into service of the nuclear-powered boats, the program will involve a two-year upgrade for each Collins boat on reaching 30 years of service – the first in May 2026, the others at two-year intervals – that will extend their life by 10 years and enhance their capabilities.

Although CN62 is yet to gain full approval, first pass was achieved in June and there is no doubting the program's implementation, and its critical importance. Even if both CN62 and the nuclear-powered submarine program adhere to current schedules, the RAN will still field only eight submarines until nearly 2050 unless the nuclear-powered build and introduction to service can be accelerated.

Collins LOTE

The LOTE will replace three of the major systems on the Collins – main motor, diesel generators and electrical distribution systems. This challenging undertaking will be combined with the usual

maintenance and obsolescence management of a scheduled full cycle docking (FCD) while somehow compressing both activities into the two years normally allocated for an FCD alone.

This will probably be achieved by replacing the capability insertion-type work normally included in an FCD work package with the LOTE workscope, although Defence recently revealed that some undisclosed LOTE updates would be accorded lower priority than what it termed 'the core work package'.

*By Julian Kerr 14 October 2021
Australian Defence magazine*



RN Astute Class Submarine

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Find the best way to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccinations for your situation

You can get a COVID-19 digital certificate or your immunisation history statement to show proof of your vaccinations.

How you get proof depends on your situation. This includes if you need to create a myGov account, link services or enrol in Medicare.

If you're 14 or older, you'll need to get your own digital certificate or immunisation history statement using either:

- Your [Medicare online account](#) through [myGov](#)
- The [Express Plus Medicare mobile app](#).

Once you've had all your required doses, you can [add your COVID-19 digital certificate to your digital wallet](#).

If you've had mixed doses of [approved vaccines](#), you can use your COVID-19 digital certificate or immunisation history statement as proof.

Use our tool to find out the easiest way to get proof of your COVID-19

If you're not eligible for Medicare

If you're not eligible for Medicare, you need an Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) to get your proof online. You can get an IHI using the Individual Healthcare Identifiers service (IHI service) through [myGov](#).

First, you need to check if you already have an IHI. You have an IHI if any of the following apply:

- you have a Medicare card
- you have a DVA card
- you're enrolled in Medicare.

If any of these do apply, you can get your proof using either your:

- [Medicare online account](#) through [myGov](#)
- [Express Plus Medicare mobile app](#).

If you don't have an IHI, you can use the IHI service through myGov to apply for one and link it. To do this, sign in to [myGov](#) then:

1. Select **Services** or **Link your first service**.
2. Select **Individual Healthcare Identifiers service** and then follow the prompts.

You don't need an IHI to get the vaccines, you only need it to get proof of your vaccinations.

If you're a veteran

If you're a DVA gold card holder and you have a Medicare number, you can access your COVID-19 digital certificate through either:

- Your [Medicare online account](#) through [myGov](#)
- The [Express Plus Medicare mobile app](#)

If you're a DVA gold card holder and don't have a Medicare number, you'll need to access your My Health Record and link it to your myGov account.

This way, you'll be able to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccinations.

To do this, you'll need to call the [My Health Record enquiries line](#). They'll verify your identity and give you an access code, also called an Identity Verification Code, to link your accounts.

Find out how to [get COVID-19 vaccination proof through My Health Record](#) from the Australian Digital Health Agency website.

If you can't get proof online, you can also call the [Australian Immunisation Register](#). Select option 4 for the AIR veteran and defence support line. Then ask us to send your immunisation history statement or COVID-19 digital certificate to you. It can take up to 14 days for your statement or certificate to arrive in the post.

If you can't get proof online

If you can't get proof online, your vaccination provider can print your immunisation history statement for you.

You can also call the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) and ask us to send your immunisation history statement or COVID-19 digital certificate to you. It can take up to 14 days for your statement or certificate to arrive in the post.

If you want to use your My Health Record

You can also get COVID-19 vaccination proof through My Health Record. If you haven't used My Health Record before, you need to link it to myGov. Find out more about [how to get proof of vaccination through My Health Record](#) on the Australian Digital Health Agency website.

There are 2 ways to show proof of your vaccinations:

Your [COVID-19 digital certificate](#) which shows proof of only your COVID-19 vaccinations that you can add to a digital wallet

Your [immunisation history statement](#) which lists your COVID-19 vaccinations and all other vaccinations.

[You can use our tool](#) to find the best proof for your situation. It can depend on how many doses you've had.

Your vaccination provider needs to report your vaccination information to the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) (AIR) before it will appear on your statement. It can take your vaccination provider up to 10 days to update the AIR.

International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate

The Australian Government has also announced the introduction of an upcoming internationally recognised International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate. It's part of the government's framework for how international travel will look in coming months.

Read more about the [announcement and the International COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate](#) on the Prime Minister of Australia website.

The second 266 departs WA

O 266 After 15 years of service, HMAS *Sirius* has commenced her final deployment, which will take her to South-East Asia and the south-west Pacific.

