

**Defence Force Welfare Association
Victoria Branch Inc**



Member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations



**INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT
JULY 2023**

Dear DFWA (Vic) member,

Welcome to the DFWA (Vic) Branch information supplement for July 2023.

Included in this supplement is information on:

- Branch President's Message
- DFWA (Vic) activities since last supplement
- DFWA (Vic) Executive Committee meeting dates
- Digital Veterans Card - Victoria
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- Veteran Homelessness Resources For Community Housing Organisations
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Regards

DARYLL TOPP
President
DFWA Vic

GREG POWELL
Secretary / Treasurer
DFWA Vic

BRANCH PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DFWA (VIC) ACTIVITIES SINCE THE LAST SUPPLEMENT

Since the last Information Supplement, DFWA (Vic) has participated in the following veteran activities:

- ESO Veterans Information Fair at Steampacket Gardens Geelong in June. This was a Legacy sponsored event that attracted ESO involvement from Geelong and Ballarat based veteran support groups. The benefit of good weather meant that the event was visited by several thousand people over the four hours that the event was run. Legacy's management of the event was excellent and ensured all participants and visitors made the most of their opportunities to network and distribute veteran welfare information.
- DFWA (Vic) Annual General Meeting was held on 30 May. A full report of the AGM will be provided to members once the meeting minutes are approved at the Branch Executive Committee meeting in August.
- The RAAF Museum, located at RAAF Base Point Cook, is seeking volunteers to assist with enhancing visitor experiences at the Museum. If you are interested, please contact the DFWA Victorian President, Daryll Topp via email: presvicbranch@dfwa.org.au

DFWA (VIC) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2023 MEETING DATES

Remaining Branch Executive Committee meeting dates for 2023 are:

- Tuesday 29 August
- Tuesday 28 November

DFWA (Vic) Branch members are always welcome to attend Branch Executive Committee meetings which are normally held at the Mail Exchange Hotel, corner of Bourke and Spencer Street, Melbourne. Meetings commence at 11 am.

To ensure that sufficient copies of relevant documents are available to all meeting attendees, Branch members wishing to attend a Branch Executive Meeting are requested to advise the Branch Secretary / Treasurer, Greg Powell, at least five working days before the meeting date. Advice of intention to attend can be given by phoning 9282 4959 or sent by email to vicbranch@dfwa.org.au

DIGITAL VETERANS CARD - VICTORIA

Victoria thanks Australian Defence Force (ADF) members for their service. The digital Veterans Card - Victoria (available from 1 July 2023) entitles all past and present ADF members living in Victoria to discounts and benefits including:

- \$100 off light vehicle rego
- free trailer and caravan rego
- free marine licence
- fishing licence exemption
- free transport on Anzac and Remembrance Days
- veteran employment programs

A full list of benefits is available at www.vic.gov.au/concessions-veterans.

All past and present ADF members, living in Victoria, can get a digital Veterans card. You can be on active duty, a veteran, or in the reserves. Civilian ADF employees aren't eligible for the digital Veterans card.

To apply for a Veterans Card – Victoria you'll need one of 3 ID numbers:

- PMKeyS number
- Regimental or Service number
- DVA Card number

You'll also need to share 2 identity documents with Services Victoria choose from:

- Medicare card
- Australian birth certificate
- Australian driver licence / learner permit (current)
- Australian passport current or less than three years expired
- ImmiCard current or less than 3 years expired
- Foreign passport with a valid Australian visa with working rights
- Australian citizenship certificate

Your names on the 2 documents must match.

Services Victoria will pass on your info to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to get your Veterans Card - Victoria. The Victorian acts that cover this collection notice include:

- Service Victoria Act 2018
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Public Records Act 1973
- Health Records Act 2001

Services Victoria may also collect anonymous data on how you use the card that may be shared with other Government departments and agencies. Services Victoria won't use your info for any other purpose unless permitted by law. You can contact Services Victoria to get your personal info or DFFH to get more info about the program.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG SERVICES FOR VETERANS

Veteran Gold and White Card holders can access the following services for treatment for alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse disorders:

- general medical
- psychiatry and psychology
- relationship support
- hospital care for detox support
- occupational therapy
- Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has arrangements with contracted hospitals for inpatient AOD rehabilitation services. Treatment at contracted hospitals does not require prior financial approval. Information about contracted hospitals can be found on the DVA website.

Veterans require a referral from a medical practitioner for AOD treatment at a contracted hospital, if they haven't been an inpatient or had contact with the hospital previously (i.e. as part of an outpatient program). If the veteran has been an inpatient or had contact with the hospital, they can self-refer.

