



National Bosun's Call



Vol 5 No 10

Once Navy, Always Navy

November 2023

Remembrance Day—Australian War Memorial Canberra



Remembrance Day Ceremony at the Australian War memorial Canberra on 11 November 2023. Wreaths laid before the Remembrance Stone were laid the previous day by the Diplomatic Corps. The Governor General and others laid their respective wreaths on the far side of the Remembrance Stone

Photos: Flickr



Above: NAA National Patron His Excellency Governor General The Hon General David Hurley AC DSC and Her Excellency Mrs Linda Hurley laying a Wreath

Right: NAA National President David Manolas with AIR CDRE Peter McDermott AM for Air Force Association laying their wreaths



Newsletter of the
Naval Association of Australia

Veterans to receive better access to a GP

Wednesday, 1 November 2023

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

The Federal Government is committed to ensuring the veteran community is provided with the best possible services and supports.

With increasing costs of living and rising costs for business, the veteran community has told us they are finding it harder to find GPs who will treat them without out of pocket costs.

That changes today.

From today it will be easier to access a GP for more than 276,000 Australian veterans.

In line with the tripling of the bill billing incentive, the Federal Government is investing \$33.3 million to triple the Veteran Access Payment (VAP) for certain GP services.

The VAP is an incentive payment GPs receive, in addition to the Medicare rebate, when treating veterans who hold a DVA Gold or White Card.

The tripling of this payment will help to ensure GPs continue to service veterans with no out of pocket costs.

These changes will see payment for a GP consultation of up to 20 minutes (Level B) increase by

more than \$16 in metropolitan areas and more than \$31 in the most remote areas of Australia.

Payments apply to general face-to-face and tele-health GP consultations, including home visits for people who are homebound, and consultations in residential aged-care facilities.

In an effort to further reduce the burden on medical practitioners, a review is currently underway to simplify and consolidate the Department of Veterans' Affairs forms that medical professionals are required to complete.

The first package of the 19 most frequently used forms has been consolidated down to 7, while a process is underway to significantly reduce the remaining 54 forms by mid-2024.

Who will benefit?

This measure will incentivise GPs to treat the more than 276,000 veterans and eligible dependents who hold Veteran White or Gold Cards.

Media contacts

- Stephanie Mathews (Minister Keogh's Office): 0407 034 485
- DVA Media: media.team@dva.gov.au

From 1 November 2023, GPs who treat Veteran Card holders will receive increased VAP fees: Modified Monash category	VAP as at 1 July 2023 (pre 1 Nov indexation)	VAP as at 1 November 2023
1 – metropolitan areas	\$8.05	\$24.25
2 – regional centres	\$12.20	\$36.90
3-4 – large and medium rural towns	\$12.95	\$39.20
5 – small rural towns	\$13.80	\$41.65
6 – remote communities	\$14.55	\$43.95
7 – very remote communities	\$15.45	\$46.65

Note: Indexation of 0.5 percent applied on 1 November ahead of VAP increase

The Naval Association of Australia Inc

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



Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

16 October 2023

The Chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has thanked past and present Defence members and their loved ones for their important contribution to the inquiry following the closure of submissions.

The Royal Commission received 5,889 submissions during its 27-month public consultation period – including 391 (~7%) received in the final 24 hours up until midnight on Friday (13 October 2023).

About 80% of submissions were from serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel, and their families and friends.

The five most common themes identified in submissions were –

- suicide and suicidal behaviour
- ADF culture, governance and accountability
- mental illness
- Department of Veterans' Affairs claims and compensation, and
- ADF mental health support and responses

Chair of the Royal Commission, Nick Kaldas, thanked everyone who made a submission to the landmark inquiry.

"This Royal Commission has been greatly assisted by the thousands of submissions that it has received," Commissioner Kaldas said. "To everyone who shared your deeply personal stories with us, thank you."

"The experiences you've shared have shone a bright light on the cultural and systemic issues that are failing serving and ex-serving ADF members, and their families – as well as the risk and protective factors for suicide and suicidality."

The final number of submissions could be higher given the Royal Commission will continue to accept submissions by mail which are postmarked prior to Friday's closing date, while a small number of people have had their requests for a time extension granted after careful consideration of their specific circumstances.

The Royal Commission will continue to read and analyse all submissions over the coming months as it works towards its final report – and developing recommendations to Government which are realistic, fit-for-purpose and implementable.

Commissioner Kaldas reiterated that the Royal Commission is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address a national crisis: the high rates of suicide and suicidal behaviour in Australia's military community.

"We strongly urge Government and the leadership of the ADF, Defence and DVA to see this inquiry as an opportunity to drive the long overdue change that is required to ensure past and present personnel, and their families, have the support they need and deserve – and to end the senseless loss of life," he said.

What happens after submissions close?

After submissions close, the work of the Royal Commission continues. We will continue to read and carefully consider submissions. The Commissioners are continuing to hold private sessions with individuals who have lived experience of suicide. We will continue to meet with community members, consult with stakeholders, conduct research, hold workshops and roundtables, and evaluate policy. We will also release a report on the body to follow the Royal Commission.

The insights that we have gathered over the course of our three-year inquiry will come together to inform our final report.

The support of the Defence and veteran community is now vitally important, and we encourage people to continue to advocate to Government for change. You can support the Commission's work by raising awareness about the inquiry, and, when the time comes, reading our final report, considering the recommendations, and using your voice to compel Government to act so we can achieve long-lasting and meaningful change for the Defence and veteran community.

As the highest form of public inquiry, the Royal Commission focuses its inquiry on systemic issues that may be contributing to Defence and veteran suicide.

The Commission will be able to make recommendations about any policy, legislative, administrative or structural reforms.

The Royal Commission will be informed by individual stories and experiences but it cannot resolve individual disputes. It cannot fix or award compensation or make orders requiring a party to a dispute to take or not take any action.