Commanding Officer *Sirius* Commander Chris Doherty said the ship's crew would conduct her final replenishment at sea before her support function to the fleet is taken over by the two new Supply-class replenishment ships.

"*Sirius* has been an enabler to the fleet and our regional partners for over 15 years, so a final deployment serving Australian and allied warships is a fitting end to her," Commander Doherty said.

Sirius entered service in the RAN on September 16, 2006. The former commercial tanker was purchased by the Australian Government in 2004 and underwent extensive modifications, including the addition of a flight deck, before being commissioned.

Sirius has the capability to replenish ships at sea by day and night, and replenish two ships at a time while also conducting simultaneous vertical replenishments via helicopter. She has transfer points for fuel, water and stores.

Sirius has served with distinction as the fleet replenishment vessel, conducting more than 740 replenishments at sea with Australian ships and a variety of foreign warships, including US aircraft carriers.

On completion of the operational phase of her current deployment, *Sirius* will hand over responsibility for replenishment and logistical support to HMAS *Supply* and Nuship *Stalwart*, which is due to enter service later this year.

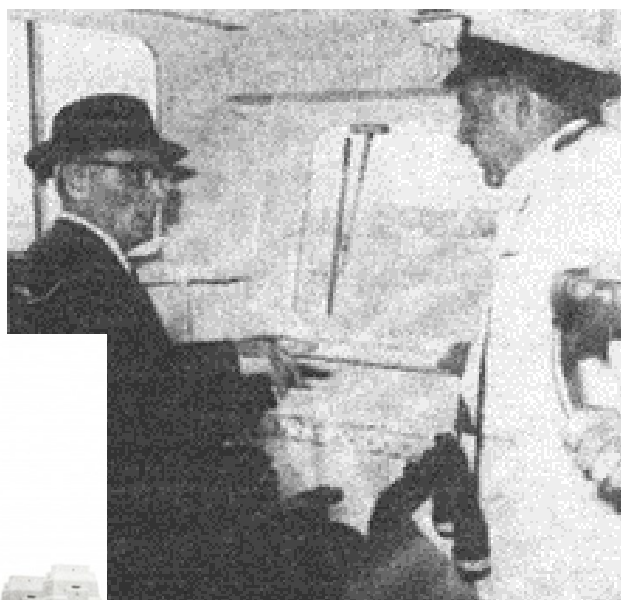
GOR 266 HMAS *Diamantina* (below) was commissioned 27 April 1945, operating in the SW Pacific in WWII, then paying off into reserve on 9 August 1946. She recommissioned on 23 June 1959, was based in Fremantle WA carrying out RAN's Oceanographic Research/Survey tasks and HMAS



HMAS Stirling Port Services personnel look on as HMAS Sirius departs Fleet Base West, Western Australia, for her final deployment.

Leeuwin's training ship for 20 years until she paid off on 29 February 1980.

Manned by Queensland Maritime Museum Association members and a RAN party of 12 serving personnel, she departed Sydney under her own power on 1 October 1980 anchoring in Moreton Bay on 3 October. Whilst at anchor, her first commanding officer CMDR M.G. Rose VRD RANR joined her for the final leg of her life. On arrival in Brisbane she was handed over to the Queensland Maritime Museum and then prepared for her exhibition in the South Brisbane Dock.



Above: Seated in the Captain's Chair, CMDR M Rose talks to Diamantina's last RAN seagoing captain LCDR Bob Burns GM RAN during the farewell cruise of Sydney Harbour.

Navy News 30 November 1979

Left: HMAS Diamantina approaching Garden Island Sydney after flying her Paying Off pennant on a final cruise around Sydney Harbour on 23 November 1979 with CMDR M Rose onboard.

Photos RAN



Value of ships' long service acknowledged



The Navy's oldest vessels, HMA Ships *Paluma* and *Mermaid*, were farewelled from service during a ceremony at HMAS Cairns at the weekend.

For more than 30 years, the survey motor launches collected hydrographic data necessary for creating products used by military, commercial and pri-

vate vessels to safely navigate the waters around Australia.

In addition to their critically important survey function, Commanding Officer *Mermaid* Lieutenant Commander Christopher Voysey said the ships also moved into operational support roles over the years.

"Since *Mermaid*'s first hydrographic operation at Bee Reef on February 26, 1990, the ship has steamed nearly 420,000 nautical miles and conducted innumerable surveys," Lieutenant Commander Voysey said.

"Surveys aren't the only function undertaken though. In February 2000, *Mermaid* and *Paluma* deployed to Bougainville Island in support of the peace monitoring group conducting Operation BEL ISI II ashore.

"Later in November that same year, the ships deployed to East Timor to support the United Nations transitional administration to East Timor operations."

More recently, the ships supported Operation Resolute, which Lieutenant Commander Voysey said showed the breadth and adaptability of the platform and crews.