DVA may fund community based AOD services, including residential rehabilitation, under its prior financial authorisation process. In order to access services through this process, individuals must be eligible for treatment, and referred by a medical practitioner. Prior financial approval can be sought using our D9314 form.

Health providers also can let their veteran patients know about interventions for alcohol and substance use conditions offered by Open Arms. Open Arms can provide care coordination support for veterans and eligible family members to access specialist drug and alcohol treatment services, including pharmacotherapy and inpatient options. Health providers can refer patients to Open Arms or veterans can contact 1800 011 046.

For more information on DVA's AOD arrangements for veterans call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or visit the DVA website.

VETERAN HOMELESSNESS RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING ORGANISATIONS

A range of resources for community housing providers tailored to the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness was launched in March in a joint initiative by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA).

The resources provide an overview of the veteran experience of homelessness, including:

- risk and protective factors
- service needs
- available referral pathways
- how to tailor support for veterans and families.

A key component of the resources is a toolkit containing factsheets and training materials to better equip community housing providers to consider the unique life experience and challenges that veterans face and support their housing needs. An industry standard of providing housing services to veterans has also been introduced to the sector as part of the launch.

While the resources were designed for community housing organisations, they could be helpful to any provider supporting a member of the veteran community who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness.

To access the resources and more information, visit the Community Housing Industry Association's website.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Recent developments in the ongoing investigation by the Australian Federal Police and the Office of the Special Investigator (OST) may understandably have caused stress and anxiety in the community, including veterans, their families, and those who provide clinical care for them.

DVA is not part of this investigation Its role is to support veterans and their families.

If you know someone in need, please pass on the important message below:

- **DVA is there to help.**

To anyone who is serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), or has served, or is close to a serving or ex-serving member, please remember

- You should be immensely proud of your service, or your loved one's service, and there is overwhelming respect in the Australian community for your service and sacrifice.
- If you need help, reach out and get the specialist support you need. Support is readily available through DVA and is routinely used by thousands of serving personnel and veterans every year.
- Families, particularly children and teenagers, could also be affected and there is support available for them as well.
- DVA does not need to know what happened overseas. DVA just want to make sure you're okay. And help you cope with what you are feeling today.

- **Clinical Resources**

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.

All current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families can access Open Arms – Veterans Families Counselling. Open Arms is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling. It is not part of the Department of Defence. Importantly the Open Arms website provides a range of self-help resources and wellbeing tools. Visit openarms.gov.au or phone 1800 011 046.

In addition, Safe Zone Support is an anonymous counselling service that has been established to support veterans and their families impacted by the IGADF Inquiry. Safe Zone Support is staffed by specialist counsellors who have an understanding of military culture and experience and can be accessed at: openarms.gov.au/safe-zone-support or 1800 142 072. Calls to Safe Zone Support are not recorded. Both current members of the ADF and veterans can access this service any time, day or night.

Family of veterans or service personnel who are concerned about the impact the arrest or the Inquiry may have on a loved one, can call DVA to seek guidance on the support available.

Veterans and their families who are unsure what support is available should contact DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).

- **Non Liability Health Care – Mental Health**

All veterans with at least one day's full time service are entitled to mental health treatment without a liability claim. Further details are available on the DVA website.

- **Veterans Specific DVA Programs**

DVA's Veterans Health Check and Co-ordinated Veterans Care programs provide unique item numbers for in-depth veteran health assessments.

- **Ex-service and non-government organisations**

Ex-service organisations (ESOs) play a vital and complementary role to DVA by providing mateship, advocacy and welfare support. Veterans and their families can find ESO contact details on the DVA website.

There are also a number of excellent non-service related community organisations available, such as Lifeline (call 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support or visit www.lifeline.org.au).

SIMPLIFIED PROCESS FOR DVA FUNDING OF MEDICINAL CANNABIS

DVA has updated its Medicinal Cannabis Framework which will streamline access to funded medicinal cannabis for eligible DVA clients.

Under the updated Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Medicinal Cannabis Framework (the Framework), general practitioners (GPs) can now seek approval of funding for medicinal cannabis without the need for a non-GP specialist's assessment in many circumstances. Applications may be made over the phone by calling the Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre on 1800 552 580.

Changes to the Framework include a new tier-based approvals approach, which considers the active ingredients, dose parameters and regulatory factors in decision making. Each application will continue to be considered on a case by case basis.

The prescribing practitioner is still required to report why medicinal cannabis is clinically indicated and confirm that the potential for an adverse event or contraindication for the person has been assessed.