Joint Communiqué - Veterans' Ministerial Council

6 October 2023

The Hon Matt Keogh MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

Federal, State and Territory Ministers responsible for veterans' matters met in Perth today, committing to strengthening national collaboration on the services and supports available for veterans and their families.

The Veterans' Ministerial Council was joined by the United Kingdom Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, the Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP, who is currently visiting Australia. Minister Mercer provided an update on matters of importance to UK veterans and families and shared insights into the UK veteran landscape.

Harmonisation of veteran recognition and concessions

Given the transient nature of defence service and the probability of a veteran family relocating following service, Ministers acknowledged the need for clearer and more consistent veteran concession arrangements. Ministers discussed opportunities for national harmonisation and mutual recognition of relevant identification documents, such as concession cards. Ministers agreed to work collaboratively towards this goal, recognising the need to improve collaboration in support of currently serving defence personnel and families who frequently move around the country.

Similarly, Ministers acknowledged this transient lifestyle had an impact on Defence and veteran families, particularly children. They considered the merits of including a 'Defence and/or Veteran Family' identifier on school enrolment forms to help identify the children of current and former Australian Defence Force personnel and other strategies to simplify access to education. This initiative is currently being progressed in the ACT and South Australia. Ministers noted the potential benefits of this initiative, intended to improve the school based supports for children from veteran families. Ministers agreed to explore this in their relevant jurisdictions.

Veteran Mental Health Support

The Council agreed that the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has made it abundantly clear that more needs to be done to support the mental health and wellbeing of Defence personnel, veterans and families. The Council was briefed on the development of the inaugural joint Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy; progress of the Veterans' and

Families' Hubs program; the recently released Veteran Transition Strategy; and the implementation of the recommendations of the Interim Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

With this commitment to improving mental health outcomes for Australian veterans and families, Ministers discussed the desirability of a national approach to psychiatric assistance dog accreditation and agreed to work together to progress national standards.

Research underway

Representatives from the Western Australian and South Australian Governments delivered a presentation on the work they are doing to better support and understand veterans in the corrective services system. The Council discussed the need to improve data collection relating to veterans' incarceration and homelessness, with research into these issues currently underway.

Ministerial attendees

- *Australian Government (Chair): Matt Keogh MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel*
- *Australian Capital Territory: Ms Emma Davidson MLA*
- *New South Wales: The Hon. David Harris MP (virtual)*
- *Northern Territory: The Hon Paul Kirby MLA (virtual)*
- *Queensland: Mr Bart Mellish MP*
- *Tasmania: The Hon. Guy Barnett MP (virtual)*
- *Victoria: The Hon. Natalie Suleyman MP*
- *Western Australia: The Hon. Paul Papalia MLA*
- *Guest: United Kingdom Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, the Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP*

Media contact

Stephanie Mathews | [0407 034 485](tel:0407034485)

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling provides 24/7 free confidential crisis support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046) or the [Open Arms website](#). **Safe Zone Support** provides anonymous counselling on [1800 142 072](tel:1800142072). **Defence All-Hours Support Line** provides support for ADF personnel on [1800 628 036](tel:1800628036) or the [Defence Health Portal](#). **Defence Member and Family Helpline** provides support for Defence families on [1800 624 608](tel:1800624608)



National President's Summary of the National Council Meeting Launceston 8 November 2023

The National Council (NC) met on Wed 8 Nov 23, in Launceston. We are all much indebted to Gordon Fuller, Eileen Calway, Brian Ellis and the members of the NAA Tasmania Section, for their warm and very generous hospitality. It was a thoroughly enjoyable visit to Launceston and, to be in their company. Thank you all.

Much was discussed at the Meeting and action undertaken in regard to a number of issues.

Firstly: A National Council Sub-Committee, comprising the National Vice President Blue, National Membership Registrar and the South Australia Section President has been established to progress a proposal to determine the worth and practicalities of rationalising the array of membership options presently in place within the Association. It is seen that the different forms of membership entitle a member to practically (if not, exactly) the same status and participation opportunities and/or entitlements. This is causing confusion within the Sections and Sub-Sections and has been cited by a number of recent newly accepted members into the Association, as being very confusing and off-putting in their efforts to navigate the NAA 'Joining Process'. The aim is for the designated Sub-Committee to submit their recommendations as to possibly combining some types of membership, so that this matter may be considered at the next AGM, presently scheduled for May 2024.

Secondly, in regard to another matter: Whilst a format is available in the NAA By-Laws ie, the 'Remembrance Ritual for use at the Funeral of a Deceased Member' (incorporating words from the NAA Constitution), to assist members and/or their loved ones at the time of our 'crossing-the-bar', assistance is now being sought from within the National Council to review the existing text to determine if any changes beyond including the 'NAA Ode to The Veteran', are warranted. A Sub-committee comprising the National Vice President Whit and the Victoria Section President, has been established to review the existing Ritual Format and is scheduled to report to the National Council at the 2024 AGM. Whatever the outcome, members are assured the aim **IS NOT to establish an INSTRUCTION, but rather, to provide 'A Guide' to assist members and/or their loved ones when planning for/or at the**



time when we each 'Cross the Bar', wherein we and our loved ones will have options from which to choose when composing a preferred funeral order-of-service.

There is also a proposal from the NAA NSW Section, that the periods of required cumulative number of years Full Membership of the Naval Association of Australia for award of Long Service Certificates be reduced from the current prescribed requirements of 15, 30, 45 and 60 years to 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of cumulative service. This proposal was welcomed and after some discussion, it will be refined by the NSW Section before being submitted for consideration at the forthcoming AGM.

It is anticipated the Minutes of the NC November 2023 Meeting will be distributed shortly to Section Presidents for the information of their respective membership.

Yours aye,

David Manolas

Kahlil Fegan DSC AM appointed as Repatriation Commissioner

Friday, 15 September 2023

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister for Defence Personnel

Mr Kahlil Fegan DSC AM has been appointed as Australia's new Repatriation Commissioner.

