

# NSW Veterans Strategy and Action Plan

2025-2030

A whole-of-government strategy and a whole-of-community approach for veterans and their families



### **Acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People**

The NSW Government pays respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

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Anzac Day March, Sydney 2024. Photo by Salty Dingo.

# Message from the Premier



As Premier, it is with great pride that I present the second NSW Government Veterans Strategy – our commitment to those who have sacrificed so much for their nation to ensure our freedoms and way of life. Serving as a roadmap for the next 6 years, key components of this Strategy include delivering a new Memorial to acknowledge our contemporary veterans and their families, a commitment to commemoration and respect for service and expanding the employment assistance we provide veterans to their partners. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has also played a crucial role in informing this Veterans Strategy. We are working even harder with governments across Australia to ensure that veterans and their families are supported and connected in their communities, that we are resourced to provide specific veterans services, and have capacity to increase support for those who need it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Minns". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

THE HON CHRIS MINNS MP  
NSW PREMIER

# Message from the Minister



As Minister for Veterans, it is a privilege to present our Government's Veterans Strategy, a comprehensive framework designed to articulate our approach to supporting veterans and their families in NSW. We have engaged with veterans, their families and Ex-Service Organisations to focus on the issues that matter most to them. Through the actions in this Strategy, we honour and thank veterans and their families for their service. Our Strategy includes new initiatives, like assistance for veterans in correctional facilities, as well as resources to support those who may be affected by problem gambling. We are also proud to be partnering with RSL NSW and Monash University to conduct research that aims to understand and improve support services for women veterans in NSW.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

THE HON DAVID HARRIS MP  
MINISTER FOR VETERANS

## A guide to acronyms

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ADF</b>	Australian Defence Force
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>CSNSW</b>	Corrective Services NSW (NSW Government)
<b>CSTC</b>	Commonwealth State and Territory Committee
<b>DCJ</b>	Department of Communities and Justice (NSW Government)
<b>DOE</b>	Department of Education (NSW Government)
<b>DVA</b>	Department of Veterans' Affairs (Australian Government)
<b>DVSRC</b>	Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide
<b>ESO</b>	Ex-Service Organisation
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Area
<b>NCVH</b>	National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare
<b>ORG</b>	Office of Responsible Gambling (NSW Government)
<b>OVA</b>	Office for Veterans Affairs (NSW Government)
<b>PAMS</b>	Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship program
<b>PD</b>	Premier's Department (NSW Government)
<b>PW</b>	Public Works (NSW Government)
<b>RSL NSW</b>	The Returned and Services League of Australia (NSW Branch)
<b>SL</b>	State Library of NSW (NSW Government)
<b>TAFE NSW</b>	Technical and Further Education Commission (NSW Government)
<b>VEP</b>	Veterans Employment Program (NSW Government)
<b>VMC</b>	Veterans' Ministerial Council
<b>WNSW</b>	Women NSW (NSW Government)



Remembrance Day  
service, 2024. Photo  
by Salty Dingo.

# The Strategy



# Our commitment to the veteran community

The NSW Veterans Strategy 2025–2030 sets out a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to support and acknowledge the important contribution veterans and their families make across NSW. It builds on the inaugural NSW Veterans Strategy 2021–2024 and initiatives already underway across government and the community. It also builds on significant consultation. In 2020, over 2,000 individual veterans, reservists, family members, and supporters gave their input through an online survey. Further, 16 focus groups were attended by more than 140 veterans, their family members, support providers, and advocates from across NSW. Through ongoing engagement with veterans and their families and Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) we have ensured that lived experience has remained central to the development of this Strategy. At our annual regional forums, we brought the Australian Government and key ESOs together to speak to local communities about services and initiatives for veterans, particularly in health, education, and employment and to hear from veterans and their families to help us shape new initiatives and ensure we are better placed to respond to challenges. Regular meetings with key ESOs also ensure that our policy and programs are based on sector expertise.

We also know more about veterans than ever before. For the first time, the 2021 Census asked about current and former service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) has used the census information to develop a comprehensive understanding of the demographics of the veteran community. This helps us better understand the profile of veterans in NSW, their needs, and how government, as well as other organisations can better support them in their civilian lives.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's (DVSRC) final report and recommendations have also been an important impetus for this second Strategy. The NSW Government advocated for the establishment of the DVSRC and contributed to its investigations through attendance at hearings, provision of information, and a submission. We acknowledge those in the veteran community who fought and campaigned long and hard for the establishment of the DVSRC and we acknowledge those who shared their personal experiences with the Commissioners through private sessions and through submissions. We acknowledge those who attended hearings and those who gave evidence. Their contribution gave the Commissioners deep insight. It ensured that the final report's analysis of suicide and suicidality was exhaustive. It also enabled the development of comprehensive recommendations. These recommendations and the final report guide us towards a better understanding of the complex cultural and systemic issues relevant to suicide and suicidality, and they also provide a framework for change. We acknowledge that change is needed. We are committed to working with the Australian Government to help ensure better support for veterans and their families. This Strategy does not represent our final response to these complex recommendations. Instead, it marks the first step in our response to the DVSRC recommendations and symbolises our long-term commitment to meaningful reform.



