Veterans in Pain: Where the body and mind meet

This document highlights some additional resources to help support veterans experiencing pain.

Treatment services for veterans

Non-Liability Health Care

Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) can pay for treatment for mental health conditions without the need for the conditions to be accepted as related to service. This is known as Non-Liability Health Care and anyone who has served at least one day in the full-time Australian Defence Force (ADF) or reservists with certain service experience can access free treatment for any mental health condition.

Veterans only need to call DVA on free call 1800 555 254 or email nlhc@dva.gov.au to seek support.

A range of treatments are available under these arrangements, including treatment from a general practitioner, medical specialist, psychologist, social worker, occupational therapist, psychiatrist, hospital services, specialist PTSD programs and pharmaceuticals. Veterans can also access Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) on 1800 011 046 to discuss or www.vvcs.gov.au for more information.

Non-Liability Health Care entitlements are entirely separate to the process of claiming compensation. There is no need to lodge an application form. For mental health conditions, a diagnosis is not required. However, veterans may need to provide proof of identity, and service records will be examined to check service eligibility.


Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS)

VVCS provides free, confidential, nation-wide counselling and support to current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families.

VVCS has an integrated, 24/7 service delivery system, that includes counselling (individual, couple and family), group programs, case management, and after-hours telephone support. All VVCS clinicians maintain an understanding of military culture and work with VVCS clients to find effective solutions for improved mental health and wellbeing. If you have a client you consider may benefit from VVCS support, please call 1800 011 046 to discuss.

**ADF Post-discharge GP Health Assessment**

All former serving members of the ADF can access a one-off comprehensive health assessment from their GP. This assessment is available to all former serving members of either the permanent or reserve forces and a Medicare rebate is available.

A key objective of the assessment is to help GPs identify and diagnose the early onset of physical and/or mental health problems among former serving ADF members. DVA has also funded the development of a specifically designed screening tool to support this assessment. It includes screening tools for alcohol use, substance use, posttraumatic stress disorder and psychological distress, as well as information on how to access other DVA services their patient may be eligible for.


**DVA Rehabilitation**

Complementary to primary and allied health treatment, DVA provides whole-of-person rehabilitation to help clients adapt to and recover from injuries or illnesses relating to their ADF service. Rehabilitation can assist individuals coordinate their medical treatment, assist individuals maximise their independent functioning and quality of life, and return to work when they are ready.

DVA’s whole-of-person approach, considers all aspects of a person’s life in an effort to return them to similar health, personal and vocational status before they were injured or became ill. The approach has three key elements:

- **Medical Management** – assisting the client to manage and understand their health conditions and treatment needs through coordination and monitoring of treatment.
- **Psychosocial** – assisting a client with their quality of life and independent functioning.
- **Vocational** – assisting a client return to sustainable employment when the individual is ready.

Veterans may be eligible for rehabilitation assistance through DVA if they are incapacitated for service or work, or have an impairment, as a result of a service injury or disease.

Under a psychosocial rehabilitation plan, veterans can access brief intervention counselling to assist them to manage their pain more effectively. [Section 6.5.1 of the CLIK library](https://at-ease.dva.gov.au/professionals/resources/alcohol-other-substance-use-community-based-treatment-panel-nov-2016) describes more about the assistance available.


**Alcohol and Other Substance Use Disorders – Community Based Treatment Services**

DVA funds community based alcohol and other substance use disorder treatment at over 20 location across the country. Residential programs are the most common form of treatment but all services meet DVA’s core service standards for the treatment of alcohol and other substance use. A list of community based treatment providers can be accessed via

These treatment services are available under the Non-Liability Health Care arrangements to anyone who has served at least one day in the full-time ADF or reservists with certain service experience.

To access these services veterans will require a referral from:

- a medical practitioner;
- personnel of a hospital such as a discharge planner;
- a mental health allied health practitioner registered under Medicare; or
- VVCS.

Further information on this program can be found at:


**Additional family support for veterans and their families**

Additional family support is available to veterans who have returned from recent conflicts overseas and their families, including certain widowed partners of veterans.

The assistance is in addition to the range of services currently available from DVA and provides for:

- additional support with child care in specific circumstances for veterans or for the spouse/partner of the deceased veteran
- counselling support, such as financial counselling or resilience training, for the immediate family members of veterans to manage challenging life circumstances that military service may have contributed to
- home help and counselling support for the spouses/partners of veterans killed in recent conflict or veterans who have taken their life after returning from warlike service, to assist them to adjust to life after the death of their partner.