Son of a war widow and a Vietnam War veteran, Kahlil has served with distinction for over 30 years in the Australian Defence Force and will continue to serve the Defence and veteran community in the next chapter of his career.

Kahlil brings a lifetime of lived experience to the role, following decades in senior leadership roles in Defence, including as Commander of the 3rd Combat Brigade in Townsville.

Kahlil has forged strong working relationships and collaboration across Government and with the veteran community and has demonstrated strong personal commitment to improving the lives of Defence personnel, veterans and families.

His compassion for others gives me no doubt that he will do an outstanding job as the Repatriation Commissioner.

He has dedicated his life to the service of our nation, and he will now serve those who served alongside him.

The Repatriation Commissioner role is a member of both the Repatriation Commission and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission. This will see Kahlil play a critical role in engaging with and representing veterans to ensure services delivered through the Department of Veterans' Affairs are best targeted and most effective.

With the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide due to hand down its recommendations next year, Kahlil's deep understanding of the experience of veterans and their families has equipped him to help shape how we best support the veteran community moving forward.

Kahlil Fegan's appointment follows the retirement of Mr Don Spinks AM as the Repatriation Commissioner in July 2023.

I would like to thank Don for his service to veterans and their families since 2019, particularly through his engagement with the young veteran community. It's this experience that's helped improve the Department of Veterans' Affairs understanding of the needs of veterans and families. I also thank Glen Ferrarotto for his work in filling this role in the intervening period.

More information can be found on [the Department of Veterans' Affairs' website](#).



DVA Biographical Note

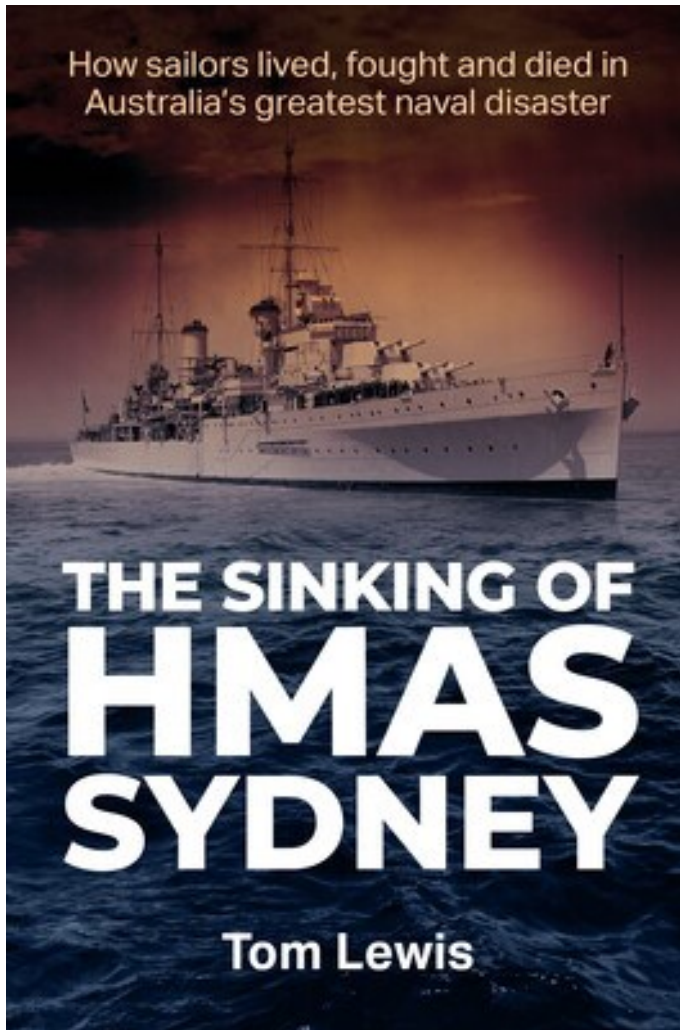
Mr Kahlil Fegan DSC AM was appointed as Australia's Repatriation Commissioner on 15 September 2023.

"We owe much to those who have dedicated their lives to the service of our nation. And for me, there is no greater calling than to serve and support them."

Kahlil is the son of a Vietnam War veteran and his mother is a war widow supported by DVA. He followed his father into the Australian Army and served for almost 34 years leading and managing people and supporting families. His last appointment was a three-year tenure as the Commander of the 3rd Combat Brigade in Townsville.

Kahlil served on multiple operational deployments and has led multi-national teams including the accomplished Mentoring Task Force – 4 in Afghanistan, and the Divisional Coalition Plans team responsible for the planning that assisted in the 2017 successful recapture of Mosul in Iraq.

Other high-profile roles include his three-year command of the 8/9th Battalion and appointments as a senior infantry instructor to the Canadian Military Forces, as the personal Policy Officer to the Chief of the Defence Force, as the Chief of Staff of the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters and later as Chief of Staff to the Chief of Army.



- **Subtitle:** How Sailors lived, fought and died in Australia's greatest naval disaster
- **Format:** PaperBack
- **Category:** [History](#), [Wars](#)
- **Subjects:** [History](#), [Military History](#), [Second World War](#), [History / Military / Land Forces](#), [History / Military / Strategy](#)
- Publisher: Big Sky Publishing (November 1, 2023)
- ISBN13: 9781923004320
- **Pages:** 540
- LIST PRICE: AU\$ 32.99 / NZ\$ 37.99
- PRICE MAY VARY BY RETAILER

HMAS Sydney was the pride of the fleet during the Second World War. A light cruiser and one of Australia's main combat vessels.

On the 19th November 1941, off the coast of Western Australia, The Sydney engaged in a fierce and bloody battle with the German raider Kormoran. Following this action, The Sydney failed to return to port.

An extensive search and rescue carried out, but the warship had disappeared with all 645 men on board. Whilst the battle lasted little more than an hour, this single ship engagement remains Australia's greatest naval disaster.

More Australian servicemen died in the battle between the German raider Kormoran and the

light cruiser HMAS Sydney than those who perished in the Vietnam War.

