



# National Bosun's Call



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Once Navy, Always Navy

October 2024

## STS *Leeuwin II*



The STS *Leeuwin II* was left mangled with broken masts, rigging and debris strewn across the deck after cargo ship *Maersk Shekou* ran into her while berthing in Fremantle Port about 6am on August 30. Photographs of the aftermath showed the *Leeuwin* as a crumpled mess but at the time the extent of the damage was not clear. *See page 13*

Witnesses have told of poor weather as the *Maersk* tried to berth about 6am on Friday, with a possible big wind gust pushing the vessel into the *Leeuwin*.

It is believed the *Maersk* was tied to tugboats as it berthed but the ropes broke. It appeared to have a huge gash on its side as it was being guided away from the scene by a tugboat. Two crew members aged in their 20s and 60s were aboard the *Leeuwin* at the time of the incident and were taken to Fiona Stanley Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

The men were sleeping in the hull when they were woken by a loud crack. It is believed they were injured while escaping the tall ship.

30 August 2024 WA News Perth



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

# Recognising 77 years in the pursuit of peace

16 September 2024

Last Saturday, on the anniversary of Australia's first peacekeeping deployment, we marked National Peacekeepers' Day.

On 14 September 1947, Australians were among the world's first peacekeepers deployed into the field, when working alongside personnel from Belgium, Britain, China, France and the United States, they helped Indonesia gain independence from the Netherlands. This heralded the start of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations.

Over the last 77 years, tens of thousands of Australian military members, police personnel and civilians have served in peacekeeping roles.

Sixteen Australians have lost their lives serving on these operations.

The nature of peacekeeping can vary enormously, with our nation's contribution spanning the globe in over 70 international peacekeeping operations across more than 60 countries.

From the remote sands of the Western Sahara to the dense jungles of the South Pacific, some operations have only involved a handful of personnel, while others have a significantly larger scope, included all three branches of defence, public servants, and state and federal police officers.

The roles of Australian peacekeepers have varied, with Australians supporting countries around the world through the delivery of humanitarian aid, helping war-torn communities, supporting peaceful transitions of power during elections, observing ceasefires, standing between hostile armies, and clearing and training others to clear landmines.



Despite the considerable risks peacekeepers face, it's a testament to the skill, professionalism and sometimes good fortune, of Australian peacekeepers that so few Australians have lost their lives while performing these dangerous jobs.

Lest we forget.

To learn more about Australia's role in peacekeeping, visit our [Anzac Portal](#).

## Commemorating 25 years since Timor-Leste

On 20 September, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of Australian service in Timor-Leste with a seminar and National Commemorative Service. These important events were attended by hundreds of Australians, including veterans and their families.

We honour and remember the service of all Australian men and women who served in Timor-Leste, and the sacrifice of their families. Lest we forget



Above: Peacekeepers Memorial ANZAC Parade Canberra

Left: National President, David Manolas (left), at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service commemoration 25 years since Timor Leste

Photos: DVA

## Preparing for a new landmark treaty

The third AUKUS Defence Ministers meeting, involving the UK Secretary of State for Defence John Healey and the US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, was the first held outside the US.

Mr Marles said the meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment to the partnership.

"What three years ago was an idea, today we can rightfully say that idea has blossomed into operational plans and plans that are being executed," Mr Marles said.

"This is a generational opportunity to modernise and enhance our longstanding partnerships, and support security and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond."

The ministers discussed key progress on AUKUS Pillar I, including the recent submarine tendered maintenance period at HMAS *Stirling* and the acceleration of workforce development initiatives, trilateral supply chain resilience and the uplift of respective industrial bases.

"I'm delighted that my British and American counterparts not only welcomed the progress we have been making, but reaffirmed their commitment to supporting Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines," Mr Marles said.

Also discussed was progress on AUKUS Pillar II Advanced Capabilities including the newly established export licence-free environment.

"We have seen legislative and regulatory changes take place across the US, UK and Australia, which have created a license-free seamless defence industrial base between our three countries," Mr Marles said.

"This is one of the biggest reforms we have seen in defence trade in decades and will have a profound effect on the way we operate together."

Mr Austin described the "extraordinary strength" of the AUKUS partnership.

"AUKUS offers a unique opportunity for our three countries to enhance our military capabilities, deepen our interoperability and strengthen deterrence in the Indo-Pacific," Mr Austin said.

'This is a generational opportunity to modernise and enhance our longstanding partnerships, and support security and stability in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.'

The talks at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, come as Australia and the UK announced the start of negotiations on a bilateral AUKUS treaty.

Mr Marles said the focus of the agreement would be the elements of AUKUS that relate to the relationship between the UK and Australia.

"That particularly pertains to the development of a strategic and operational framework for the development of the new AUKUS submarines (SSN-AUKUS)," Mr Marles said.



*Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, UK Secretary of State for Defence John Healey and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III at the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich UKI*

*Photo: Jenny Magee*

Mr Healey has welcomed the commencement of the negotiations.

"This not only reflects our commitment to secure a secure Indo-Pacific region where international rules are respected, it also sends a very strong message that our defence alliance is one that will endure for many decades to come," Mr Healey said.

The ministers issued a joint communique at the end of the talks, reaffirming their commitment to the AUKUS partnership. It outlined some of the key milestones that have been achieved, including:

- More than 60 Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel are currently in various stages of the US nuclear-powered submarine SSN training pipeline to equip a cadre of Australian officers and sailors with experience aboard the US Virginia-class SSNs that the RAN will own and operate from the early 2030s. These numbers will increase further in 2025, with more than 100 personnel commencing training. Six officers have completed all training and have been assigned to US Virginia-class submarines. RAN enlisted sailors will join US submarine crews before the end of this year.
- In the United Kingdom, three RAN officers completed the UK Naval Nuclear Reactor course in July 2024 and are now assigned to UK Astute-class submarines. The next group of RAN officers will commence training in the UK in November 2024.
- The Royal Navy, with the support of the Australian Submarine Agency, has also delivered professional and general naval nuclear propulsion training for more than 250 Australian personnel in Canberra.
- Australians have embedded into program delivery teams in the UK Ministry of Defence and with Rolls-Royce Submarines. Australians are also embedded in US Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program teams.

*Defence*



## About this guide

This is a guide to the final report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (Royal Commission). The final report has seven volumes and contains 122 recommendations. In this guide, we provide a broad outline of each volume and describe what it contains.

This guide is for anyone who wants to understand quickly what is in the final report and find the information they need.

## Volume 1

### Executive summary, recommendations and the fundamentals

Volume 1 of the final report introduces the work of the Royal Commission, along with a foreword from the Commissioners.