A Star Ceremony in the Anzac Memorial's Hall of Memory to commemorate the end of the Gallipoli campaign, 2024. Photo by NSW Government.





We have used the learnings from our first Strategy, our engagement, and the recommendations of the DVSR to help shape our Strategy. This continues to be framed around four themes. The first theme, 'Recognition and Commemoration', acknowledges the importance of recognition and commemoration as an enduring testament to sacrifice. The second theme, 'Employment and Training', speaks to the link between employment and wellbeing. It recognises that it makes good business sense for organisations to access the skills and experience of well-trained veterans, while acknowledging that veterans and their families can sometimes struggle to translate their capabilities into civilian requirements. A third theme, 'Advocacy and Community Engagement', recognises that services need to be accessible, and where possible, coordinated so that veterans and their families can receive appropriate supports wherever they live.

When government cooperates, and when we share our good work, the community prospers, and we are well placed to respond to the unique challenges that service life can bring. The final theme, 'Support', acknowledges that some veterans need additional assistance, and that the NSW Government has an important role to play both in providing services to veterans and their families, but also in working with other organisations responsible for veterans. While the Australian Government has primary responsibility for veterans, the NSW Government also has an important role to play. The Strategy outlines the NSW Government's responsibility for veterans. It delivers services to all citizens, including veterans and their families, and delivers a suite of programs and initiatives aimed to honour service and ease the transition into civilian life.

# The Veterans Strategy at a glance

Theme	Outcomes
<b>1 Recognition and Commemoration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The service and sacrifice of veterans is honoured throughout the community.</li><li>• The diversity and contribution of the veteran community is recognised.</li><li>• The knowledge and understanding of the contributions of veterans and the impact of wars on Australia is increased.</li><li>• Our war memorial heritage is protected and conserved.</li></ul>
<b>2 Employment and Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Veterans and their spouse/partner have tools and resources to assist them to participate in employment.</li><li>• Organisations understand that veterans have transferable skills and capabilities.</li><li>• Peer networks connect veterans to information in the workplace.</li></ul>
<b>3 Advocacy and Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Government, within NSW and across Australia, is better coordinated so that veterans can receive support wherever they live.</li><li>• The veteran community is engaged and connected to trusted information.</li></ul>
<b>4 Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support is available for veterans and their families who may require additional assistance.</li></ul>

## Veterans in NSW

### Who are our veterans?

Veterans include all ex-serving personnel who have served at least one day in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), including reservists, personnel who experienced operational deployments and personnel who served in peacekeeping and peace-making operations, including humanitarian and domestic support operations.

## NSW Veteran Landscape - 2021 Census

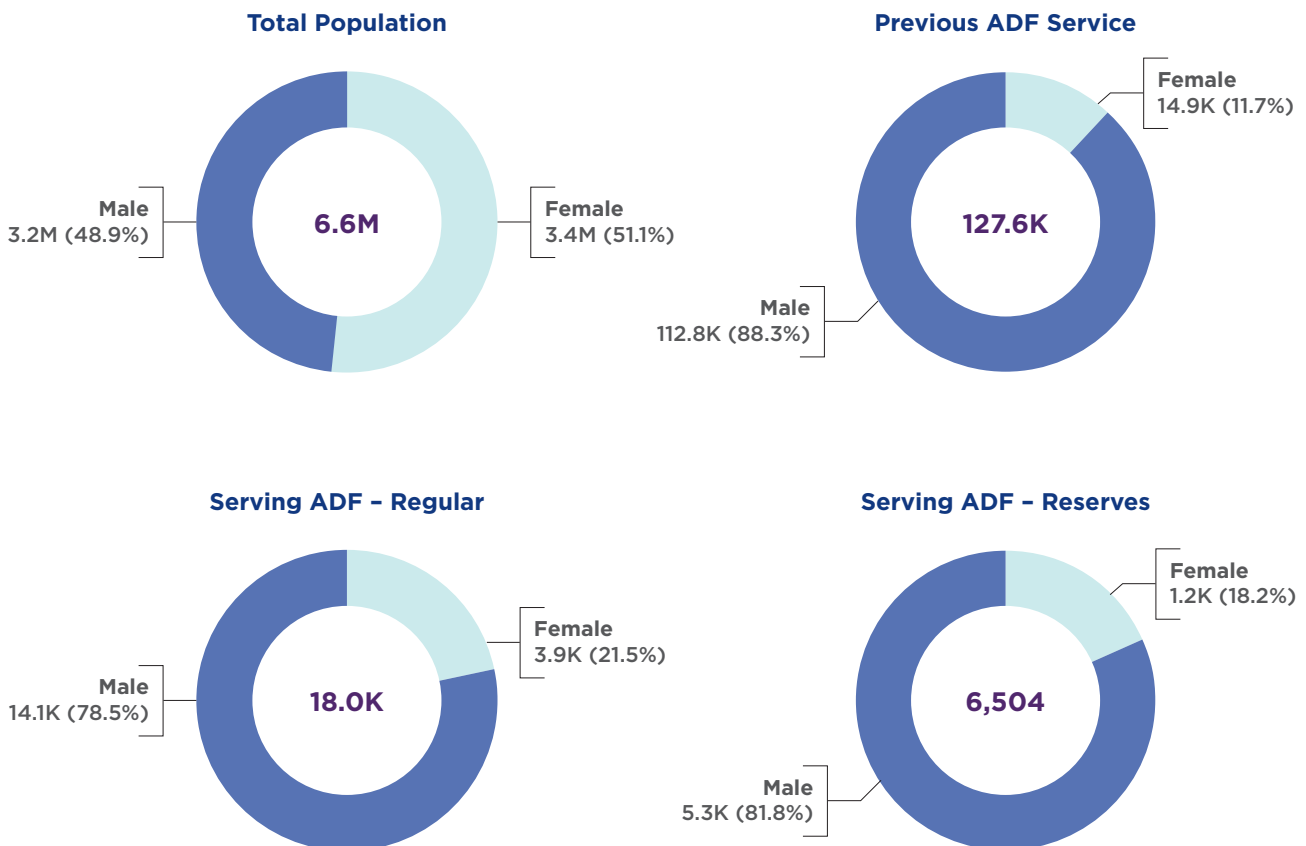
According to the 2021 ABS Census, almost 130,000 veterans live across NSW, with almost 60% living within regional NSW. In addition, over 88,000 veterans and family members of veterans are current clients of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Every year around 1,200 service members leave the ADF to live in NSW with around 40% of these veterans moving to Sydney.