It was not until 2008 that the wreck was discovered. The passage of time between the sinking and the discovery led to numerous mystery and conspiracy theories, all of which started replacing the truth. Now, with an explanation of how those on board lived, fought, and died, this book tells the full story.

Exercise BERSAMA LIMA 2023

3 November 2023

The Australian Defence Force deployed approximately 800 personnel to participate in the annual Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) Exercise BERSAMA LIMA 2023 (BL23) in Malaysia. HMAS Brisbane was part of that contingent.

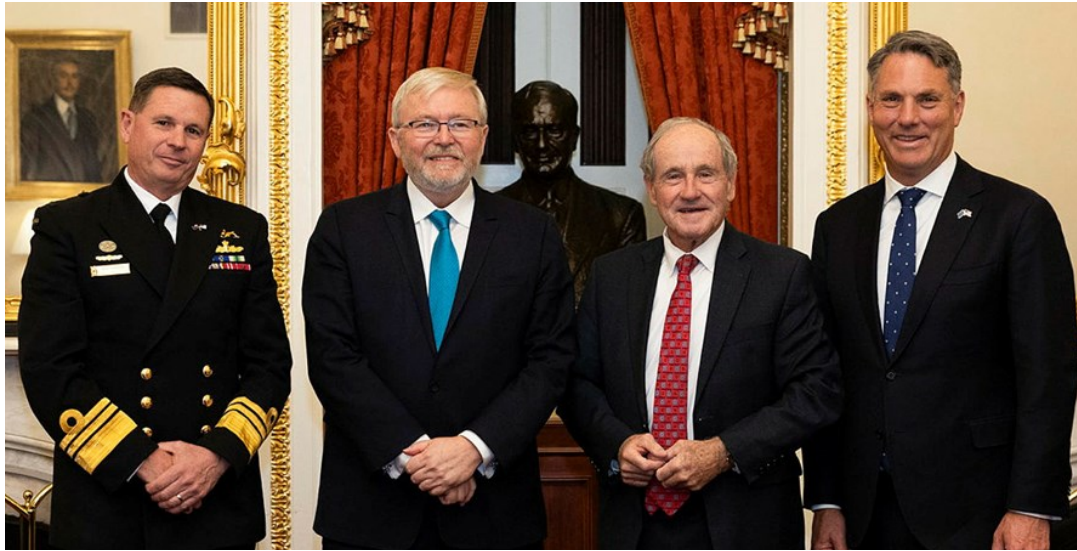
BL23 is designed to exercise the militaries of FPDA nations Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom in combined joint operations in a simulated multi-threat environment to enhance our interoperability and strengthen professional relationships.



HMAS Brisbane (left) and HMNZS Te Mana (right) conduct a replenishment at sea with HMNZS Aotearoa

Photo: LSA Belinda Cole

Active Top Navy Brass



From left, Chief of the Royal Australian Navy Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, AO, RAN, Ambassador to Australia for the United States of America Kevin Rudd, Deputy Prime Minister, United States for Idaho, Senator Jim Risch and Minister for Defence, the Hon Richard Marles MP, in Washington D.C. on 1 November 23

Photo: Kym Smith

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, the Hon Richard Marles MP, travelled to the United States and United Kingdom from 30 October to 5 November 2023 to meet with counterparts to discuss shared security objectives and progress the Pathway for Australia's acquisition of conventionally-armed nuclear-powered AUKUS submarines. In the US, the Deputy Prime Minister met with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, US Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, members of Congress and Defence industry representatives.

Indo-Pacific Conference 2023



Above:: Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, AO, RAN, meets First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff of the Royal Navy, Admiral Sir Ben Key at the Indo-Pacific Sea Power Conference, Sydney, 2023.

Photo POIS Jake Badior

Right: Commander Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Chris Smith, AM, CSM, RAN, joins Commander, Submarine Force, United States Pacific Fleet, Rear Admiral Richard Seif at the Indo Pacific 23 conference in Sydney, Australia.

Photo: LEUT Brendan Trembath

Indo Pacific 23 conference ran from 7-9 November 2023 and is the largest conference of its kind in the southern hemisphere. The Australian government-initiated conference draws together naval and maritime security experts from across the world. This year's conference will explore the theme 'Fleet 2035: Sea Power and the Future of Maritime Warfare; to encourage critical thinking about the role of sea power now and into the future.



The Navy and Shipbuilding Careers Expo

The Navy and Shipbuilding Careers Expo was conducted over three days in South Australia. Held in Outer Harbour, Adelaide the Expo included opportunities for school visits, future Defence candidates and the general public to experience what the Navy has to offer. Ship and submarine tours, simulators and Navy personnel were all available for the public to get a sense of Navy life



Above: Premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskas MP, crosses the gangway of HMAS Dechaineux with his son, Jack, and Deputy Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley, CSC, RAN, during the South Australian Navy and Shipbuilding Careers Expo held in Outer Harbour, Adelaide



Left: Deputy Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley, CSC, RAN, meets with Commanding Officer of HMAS Warramunga, Commander Jennifer Graham, RAN, during the South Australian Navy and Shipbuilding Careers Expo

Photos: POIS Christopher Szumlanski

Droggie Symposium in Darwin

On the 18th of October 2023, HMAS Leeuwin hosted an official luncheon while alongside Fort Hill Wharf, Darwin, NT. Among the invited guest were representatives from the Indonesian Hydrographic Survey (Pushidrosal) and the Australian Hydrographic Office. HMAS Leeuwin has worked closely with Indonesian Navy ship KRI Spica during a coordinated Joint Hydrographic Survey exercise between Australia and Indonesia. A symposium was also held at Larakeyah Defence Precinct and facilitated by the Maritime Geospatial Branch. During the survey exercise both navies collected seabed data in their respective Exclusive Economic Zones. The goal of the Joint Hydrographic Survey and symposium was to encourage and foster professional development and learning between the Royal Australian Navy and the Indonesian Navy



Above: Indonesian Navy officer Commodore Yudi Cahyadi presents Hydrographer of Australia, Director General Maritime Geospatial, Commodore Robyn Phillips RAN with a gift onboard HMAS Leeuwin alongside Fort Hill Wharf, Darwin, NT.