It also includes the executive summary, which provides a useful overview of the scope of our inquiry, and a list of all of our recommendations. It outlines how the Royal Commission was conducted, as well as impediments to our inquiry.

#### Part 1 – Understanding the fundamentals

Australia's defence capability is primarily dependent on personnel – the roughly 89,000 current serving members of the Navy, Army and Air Force. Many of the features that distinguish military service from other occupations, including how members are trained, equipped and employed, are necessary to achieve Defence's mission of maintaining our collective security and defending Australia's national interests.

Part 1 explores the unique nature of military service more fully. It also helps readers understand suicide among serving and ex serving ADF members. This includes the complex interaction of risk and protective factors for suicide and suicidality associated with military service, and statistics that highlight the severity of these issues and the need for change.

It also includes lessons we learned from overseas about how our closest allies are responding to the issues of suicide and suicidality in their own military communities.

## Volume 2

### Serving the nation and Defence culture and leadership

#### Part 2 – Serving the nation

Part 2 of the final report discusses ADF recruitment and initial training, postings and deployments, and the military employment classification system. This is a personnel management tool used to determine medical fitness and employment status of serving members.

It explores how the ADF working environment can expose members to extreme physical and psychological stressors, risk factors for suicide and suicidality, and the emerging evidence that military cultural values may be associated both directly and indirectly with suicide risk.

We also look at ADF retention issues, voluntary separation, and involuntary separation – on medical grounds or for the reason 'retention-not in-service-interest' – which is associated with a significantly heightened risk of suicide.

We found that while some members experience symptoms of psychological distress immediately following exposure to risk factors, others may not do so until years later. Similarly, the physical and psychological effects of service are often carried into post-service life, while specific stressors associated with separation, transition and post service life can also contribute to, or exacerbate suicide risk. Read the full Volume 2 on our website

Our recommendations in Part 2 aim to help prevent harm and mitigate the risk factors associated with service and post-service life. This includes a number of recommendations related to ADF culture and leadership.

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide A Guide to the Final Report

*(Continued from page 4)*

### Volume 3

#### **Military sexual violence, unacceptable behaviour and military justice Part 3 – Misconduct, complaints and military justice**

##### **Part 3 – Misconduct, complaints and military justice**

In Part 3, we discuss military sexual violence, unacceptable behaviour and complaints management, and the ADF military justice system.

During our inquiry, we received detailed historical and contemporary accounts of bullying, harassment, discrimination, misogyny, and physical and sexual violence experienced during training as well as during service life, reinforcing the findings of countless previous inquiries and reviews.

We also identified factors within the military justice system that can cause or aggravate poor mental health outcomes and contribute to risks of suicide and suicidality, including real or perceived issues with fairness in the administration of military justice.

Many of our recommendations are directed towards addressing unacceptable behaviour, including preventing sexual misconduct, along with stronger workplace protections, better management of incidents of military sexual violence, and stronger repercussions for perpetrators of military sexual violence. Our recommendations also focus on improvements to complaints management processes, and reform of the military justice system.

##### **Part 4 – Governance and accountability**

Part 4 discusses governance and accountability, and workplace health and safety. We found numerous deficiencies in Defence's governance mechanisms that reduce its ability to identify, escalate and address areas of risk to health and wellbeing. Defence has failed to recognise and articulate suicide prevention as an enterprise wide priority in core governance frameworks, contributing to a lack of attention on minimising harm. Read the full Volume 3 on our website

Our recommendations in Part 4 focus on addressing limitations in Defence's governance structures, the role and functions of the Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force, and greater oversight of ADF workplace health and safety.

### Volume 4

#### **Health care for serving and ex-serving members**

##### **Part 5 - Health care for serving and ex serving members**

Part 5 of the final report focuses on healthcare for serving and ex-serving members, including a discussion of ADF healthcare services and problems associated with healthcare provision in the ADF.

We heard that physical and psychological injuries are often poorly managed within the ADF and there is ongoing stigma attached to injury and illness, particularly mental ill health.

Many of our recommendations are directed therefore towards early intervention and providing timely supports tailored to individual needs. They express a vision towards reducing psychological distress and treating and rehabilitating physical injury to enable recovery, including assessing and treating neurocognitive issues, whatever their cause.

We also make recommendations for **postvention** following a serving member's death by suicide (or suspected suicide), and to **prevent**, minimise and treat moral injury, which can significantly impact personal wellbeing and interpersonal relationships, and heighten suicidal behaviours.

### Volume 5

#### **Transition, DVA and support for ex-serving members**

##### **Part 6 – Transition and support for ex-serving members**

Part 6 looks at the support available to ex-serving members during their separation from the ADF and transition from military to civilian life. With between 5,500 and 6,500 members leaving full-time ADF service each year, separation and transition was a critical area of focus for our inquiry.

We found that separation and the early post service period are often characterised by instability and uncertainty, as well as social and psychosocial disruption. These reintegration challenges can expose members to risks of suicide and suicidality.

There also remains a clear need for more integrated service delivery and better coordination among service providers, to enable a more responsive and connected system of care for veterans and their families. We therefore make several recommendations to improve separation and transition processes, and better support member wellbeing during this phase of their lives and careers.

Part 6 also contains detailed discussion of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), and its delivery of services and programs to support serving and ex-serving ADF members and their families. This includes access to income support, compensation and other financial entitlements, and

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide A Guide to the Final Report

(Continued from page 5)

health and other care services.

We identify aspects of DVA culture, processes and systems that have historically, and in some cases continue to, negatively affect the mental health and wellbeing of ex-serving ADF members and their families. We examine the progress made in response to recommendations in our interim report delivered to the Governor-General in August 2022, including recommendations to Read the full Volume 5 on our website simplify and harmonise the legislative framework for veterans' compensation and rehabilitation, to enable more efficient and timely claims processing within DVA, and to address the backlog in unallocated compensation claims.

In light of ongoing concerns, we outline further recommendations to improve DVA service delivery and its engagement with veterans, with the aim of empowering veterans to thrive and ensuring they receive the help and supports they need.

### Volume 6

#### Families, data and research and establishing a new entity

##### Part 7 – Matters of importance to the whole Defence and DVA ecosystem

Part 7 of the final report explores the critical role played by the families of serving and ex-serving ADF members. We look at the stressors that military service and post-service life can place on the family unit, and make recommendations to help address these issues.

Volume 6 also contains numerous recommendations to strengthen Defence and DVA research, data collection and analysis, and data sharing. This is imperative to enhance their ability to identify,

understand and monitor the impact of risk and protective factors for suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members. It is also necessary to support Defence and DVA's ability to monitor and evaluate suicide prevention initiatives and organisational reforms to support member health and wellbeing.