Almost 15% of the veteran population in NSW are aged under 45, 30% are aged between 45 and 65 and more than half (55%) are aged 65 or over.

Although females make up over 51% of the general population, they only make up approximately 12% of the veteran population in NSW, and almost 22% of current serving ADF members.

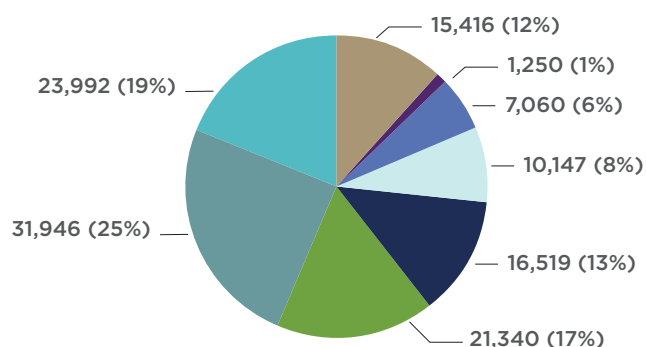
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### Gender Distribution

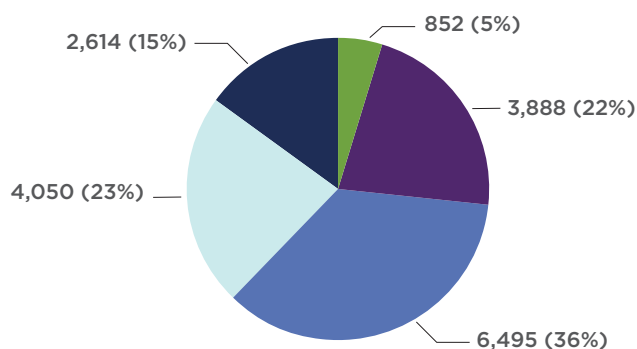


## Age Distribution

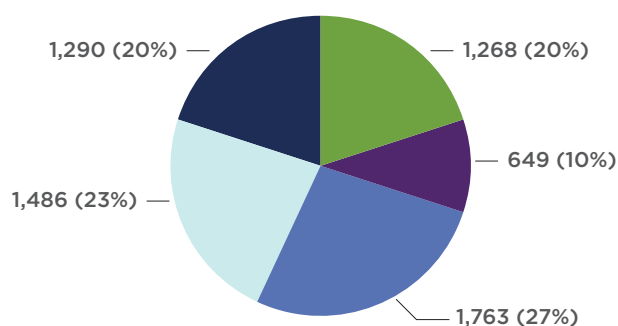
Previous ADF Service - 127,649



Serving ADF (Regular) - 17,950



Serving ADF (Reserves) - 6,504



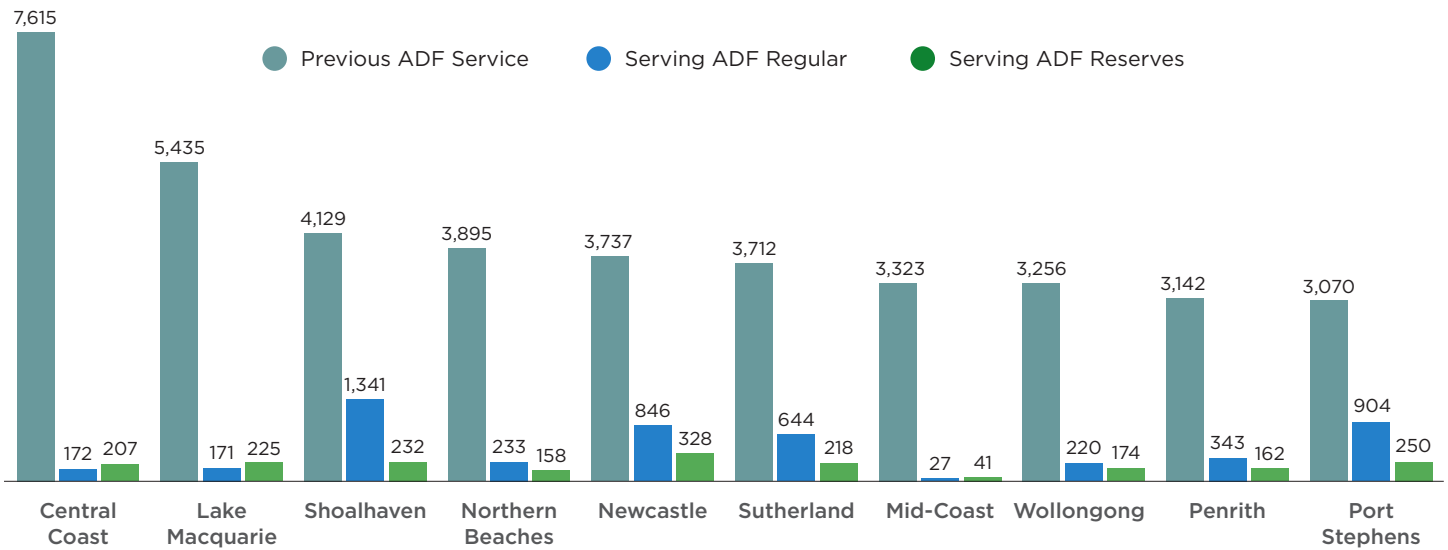
## How do we use veteran census data in NSW?

The Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) has used the census data to develop an interactive report that filters data by defined regional groupings and/or local government areas (LGAs). It covers population, gender, age distribution, as well as the distribution of current and proposed veterans' hubs and Ex-Service Organisations. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) data has also been added to the analysis providing the numbers of DVA pensioners and treatment card holders.

The OVA report is interactive and provides a statewide view of the data, allowing the user to filter the report by defined regional groupings and/or LGAs. OVA shares this information across government and with the veteran community to build awareness and support for programs and initiatives that are of benefit to the veteran community. This data helps us better understand the profile of veterans in NSW, their needs, and how government, as well as other organisations can better support them in their civilian lives.

The OVA report revealed that the LGA of the Central Coast has the highest population of veterans in NSW with over 7,600 veterans (almost 6% of the total veteran population) residing in the LGA. It also demonstrated that the Central Coast has the highest number of veterans across all age brackets as well as the highest number of female and male veterans of all LGAs.