Photo: POIS Leo Baumgartner

Achieving goals personally and professionally

26 October 2023

Seaman Vimbayi Hakutangwi is hoping to inspire others, particularly young women, to pursue a career in Defence and show it doesn't have to come at the expense of achieving personal goals.

Enlisted through the ADF Gap Year Navy program, Seaman Hakutangwi is currently balancing her ambitions of becoming a clearance diver with a 'passion for fashion', competing as a finalist in the Miss Universe Australia competition.

Seaman Hakutangwi was born in Zimbabwe, came to Australia as an unaccompanied minor in 2009 and was brought up in Perth by a single mother.

It was her passion for challenging herself that drew her to a career in Defence.

"When I initially began looking into a career with Defence, I had ambitions to become a submariner," she said.

"But as I researched more roles, I became drawn to the role of a cryptologic linguist and clearance diver.

"I recall someone at Defence Force Recruiting suggest that I enlist through the ADF Gap Year as this would allow me to explore these different roles without committing blindly."

From the beginning of this year, Seaman Hakutangwi has been posted to Clearance Diving Team Four (AUSCDT Team Four) for work experience, witnessing first-hand the daily activities of one of Navy's most elite units.

"The Gap Year has provided me with invaluable perspectives on the various roles and is especially beneficial for those who are fresh out of school or having trouble deciding on a specific role."

"It is truly inspiring to see how they handle challenging and high-pressure situations with professionalism and precision," she said.

"Working alongside them has taught me the importance of teamwork, attention to detail and staying calm under pressure. It has been an invaluable experience that has greatly enriched my understanding of the Navy and its tenacious personnel

"I have been able to make lifelong friends and have met an extensive range of mentors of differing ranks, who have provided me with guidance in making the right career choice no matter what path I choose to take. I have never felt alone with their consistent support."

While training to become a clearance diver would be more than enough to keep most people busy, Seaman Hakutangwi also finds time to indulge her passion for dancing, surfing, travelling and competitive netball.

It was through a netball friend that she became aware of the Miss Universe Australia competition.

"I saw it as an incredible opportunity to showcase my skills, represent my country and empower women to dare to have a career whilst still pursuing personal dreams and aspirations," she said.

"The journey to competing in Miss Universe Australia has been a whirlwind of excitement, hard work and personal growth. I have made lifelong friends from all over Australia and had the opportunity to travel to Vietnam with them for our national finalists trip. The memories I have created will always hold a special place in my heart."

Seaman Hakutangwi said she hoped her achievements would inspire more young women to pursue a career in Defence, showing they can strive to achieve their personal goals regardless of profession.

"At first, I thought balancing my career and personal aspirations would be a daunting challenge. However, over the past eight months, I have experienced nothing but immense support and flexibility from both sides," she said.

"Personnel from AUSCDT Team Four even went the extra mile to come to the Miss West Coast State Final. The support I have received from the Defence community has definitely surpassed my expectations. I saw it as an incredible

(Continued on page 11)



Seaman Gap Year Vimbayi Hakutangwi with a dive helmet at HMAS Stirling, Western Australia.

Photo: ABIS Rikki-Lea Phillips

Achieving goals personally and professionally

(Continued from page 10)

ble opportunity to showcase my skills, represent my country and empower women to dare to have a career whilst still pursuing personal dreams and aspirations."

ADF Gap Year Navy Officer in Charge Lieutenant JD Byrne commended Seaman Hakutangwi for her achievements. "I am thrilled that we have the capacity in Navy and the Gap Year Program to support members like Seaman Hakutangwi as they strive to achieve their personal goals. She is an inspirational member whose hard work and dedication has resulted in her achieving outstanding results through the Miss Universe competition. The benefits of having goals outside of the RAN can greatly add to achievements at work, and striking the balance is important," Lieutenant Byrne said.

AUSCDT Team Four Commanding Officer Lieutenant Commander William Thomas said Seaman Hakutangwi is already making a name for herself in the team. "We have enjoyed the way Vim has integrated seamlessly into our team, even taking on rates on the dive site that shows her motivation to strive to be her best self. It also shows that young women like her are more than capable of taking on responsibilities that they may have never imagined possible. She's been an absolute asset to the team and we know she will continue to prosper. She is an inspirational member whose hard work and dedication has resulted in her achieving outstanding results through the Miss Universe competition. The benefits of having goals outside of the RAN can greatly add to achievements at work, and striking the balance is important."

Not one to rest on her laurels, Seaman Hakutangwi is looking ahead to what is sure to be a successful and inspiring career in Defence.

"My aspiration is to become a clearance diver. I am working towards that goal by planning to take the ADF Scuba Air Course later this year in September, followed by the clearance diver aptitude assessment testing next year in May," she said.

"In the long run, I hope to commission and continue my Bachelor of Arts degree, double majoring in journalism and international relations. I believe this combination will allow me to make a positive impact and contribute greatly to the field.



Seaman Vimbayi Hakutangwi recently competed as a finalist in the Miss Universe Australia competition. Seaman Hakutangwi is currently balancing her ambitions of becoming a Clearance Diver with a "passion for fashion" and competing as a finalist in the Miss Universe Australia competition

Photo: Supplied to Defence

"The Gap Year has provided me with invaluable perspectives on the various roles and is especially beneficial for those who are fresh out of school or having trouble deciding on a specific role.

"The ability to explore different options and gain exposure to a wide range of experiences is priceless. I could not be more fortunate to have chosen this path to begin my career within the Navy.

By Richard Wilkins



HMAS Stirling—2022

Collaboration is key



Left: Commander Fleet Aviation Arm Commodore David Frost presents the 2022 McNichol Trophy to then Seaman Joshua Williams (left) and Commanding Officer 723 Squadron Commander Samuel Dale during a gathering at 723 Squadron, HMAS Albatross.