### Part 8 – Beyond the Royal Commission

We recognise that there is no quick fix to the problems we have identified in our final report, and that reform will take time.

Part 8 sets out our vision beyond the Royal Commission. We recommend establishing a new statutory entity to support governments, Defence, DVA, and the wider defence and veteran ecosystem to prioritise and build on the positive work that has commenced during this Royal Commission. By monitoring the Defence and veteran ecosystem through the lens of suicide prevention, the new entity can promote long term change and drive system reform.

Establishing a new entity would clearly signal that the Australian Government recognises the gravity of this crisis. It would demonstrate that the lives of those who serve this country are valued. And it would confirm that Australia is committed to protecting the lives of those who protect us.

### Volume 7

#### Appendices

##### Part 9 - Appendices

Part 9 contains information about the Royal Commission's operation and administration, along with summaries of our research, a list of previous reports and inquiries that relate to matters associated with suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members, and procedural fairness

## Our work (DVA) in response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

18 September 2024

On 9 September 2024, the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide handed down its Final Report, which is available on the [Royal Commission's website](#) (along with useful resources to help people understand and read the document) and the [Australian Parliament House website](#).

The Report comprises more than 3,000 pages of evidence, commentary and findings across 7 volumes.

The Report seeks to highlight the scale, contributing risk factors and overarching drivers of suicide and suicidality. It acknowledges that suicide and suicidality of serving and ex-serving members of the ADF is a multifaceted problem.

The Final Report represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for meaningful change.

A total of 122 recommendations have been made to address identified systemic risk factors and overarching drivers of suicide and suicidality in serving and ex-serving ADF members.

The recommendations are largely directed to Defence and DVA; as well as other agencies separately or in combination with Defence and DVA.

The Government will take some time to appropriately consider the recommendations and provide the whole-of-Government response.

DVA, working in partnership with Defence, will make every effort to address suicide and suicidality among our serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.

**Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade  
Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and  
Harmonisation) Bill 2024 [Provisions]**

<b>Submissions received by the Committee</b>	
<b>Submission Number</b>	<b>Submitter</b>
1	Australian Lawyers Alliance ( <a href="#">PDF 453 KB</a> )
2	Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association Ltd ( <a href="#">PDF 324 KB</a> )
3	TPI Federation of Australia ( <a href="#">PDF 491 KB</a> )
4	Families of Veterans Guild ( <a href="#">PDF 95 KB</a> )
5	Australian War Widows Inc. ( <a href="#">PDF 176 KB</a> ) Attachment 1 ( <a href="#">PDF 116 KB</a> )
6	Community and Public Sector Union ( <a href="#">PDF 155 KB</a> )
7	Slater and Gordon Lawyers ( <a href="#">PDF 319 KB</a> )
8	Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Inc ( <a href="#">PDF 254 KB</a> )
9	Legacy Australia Incorporated ( <a href="#">PDF 214 KB</a> )
10	Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner ( <a href="#">PDF 215 KB</a> )
11	RSL Australia ( <a href="#">PDF 780 KB</a> )
12	Mr John Miklavcic ( <a href="#">PDF 1084 KB</a> )
13	Mr Barry Aldcroft ( <a href="#">PDF 22 KB</a> )
14	Mr Michael Carlon ( <a href="#">PDF 140 KB</a> )
15	Department of Veterans' Affairs ( <a href="#">PDF 11720 KB</a> )
16	Mr Nicholas Hannay ( <a href="#">PDF 222 KB</a> ) Attachment 1 ( <a href="#">PDF 2563 KB</a> )
17	Name Withheld ( <a href="#">PDF 66 KB</a> )
18	Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation ( <a href="#">PDF 534 KB</a> ) Attachment 1 ( <a href="#">PDF 874 KB</a> ) Attachment 2 ( <a href="#">PDF 374 KB</a> ) Attachment 3 ( <a href="#">PDF 241 KB</a> )
19	Naval Association of Australia ( <a href="#">PDF 451 KB</a> )
20	Department of Defence ( <a href="#">PDF 727 KB</a> )
21	Productivity Commission ( <a href="#">PDF 414 KB</a> )
22	Defence Force Welfare Association ( <a href="#">PDF 488 KB</a> )
23	Mr Alan Huggins ( <a href="#">PDF 662 KB</a> )
24	Name Withheld ( <a href="#">PDF 36 KB</a> )
25	Name Withheld ( <a href="#">PDF 29 KB</a> )
26	<b>Mr Bruce Tisdell RFD</b> ( <a href="#">PDF 223KB</a> )
27	Sandgate RSL Sub Br Inc ( <a href="#">PDF 1200 KB</a> ) 27.1 Supplementary to submission 27 ( <a href="#">PDF 6 KB</a> )
28	126 Signal Squadron (Special Forces) ( <a href="#">PDF 204 KB</a> )
29	Mr Gregory Isolani ( <a href="#">PDF 378 KB</a> )
30	Mr Roderic Thompson ( <a href="#">PDF 129 KB</a> )
31	Mrs Julie Anderson ( <a href="#">PDF 52 KB</a> )
32	Mr Ross Dunn OAM ( <a href="#">PDF 64 KB</a> )

## Emails to the Editor

(included in National Bosun's Call with writers' approval)

### FADT REPORT INTO HARMONISATION BILL

Good evening

I have just received the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (FADT) report into the Harmonisation Bill.

You will note that despite all the bumf in the report, there is only one recommendation which is at page 49 and that is **The Committee recommends that the Bill be passed.**'

It is disappointing given all the energy taken by the various organisations and individuals to make a submission in the belief that public consultation would lead to a better piece of legislation for veterans, to find it is dismissed in eight words.

I would have thought that some of the issues, for example hazardous service and the service differential could have been addressed more fully and, if dismissed, at least a reason be given for the dismissal.

The fact that DVA were given two opportunities to present their views before the Senate Committee, whilst others did not get any opportunity makes me very cynical of the process.

Regards

Allan Joyce

Dear Peter

On 4 July 2024, the Senate referred the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024 [Provisions] (the Bill) to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee (FADT) Committee for inquiry and report by 3 October 2024.

The FADT Committee sought public comments on the Bill and received 33 submissions including submissions from the Naval Association of Australia, the Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association, the RSL, and the Productivity Commission as well as several private individuals.

The FADT report released on the evening of 9 October 2024 indicates the process has been a complete sham and a massive whitewashing exercise.