To receive this additional support, eligibility requirements must be met. Further information can be found at:


**Trauma Recovery Programs: Treatment for veterans and former serving members**

DVA funds Trauma Recovery Programs – PTSD in hospitals across Australia. These programs are required to meet DVA’s National Accreditation Standards for Trauma Recovery Programs – PTSD (2015). These standards provide a framework for ensuring that hospitals provide high quality evidenced based treatment for veterans and former serving members of the ADF who have PTSD.

The standards address the key components of quality service provision:

- clinical governance
- access and targeting
- veterans’ rights and responsibilities
- clinical pathways
- treatment
- clinical data collection.

Other related Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) Group Programs

*Operation Life - Group Programs*

VVCS delivers Operation Life suicide prevention workshops. The workshops raise awareness on suicide prevention and prepare individuals to work with people at risk to increase their immediate safety and to get further help. Operation Life workshops are free for anyone who is concerned about family, friends or colleagues in the veteran community. This program is offered in addition to the Operation Life website and associated mobile App.

*PTSD for Carers and Families*

This program is specifically designed for carers and family members of veterans diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The course provides psychoeducation regarding PTSD and practical skills for carers and family members to help them to help their veteran and themselves.

This workshop is generally delivered as a one-day group program.

*Stepping Out*

The *Stepping Out group program* is a two-day program developed for ADF members and their partners who are about to, or have recently separated from the military.

The program helps participants to examine their transition process and what it means to go from military life to civilian life as an individual and as a family – both in practical and emotional terms. This free program is considered as ‘on duty at another location’ for current ADF members attending the program.

*Lifestyle Management Program*

The *Residential Lifestyle Program* is designed for veterans and their partners who want to improve their wellbeing and enhance their relationship. It provides an opportunity to take time out from the daily routine and focus on a range of lifestyle subjects, such as stress management, communication skills and relationship building.

The program is located in a relaxing venue and enables veterans and their partners to take stock of what is working well in their lives and identify areas that may need some changes. It also provides information and introduces, or reinforces, skills to more effectively manage issues.

Topics covered include: communication; relaxation and stress management; adjustment to civilian life; relationship skills; building resilience; impact of military service on families; diet; motivation, problem solving and goal setting.

The full program is generally held over five days. There is also a modified program held over two weekends.
Other related online resources

Pain management network website
This website is designed to help people gain a better understanding of their pain. The site contains information to enable skill development and knowledge in the self-management of pain in partnership with healthcare providers.


Painaustralia website
Painaustralia is the national peak body working to improve the quality of life of people living with pain, their families and carers, and to minimise the social and economic burden of pain.

http://www.painaustralia.org.au

Operation Life - Mobile App
The Operation Life mobile application is designed to help those at risk deal with suicidal thoughts and is recommended to be used with the support of a clinician. The app provides on-the-go access to relevant emergency and professional support and self-help tools to help users regain control, keep calm and take action to stay safe. The app also contains web links to relevant online resources, including information on suicide awareness, prevention training and counselling.

The supporting Clinicians Guide provides an overview of the app and a step-by-step guide to help you set-up and use the app with your client. The Clinician’s Guide is available for Android or iOS users.

- More information about the app is available at:
  
  
or
  

The effect of mental health concerns on veterans and their families
This Factsheet explains how mental health concerns can affect veterans and their families and what help is available.


The effects of PTSD
This Factsheet describes how Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can affect veterans and their families and outlines how it can be treated.

Transition to civilian life

This factsheet outlines concerns that ADF members and their families may have when transitioning to civilian life and provides suggestions to assist this transition.


At Ease Professional website

DVA’s clearinghouse for mental health professionals, At Ease is a one-stop shop for information, professional development opportunities, referral options, clinical resources, educational resources and the latest in international research.

www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/professionals/

At Ease portal

At Ease can help veterans, ADF personnel, and family members identify the symptoms of poor mental health, find self-help tools and advice, access professional support and learn about treatment options. Families can find advice on how to keep their family healthy while caring for someone with a mental health condition.


Case Formulation eLearning

Case Formulation assists front line therapists to make better sense of complex presentations and to design and plan treatment in collaboration with their patient. This eLearning program assists clinicians to identify and focus on the presenting problems that are likely to have the most impact on recovery and help set priorities for treatment. Users will learn about the case formulation approach, and have the opportunity to hear from experts, watch demonstrations of case formulation, and then practice case formulation based on veteran case studies.

www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/professionals/professional-development

Working with Veterans with mental health problems eLearning

This one-hour eLearning program assists GPs to better understand common veteran mental health conditions, how military service can affect the mental health of serving and ex-serving personnel and referral pathways for DVA clients. The program was developed in partnership with Phoenix Australia: Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and is hosted on the RACGP’s gplearning system. The program is free to RACGP members and participants will accrue CPD points upon completion.