Photos: Petty Officer Peter Thompson

Each element of the enterprise contributes to the overall outcome, and the alignment and collaboration across the group was recognised during the celebration.

Boeing Defence Australia's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Sustainment Operations Amy List appreciated the work conducted across the

3 November 2023

For the past two years, 723 Squadron – Joint Helicopter School has increased the output of trained aircrew by 50 per cent, increasing the number of graduations per year and setting new monthly flying records on multiple occasions.

723 Squadron and all elements of the helicopter aircrew training system came together at HMAS Albatross recently to celebrate this achievement.

It attracted high-profile attention, with leadership representatives of Navy and Boeing Defence Australia attending to congratulate the team that made it happen.

723 Squadron delivers helicopter training to Navy's and Army's aspiring aircrew on the EC-135 training helicopter.

The squadron works very closely with, and is well-supported by, Boeing Defence Australia, Thales and Capability Acquisition & Sustainment Group.

helicopter aircrew training system enterprise. "We are always hearing awesome things about the team in Nowra. What is being done here is truly monumental and everyone who has taken part should be very proud of the capability provided by this unit," she said.

Commander Fleet Aviation Arm Commodore David Frost said the collaboration between ADF and industry partners was vital to meet ADF requirements.

"723 Squadron and its partners are critical to delivering warfighters to both Army and Navy," Commodore Frost said.

723 Squadron was also presented with the 2022 McNichol Trophy, which was received by Commanding Officer Commander Sam Dale and the youngest member of the unit, Seaman Josh Williams. The McNichol Trophy is awarded to the squadron or support unit which has been foremost in all aspects of aviation operations, safety, reliability and unit-level training.

Right: Boeing Defence Australia Sustainment Operations Director and Chief Operations Officer, Amy List, Commander Fleet Aviation Arm, Commodore David Frost RAN and Commodore Darren Rae RAN, Director General Naval Aircrew Training Common with the staff and trainees of 723 Squadron at the presentation of the 2022 McNichol Trophy for their exceptional achievements in the last two years, during a gathering at 723 Squadron, HMAS Albatross.



Making commemorative services work

20 October 2023

An important part of DVA's role is to acknowledge and commemorate all those who have served Australia and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations.

Commemorative events raise community awareness and understanding of the service and sacrifice of our military personnel and families, and promote improved veteran wellbeing outcomes through recognition and respect.

For a veteran, it's about remembering those you tragically lost, those you served with, engaging with the families, and an opportunity to reflect on what you did as an individual, a unit and most importantly with your mates,' says Paul Richardson CSC OAM, Director of Commemorative Events at DVA. 'It goes towards making veterans feel proud about their service. And it's an education process – making the younger generation aware of what these veterans did for us.'

A veteran himself (see side story), Paul heads up three small teams in the department's Commemorations Branch that are responsible for organising the annual Anzac Day services in Gallipoli, Türkiye, and Villers-Bretonneux, France as well as significant domestic commemorations in Australia as directed by the Government.

He says the two major challenges in delivering appropriate commemorations are the logistics and getting the narrative right. He takes as an example the National Commemorative Service marking the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, which took place on 18 August in Canberra.

'The key for us to get that right was to listen to those who served in Vietnam,' Paul says. 'The hard part was telling their story appropriately and accurately – not just the Army but the Navy and Air Force as well as National Servicemen, civilians, nurses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and families.'

'Families are that critical link. They were stuck at home, not knowing what's going on. The Vietnam War became unpopular. All of that was a pretty difficult dynamic for a family member to take on. There were some people who never met their fathers because they were tragically killed. Others came back drastically different as a result of their service. Families were critical in helping them deal with what they had been through, and the families themselves can be affected by that.'

That's why the DVA team ensured that both veter-



Paul Richardson, with Anzac Day services on Gallipoli, old & new, in background

Photo: DVA

ans and families were directly involved in the National Commemorative Service. In particular the descendants, widows and other relatives of some of the 523 personnel killed.

Paul's teams start planning for events like Anzac Day about six months out from 25 April. But for the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, planning began in 2021.

'Apart from developing the commemorative medalion and certificate, the main reason was engagement,' Paul says. 'We met with a Vietnam Consultative Committee every couple of months, where we asked their views on every aspect of the service. We have a unique linkage with the ex-service organisations who represent the 35,000 surviving Vietnam veterans. We relied on them to filter information through to their members. Then when it got closer to the event, we broadened our reach to those unit level associations and that was to make sure that they were aware what was going on. Talking to Vietnam veterans was important to ensure that we understood how they felt our preparations would be viewed by Vietnam veterans.'

A big focus of the commemorative program was ensuring that the service and sacrifice of all Vietnam veterans was acknowledged, regardless of their role or the duration of their tour.

'Even though it was a memorial service, we wanted to thank those veterans for their service and their contribution to society,' Paul says. 'And draw that link between the current Australian Defence Force and themselves. We introduced a general salute for the veterans, which I believe was well overdue and well received. We also went to great lengths to make sure all the associations were represented,

(Continued on page 14)

Making commemorative services work

(Continued from page 13)

where possible. Every one of them laid wreaths as that was considered to be essential by the veterans. We extended the service to accommodate that.

'Because it's not about what you did. It's about acknowledging service and sacrifice equally. Everyone's exposure and reaction is different. No matter where you served, you're affected by the experience. Commemoration is what brings that all together.'

'The biggest lesson we learned was to listen. To find out what veterans wanted and expected. Being a veteran myself makes that easier because I still speak military-speak. There are some other veterans in the team too and that helps.'

His one regret about the service was that a flypast of two Vietnam-era Caribou transport planes and a Huey helicopter all flown by Vietnam veterans couldn't go ahead due to poor weather. But otherwise Paul feels that it achieved exactly what it set out to.

'Organising it was demanding but extremely rewarding for all of our team,' he says. 'I think it went a long way to making those veterans who felt their service had never been appropriately acknowledged, now has been.'