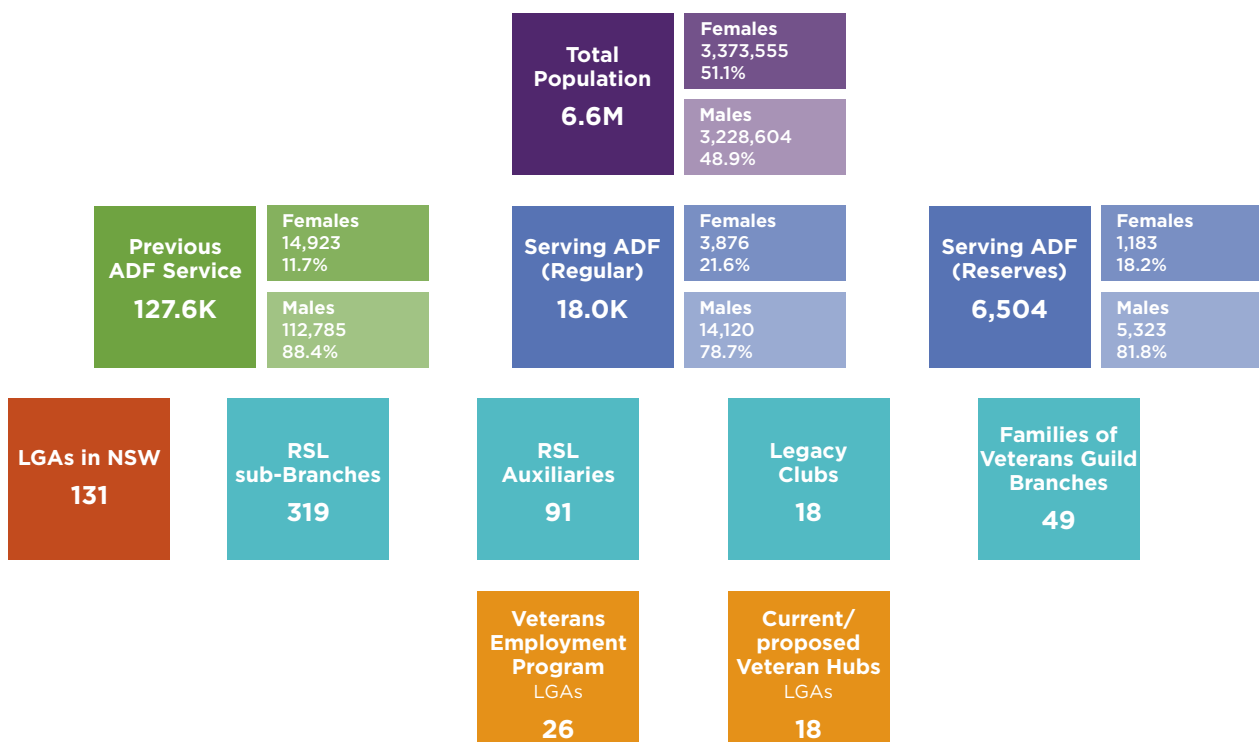
## Top 10 LGAs for ex-ADF Members



These statistics were also reflected in the number of ESOs currently offering services and supports within the Central Coast LGA, with the highest number of RSL sub-Branches (11), RSL Auxiliary Branches (6) and Families of Veterans Guild Branches (3) within the one area.

In recognition of the significant veteran population in the Central Coast, RSL LifeCare was granted Australian Government funding to establish a Veteran and Family Hub in Wyong. Officially opened on 13 September 2024, the purpose-built facility offers veterans and their families connection to a range of services, including health, housing, employment, financial support, advocacy, and social connection.

## Snapshot of veteran population and key ESO support – as of January 2025



# Veterans support ecosystem

## The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

DVA is the primary Australian Government entity responsible for developing and implementing programs that assist the veteran community. It supports the wellbeing of those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation, and their families.<sup>1</sup> Its programs and services can be broadly grouped into three main areas: care, compensation, and commemoration. Nevertheless, not all veterans access DVA assistance. As of June 2024, 352,077 veterans and veteran family members had accessed DVA for various types of support.<sup>2</sup>

DVA use a wellbeing wheel designed with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to assist understanding of the factors that influence the health and welfare of veterans, and to allow for comprehensive and holistic analysis and reporting. It includes the domains and elements related to the health and welfare of the general population, as well as characteristics specific to the Australian veteran population. The level of interaction and outcomes are also influenced by external factors, such as funding, the types of services and assistance available, and the opportunities accessible to veterans.



Figure 1.0 DVA wellbeing wheel

1 Portfolio Budget Statements 2022-23 - Department of Veterans' Affairs

2 [dva.gov.au/about/australias-veteran-support-system-glance](https://dva.gov.au/about/australias-veteran-support-system-glance) (accessed 31 October 2024)

## **The work of NSW Government departments**

The NSW Government plays an important part in ensuring veterans, their families and all communities in NSW live full and satisfying lives, making sure they have access to mainstream services including health, education and skills, housing, justice, and family and community services. Every NSW Government department was invited to participate in this Strategy, both by recognising those services that already provide important support for veterans, and through shaping new programs and services.

## **The NSW Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA)**

OVA spearheads the NSW Government's work in advocating for and responding to the needs of veterans and their families. As well as leading commemoration and heritage activities, OVA provides targeted programs, grants and support. These assist the veteran community to access employment and training opportunities, which are critical for long-term wellbeing and works with other organisations to shape these programs.