Veteran Mental Health Consultation Companion mobile app

The Veteran Mental Health Consultation Companion (VMHC2) is a free application for tablet devices, designed to assist mental health practitioners in the evidence-based assessment and treatment of their veteran patients. It contains interactive psychometric and assessment measures (including the
PTSD Checklist), details of referral pathways and recommended treatments. The app also contains a range of clinical resources and patient handouts.

Please note that, due to technical issues, VMHC2 is currently only available for Apple devices.

www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/professionals/clinical-resources/vhm-c2_app

**High Res (High Resilience) mobile app**

The *High Res* resilience suite includes a website and app to help serving and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families manage stress and build resilience.

https://at-ease.dva.gov.au/highres/#!/home

**The Right Mix website**

The *Right Mix* website helps serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members better manage their alcohol consumption with information, strategies and online tools. It includes information on how to maintain a healthy balance with alcohol as well as self-help strategies and motivational goal setting to promote behaviour change.


**ON TRACK with the Right Mix app**

The *ON TRACK* app helps serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members keep track of their alcohol consumption in real time and find out what it is costing them financially and physically. It is free to download from the App Store (iOS) and Google Play (Android).


**PTSD Coach Australia mobile app**

The *PTSD Coach Australia* app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur following exposure to trauma. It is free to download from the App Store and Google Play.


**Evidence Compass**

The *Evidence Compass* is a repository for literature reviews on issues of importance to the veteran community. The *Evidence Compass* is designed to be used by researchers, policy-makers, and the broader community. The literature reviews available on this website use the Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) methodology.

Australian Society for Psychological Medicine

The Australian Society for Psychological Medicine, www.aspm.org.au offers training in psychological medicine skills for GPs.

DVA Provider News

Subscribe to DVA Provider News to receive the latest updates and information for working with DVA patients and clients.

Centenary of Anzac Centre

The Anzac Centre comprises a treatment research collaboration to discover new and more effective treatments for posttraumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems, and a nationwide support service for practitioners who treat veterans.

http://anzaccentre.org.au/

Phoenix Australia website

Phoenix Australia has a range of practitioner education and training.

http://phoenixaustralia.org/for-practitioners/
Veteran specific research

Australian Gulf War Veterans’ Health Study (2003)


The Australian Gulf War Veterans’ Health Study investigated whether Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel who served in the Gulf War (1990 – 91) experienced higher rates of adverse physical and psychological health effects than ADF personnel who had not served in the Gulf War. The study was commissioned by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and was conducted by a collaborative medical research team from the Department of Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine at Monash University, Health Services Australia Ltd, the University of Western Australia and The Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health at the University of Melbourne. The study was the first comprehensive health study of a group of Australian war veterans involved in a single theatre of war.

Of the 1,873 Australian Gulf War veterans, 1,456 took part in the study, comprising 80.5% of the target population. The major finding of the study was that Gulf War veterans experienced higher rates of psychological disorders than the control group, in the time since the Gulf War. Gulf War veterans were found to be at significantly increased risk for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) though other anxiety disorders, depression and substance use disorders were also common among the cohort.

The published study is available from:

Australian Gulf War Veterans’ Health Study – Follow Up Health Study (2015)

Authors: Sim, M., Clarke, D., Forbes, A., Glass, D., Gwini, S., Ikin, J., Kelsall, H., McKenzie, D., Wright, B., McFarlane, A., Creamer, M., Horsley, K.

The Australian Gulf War Veterans’ Health Follow Up Study was a longitudinal cohort study that built upon the findings of the 2003 baseline study. As in the 2003 study, the 2015 Follow Up Study aimed to examine the physical, psychological and social health and military-related exposures of ADF veterans who served in the Gulf War as compared to ADF personnel who had not served in the Gulf War. All 1,456 participants of the baseline study were eligible to participate, and 715 Gulf War veterans participated in the Follow Up Study.

The Follow Up Study found Gulf War veterans remained at an increased risk for PTSD, 12-month alcohol disorder and general psychological distress when compared to the comparison group. The difference in risk for these factors between Gulf War veterans and the comparison group widened since the baseline study. The risk of major depression was not significantly different between study groups and both groups were found to be equally resilient.