As the older of the two, *Paluma* held the 'First Lady of the Fleet' title, which was passed on to HMAS *Shepparton* during the decommissioning ceremony.

Commanding Officer *Paluma* Lieutenant Commander Craig Hamilton said the title handover and ceremony were fitting and memorable moments to recognise the important legacies the ships leave behind.

"Our ships have served the Navy and region for many years and many proud personnel have served on board," Lieutenant Commander Hamilton said.

"The ceremony today and the response we've had in the lead-up to it from previous crew

members and those with an affiliation to the ships, shows the impactful role our vessels have had to so many.

"We now look forward to integrating into and helping to develop Navy's incoming maritime mine countermeasures and military survey capability through SEA1905 Phase 1."

SEA1905-1 will provide Defence with innovative and adaptive capabilities to meet the growing threat of mines, while developing maritime environmental knowledge.

The decommissioning of *Paluma* and *Mermaid* is part of the staged introduction of up to eight specialist vessels, which will have robotic, autonomous and artificial intelligence systems.

"While the future is very exciting and technology-driven, today was about our people past and present and these two robust vessels, which have served the Navy so well over the years," Lieutenant Commander Voysey said.

By Lieutenant Jessica Craig
20 September 2021

Paluma-class survey motor launch HMAS *Shepparton* II is the new First Lady of the Fleet.

The title, recognising the longest-serving commissioned ship in the fleet, was handed over to *Shepparton* at a ceremony at HMAS Cairns following the decommissioning of HMA Ships *Paluma* and *Mermaid*. Commanding Officer *Shepparton* Lieutenant Commander Andrew Shiels said the vessel was in her 31st year of commissioned service and the crew was honoured to take possession of the prized First Lady of the Fleet plaque.

By Able Seaman Emily Wain and
Able Seaman Rebecca Churches
1 October 2021

HMA Ships Paluma and Mermaid in their original colour scheme which was changed to Pusser's grey in 2002



Old salt never says never

As HMAS *Sirius* undertakes her last operational deployment during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2021 (IPE21), it could also be the end of the seagoing career of Lieutenant Commander Ric Mingramm.

At age 60 *Sirius'* maritime logistics officer is content knowing his seafaring days might be over, but is open to the chance to sail again, should the opportunity arise.

"I have an extension to work until 65, so I have another five years to serve, and I've made it clear that, in that time, I want to work operational jobs or go overseas, but we'll see," Lieutenant Commander Mingramm said.

Initially joining the Army in 1978, Lieutenant Commander Mingramm transferred to the Navy as a logistics officer in 1980, but left seven years later to pursue a career in the private sector.

"I worked my first sales job for 12 months, then a manager's position came up, and my experience with Navy helped me to land that, then things just took off from there, running big teams for national and international companies," Lieutenant Commander Mingramm said.

"I found working in sales really satisfying, but it was not dissimilar to the services.

"I only ever found myself in one position every two or so years, so, it was just like the posting cycle."

After a 30-year hiatus, Lieutenant Commander Mingramm went back to Navy, motivated by the hope of carrying out his trade as a logistics officer at sea.

"I loved my time in the Navy, being at sea and doing my job, and that's why I came back," Lieutenant Commander Mingramm said.

Commanding Officer *Sirius* Commander Christopher Doherty said he was happy to have Lieutenant Commander Mingramm as part of the crew.



Lieutenant Commander Richard Mingramm looks out from the starboard bridge wing of HMAS Sirius, as the ship departs Cam Rah Bay, Vietnam, during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2021.

Photo: Leading Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol

"Ric is a pleasure to work with. He is enthusiastic and so much fun to have around, but his technical knowledge of the supply system ensures we get everything we need to achieve our mission," Commander Doherty said.

"He is a very wise man who worked in several industries before he came back to Navy, and that shows in his day-to-day interaction with members of the crew."

During his career, Lieutenant Commander Mingramm has worked as an honorary Aide de Camp to the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Vicky Halloran, during Prince Charles' visit.

He also served as an ADF chaperone to the Western Front tour on the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, reading the ode at the Menin Gate.

But he lists working as *Sirius'* head of the ship's logistics department as one of the highlights of his career.

"I'm finally doing what I was trained to do, and it's really satisfying to know that it is enabling the capability of the ship," Lieutenant Commander Mingramm said.

*By Captain Peter March
12 October 2021*



Note.

Ric transferred to the RANR in 1986. He became a member of the NAA's Pine Rivers Sub-section in 2011. Transferring to the Brisbane Sub-section in 2013, he was very active as its President and as a Vice President on the National Council. In 2017 he went back into full time service in the RAN and was posted to Darwin. He remains a member of the Brisbane Sub-section.

Two reports provide valuable insights into veteran suicide

1 October 2021

On 29 September, two reports were published that will help the Government tackle the tragedy of suicide in the Defence and veteran community.

One was released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The other was prepared by the Interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, and tabled by the Government.