I wrote to the FADT Secretariat on 21 September 2024 after being informed no further appearances before the FADT Committee were planned. In my letter I said,

*"My organisation's submissions plus attachments were lodged on 11/8/24 and it was made clear to the Secretariat staff (who do a wonder-*

*ful job) via my phone call that I and Allan Joyce would very much like to seek leave to appear".*

*That request was repeated again over time.*

*On Monday 30 September 2024 I rang the Secretariat again to enquire as to when the Senate Committee was sitting again (to plan my diary).*

*I was informed by the Secretariat that the Committee was not holding any further hearings.*

*That stunned me and I then expressed the concern that it seemed that all the work I and others had put in to preparing submission was all for nothing.*

*I was given an assurance that our written submissions would be given exactly the same weight by the Committee as those organisations who, in addition to a written submission were granted a face-to-face meeting with the Committee and allowed to expand upon the comments they made.*

*I rang Allan Joyce and briefed him on the discussions with the Committee Secretariat.*

*His Yorkshire reply was clear and succinct.*

*He said, "That's bullshit."*

*I agree completely.*

*That Committee sat only twice. Twice!! It sat on Friday 6 October 2024 hearing from five witnesses one of which was DVA.*

*The entire session went from 0900 to 1230 and adjourned for the rest of the day.*

*It sat again on Friday 13 September 2024 and heard from one witness only – DVA.*

*DVA was given a second go before the Committee.*

*That session went from 0900 to 1130 and adjourned for the day.*

*Allan's very accurate response has merit indeed.*

*The risible statement that our submissions would be given equal weight and attention as if we had appeared, does not flow."*

The Senate FADT Committee, giving only one recommendation consisting of only six words "The Committee recommends that the Bill be passed" fills me with horror and an

ever-deepening suspicion that the veteran community has been dudded by the Government big-time with the willing assistance of its camp followers in the Senate's FADT Committee. No other conclusion can reasonably be made.

Yes, it's good news to us all that we are finally going to be shot of a three-Act circus for a one-Act circus.

But concerns arising from reading all 33 submissions, suggests to me that the jury is still out as doubts as to the new Act's efficacy, still linger.

*(Continued on page 9)*



## Emails to the Editor

(included in National Bosun's Call with writers' approval)

(Continued from page 8)

In over 38 years as a Practising Advocate TIP 4 (Appeals) I have seen enough chicanery from the ommonwealth and its agent, DVA, to last a lifetime

In this instance and on every level, the FADT Committee process was a complete sham and an absolute travesty.

It also appears that we, as veteran stakeholders and who represent other veteran stakeholders, have been locked out of participating in a debate that is at its heart about human lives and not bu-reaucratic bullshit.

Our participation would have enabled interested parties to put their cases in writing and orally, given the DVA Minister, Matt Keogh refused additional time to lodge submissions on the Bill's draft back in March.

The Senate FADT Committee process was an exercise in pure bullshittery and was manifestly too short as set out above when looking at the miserable and risible number of appearances granted by the FADT to interested parties.

Senate inquiry?? Absolutely not – just an exercise in going through the motions.

And we pay these roosters wages. God give me the strength!!

For DVA to be given a second bite at the cherry and interested ESOs kicked to the kerb, is the ultimate insult.

The additional recommendation by Sen Shoe-bridge in the final FADT report stated:

*'Additional recommendation 1.18 The Senate initiates a review of the changes this Bill made to the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004, to be conducted, with input from all stakeholders, within 12 months after the legislated changes commence.*

I disagree with such a truncated timeframe and argued in our now-defunct opening statement to be delivered to the FADT Committee that a three-year assessment period would be reasonable in all the circumstances. To do any less is the height of folly.

A truncated time frame will in my respectful submission, operate to fail to pick up any serious faults or flaws in the new Act to enable remedial amendments to be undertaken.

It follows that, in my view, a 12-month period is fanciful in the extreme.

The inexcusable failure by the FADT Committee to consider having other stakeholders to appear before the Committee has denied veteran stakeholders the opportunity to address a wide range of issues such as the service differential, the withholding of medical advice which DVA may use in assessing a claim but are not provided to the veter-

an, and the dispensing of common law principles.

I have significant concerns at the failure by the drafters to cross-vest the Henry VIII Clause from DRCA (s.121B) into the current Draft Bill.

This clause is needed to provide statutory relief from the incomprehensible Federal Court decision in the *Boys* case (*Boys v Repatriation Commission (Veterans' Entitlements)* [2022] FCA 257 (23 March 2022)) where the SOP timeline between trauma and number of years leading up to clinical onset have been thrown out the door.

In *Boys* the Court agreed with "*The Respondent submits that the date of clinical onset therefore ought to be 13 June 2014, given the radiology confirming cervical spondylosis on that date.*[30]"

The provisions of 121B would have in my view given us statutory relief from the effects of *Boys*.

The only conclusion I can draw is that the veteran community has been duded.



Noel Mc Laughlin OAM MBA  
MBA  
Advocate (TIP 4)

### Senate Committee Report October 2024

The Senate

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee

Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Bill 2024 [Provisions]

SENATE%20COMMITTEE%20REPORT%20INTO%20THE%20HARMONISATION%20BILL%20(2).pdf

### Extract from the Senate Committee Report

Page 49

#### Recommendation 1

**3.106 The Committee recommends that the Bill be passed.**

**Senator Raff Ciccone**

**Chair  
Labor Senator for Victoria**

## FADT REPORT INTO HARMONISATION BILL—Extract

### Pages 31 and 32

#### **Wholly dependent partner**

3.37 Submitters raised concerns about the use of the term 'wholly dependent partner' in the Bill, which is argued to be no longer reflective of modern family dynamics. It was clear that there is strong opposition to the use of the term, however there was no consensus on what term should replace it.

3.38 According to Legacy Australia, the current interpretation of a 'wholly dependent partner' is not relevant in today's context:

There's a certain emotional dependency. There's care dependency. There's educational dependency. There's many different types. When these acts were drafted, a family was mum, dad and a couple of kids. That no longer applies. Often, it meant that—I will use the term 'husband'—the male partner was the breadwinner and the female partner, the wife, was either the home carer and looked after the kids or had a lesser paid job. Of course, in those days, superannuation was minimal. So consequently, that definition generally applied when the male partner, who might have been the veteran, died and therefore left the family in financial distress. Quite frankly, that is no longer the case for several reasons. Families ... are now quite broad. Often, it is the surviving partner who is the breadwinner or is the higher earner and there is different superannuation. There is ComSuper superannuation payments as well as compensation payments<sup>33</sup>.