The published study is available from:
Mental Health in the Australian Defence Force – 2010 ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study (2010)

Authors: McFarlane, A.C., Hodson, S.E., Van Hooff, M., Davies, C.

The ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study was conducted by a collaborative research team comprising representatives from the Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies at the University of Adelaide, the Joint Health Command of the ADF and the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health at the University of Melbourne.

The study examined the prevalence rates of the most common mental disorders, the optimal cut-offs for relevant mental health measures, and the impact of occupational stressors. ADF prevalence rates were compared to an Australian sample matched for age, sex and employment. Nearly 49% of ADF current serving members participated in the study between April 2010 and January 2011.

Prevalence of mental disorders was similar to the Australian community sample, but profiles of specific disorders in the ADF varied. The study identified PTSD as the most prevalent anxiety disorder, with ADF males experiencing PTSD at a significantly higher rate than the general community. ADF males also experienced higher rates of affective disorders than the control sample and both ADF males and females experienced 12-month depressive episodes at higher rates than the general community. Alcohol disorders were significantly lower in ADF personnel than the control sample in the 12 months preceding the study.

The published study is available from:


Mothers in the Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO) Study (2014)

Authors: Lawrence-Wood, E., Jones, L., Hodson, S., Crompvoets, S., McFarlane, A., Neuhaus, S.

The MEAO Study examined the impacts of deployment on female veterans with dependent children. Using a mixed methods design, the study collected standardised self-reported data and qualitative information from participants. The main finding of the study indicated that while the experience of deployment is particularly challenging for female veterans with dependent children, most participants viewed their deployment as a positive and important element of their service. The resilience, creativity and agency of female veterans was key to successfully navigating the demands of motherhood and deployment.

The published study is available from:


Vietnam Veterans’ Family Study (2014)

The Vietnam Veterans’ Family Study was conducted by a research panel commissioned by DVA. The study comprised a number of complimentary research projects that aimed to determine the effect, if any, that active Vietnam service had on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of the sons and daughters of Australian Vietnam veterans. The study cohort comprised 27,000 participants including Vietnam veterans, their partners and children and a control group of veterans (and their children and partners) who served in the ADF during the Vietnam War era, but were not deployed to Vietnam. The study found the majority of children of Vietnam veterans were in good health. However, children of
Vietnam veterans (as compared to children of veterans who were not deployed to Vietnam) were more likely to experience depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal thoughts and planning, skin conditions, migraines and sleep disturbances.

The published study is available from:


Timor-Leste Family Study (2012)


The Timor-Leste Family Study was conducted by The University of Queensland, Centre for Military and Veterans’ Health and funded by DVA. The study aimed to determine the physical, mental and social health impacts and associated risk and protective factors of deployment to Timor-Leste on the families of service members. The study involved 4,186 participants comprising veterans deployed to Timor-Leste between 1999 - 2010 and their partners as well as a control group of veterans who were not deployed to Timor-Leste (and their partners).

The study found no statistically significant differences were found between the physical, mental or family health of family members of people deployed to Timor-Leste when compared with comparison group family members.

The published study is available from:


Rwanda Deployment Health Study (2014)

Authors: Runge, C., Kanesarajah, J., Loos, C., Waller, M., Nasveld, P.

The study was commissioned by DVA and conducted by the Centre for Australian Military and Veterans’ Health. The aim of the study was to examine the health and compensation history and outcomes of veterans of Rwanda deployments (Operation TAMAR (Troops and Medical Aid Rwanda)). The study sample included 680 veterans of Operation TAMAR. Major findings included: half of participating veterans had an accepted compensation claim, with 31% having a claim or treatment for PTSD; medical personnel had fewer compensation claims and medical presentations than rifle company and support personnel; claims were mainly lodged around the time of discharge not at incident; the majority accepted 11-15 years after the deployment.

The published study is available from:

Peacekeepers’ Health Study

Authors: Hawthorne, G., Korn, S., Creamer, M.

The Peacekeepers’ Health Study examined the long-term effects on mental health status, health service use and quality of life of peacekeeping or peacemaking deployments among Australian veterans. The study involved over 1,000 participants from seven United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions between 1989 and 2002, who had transitioned out of full-time service in the Australian Defence Force. Major findings included: most peacekeepers reported they were in good, very good or excellent health, though 30% of participants had at least one diagnosable mental health condition.