AIHW report

DVA commissions the AIHW to conduct research each year to help the Government to understand the incidence of suicide and to ensure programs and services are directed to prevent Defence and veteran suicide. This is the fourth annual update. The report is called *Serving and ex-serving ADF members who have served since 1985: suicide monitoring 2001 to 2019 report*.

This research provides DVA and the Department of Defence with an even stronger evidence base from which we can target our efforts to support those most at risk.

This year's update includes a significant expansion of the study population (from 223,000 to 373,500) and, for the first time, includes anyone with a single day of ADF service from 1 January 1985 who died by suicide between 2001 and 2019. The larger study population enables more detailed analysis, providing greater insight into the risk and protective factors for suicide within the permanent, reserve and ex-serving populations.

This update reports 1,273 deaths by suicide among all service groups between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2019.

Because the ex- population included in this latest update is significantly larger than the previous report, the number of suicides reported in this report has increased. However, the general patterns, including rates of suicide and comparisons with the general Australian population, remain similar to previous studies.

Similarly, the report's findings are consistent with previous years in terms of those groups that are considered more at-risk than the general population, for example those who discharge involuntarily on medical grounds, younger men, early leavers and those not of officer rank.

Interim National Commissioner's report

The National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention's *Preliminary Interim Report* was tabled on 29 September 2021.

When undertaking her inquiry, the Interim National Commissioner Dr Bernadette Boss CSC conducted many engagements with the Defence and veteran community, government departments, medical professionals and peak bodies. In addition, a broad assessment of previous inquiries, reports and reviews was undertaken.

The Interim National Commissioner's report provides 41 recommendations for the Government to consider. These recommendations not only highlight a number of areas where improvements could be made, but also a number of positive outcomes that have been achieved as a result of significant investment in reform and new initiatives by the Government in recent years.

Dr Boss emphasises the significance of the Veteran Centric Reform Program, the progress made by Defence and DVA in establishing the Joint Transition Authority and also the benefits we have seen for veterans from the peer support program.

We acknowledge there is still plenty of work to do to further reform and to improve the services and support available to our Defence and veteran communities. Dr Boss has provided advice on a number of areas on which she recommends we should focus.

There are a number of recommendations that require further consideration by the Government. The Government has indicated its intention that these will be examined as part of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Support

Help is available, including free, lifetime mental health care for anyone with a single day of continuous full time service in the Australian Defence Force; immediate financial assistance for those submitting mental health claims; and case management for those with complex needs.

Services that understand the military experience are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including:

- Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counseling, offering free and confidential counseling to the veteran community on 1800 011 046
- Safe Zone is available for current and former ADF personnel on 1800 142 072. Calls to Safe Zone are confidential and never recorded.

Dr Bernadette Boss CSC admitted to practice in the United Kingdom in 1992 and then in Australia in 1993. From 1996 to 2002, Boss was a legal officer in the Australian Army. Appointed ACT Magistrate 2012



Memorial for Afghanistan veterans unveiled in Brisbane

19 October 2021

Corporal Ty Fergus, of the 6th Engineer Support Regiment, who helped build the Afghanistan War Memorial Garden in Brisbane, with 42 for 42 Board President and former combat engineer, Sean Mulqueen, at the memorial's opening.

Five years of fundraising, planning, digging and planting culminated on October 16 with the opening of the Afghanistan War Memorial Garden in Brisbane. A project of the charity 42 for 42, the memorial garden is located next to Suncorp Stadium.

The project started with a vision to honour the fallen and those feeling the effects of their service in Afghanistan.

An army of volunteers joined forces to create a sanctuary where everyone can be inspired by, and learn about, the selfless and courageous sacrifice of the fallen, as well as find peace in the solitude of the memorial garden.

Forty-two plaques frame the edge of the garden – one for each of the 41 Australian service personnel who lost their lives during Operation Slipper, and an additional one representing those who have died since returning home, or who continue to carry post-war injuries. Each plaque has a QR code that visitors can scan to read the biography of the fallen.

42 for 42 Board President and former Army combat engineer, Sean Mulqueen, was lost for words when he reflected on the years of effort that led to the

opening day.

"I can't believe that we've finally done it," Mr Mulqueen said. "The garden is now open for people to use the way we envisioned it, and we're already getting emails from schools that want to take their students there. All the hard work was definitely worth it."