3.39 However, Legacy Australia acknowledged that whilst the understanding of the term has changed over time, it does not really present problems for them in terms of how successfully they advocate on behalf of veteran families. Legacy Australia stated if the term was not redefined in the Bill:

We would continue as is. We're very pleased generally with the legislation as it has been drafted. If, for example, you recommend that we don't have a definition of dependant or family, we will continue to offer that full range of Legacy services to those people regardless ... It just makes it clearer in terms of our dealing with DVA in particular where the demarcation might be<sup>34</sup>.

3.40 Australian War Widows Inc (AWW) is a strong advocate for replacing the term 'wholly dependent partner' with 'widow/er'. AWW submitted:

In the present form of the MRCA legislation there is no mention of war widows/ers, instead the term "Wholly Dependent Partner" is used. The majority of war widows/ers across Australia are saddened and disappointed at being labelled with this term. Most war widows worked

during their marriages and contributed to the family finances, not to mention keeping the family unit together during their husbands' absences. When their husbands became ill due to their war service the "widows" cared for them and in actual fact, it was the veteran who was "dependent" ... The proposed terminology "Wholly Dependent Partner" could relate to anyone, it makes no reference to veterans or their defence service. AWW believes that it is disrespectful to those who have served, and shows contempt and ignorance towards widows/ers who are left behind<sup>35</sup>

3.41 Alternatively, the Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner proposed that the term 'wholly dependent partner' be replaced with the term 'bereaved family member' for its clarity and inclusivity, stating:

Community discussions revealed that referring to a partner as wholly or partly dependent is not only outdated but also offensive. The feedback strongly favours 'bereaved family' as the future terminology, even though the older generation of veteran families still strongly prefers 'widow(er).' Embracing 'Bereaved Family Member' aligns with modern family dynamics and diverse compositions, making it more acceptable to younger partners and ensuring our language is both gender-neutral and relevant<sup>36</sup>.

3.42 RSL Australia agreed that there needs to be a new term and that 'wholly dependent partner' is not consistent with modern norms in relationships, and commented on the Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner's suggestion stating that 'bereaved family member' does sound better than 'wholly dependent partner'<sup>37</sup>. However, RSL Australia stated that the term needs to be more specific so that it clearly defines and identifies the different family members who are to be covered by the Bill, suggesting the following:

- \* Bereaved Family Member – Partner
- \* Bereaved Family Member – Dependent Child
- \* Bereaved Family Member – Other Dependent<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> DVA, *Submission 15*, pp. 13–14. . See, also: *Legacy Australia, Submission 9*, pp. 3–5.

<sup>34</sup> *Dr Mark Lax, Vice-Chairman, Legacy Australia, Committee Hansard, 16 August 2024*, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> AWW, *Submission 5*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>36</sup> *Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, Submission 10*, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ms Margaret Jenyns, Head, Veterans' Services Support, RSL Queensland, Committee Hansard, 16 August 2024*, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> *RSL Australia, Supplementary submission 11.1*, p. 4.

## FADT REPORT INTO HARMONISATION BILL—Extract

### Pages 39 to 42

#### ***Service differential and the Statement of Principles***

3.71 A number of submitters advocated for removing the service differential (between warlike and non-warlike service, or operational and non-operational) in favour of a single operational environment for injuries, illnesses, or the death of a veteran.<sup>71</sup> Concerns about the application of the Statement of Principles (SoPs), produced by the Repatriation Medical Authority (RMA), under the MRCA, which is retained in the Bill, was also discussed<sup>72</sup>.

3.72 126 Signal Squadron (Special Forces) explained the issue:

Currently there are two thresholds and standards applied to veterans who make claims to DVA. This has become known as the 'service differential' and has been the source of confusion and disenchantment among the veteran community for a number of years. The service differential is used in conjunction with the Statement of Principles produced by the Repatriation Medical Authority to differentiate claims of injury, health conditions or death of those veterans with operational experience against those with non-operational experience. Those veterans with operational experience are judged on the 'Reasonable Hypothesis' of a claim and those with non-operational service are judged on the less generous provisions of the 'Balance of Probabilities'.<sup>73</sup>

3.73 126 Signal Squadron (Special Forces) expressed disappointment that the Bill does not remove the current service differential in favour of a single operational method of assessment for veterans regardless of where the injury, illness, or death of a veteran occurred. 126 Signal Squadron noted that the Productivity Commission, the Chief of the Defence Force at the time, General Angus Campbell AO DSC, and the Royal Commission, all supported the removal of the service differential<sup>74</sup>.

3.74 Slater and Gordon outlined the major problems with the SoPs and recommended that the SoPs be reviewed in the Bill as a matter of priority:

The SoPs are perceived to work against a veteran rather than in their support. Rigid, inflexible application of the SoP Risk Factors in determining a claim is inconsistent with the beneficial intent and provisions of the legislation, particularly where the veteran also suffers with [post-traumatic stress disorder] ... The current SoP structure is overly complicated and burdensome for veterans ... Namely, we urge the current SoP system be reviewed with a view to simplifying the process and reducing the unreasonable evidence requirements. Furthermore, provisions should be made for conditions recognised in the medical community that are not

yet reflected in SOPs. Legislation and specifically the Simplification Bill implementing this fundamental change should be a priority for the DVA<sup>75</sup>.

3.75 Furthermore, Slater and Gordon added that the Bill must be drafted to provide more certainty and clarity with the SoPs, stating that the fundamental issue with SoPs is: ...

that they are premised on constantly evolving medical science, yet, despite endeavours by the RMA, they are not updated soon enough to reflect these changes. By the very nature of SOPs, they cannot be applied too rigorously and should only be referred to as a general guide. The strict interpretation approach needs to be removed.

The quantification and qualification required to prove the above factors is onerous on the veteran and serves to lengthen the claims process and restrict Commonwealth liability. If a claimant cannot immediately report the onset of symptoms or if their experience does not otherwise meet these strict parameters, their claim can be denied.

In comparison, a Commonwealth public servant covered by the existing SRCA must only demonstrate that on the balance of probabilities their injury arose out of or was aggravated in the course of their employment. In my experience, this test is less restrictive and contains fewer arbitrary technicalities that seem designed to block claims by veterans. The simplification Bill does not remedy this inequity<sup>76</sup>.

3.76 Australian Lawyers Alliance agreed that the two standards of proof should not be transferred to the new Bill, rather the 'on balance of probabilities' measure would be an appropriate standard of proof for this legislation, and that the SoPs should be treated as discretionary and as a guide, rather than determinative<sup>77</sup>.