The published study is available from:

Appendix: Hospitals providing trauma recovery programs

**New South Wales**

**St John of God Hospital – Richmond**
177 Grose Vale Road
NORTH RICHMOND NSW 2754
Phone: (02) 4570 6100
Free Call: 1800 808 339
Fax: (02) 4571 1552
Website: www.sjog.org.au

**Wesley Hospital – Ashfield**
91 Milton Street
ASHFIELD NSW 2131
Phone: 1300 924 522
Website: www.wesleymission.org.au

**Wesley Hospital – Kogarah**
7 Blake Street
KOGARAH NSW 2217
Phone: 1300 924 522
Website: www.wesleymission.org.au

**Baringa Private Hospital – Coffs Harbour**
31 Mackays Road
COFFS HARBOUR NSW 2450
Phone: (02) 6659 4444
Website: www.baringaprive.com.au

**Brisbane Waters Private Hospital**
21 Vidler Avenue, WOY WOY, NSW, 2256
Phone: (02) 4341 9522
Website: www.brisbanewatersprivatehospital.com.au

**Mayo Private Hospital**
2 Potoroo Drive, TAREE, NSW 2430
PO BOX 480, TAREE, NSW 2430
Phone: (02) 6539 3600
Fax: (02) 6552 0059
Website: www.mayoprivate.com.au
Queensland

Greenslopes Private Hospital
Newdegate Street
GREENSLOPES QLD 4120
Phone: (07) 3394 7111
Fax: (07) 3394 7322
Website: www.greenslopesprivate.com.au

Mater Health Services (Townsville)
42 Diprose Street
PIMLICO QLD 4812
Phone: (07) 4727 4187
Fax: (07) 4755 0801
Email: tru@matertsv.org.au
Website: www.matertsv.org.au
Please note this is a non-residential programme, however, out of town residents are booked into a nearby motel.

Toowong Private Hospital
Day Treatment Services
496 Milton Road
PO Box 822
TOOWONG QLD 4066
Phone: (07) 3721 8055
Fax: (07) 3721 8054
Website: www.toowongprivatehospital.com.au

Sunshine Coast Private Hospital
12 Elsa Wilson Drive
BUDERIM QLD 4556
PO BOX 5050
Maroochydore BC 4558
Phone: (07) 5430 3305
Fax: (07) 5430 3375
Website: www.buderimprivatehospital.com.au

Belmont Private Hospital
1220 Creek Road, CARINA, QLD 4152
PO BOX 24, CARINA, QLD 4152
Phone: (07) 3398 3105
Email: belmontprivate@healthecare.com.au
Website: www.belmontprivate.com.au
Townsville Private Clinic
136 Wills Street, TOWNSVILLE, QLD, 4810
PO BOX 5048, TOWNSVILLE, QLD, 4810
Phone: (07) 4431 1600
Fax: (07) 4431 1666
Email: townsville@healthecare.com.au
Website: www.townsvilleprivate.com.au

South Australia
Repatriation General Hospital
Southern Adelaide Local Health Network
Daws Road
DAW PARK SA 5041
Phone: (08) 8276 9666
Fax: (08) 8277 8267
Website: www.rgh.sa.gov.au

Victoria
Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital
Psychological Trauma Recovery Service
300 Waterdale Road
WEST HEIDELBERG VIC 3081
Phone: (03) 9496 4138
Fax: (03) 9496 2418
Website: www.austin.org.au

The Geelong Clinic
98 Townsend Road
ST ALBANS PARK 3219
Phone: (03) 5240 0700
Fax: (03) 5248 4852
Website: www.thegeelongclinic.com.au

Western Australia
Hollywood Clinic
95 Monash Avenue
NEDLANDS WA 6009
Phone: (08) 9346 6801
Fax: (08) 9346 682
Website: www.hollywoodclinic.com.au
Northern Territory

At this time, there are no PTSD programs accredited in the Northern Territory.
Inquiries regarding veterans who reside in the Northern Territory should be made initially to the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service in Darwin on 1800 011 046 or to Daw Park Hospital in Adelaide on (08) 8276 9666 or the Mater Hospital in Townsville on (07) 4727 4187.

Australian Capital Territory

At this time, there are no PTSD programs accredited in the Australian Capital Territory.
Inquiries regarding veterans who reside in the Australian Capital Territory should be made initially to the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service on 1800 011 046 or to one of the programs in New South Wales.

Tasmania

At this time, there are no PTSD programs accredited in Tasmania.
Inquiries regarding veterans who reside in Tasmania should be made initially to the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service on 1800 011 046 or to one of the programs in Victoria.