DVA has a duty of care to veterans and their families to fund treatments that are proven to be effective, safe and comply with legislation. The updated Medicinal Cannabis Framework provides greater flexibility to enable DVA to adapt and fund more health conditions in the future, as clinical evidence emerges.

NEW TAX OFFSET FOR SOME VETERANS AFFECTED BY THE *DOUGLAS* DECISION

Veterans who are entitled to the new *Veterans' superannuation (invalidity pension) tax offset* (VSTO) will have their affected tax return/s amended by the ATO and be issued an amended notice of assessment.

The ATO advises that veterans do not need to do anything different. Veterans should include their military invalidity pension payment amounts in their tax return at Question 8 'Australian superannuation lump sum payments', and the ATO will do the rest.

The *Veterans' superannuation (invalidity pension) tax offset* (VSTO) removes the additional tax some veterans would pay because of the *Douglas* decision. The *Douglas* decision covers invalidity pensions paid to veterans under the MSBS (Military Super Benefit Scheme) or DFRDB (Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits) scheme that commenced on or after 20 September 2007.

The ATO is sending letters to veterans who are entitled to a VSTO amount greater than \$0 and have lodged their 2020–21 and/or 2021–22 income year tax returns. The ATO has advised that it is amending affected veterans' tax returns to apply the new tax offset.

When relevant veterans lodge tax returns in the future, the ATO will treat their invalidity pension as a super lump sum. If veterans are entitled to a VSTO amount, the ATO will calculate it for them and apply it to their tax return.

The ATO says it is committed to amending prior year tax returns as quickly as possible/

You can get the latest information about the *Douglas* decision and the VSTO on the ATO's website at ato.gov.au/militarysuper.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE - NEW RESEARCH PAPER RELEASED

The Royal Commission recently published a fourth external research paper, *Machine learning analysis of risk factors for progression from suicide ideation to suicide-related behaviours in contemporary Australian Defence Force members*, on our website. This research paper, prepared by the University of Melbourne, explores the use of machine learning to identify an increase in risk of suicide in serving and ex-serving Defence members.

The Royal Commission's research program seeks to identify and explore cultural, structural and systemic issues related to serving and ex-serving ADF member suicide and suicidality. The Royal Commission undertakes various forms of evidence gathering, including internal and external research, to provide context and background information, fill critical knowledge and evidence gaps, and summarise existing findings related to Defence and veteran suicide. The Royal Commission's research program is crucial to improving the Commissioners understanding of these complex issues.

More research papers will be published over the life of the Royal Commission, in addition to the four research papers that have already been published on Royal Commission's website (www.defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au). These research papers may inform the work of the Royal Commission; however, the views or findings expressed in the research papers do not necessarily reflect those of the Commissioners.

DFWA ANNUAL RAFFLE

The Annual DFWA Raffle was drawn on Tuesday 18 July with the following results:

1 st Prize	G. Clarke	NSW	ticket No: 38435
2 nd Prize	E. Gimm	QLD	ticket No: 22176
3 rd Prize	S. Szajner	VIC	ticket No: 5506

Consolation Prizes:

P. Richards	NSW	ticket No: 29121
K. Kinghorne	SA	ticket No: 890
A. Tucker	SA	ticket No: 1490
R. Luxford	NSW	ticket No: 3183

Congratulations to all winners and thank you for your support of the 2023 Raffle.

NEW DVA (INTERIM) REPATRIATION COMMISSIONER

(information in this article is courtesy of the Australian Veteran News)

For the first time a junior non-commissioned officer will be appointed as the new Department of Veterans Affairs (Interim) Repatriation Commissioner. In a break from precedent, Glen Ferrarotto, a highly respected member of the veteran community; former Corporal; Royal Australian Electrical Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) Vehicle Mechanic (VM); Afghanistan veteran; businessman; and young father, has been chosen for the position on the retirement of Don Spinks AM, who leaves having filled the role since 2019.

Ferrarotto is a comparatively young leader in the veteran sphere, but already has an impressive CV. Growing up in Victoria, Ferrarotto joined the Australian Regular Army in 1998 and trained to be a RAEME VM. His career saw him deployed from Malaysia, to Kuwait, and then to Afghanistan, where he was deployed twice as a patrol mechanic with the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG)

In 2008, Ferrarotto transitioned out of the Army and into the private sector. He founded a recruitment agency focused on ex-service men, women, and their families. Both Ferrarotto and this business have been recognised with the Prime Ministers Award for Most Outstanding Individual Contributor to Veteran Employment, and Excellence in Supporting Veteran Employment. Since 2021, he's been a Veteran Engagement Advisor to DVA, as well as a member of the Victorian Veterans Council.