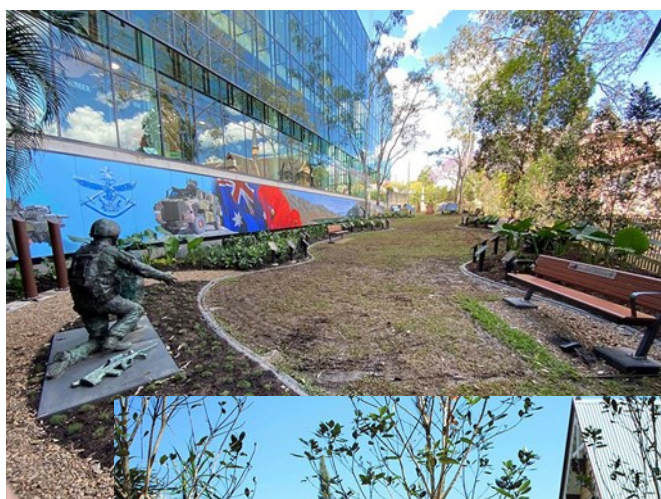
While 6th Engineer Support Regiment members have supported various fundraising activities over the years, including raising more than \$22,000 through a 42-hour challenge at the Gallipoli Barracks gym last year, it was their construction expertise and trade skills that helped bring the memorial garden to life.

Having been involved in the 42 for 42 fundraising activities for the memorial garden, Sergeant Michael Britten knew the project would require tradies and a foreman, so he introduced the team to Corporal Ty Fergus, a construction foreman at the 6th Engineer Support Regiment.

"I know it's difficult because Army receives a lot of requests for support, but Britto [Sergeant Michael Britten] and Ty [Corporal Ty Fergus] came in their own time, just when we really needed them," Mr Mulqueen said.

"They brought their construction and tradie expertise and helped us work out a few things such as drainage and setting up foundations.

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Above: Corporal Ty Fergus, of the 6th Engineer Support Regiment, who helped build the Afghanistan War Memorial Garden in Brisbane, with 42 for 42 Board President and former combat engineer, Sean Mulqueen, at the memorial's opening.

Left Mr Doug Baird, OAM, father of Corporal Cameron Stewart Baird, VC, MG, the 40th Australian soldier to be killed in Afghanistan, joins with Mr Daniel Keighran, VC, on a park bench dedicated to Corporal Baird at the opening of the Afghanistan War Memorial Garden in Brisbane.

Evolved Cape Class Patrol Boat

19 October 2021

The first of six Evolved Cape-class patrol boats was recently launched at the Austal Ships shipyard in Henderson, Western Australia.

Head Maritime Systems Rear Admiral Wendy Malcolm said the vessels would replace the Navy's Armadale-class patrol boats and would be used as interim patrol platforms until the commissioning of the Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels.

"The Evolved Cape-class patrol boats will ensure the Royal Australian Navy is well-equipped to keep Australia's borders safe," Rear Admiral Malcolm said.

"With all six Evolved Cape-class patrol boats to be built in WA, we are continuing to strengthen Australia's naval capability while supporting local jobs."

Austal has commenced construction on the remaining five boats, the first of which is expected to

The first Evolved Cape-class patrol boat in the water after being launched.

Photo: Austal

be accepted by the Navy early next year.

The 58-metre long boats are being built with a number of enhancements, improving operational capability and crew capacity compared to the vessels already operated by the Navy and Australian Border Force.

For more information on the Naval Shipbuilding Enterprise capability programs visit www1.defence.gov.au/business-industry/naval-shipbuilding/capability

More photos can be viewed on the [Defence image gallery](#).



Memorial for Afghanistan veterans unveiled in Brisbane

(Continued from page 8)

"They also brought in other Army tradies who could help the volunteers with the heavy lifting, and every time it looked like we would have yet another hurdle to jump over, they stepped up and helped us out, ensuring that everything had a professional finish."

Corporal Fergus said he enjoyed working on the project.

"We volunteered to help them with the drainage works, concreting, building the fence, installing all the plaque stands, completing the formwork for the statues and other technical tasks," Corporal Fergus said.

"We had soldiers building a place to remember soldiers; we all developed relationships with the fallen soldiers' families.

"They'd cook us lunch and watch our kids for us while we worked in the garden.

"It felt really good to be helping out – I loved it."

At the opening of the memorial garden, Corporal Fergus commanded the catafalque party, which comprised 6th Engineer Support Regiment members who had volunteered their time and trade expertise to help create the memorial garden.

Veterans, families, current serving members and community members attended the opening ceremony. As the dignitaries officially opened the garden, 800 people watched a live stream of the service from inside Suncorp Stadium and more than 150 others tuned in to the live broadcast on the 42 for 42 Facebook account.

Now open to visitors 24/7, the Afghanistan War Memorial Garden can be accessed through the grounds of the Anglican church at the end of Chippendall Street in Milton, Brisbane.

More photos can be viewed on the [Defence image gallery](#).

Text and photos; Defence



What is the Pensioner Concession Card—DVA 18 December 2020

The Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) gives you access to cheaper medicines, public transport and utilities. PCCs issued by DVA are the same as those issued by Services Australia.

Who can receive it

DVA will send you a PCC if you receive one of the following payments from us:

- [Service Pension](#)
- [Income Support Supplement](#); or
- [Age Pension](#)

If you were getting one of these payments from us but it stopped on 1 January 2017 because of changes to the assets test, you can still use your PCC. In all other cases, your eligibility for the PCC stops if your payment stops.