'But I appreciate that you can't heal all old wounds and that tragically many Vietnam veterans still struggle as a result of their service. I have mates I have also served with who also struggle as a result of their service.'

'I can confidently speak on behalf of my team when I say that it was an absolute privilege to deliver these commemorations that honoured the service and sacrifice of all those who

served during the Vietnam War, including those who tragically did not return.

'The Vietnam era taught us that we need to continue to recognise veterans' service and we must continue to support them and their families now and well into the future, particularly those who are struggling.'

Though just a handful of DVA staff planned the event, around 40 staff from elsewhere in the department turned up on the day to ensure things went smoothly. Paul's team also relies on other staff to provide support in France and Türkiye.

Paul is hoping to get the Anzac Day host nations more involved in the future.

'What we deliver is based on very traditional customs and protocols but we have to add contemporary elements to it,' he says. 'It would be great for instance if a Turkish teenager could take part in the pre-service activities at Gallipoli, giving their great-great-grandfather's perspective of the campaign. Getting Australian and New Zealander kids involved would be great too, just to pass on that understanding.'

By DVA

DVA's Rory Walker and Elspeth Forster are ready for the start of the Vietnam War 50th anniversary commemorative service

Photos: DVA



World first for Navy officer

30 October 2023

A Royal Australian Navy (RAN) officer was the first non-US national to complete a renowned weapons and tactics course on the Seahawk helicopter in America.

Lieutenant Commander Jeffrey Topping's recent graduation from the US Navy's (USN) Seahawk weapons and tactics instructor course heralded a new chapter in cooperation and interoperability between the two countries.

The 10-week-course is renowned as the ultimate test for Seahawk MH-60R Romeo aviators in the USN, designed to advance the anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare skills of its participants.

As the first RAN member and non-US national to attempt and graduate from the course, Lieutenant Commander Topping was grateful for the opportunity to showcase Australian skill sets while fully integrating with his USN counterparts.

"Spending time with American aircrew was fascinating, their level of competence and professionalism was impressive," Lieutenant Commander Topping said.

The program gave Lieutenant Commander Topping the opportunity to travel coast to coast and experience life in the USN.

"Operating on dedicated, state-of-the-art ranges against real-world threats was as close to the real thing as you can get," he said.

However, operating with a foreign military it is not always smooth flying.

"The subtle differences in accents and acronyms made it challenging at first. It felt as if we were speaking a different language at times," Lieutenant Commander Topping said.

"It took a bit of adjusting over a few days, but after



Above: Lieutenant Commander Jeffrey Topping on the flightline at the Romeo complex, HMAS Albatross.

Photos POIS Peter Thompson:

Below: HMAS Brisbane's embarked Seahawk MH-60R helicopter 'Chaos' in preparation for take-off during Exercise Noble Caribou.

Photo: LSIS Daniel Goodman



that integration became more or less seamless with some good humour thrown in."

Lieutenant Commander Topping is excited the RAN will continue to send Romeo aircrew to the US course.

"It is mutually beneficial for both countries to engage in this type of high-end warfare training, working together to collectively improve our skill sets, align our tactics and ultimately integrate seamlessly when it matters," he said.

The Seahawk weapons and tactics instructor course has provided Lieutenant Commander Topping with a wealth of knowledge and perspective to further advance warfare training within the Fleet Air Arm and RAN.

By Acting Sub Lieutenant Sam Carter RAN

Shingles vaccine now free for nearly 5 million Australians

23 October 2023

From 1 November, older Australians will have free access to the best protection against shingles through one of the most comprehensive and widely available vaccination programs in the world.

The Australian Government is committing \$826.8 million to provide almost five million people who are at risk of severe disease from shingles with a free Shingrix® vaccine under the National Immunisation Program.

This includes people aged 65 years and over, First Nations people 50 years and over, and people 18 years and over with severely weakened immune systems at high risk of herpes zoster infection.

People who could not have the previously funded vaccine against shingles because of a weakened immune system are able to have Shingrix.

Shingles is caused by reactivation of the virus that causes chickenpox and presents as a painful blistering rash on one side of the face or body that lasts 10-15 days.

One in five people with shingles will develop severe nerve pain, known as post-herpetic neuralgia, that can last months or even years. In a few people, it may be permanent.

The likelihood of developing shingles increases with age. People aged 65 years and over have the highest chance of complications like post-herpetic neuralgia.

Shingrix® will replace Zostavax® on the National Immunisation Program from 1 November 2023, following advice from the independent medicines experts at the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). Shingrix® provides around 10 years of protection and usually costs up to \$560.

Getting vaccinated is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself from shingles and its complications.

For more information, visit the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care [website](#)

Hamas-Israel conflict – counselling support for veterans

20 October 2023

The Hamas-Israel conflict is confronting and may have a particular impact on members of the Defence and veteran community. Hundreds of Australian Defence personnel have served in peace-keeping operations in the region.

Continuous media reporting and images from the conflict can be distressing for those who have served and their families, evoking complex memories and emotions.

The health and wellbeing of the veteran community is at the forefront of our minds at this time. If you need support, please get in touch with us.

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling is available 24/7 for you and your family. If you or someone you know needs support, we're here to listen on 1800 011 046.

Support services

Current and ex-serving ADF personnel, and their families, can access **Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling**. This national mental health service provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling. The Open Arms website also provides a range of self-help resources and wellbeing tools. Visit the [Open Arms Website](#) or phone 1800 011 046.

For all current ADF members and their families, the **Defence all-hours Support Line** is a confidential phone and online service and is available on 1800 628 036. Families of serving personnel can also contact the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

Safe Zone Support is an *anonymous* counselling service that supports serving members, veterans and their families. This service is available at any time, day or night. The specialist counsellors have an understanding of military culture and experience and can be accessed online at [Safe Zone Support webpage](#) or call 1800 142 072. Calls to Safe Zone Support are not recorded.