3.77 Mr Greg Isolani concurred, stating that, in most cases, the SoPs are used to deny claims rather than as a framework to accept claims. Mr Isolani acknowledged that the strict application of SoPs can lead to the rejection of a claim where the medical evidence indicates there is a link between the claimed condition and the claimant's ADF service, and therefore the interpretation and application of SoPs should have a degree of flexibility for delegates<sup>78</sup> Mr Isolani recommended:

The Bill can overcome this "unintended outcome" of the SoP's if there is a discretion for DVA at review level, including at the VRB [Veterans' Review Board] and the AAT [Administrative Appeals Tribunal] to "override" the SoP ... [A decision] should also be reviewable by the VRB and the AAT if a request to

*(Continued on page 12)*

## FADT REPORT INTO HARMONISATION BILL—Extract

(Continued from page 11)

override the SoP is refused by the [Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission]

This approach allows DVA to obtain and / or consider medical evidence as to causation when strict adherence to the SoP factors would result in the claim failing despite evidence that the condition is service related. It is recommended that all SoPs ... are reviewed by the Repatriation Medical Authority to determine, if, for example, using the DRCA standard of proof (Balance of probability) for the frequent ADF conditions would likely succeed. If so, the SoP's should be beneficially amended to ensure consistency of decision making<sup>79</sup>.

3.78 DVA explained that the Bill does alleviate some of the need to use the SoPs as it enables:

... the Repatriation Commission to specify, via legislative instrument, that claims for certain injuries and diseases can be accepted by DVA on a presumptive (i.e. automatic) basis without otherwise needing to engage with the Statements of Principles system. This would reduce the investigation required prior to determining such claims<sup>80</sup>.

3.79 Additionally, DVA reported that following consultation on the exposure draft of the Bill, it added a provision to ensure that where the RMA updates a SoP between the veteran's primary and reviewable decision, the version of the SoP which is most

beneficial to the veteran's circumstances will be applied<sup>81</sup>.

3.80 Regarding the service differential, DVA acknowledged that this is a 'contentious issue amongst the veteran community and no consensus has been reached about whether it is appropriate to retain a service differential within the compensation system', however:

The use of different standards of proof reflects that evidence can be more difficult to obtain in the context of service in operational areas. It also reflects the view of successive Governments that operational service is 'unique' in nature when compared to peacetime service. The MRCA has always provided compensation for conditions attributable to all types of ADF service and retains the 'service differential' to recognise the circumstances of service on operations and the unquantifiable effects of combat<sup>82</sup>.

75 Slater and Gordon, Submission 7, pp. 7–8

76 Slater and Gordon, Submission 7, p. 8.

77 Australian Lawyers Alliance, Submission 1, pp. 6–7

78 Mr Greg Isolani, Submission 29, p. 6.

79 Mr Greg Isolani, Submission 29, pp. 6–7

80 DVA, Supplementary submission 15.1, pp. 4–5.

81 DVA, Submission 15, p. 43.

82 DVA, Supplementary submission 15.1, p. 8.

## Be on the watch for false or misleading representations

23 September 2024

Veterans and families are encouraged to be on the lookout for third-party organisations making false or misleading claims that they are working on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), or any other Australian Government department. DVA is aware that some third-party organisations are trying to access funding via our clients.

As a DVA client you will have access to a range of [health care services and programs](#) designed to support your physical and mental health and well-being.

You may be contacted by people falsely claiming to represent a DVA approved service provider and suggesting you use their services.

We encourage all veterans and families to be wary of any advertisements or other representations made by third-party organisations – especially when they claim to be doing so on behalf of DVA, or with our approval.

### Signs of a false or misleading representation

- \* **Being offered vouchers, discounts or other gifts**  
We will never directly send you unsolicited

goods, such as retail vouchers or gifts.

- \* **Being offered unsolicited health-related services**  
We will never offer you or your family any health-related services without your consent.
- \* **Being asked to call a random phone number to talk in more detail**  
If someone contacts you claiming to be from DVA and asks you call a random number, you can call us direct on [1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372) to check the validity of their claim.

### If you suspect false or misleading representation

If you receive a phone call but are not sure if you're speaking to a genuine DVA staff member, or if you suspect a third-party may be misrepresenting DVA – hang up and call us directly on [1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372). You can check the validity of any emails or letters you have received by phoning the same number.

You can also request a call back by using [MyService](#) or submit a general enquiry form at our website <https://www.dva.gov.au/form/general-enquiries>.

# STS Leeuwin II— 30 August 2024

STS Leeuwin Leading Master James Rakich has also thanked the community for its “outpouring of support”.

“It is with a heavy but hopeful heart that I write this, after Friday’s incident where the vessel was dismasted whilst alongside at B Berth,” he said.

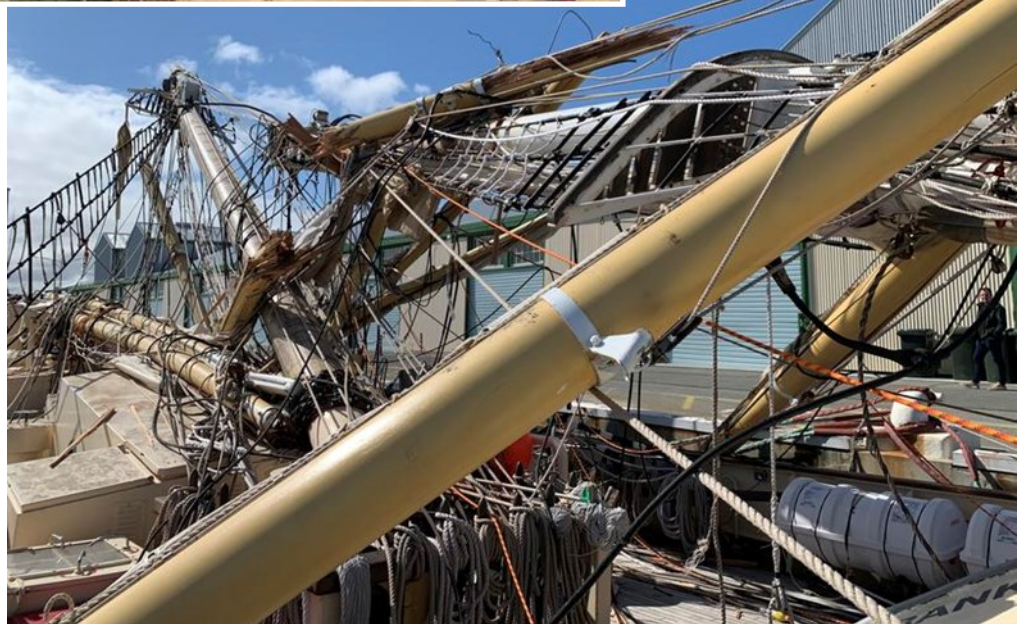


been through the ship and its watertight integrity was “maintained”.