Ferrarotto has served as President of the Montmorency Eltham RSL sub-branch and as a member of the RSL Victoria State Executive.

DONATIONS TO DFWA (VIC)

All donations to DFWA are tax deductible. The Branch would like to acknowledge and thank the considerable number of members who have very generously donated to the DFWA Vic Branch during the past year. Without your generous support the Branch would not be able to continue to support Victoria's veterans and their families.

Another way to support the continued work of DFWA is by including a bequest in your will.

ARE YOU GETTING YOUR ENTITLEMENTS?

Members who require help with DVA claims please contact the Vic Branch office or our collocated advocates in MVSSC as follows:

Telephone: (03) 9282 6791, or 9282 7090

Fax: (03) 9282 7089

Email: gregpowell@metvets.org or metvets@metvets.org

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

COMSUPER; 1300 338 240 Fax: (02) 6275 7010

DVA: 13 32 54 OR 1800 555 254 (If calling from regional Australia)

DVA WEBSITE www.dva.gov.au

COMMONWEALTH CARELINK CENTRES 1800 052 222

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling 1800 011 046 www.openarms.gov.au

Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) 1800 624 222

Defence Honours and Awards www.defence.gov.au/medals 1800 333 362

Shrine of Remembrance, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne
web: shrine.org.au | 03 9661 8100 | email: reception@shrine.org.au

Victorian Government Veterans Branch veterans@dffh.vic.gov.au

Media Release - Minister Keogh - 50 years since last Australian troops left Vietnam

Department of Veterans' Affairs



THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

MEDIA RELEASE

30 JUNE 2023

50 YEARS SINCE LAST AUSTRALIAN TROOPS LEFT VIETNAM

Today we mark 50 years since the withdrawal of the last Australian troops from Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Australia's participation in the war was formally declared at an end when the Governor-General issued a proclamation on 11 January 1973. The only combat troops remaining in Vietnam were a platoon guarding the Australian embassy in Saigon.

These six soldiers were the last to leave on 30 June 1973, however over the course of Australia's longest 20th century conflict, many soldiers were involved in safeguarding our Embassy.

For much of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, soldiers of the First Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy or from Headquarters Australian Forces Vietnam in Saigon protected the Australian Embassy.

Some 60,000 Australians served in the Vietnam War, more than 3,000 were wounded and 523 lost their lives.

Throughout 2023, the Australian Government is recognising the contribution of our Vietnam veterans, their service in Vietnam and their role as integral members of the ex-service community in the decades since the war.

On Vietnam Veterans' Day, 18 August 2023, a national commemorative service will be held in Canberra to recognise the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

For more information, visit the Department of Veterans' Affairs website: dva.gov.au/vietnam50

MEDIA CONTACT:

DVA Media: media.team@dva.gov.au

Korean Veterans' Day 27 July

On 27 July each year, we commemorate Korean Veterans' Day. This is the anniversary of the day in 1953 when an armistice was signed to end the fighting in Korea. This day is a time for us to remember the almost 18,000 Australians who served in the war, including some 340 who lost their lives.

The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 when the Korean People's Army of North Korea invaded South Korea. The North Koreans captured South Korea's capital, Seoul, within days.

The United Nations Security Council declared North Korea the aggressor and set up the [United Nations Command](#), a joint force to support South Korea.

Australia was one of 21 members of the United Nations to send military forces to help South Korea.

The Korean War became one of the most destructive conflicts of the modern era. Many of Korea's major cities were affected. The death toll rose to approximately 3 million, including many civilians.

Fighting formally ended on 27 July 1953 when an armistice was signed by officials from the United States, North Korea and China.

Some Australian defence personnel remained in Korea until 1957. They served as part of a multinational peacekeeping force in the post-armistice period.

The Korean War is sometimes referred to as the 'forgotten war' because it occurred between two very high-profile conflicts, World War II and the Vietnam War.

SPONSOR INFORMATION



The Bradford Exchange kindly sponsors DFWA National. Since the early 1970s, The Bradford Exchange is recognised as the premier source for a vast array of unique limited-edition collectables and fine gifts that offer an exceptionally high level of artistry, innovation and enduring value.

The Bradford Exchange's mission is to delight collectors and gift buyers alike by providing an exciting and satisfactory online shopping experience second to none.

Further information on the goods and services available from the Bradford Exchange can be found on the website www.bradford.com.au or by calling toll free 1300 725 103 between 8am-5pm Monday to Friday.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF DFWA VICTORIA