## **Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs)**

ESOs provide a broad range of supports and services to veterans and their families, including social connection, claims advocacy, health and wellbeing support, employment support, crisis and transitional housing, living assistance and commemorative activities. The NSW and Australian Governments work with ESOs to commemorate veterans' service through memorials, events, and learning opportunities that encourage remembrance. The ESO sector is large and diverse, ranging from well-known national organisations through to smaller organisations that serve a particular geographic community or cohort of veterans. ESOs often rely on the support of volunteers, many of whom are veterans or the family members of veterans.

# Themes





# Recognition and Commemoration

**Our first theme ‘Recognition and Commemoration’ recognises the NSW Government’s commitment to ensuring veterans are commemorated with honour and respect. This has been a key aim since the Office for Veterans Affairs was first established. Programs to recognise and commemorate the veteran community continue to grow as does our appreciation of how important recognition of service is to the veteran community – the role that it plays in overall wellbeing, and the role that commemoration plays in the wider community.**

There are many reasons to commemorate service. We remember the sacrifices of past generations through names inscribed on the thousands of war memorials found across NSW. We acknowledge the ongoing service of our current generations of veterans and the support that their families provide. Across NSW, we honour this service through special commemorative days and events; through maintaining the war memorials dotted throughout our communities; through a daily service of remembrance at the Anzac Memorial; and through special programs and initiatives.

## **Outcome 1: The service and sacrifice of veterans is honoured throughout the community.**

Commemorative days and events such as Anzac Day and Remembrance Day have ongoing significance for veterans, their families, and the broader community. These events can provide current and former serving members and their families with opportunities to reflect on the community’s gratitude for their sacrifices, feel pride in their service and share stories of their experiences. They are occasions for veterans and their families to connect with one another.

Anzac Day services in particular give NSW communities an opportunity to express their thanks for the contribution and sacrifices that veterans have made on behalf of the nation. Participation at Anzac Day events continues to be significant. Between 2020 and 2024 around 24,000 people attended the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Martin Place in Sydney, and over 100,000 people attended the traditional Sydney march.