“We have closed underwater valves and watertight doors, and the ship appears for the time being safe in its position alongside B Berth,” he said.

“I’m thankful for the medical care and support provided to our two crew members aboard at the time, and the outpouring of support from throughout the Leeuwin community — asking how can they help?”

“The masts, spars and rigging have all been significantly damaged, with the masts all having fallen most of the way to deck, still under tension.” Mr Rakich said he had



[Final Report – all volumes | Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide](#)

[A guide to the Final Report\(royalcommission.gov.au\)](http://royalcommission.gov.au)

## HMNZS Manawanui lost off Samoa

On the evening of 5 October 2024, HMNZS *Manawanui* lost power and ran aground around one nautical mile (1.9 km; 1.2 mi) off Siumu, on the south coast of Upolu island, Samoa, whilst carrying out survey work to a reef in rough seas and high winds. Commander Yvonne Gray gave the order for everyone to abandon the ship. All 75 crew on board were evacuated by four of the vessel's life rafts and two rigid hull inflatable boats early on 6 October. Rescue efforts were managed by the New Zealand Rescue Coordination Centre and the Royal New Zealand Air Force deployed a P-8A Poseidon aircraft to assist. The evacuation began at 7:52 pm on 5 October. Due to challenging weather conditions it took five hours for the lifeboats to reach the shore. One of the rescue boats flipped over during the journey and its occupants walked to shore on the reef. At 10:00pm the British cruise ship *MS Queen Elizabeth* and Norwegian cable-laying ship *MS Lodbrog* responding to the mayday arrived on scene to render aid.



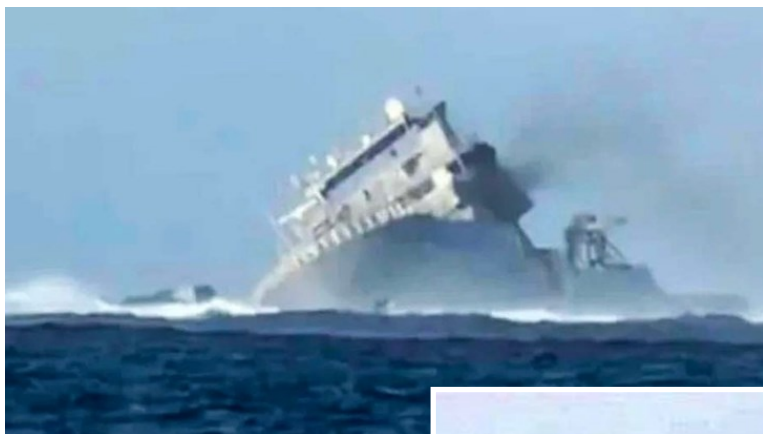
The vessel caught fire by 6:40 am on 6 October and capsized and sank by 9:00 am. At least 17 people were injured in the incident, many from cuts

On 7 October, local residents reported seeing and smelling oil near the wreck. The acting Samoan Prime Minister Tuala Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio said in a press statement, "The HMNZS *Manawanui* is not recoverable and has sunk into the ocean."

At the time of the sinking, the vessel was carrying 950 tonnes of diesel. On 8 October local Samoan residents reported that the sinking caused an oil spill which threatens tourism and fishing in the local area. On the same day the RNZN stated that while oil had leaked from *Manawanui* as it sank naval divers who had inspected the wreck had not detected anything leaking from it. The Samoan Government concurred with this assessment. At this time the wreck was 30 metres (98 ft) below the surface, with the ship lying on its side. The RNZN was considering options to remove fuels and other chemicals from the wreck.

**HMNZS *Manawanui*** had previously served as the civilian survey vessel **MV *Edda Fonn*** in the Norwegian oil and gas industry. The ship was purchased for the RNZN in 2018, and commissioned on 7 June 2019, replacing the hydrographic survey ship HMNZS *Resolution* and diving support vessel HMNZS *Manawanui* (A09).

*Wikipedia*



and abrasions from walking on the reef, and three received hospital treatment, including one for a dislocated shoulder. The crew and passengers, including seven scientists and four personnel from foreign militaries, were accommodated in Samoa before being flown to New Zealand. The RNZN was carrying out works to salvage the vessel and mitigate the environmental impact of the sinking.



## Marking the gravesites of First World War veterans

16 August 2024

Marking First World War Private Graves Grants Program is now open for applications.

More than 330,000 Australians left their homes and families to fight in the First World War, and 60,000 never returned. In the years and decades that followed, far too many of the 270,000 men and women who returned home were buried in unmarked graves.

Private George Thomas Wetzel was injured by an exploding shell after landing at Gallipoli. He returned home to Australia following the war and passed away in 1926. He was laid to rest in an unmarked private grave.

This was not uncommon for many men and women returning home after the First World War and were later buried in unmarked private graves, sometimes because they had no local family, or their families could not afford a headstone. While we don't know why George Wetzel was laid to rest in an unmarked grave, communities around Australia are discovering he is not alone.

The Marking First World War Private Graves Grants Program aims to provide community recognition to those who served in the First World War and were later buried in unmarked private graves.

Because these men and women died of causes unrelated to their war service, they are ineligible for an official commemoration. However, the Australian Government recognises the great sacrifice made by this generation of Australians and honours their service to our country.

This grants program encourages applications from community groups or individuals to help identify and appropriately recognise the unmarked private graves of First World War veterans. Each eligible grave can receive a contribution of up to \$620, an increase from the \$450 contribution available last year, to enable formal recognition of the grave through a plaque or headstone, ensuring their service and sacrifice are not forgotten.

George Wetzel's grave was identified by The South Australian Headstone Project, and they were provided funding to mark his grave from the Marking First World War Private Graves Grant Program. There are many others out there like Private Wetzel, waiting to be identified and appropriately recognised.

Applications for the current round of grants close on 5 November 2024.

Please visit [GrantConnect](#) for more information.

DVA



*Before and after images of the grave of First World War veteran, Private George Thomas Wetzel.*

*Image courtesy of The Headstone Project SA (2023-4 Marking First World War Private Graves Grants Program recipient).*

## Defence Honours and Awards system

On 3 July 2024, the Senate referred an inquiry into Defence honours and awards system to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference Committee for inquiry and report by **28 November 2024**.

Further detail about the scope of the inquiry is provided in the [terms of reference](#). Submissions are sought by **30 August 2024**.

On the 19 September 2024, the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date to **28 February 2025**

## Exercise KAKADU—2024

22 September 2024

The 16th iteration of Australia's largest biennial maritime warfare exercise, Exercise Kakadu, has come to a successful close at the port of Darwin, Northern Territory.