The card will have your name and address on it as the primary cardholder. If you have a partner or dependant, their names will also be on your card. Your partner will receive their own card if they are eligible.

What you can receive

The PCC entitles you to the following benefits from the Australian Government:

- prescription medicines at the concession rate of \$6.60 per script through the [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme](#) (PBS)
- [free prescription medicines](#) after you have spent \$316.80 on prescriptions in one calendar year
- access to cheaper out-of-hospital medical treatment once you have reached a lower [Medicare Safety Net](#) threshold
- access to [bulk billed](#) GP appointments (at the discretion of the doctor)
- [National Diabetes Services](#)
- [Hearing Services](#); and
- discounts on [mail redirection](#) from Australia Post

We do not control the concessions offered by state authorities, organisations and businesses. They decide for themselves what concessions they will give you. Concessions may include discounts on:

- property rates and water charges
- electricity and gas bills
- public transport
- motor vehicle registration fees
- drivers' licences; and
- admission to various entertainment or sporting venues

Find [concessions](#) in your state or territory.

How to get your Pensioner Concession Card

You do not need to do anything to get a PCC. If you get an income support payment from us, such as a Service Pension, Age Pension or Income Support Supplement, we will send you one automatically.

If you lose your PCC, or don't have one and think you should, you can [contact us](#).

Things you should know

- If we stop paying you an income support payment, your PCC will no longer be valid. You will need to destroy it or return it to us. You may be eligible for a [Commonwealth Seniors Health Card](#) instead.
- As long as you are eligible, we will send you a new PCC every 2 years.
- If you are in your 60s or above, find out from your state government whether you are eligible for a [Seniors Card](#). Local businesses may accept these more often than a PCC. Eligibility is different for each state and territory.

What to tell us

You should tell us if:

- your PCC is lost or stolen; or
- you change address

If you receive an income support payment, there are more things you need to tell us about.

If anything changes that could affect your entitlements, you need to let us know within 14 days (or 28 days if you receive the [Remote Area Allowance](#) or live overseas).

You need to tell us if you or your partner:

- have a change in your finances, aside from minor everyday fluctuations
- start or stop working, or your earnings change
- take leave from your employer and don't plan to go back
- start or stop getting income from somewhere, such as an income stream, a rental property or a foreign pension
- buy or sell shares or other investments
- buy or sell your home or other property
- get compensation payments we don't know about
- leave Australia, even for a short-time
- start or stop living with a partner
- lend or give away money or other assets
- move house or change your postal address
- start or stop paying rent, or change how much rent you pay
- have a dependent child who stops studying or moves out
- have someone else move in with you or move out
- move into aged care or a retirement village
- go into [respite care](#) for more than 14 days
- start or close a business
- go to prison, or get out of prison; or
- have something else change that could affect your payments

National President's Note

I don't have a specific message for this issue other than to commend the NBC to all members and to draw their attention to the very informative articles that have drawn together so well by the Editor.

Thank you Peter.

Service pension for partners

Last updated:

20 September 2021

What is a partner service pension

The service pension provides a regular income to veterans and their partners. When paid to a veteran's partner, it is called a partner service pension.

You may be able to qualify as a current or former partner, or as a widow or widower.

A service pension is an income support payment, so your income and assets affect how much you can receive. If you are partnered, we assess your combined income and assets as a couple.

Who can get it

You may qualify for a partner service pension if you are the:

- current partner of a veteran who has [qualifying service](#)
- former partner of a veteran who has qualifying service
- widow or widower of a veteran who had qualifying service.

There are other requirements depending on your situation. The following sections contain more details about who is eligible.

Current partners

You may be eligible if the veteran you are partnered to either:

- receives a [service pension](#), or is eligible to receive one
- is registered as a member of the [Pension Bonus Scheme](#) (PBS)
- **Has [qualifying service](#) but is not yet eligible for a service pension, and you have reached [Age Pension age](#).**

Who counts as a partner

We consider you to be partnered if you and the veteran either:

- are legally married and live together
- live together in a de facto relationship
- remain a couple but have to live apart due to illness.

If we need to clarify whether or not you are partnered, we consider whether you:

- think of yourselves as a couple
- share financial and household responsibilities
- do social and leisure activities together
- appear as a couple to the general community.

We may consider you to be partnered if some or all

of those factors apply. Go to [Your relationship status](#) or more details.

Age requirements for current partners

To be eligible for a partner service pension you need to be at least 60, except in some situations.

You may be eligible from age 50 if your partner either:

- receives a [disability pension](#) under the [Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986](#) (VEA) at above the general rate (AGR)
- has at least 80 [impairment points](#) under the [Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004](#) (MRCA).

The following rates of VEA disability pension count as AGR:

- [extreme disablement adjustment](#) (EDA)
- [intermediate rate](#)
- [temporary special rate](#)
- [additional disability pension for specific disabilities](#).