## **Veterans and their families: in their own words**

Melissa Harries, who served in the Australian Army as a Psychology Officer for six years, followed by four years in the Reserves, reflected on the importance of Anzac Day and the opportunity it provides to educate others about her service and the meaning of her medals.

*“I love Anzac Day. A lot of people ask me if I’m wearing my grandfather’s medals but it’s an education piece. They don’t know. It’s very rare that someone accuses me of wearing the medals on the wrong side. People ask genuinely if they are my grandfather’s medals because they don’t know so it becomes an opportunity to educate people about what it means to wear the medals on the left or right.”*

Melissa Harries as told to Carla Edwards, [NSW Stories on the NSW War Memorials Register](#)

Other commemorative days throughout the year recognise specific events or groups of veterans such as Vietnam Veterans Day (18 August), National Peacekeepers' Day (14 September), War Widows Day (19 October) and Kokoda Day (3 November). An annual Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Service is also held at the Anzac Memorial during National Reconciliation Week.

We acknowledge that commemorative days can also be challenging for veterans and their families as they reflect on those who have died or been adversely affected because of their service. These events can also raise difficult emotions relating to service and the return to civilian life.

## **Outcome 2: The diversity and contribution of the veteran community is recognised.**

Throughout Australia's military history, people from diverse backgrounds have served in the Australian Defence Force. Inclusive acknowledgment of the veteran community includes recognition of the different identities, backgrounds and lived experiences that veterans have. Every veteran has a unique and valuable perspective based on factors such as their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and their cultural and language background. We know that perceptions of veterans have not always reflected the true demographics of serving and ex-serving members. Through our online NSW War Memorials Register, we tell the stories of veterans who belong to communities that historically were excluded from aspects of recognition and have experienced distinct challenges both during and after service.

### **Veterans and their families: in their own words**

Gary Oakley grew up in Canowindra in Central New South Wales with his Indigenous father and non-Indigenous mother. He joined the Navy as a 15-year-old Junior Recruit and said about his service:

*"People have to realise, it's a job and it's a job where you could get killed but you do it because it's your job and because of love of country. And that's especially true with Indigenous people, we protect our country and our people...We all serve, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, because we love this place enough to put ourselves on the line when we're needed."*

It is also important that commemoration and recognition of service is welcoming and inclusive for all veterans. In NSW, a range of initiatives and commemorative events help to ensure that we reflect the diversity of service with respect and dignity. In 2025, we will expand our regional youth program that brings high school students from regional NSW to Sydney to learn about the unique wartime experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and their significant contribution to Australia's military history. We will also build a new memorial in the heart of Sydney, in the Domain, to commemorate contemporary service for all who have served in the ADF from 1990 to the present day. This includes the service and sacrifice of those who served in the Middle East campaigns of Iraq and Afghanistan and all peacekeeping and peace-making operations, including humanitarian and domestic support operations from 1990.

### Outcome 3: The knowledge and understanding of the contributions of veterans and the impact of wars on Australia is increased.

Education, research, and storytelling also play an important part in helping the community understand how military service has shaped contemporary Australia and personally touched the lives of millions of Australians. Through a grant program; educational resources and programs; as well as an annual scholarship and an annual military history prize, we help to ensure that the lessons of history enhance our understanding of the present.

For school students, we have a range of educational resources and a vibrant learning program at the Anzac Memorial. We also offer the Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship program (PAMS), which gives high school students the opportunity to participate in an annual tour of sites of military significance to develop their knowledge and understanding of the history of Australians at war. In 2024, 20 scholars from years 10-11 travelled to Japan to learn about the personal experiences of serving personnel in the Second World War. The tour also featured a Prisoner of War camp as well as commemorative sites allowing students to learn about the ways that different cultures are impacted by war and commemorate service. One of the scholars said:

*“The PAMS tour gave me a more first-hand insight into direct experiences and tragedies of war, seeing sites that showcased soldier experiences... I realised the need to be aware of veteran contributions and to commemorate them as a way of peace and unity.”*

PAMS Scholar - 2024

For the wider community, we support life-long learning with a range of lectures, public programs, exhibitions, and tours at the Anzac Memorial. We also encourage scholarship in military history through the Anzac Memorial Trustees Military History Prize. As part of the NSW History Awards, this prestigious prize is awarded for a work of non-fiction on the involvement of Australians in wars, campaigns, battles and/or peacekeeping operations since the granting of limited self-government to NSW in 1855. In addition, our grant program awards funding to community organisations for projects that support and recognise veterans' service.

Together, these programs, resources and events help to ensure that the community better understands the impacts of service - both at an individual and a social level.



>  
Four students who participated in the 2024 NSW Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Regional Youth Program. Photo by Salty Dingo.

#### Outcome 4: Our war memorial heritage is protected and conserved.

There are more than 3,800 war memorials in NSW. Each is unique. Together they represent a significant heritage of national importance that binds together millions of Australians through ties of remembrance. Local war memorials in NSW were often erected by committees established to create memorials in recognition of the service and sacrifice of members of the local community who had served their country. In many cases they recognise Australian service men and women who died while serving overseas during the world wars and who are either buried overseas or have no known grave. Historic war memorials relating to the late 19th century and the early 20th century have ongoing significance to NSW communities. A significant portion of these community war memorials in NSW were constructed in the aftermath of the First World War and now have complex conservation needs due to their age.