Exercise Kakadu involved warships and personnel from over thirty nations contributing to planning, briefings, sporting and cultural events, to the full spectrum of maritime warfare from constabulary operations through to high end, anti-submarine and anti-air warfare.



*Above; Kakadu participants secured alongside at HMAS Coonawarra Darwin*

*Left: Japanese ship Ariake arriving at HMAS Coonawarra*

*Below: A stern view, Vietnam Peoples Navy Ship 18 and HMCS Vancouver rafted up to Japanese Ship Ariake*

*Photos Defence*



Commander Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Chris Smith, said the enduring success of Exercise Kakadu lay in the development of people-to-people connections.

“The exercise is about so much more than ships and aircraft,” Rear Admiral Smith said “This is about bringing our partners together; to discuss shared values and security challenges and to continue to strengthen our mutual understanding.”

The harbour phase of the exercise featured a Regional Fleet Commanders' conference, including presentations on humanitarian and disaster relief responses and discussions between star ranked officers from over 30 nations.

“One of the outcomes of this is the assurance that we are all united in a common purpose – the security of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific region,” Rear Admiral Smith said.

Exercise Director, Captain David Tietzel, said the exercise also included a number of “firsts”.

“We were delighted to welcome the participation of the Vietnamese People's Navy corvette VPNS18 in a constabulary role,” Captain Tietzel said.

A number of expeditionary logistics tasks were successful including a parachute air drop of stores



from a Royal Australian Air Force C-27 Spartan aircraft to HMAS *Warramunga* and a replenishment of the frigate from fuel reserves at Port Melville in the Tiwi Islands.

“These types of activities demonstrate the versatility of our ships, aircraft and personnel to maintain a competitive edge,” Captain Tietzel said.

Exercise Kakadu, held in the Darwin region, provides a unique and challenging training environment for all participants.

“I'd also like to extend my gratitude to the Northern Territory Government and members of the local community for their ongoing support of the Royal Australian Navy and Exercise Kakadu,” Captain Tietzel said.

*Defence*



## Sea change for Army's new Black Hawks

Army's UH-60M Black Hawks gained their sea legs at recent first-of-class flight trials, completing the first phase of the helicopter's Australian shipboard operations certification.

The trials, conducted by Navy's Aircraft Maintenance and Flight Trials Unit, assessed the aircraft's suitability for operating off the deck and its integration with the ship's aviation facilities, and determined its limitations for ship-board operations.

A Black Hawk from the 6th Aviation Regiment, Holsworthy, was used for the trials conducted at Jervis Bay aboard the Navy's multi-role aviation training craft, Merchant Vessel (MV) *Sycamore*.

Navy MH-60R Seahawk test pilot Lieutenant Peter Jacobs, who was at the controls of the helicopter, said the Seahawk's characteristics were very similar to those of the Black Hawk.

"The Black Hawk is a great aircraft," Lieutenant Jacobs said.

"It's very similar to the Seahawk, however, as the Black Hawk is much lighter there are many other operations and manoeuvres you can conduct with it.

"Overall, the biggest challenge for ship-board operations occur in higher sea states when there is high deck motion. You also have to be mindful of high wind conditions that can lead to additional turbulence around the ship and exceedances in aircraft limitations."

A member of Army's Aviation Command, which was also involved in the trials, said it was: "a little trickier than land operations, because while the aircraft is moving in three dimensions, the landing surface is also moving in three dimensions, making it quite dynamic".

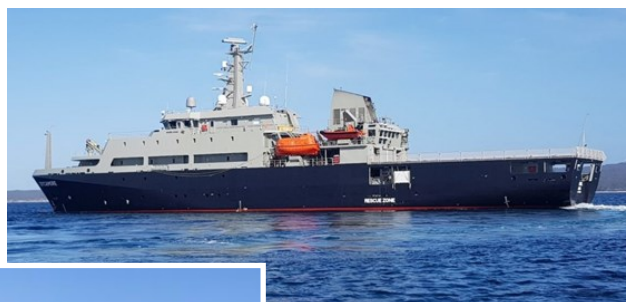


"As an aircrew member, we help the pilots operate the aircraft in a safe manner. We are the eyes and ears rear of them. We have to make sure the tail wheel is over the deck as it is located further back on a Black Hawk than on other helicopters. We also provide extra sets of eyes to ensure clearances between the rotor and the ship," he said.

"Overall, the transition to the UH-60M has been great. It's an aircraft I am familiar with because I was previously a crew member on the S-70A-9 Black Hawks operated by Army. Our new helicopters are interoperable with US Army Black Hawks and other worldwide users. This means we can operate this aircraft efficiently wherever we go."

Forty UH-60M Black Hawks are being delivered to Army under the UH-60M Black Hawk Utility Helicopter Project (LAND 4507).

*By Major Cameron Jamieson*



*Above: MV Sycamore*

*Photo: Defence*



*Other 2: An Army UH-60M Black Hawk trials on the flight deck of the multi-role aviation training vessel MV Sycamore during first-of-class flight trials in Jervis Bay*

*Photos: Private Alex Brown*

## DVA Contacts

### 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

**A snapshot of August 2024:**

DVA received **8,918** claims, compared to 6,386 in August 2023.

DVA made **8,555** determinations, compared to 8,126 in August 2023.

**70,789** claims were with officers for processing and **8,245** claims were yet to be allocated for processing.

The average time taken to process a MRCA IL claim was **306** days in the 2024-25 financial year to date (FYTD) (1 July 2024 to 31 August 2024), compared to 433 days in the corresponding 2023-24 FYTD.

Please [contact us](#) or an [advocate](#) if you have any questions about submitting a claim. More information about [making a claim for a service-related condition](#) and [eligibility for benefits and pay](#).

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(1800838372))

International callers:

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

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

Health Approvals & Home Care Section department of Veterans' Affairs

GPO Box 9998  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

**DVA WEBSITE:**

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

DVA email for prior financial authorisation: [health.approval@dva.gov.au](mailto:health.approval@dva.gov.au)

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

**CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT**

For information about claims for payment visit: [www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim](http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim)

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

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.

 <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">OPEN ARMS</p> <p style="font-size: 18px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">1800 011 046</p>	 <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">SAFE ZONE SUPPORT</p> <p style="font-size: 12px; margin: 0;">FREE ANONYMOUS COUNSELLING LINE CALL 1800 142 072</p>	<p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Defence Family Helpline</p>  <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">1800 624 608</p>	<p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Defence All-hours Support Line</p>  <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">1800 628 036</p>
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