You may be eligible for a partner service pension at any age if one of the following applies:

- you have a [dependent child](#) or children when you apply
- your partner receives a disability pension under the VEA at the [special rate](#) (TPI)
- your partner receives or is eligible to receive a [special rate disability pension](#) (SRDP) under the MRCA.

If none of the above categories apply to you, and your partner has qualifying service but is not yet eligible for a service pension, you need to be [Age Pension age](#).

Former partners

If you have been receiving a partner service pension and your relationship with the veteran ends, your service pension will usually continue for 12 months. There are some exceptions, depending on your circumstances.

You can remain eligible for service pension indefinitely if either:

- you reach [Age Pension age](#) within 12 months of your separation
- special domestic circumstances apply.

Special domestic circumstances apply if the veteran has a mental health condition, and you or your family were in an unsafe or abusive domestic relationship before your separation. If this may apply to you, [contact us](#).

If the above points do not apply, you will stop being eligible for partner service pension 12 months after the date of your separation.

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Service pension for partners

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If you enter a new relationship, you will stop being eligible for partner service pension immediately. The only exception is if you qualify as the current partner of a veteran in your new relationship. To keep receiving service pension, your combined income and assets as a couple would need to be below the cut-off limits.

If you weren't receiving a partner service pension at the time of your separation, you can apply for one as a former partner. The age requirements are the same as for current partners. This means your eligibility may depend on which payment or payments your former partner receives.

What to do if your relationship ends

If you become single, you need to let us know so we can pay you correctly. We will need to remove your partner's income and assets from your assessment. We will also need to change your pension to the single rate.

You may need to give us new bank account details to pay your pension into. If you have authorised your partner to communicate with us on your behalf, we can update your preferences to remove this authority.

For more information about how your relationship status affects your payments, visit Your relationship status.

Counselling and support

If you or someone else is in crisis and needs immediate help, please call:

- Triple zero (000) if you feel like you may hurt yourself or someone else
- Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling on 1800 011 046
- ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line on 1800 628 036
- Lifeline Australia on 13 11 14
- 1800RESPECT, National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service on 1800 737 732.

Find more options at Receive urgent help and support.

In some situations, we may be able to pay you a crisis payment.

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling is a free and confidential 24-hour service for current and ex-serving ADF members and their families. Call 1800 011 046 or visit their website to get support or find out more.

If you are no longer eligible for a partner service pension but need financial support, contact Services Australia to find out about Centrelink payments.

Legal and financial advice

For legal advice, you can contact Legal Aid in your state.

You can also contact legaladvice.com.au, an independent organisation.

A Financial Information Service is available through Services Australia to help you make informed decisions about your finances.

Widows and widowers

If you were receiving a partner service pension immediately before the veteran's death, you continue to be eligible regardless of your age.

If we grant you a war widow(er)'s pension, you will no longer be eligible for a service pension but you may receive an income support supplement instead.

If you were not receiving a partner service pension at the time of the veteran's death, you can apply for one as a widow or widower.

You may be eligible if the veteran either:

- was receiving, or was eligible to receive, a service pension
- was registered as a member of the Pension Bonus Scheme (PBS)
- had qualifying service, and you have reached Age Pension age
- had made a claim for service pension which would have been granted if they had not died.

If you enter a new relationship, you will stop being eligible for partner service pension immediately. The only exception is if you qualify as the current partner of a veteran in your new relationship. To keep receiving service pension, your combined income and assets as a couple would need to be below the cut-off limits.

Age requirements as a widow or widower

You may be eligible from age 60 if, before the veteran's death, you either:

- were receiving a social security pension
- had lodged a claim for partner service pension
- were registered as a member of the PBS.

If you currently have a dependent child, you can apply as a widowed partner at any age.

In all other circumstances, you need to have reached Age Pension age.

What to do if you become widowed

When someone receiving a service pension dies, we may pay a bereavement payment to their surviving partner or estate. In some situations, we may also help with the cost of a funeral. Visit Bereavement payments for more information.

It is important to notify us of the death as soon as possible, so we can make sure your payments are correct. A family member, friend, representative or funeral director can notify us.

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Exchange strengthens regional partnerships

Cook Islands, Fiji and Singapore have become the first three nations to successfully complete the inaugural Sea Training Group – Defence Cooperation Program (STG-DCP) non-reciprocal exchange.

The exchange was established in 2018 primarily to support the introduction into service and training of the Guardian-class patrol boats as part of the Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP).

Beginning earlier this year, the three-month program at *HMAS Stirling* in Western Australia invited three partner nations from across the Indo-Pacific to send a participant to embed with the Australian STG-DCP team.

These members, alongside their Australian counterparts, will be responsible for training other participant Pacific nations.

The non-reciprocal exchange program supports Navy's mission to nurture and strengthen its alliances and regional partnerships.