Bruce Pettman, Architect and heritage conservation specialist, explained the importance of conservation of war memorials:

*“It is our duty as stewards to look after these memorials and to continue that promise of lest we forget.”*

The Anzac Memorial in Sydney’s Hyde Park is the state’s principal war memorial. Originally established to recognise service in the First World War, the Memorial now recognises all Australians who have served in peace and war through its rededication in 1984 and Centenary Extension completed in 2018. Many other war memorials in NSW also recognise the service and sacrifice of veterans in more recent conflicts.

✓ Specialist timber conservator working on the Woodburn Hall First World War Honour Rolls, partially funded by the Community War Memorials Fund, 2022. Photo courtesy of Richmond Valley Council, 2023.





Expert stonemasons undertaking conservation on the Lake Cargelligo War Memorial, partially funded by the Community War Memorials Fund, 2024. Photo courtesy of Rookwood Cemetery, 2024.



Cannon being lowered into place following conservation work on the Vaucluse War Memorial, partially funded by the Community War Memorials Fund, 2020. Photo courtesy of Woollahra Municipal Council, 2023.

# 1. Recognition and Commemoration

No.	Action	Lead
<b>Outcome 1: The service and sacrifice of veterans is honoured throughout the community</b>		
1.0	<b>Commemorate all veterans service and sacrifice</b> At 11.00am each day, the Anzac Memorial pauses for a Service of Remembrance. Visitors are invited to participate and to take a commemorative star bearing the name of an ADF member from NSW killed on active service, or a veteran who has since passed away, and cast it into the Well of Contemplation following a moment of reflection.	Anzac Memorial
1.1	<b>Lead a calendar of commemorative events</b> Lead a calendar of commemorative events to mark the involvement of all who served Australia in conflicts and peacekeeping operations. These include Anzac Day, Boer War Day, Battle of Fromelles, Victory in the Pacific Day, Korean War Day, Vietnam Veterans Day, Battle for Australia, Kokoda Day, and Remembrance Day.	OVA/Anzac Memorial
1.2	<b>Anzac Day</b> Coordinate whole-of-government support for the Dawn Service in Martin Place, the March through the CBD and the lunchtime service at the Anzac Memorial. This includes security and crowd management, coordination, and media.	PD/OVA/Anzac Memorial
1.3	<b>Remembrance Day – poppies on the Sydney Opera House</b> Project red poppies, a sign of remembrance, onto the Sydney Opera House sails on Remembrance Day to acknowledge the signing of the Armistice that ended the First World War and the sacrifice by service men and women.	PD/OVA
1.4	<b>Veterans’ reception</b> Host an annual reception to acknowledge the service of veterans.	PD/OVA
<b>Outcome 2: The diversity and contribution of the veteran community is recognised</b>		
1.5	<b>Honour the service of all veterans</b> The Anzac Memorial’s programs, events, exhibitions, and service-related programs will tell stories of military experience that acknowledge the diverse experiences of service for veterans of all generations.	Anzac Memorial
1.6	<b>Recognise contemporary veterans</b> Build a war memorial to commemorate contemporary service for all who have served in the Australian Defence Force from 1990 to the present day.	OVA with the Government Architect & Botanic Gardens
1.7	<b>Recognise the service of women</b> Hold, or provide support for, events at the Anzac Memorial and elsewhere to recognise the service of women veterans, and support networking and connection during Women’s Week.	OVA/Anzac Memorial/WNSW
1.8	<b>Recognise war widows</b> The NSW Government has designated 19 October as War Widows Day, a special day for the State to officially recognise war widows and widowers of members of the Australian Defence Force.	OVA
1.9	<b>Commemorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans service</b> Support the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Committee to host a service that combines conventional military protocol with Indigenous ceremonial display. The service is held on the Friday of National Reconciliation Week in May at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park.	OVA/Anzac Memorial
1.10	<b>NSW Indigenous Veterans Commemoration Regional Youth Program</b> Engage high school students from regional NSW in an annual exploration of the unique wartime experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and their significant contribution to Australia’s military history.	OVA/Anzac Memorial