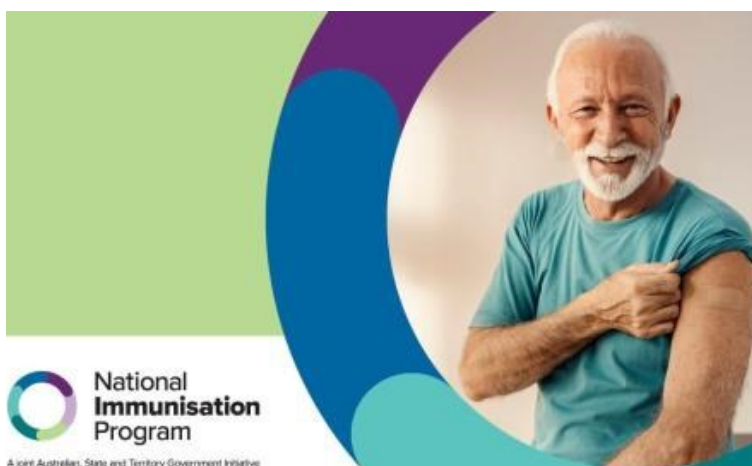
For other support, please contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

Ex-service and non-government organisations

If you are unsure about seeking Government support, there is support available elsewhere.

Ex-service organisations play a vital and complementary role to DVA by providing mateship, advocacy and welfare support. Visit the [Ex-service organisations webpage](#).

There are also a number of excellent non service-related community organisations available, such as Lifeline on 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support, or visit the [Lifeline website](#).



Recent and upcoming updates to the MyService experience

16 October 2023

Under the Modernisation Program, DVA is working to improve the claiming process in MyService. We are pleased to announce that from Sunday 15 October 2023 you will see some new features in MyService. The following improvements will first be applied to Initial Liability claims, but over time you will see these changes applied to other claims:

- Prompts to help you provide the information needed to support a claim at the time you submit it.
- Notification through the myGov Inbox if we need further information about your claim, along with a link to a MyService task that provides you with all the information you need to provide the additional information.
- An enhanced MyService experience for uploading documents to your claims, as well as viewing details of your documents and claims.
- The ability for you to view information and provide documents via MyService for all claims whether submitted through MyService or other channels, reducing the need to send that information by paper or email. This capability provides you with a more intuitive document upload experience, including the ability to add any 'Other' documents they like to their claim up until determination, and view all the documents uploaded in MyService against their claim at any time.

For more information see the [Updating and Enhancing MyService factsheet \(PDF 637 KB\)](#) or if you need any assistance, please call

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

Further expansion of the Veteran and Family Hub network

In the 25 October 2022 Budget, the Australian Government invested \$46.7 million for eight new Veterans' and Families' Hubs across the country. The commitment include the continuation of work underway to establish hubs in Southeast Queensland and Tasmania.

The eight new hubs will be established in the following locations:

- Hawkesbury region, New South Wales;
- Hunter region, New South Wales;
- Tweed/North Coast region, New South Wales;

Advocacy handbooks

Last updated:

24 April 2023

On DVA website

- [Rehabilitation and Compensation Handbook](#)
- [Wellbeing Handbook](#)
- [Wellbeing Support Officer \(WSO\) Handbook](#)
- [Compensation Support Officer \(CSO\) Handbook](#)
- [GARP](#)

Rehabilitation and Compensation Handbook

- [Rehabilitation and Compensation Handbook \(PDF 11 MB\)](#)
- [Rehabilitation and Compensation Handbook \(DOCX 3.6 MB\)](#)

Wellbeing Handbook

- [Wellbeing Handbook \(PDF 2.3 MB\)](#)
- [Wellbeing Handbook \(DOCX 3.6 MB\)](#)

Wellbeing Support Officer (WSO) Handbook

- [Wellbeing Support Officer Handbook \(PDF 400 KB\)](#)
- [Wellbeing Support Officer Handbook \(DOCX 200 KB\)](#)

Compensation Support Officer (CSO) Handbook

- [Compensation Support Officer Handbook \(PDF 1 MB\)](#)
- [Compensation Support Officer Handbook \(DOCX 6 MB\)](#)

Handbooks for Support Officers are under review. Any questions or enquiries regarding Advocacy Handbooks should be directed to ATDPenquiries@dva.gov.au.

GARP

[Guide to the assessment of rates of veterans' pensions](#) (GARP) is used to assess the extent of incapacity from war caused or defence caused injury or

- Queanbeyan, New South Wales;
- Ipswich, Queensland;
- Northern Adelaide, South Australia;
- Southwest Perth, Western Australia; and
- Surf Coast/Geelong region, Victoria.

DVA CONTACTS

Provider enquiry numbers

- Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: [1300 550 017](tel:1300550017)
- Provider enquiries: [1800 550 457](tel:1800550457)
- Transport bookings: [1800 550 455](tel:1800550455)
- [Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre \(VAPAC\)](#): [1800 552 580](tel:1800552580)

Hearing or speech impairment assistance

- If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the [National Relay Service \(NRS\)](#):
- Talk To You (TTY) users phone [1800 555 677](tel:1800555677) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Speak and Listen users phone [1800 555 727](tel:1800555727) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Internet relay users connect to the [NRS](#) then ask for 1800 838 372

Claim Processing

Where things are at

In the month of September 2023 we:

- made 8,170 decisions on claims
- received claims from 5,254 veterans

As at 30 September 2023 we:

- were working on 53,601 claims
- had 21,915 active claims not yet allocated to an officer for processing (known as the claims backlog), lodged by 14,369 veterans

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:1800VETERAN)

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

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

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

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

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

OPEN
Veterans & Families
Counselling
ARMS
1800 011 046



**SAFE ZONE
SUPPORT**

FREE ANONYMOUS
COUNSELLING LINE
CALL 1800 142 072

**Defence
Family
Helpline**



1800 624 608

**Defence
All-hours
Support Line**



1800 628 036