It allows Australia to provide partner nations with opportunities to enhance their maritime skills and provide them with the knowledge and experience to be-

come sea trainers, taking the critical capability back to their respective countries.

Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Samoa, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Palau, Kiribati and Vanuatu are among the nations which have already received the Guardian-class patrol boats under the PMSP.

Chief Petty Officer Timoci Tokaru, Republic of Fiji Navy, said it was an honour to be the first participant from Fiji in the program that would allow him to take valuable lessons back to his workplace.

"Throughout the program, I was involved in the delivery of training to the crews of Vanuatu's RVS *Takuare* and to Kiribati's RKS *Teanoai* II. It was very professionally rewarding and enabled me to refine my skills as an instructor and a mariner," CPO Tokaru said.

"I was also fortunate to be able to work side-by-side with sea trainers from Australia, Singapore and the Cook Islands."

The latest exchange rotation began this month with participants from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea

*By Sub Lieutenant Nancy Cotton
29 September 2021*

Service pension for partners

(Continued from page 12)

If you become widowed while receiving a partner service pension, your payments will change to the single rate.

Depending on the circumstances, we may automatically grant you a [war widow\(er\)'s pension](#) and replace your partner service pension with an [in-come support supplement](#). If this does not happen automatically and you believe the veteran's death was related to their service, you can apply for a war widow(er)'s pension. Go to [Pension for orphans and war widow\(er\)s](#) for details.

Our [Planning ahead kit](#) can help you and your family prepare for bereavement.

You can also contact [Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling](#) for support.

How to apply

You can apply for a partner service pension online through [MyService](#).

Using MyService means:

- it is simpler and faster to submit your claim
- you don't need to send us [proof of identity](#) documents
- we can access the information we need quickly
- there is no need to wait for documents through the post.

Find out how to [register for MyService](#). If you need help to register, call us on [1800 VETERAN](#) (1800 838 372). To access MyService, sign in to [MyGov](#).

If you prefer to use paper forms, [contact us](#) and we

can send you the ones you need. There may be different forms to complete depending on your circumstances.

You can download the following forms:

- [D0504 Claim for service pension by a partner, a former partner or widow or widower part A – eligibility](#)
- [D0648 Claim for service pension or income support supplement part B – income and assets](#)
- [D0503-4B About claiming service pension](#)

Go to [Forms](#) to find others you may need.

Get help with your claim

Many ex-service organisations have advocates who are trained to help you submit your claim. You can use the [Advocate Register](#) to find one near you.

You can also [contact us](#) if you have questions about applying.

Transferring from another payment

If you are receiving a Centrelink payment from [Services Australia](#) and become partnered to a veteran, you will need to notify Services Australia. If your partner receives a service pension, they will need to [notify us](#).

You may be eligible for a partner service pension, which would replace your Centrelink payment. Go to [Current partners](#) for details about who is eligible.

We will need information about your combined income and assets as a couple. This is regardless of whether you actually share your finances. Go to [Income and assets](#) for more information.

New uniform being rolled out

Navy personnel in North Queensland and the Northern Territory are the first to be issued the new maritime multi-cam pattern uniform (MMPU).

The MMPU uniform replaces the disruptive pattern Navy uniform (DPNU), which has been in service for the past 12 years.

Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Michael Noonan said it was great to see the roll-out of the new uniform.

"Our people are at the forefront of what our Navy achieves, and we rely on our people to be able to perform at their best in a variety of challenging environments," Vice Admiral Noonan said.

"It's important that their kit is fit-for-purpose and evolves to meet the needs of our fleet and the environments that we operate in.

"The new MMPU is based on design feedback directly from our sailors and will provide our people with greater utility and comfort to perform the important work they do in support of our nation.

"I look forward to seeing our members in Darwin and Cairns kitted out in the MMPU, providing them with greater comfort as we move into this summer season."

The roll-out of the MMPU across Navy is scheduled to take place progressively across states and be completed late next year.

The new lighter-weight contemporary uniform uses the latest technology, enhancing the safety and comfort of members wearing it.

It brings uniformity across Defence as it features the familiar design of the Australian multi-cam camouflage uniform and the Air Force general purpose uniform, but retains the maritime grey tones and a few key differences unique to Navy requirements.

It took several years to undertake research and trial the MMPU before the design was finalised.



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

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

The contribution of Australian industry, working in collaboration with the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, was critical to the development of the uniform.

The garments are manufactured in Australia by Australian Defence Apparel in Bendigo and Melbourne, Victoria, and Workwear Group in Melbourne, Victoria, using fabric manufactured by Bruck Textiles in Wangaratta, Victoria.

Two versions of the MMPU are available, depending on the roles and duties of personnel.

The flame-resistant option, featuring reflective strips, meets work, health and safety regulations for members on sea-going duties and shore-based roles requiring a higher level of protection.

After Darwin and Cairns, the MMPU will be rolled out to WA towards the end of the first quarter of next year.

More photos can be viewed on the [Defence image gallery](#).