No.	Action	Lead
1.11	<p><b>Publish stories that reflect the diversity of veterans' voices and experiences</b></p> <p>Publish stories about veterans' service and experiences to increase awareness of the diversity of veteran service.</p>	OVA/SL
1.12	<p><b>Showcase the work of veterans that reflects on military experiences, service and commemoration</b></p> <p>Maintain the Anzac Memorial's Veteran Artist in Residence Program, and hold veteran led and veteran centric exhibitions.</p>	Anzac Memorial
<p><b>Outcome 3: The knowledge and understanding of the contributions of veterans and the impact of wars on Australia is increased</b></p>		
1.13	<p><b>Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship</b></p> <p>Deliver a study tour that is awarded to up to 20 high school history students and three accompanying teachers. Scholars travel to battlefields, memorials, and sites of historical significance, in Australia and overseas.</p>	OVA
1.14	<p><b>Anzac Memorial Trustees Military History Prize</b></p> <p>Fund the annual Anzac Memorial Trustees Military History Prize of \$10,000 as part of the NSW History Awards in collaboration with the State Library of NSW.</p>	OVA/SL
1.15	<p><b>School education resources</b></p> <p>Provide NSW schools with teaching and learning resources connecting commemoration, local war memorials and veterans' stories.</p>	OVA
1.16	<p><b>Anzac Memorial education program</b></p> <p>Provide high-quality, engaging, interactive and creative education opportunities for students linked to the NSW syllabus, as well as life-long learning experiences.</p>	Anzac Memorial
1.17	<p><b>Anzac Community Grants Program</b></p> <p>Award \$100,000 for projects that commemorate and educate NSW communities about the service and sacrifices of current and former military service men and women, and for projects which benefit the NSW veteran community.</p>	OVA
<p><b>Outcome 4: Our war memorial heritage is protected and conserved</b></p>		
1.18	<p><b>The Anzac Memorial</b></p> <p>Maintain and conserve the Anzac Memorial as a living symbol of the Anzac spirit, continuing its original purpose as a war memorial and as a place of commemoration, remembrance, education, and reflection. Explain its cultural and architectural significance to the state as well as its national and international relevance.</p>	Anzac Memorial
1.19	<p><b>Community War Memorials Fund</b></p> <p>Protect our war memorial heritage by awarding \$250,000 in grants annually to assist community organisations to conserve war memorials across NSW. Work with organisations to ensure they understand best practice heritage approaches to conservation.</p>	OVA
1.20	<p><b>Caring for our war memorials</b></p> <p>Update the Caring for our war memorials guide and resources that provide best practice advice on war memorial conservation.</p>	OVA/PW
1.21	<p><b>NSW War Memorials Register</b></p> <p>Record war memorial history by maintaining the NSW War Memorials Register, an online database of over 3,800 war memorials plus more than 250,000 veterans' names that are recorded on those memorials. The Register's data is continuously reviewed and enhanced.</p>	OVA/SL

# Employment and Training

**The theme ‘Employment and Training’ recognises the important role of a rewarding civilian career and training opportunities to promote wellbeing. It sees us continue our long-standing commitment to veterans’ employment and training, and further support partners with additional resources.**

Around 1,200 veterans leave the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for civilian life in NSW each year. For many, this new beginning will include the challenge of finding a sustainable and rewarding career. This experience will be different for each veteran and family, but veterans frequently report a sense of loss of identity and purpose on discharge from the military.<sup>3</sup> Research shows that meaningful employment can be beneficial to wellbeing – and can help restore this sense of loss. Not only can work bring an important focus to our lives, but it can also bring a sense of identity, meaning and community, and is also important financially.<sup>4</sup> Employment following transition from the ADF is recognised as a key contributor to veteran wellbeing in the ADF and Department of Veterans’ Affairs Wellbeing Factors, and in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reporting on veteran wellbeing. Most members separate from the ADF with many working years ahead of them.

Military service fosters leadership, organisational skills, resilience, and specialist skills such as medical or technical expertise, and ADF personnel receive rigorous, high quality, and broad ranging training, meaning that they are great assets for all employment sectors. However, veterans have told us that they sometimes struggle to translate these skills and attributes into civilian employment requirements and can find that employers do not always understand military terminology.

Partners of veterans may also possess significant skills and can experience employment challenges, in part because of disrupted professional lives due to residential relocations and reduced hours while their partner is deployed or because of posting cycles and frequent relocations.<sup>5</sup> Spousal and partner employment is important not only for personal wellbeing but can also be critical to a successful and sustainable transition. A second income can help provide financial stability and can ensure that the veteran is supported in seeking work.

## **Outcome 1: Veterans and their spouse/partner have tools and resources to assist them to participate in employment.**

In NSW, the Veterans Employment Program (VEP) provides veterans with tools to help them apply for roles in the public service and offers support to hiring managers through communication and education. The NSW Government has published a Rank to Grade Guide, which is a starting point to assist in mapping ADF ranks against NSW public sector grades and the capabilities used to assess candidates for public sector jobs. In addition, a suite of online resources and animated videos provides a range of employment assistance, including a capability definition tool as well as workshops for veterans to support them to apply for NSW public sector jobs.

<sup>3</sup> Van Hooff, M., Iannos M (2020). Leaving military service: A mixed-methods study into the experience of transition from active service to civilian life among a subset of former Australian Defence Force Members. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide & Military and Emergency Services Health Australia, The Hospital Research Foundation Group.

<sup>4</sup> AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare), (2024), Understanding the wellbeing characteristics of ex-serving ADF members, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 23 October 2024, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/wellbeing-characteristics-of-ex-serving-ADF/contents/employment-status-of-ex-serving-ADF-members>

<sup>5</sup> Hughes, Gahan and Smart, Strengthening Defence and veteran couple relationships through relationship education, Final report, Australian Institute of Family Studies, September 2023





## Veterans and their families: in their own words

An Army veteran who attended a Veterans Employment workshop said:

*“This is the best job preparation course I have attended. Simple, concise, and informative, it is equally applicable when applying for private sector roles.”*

Veterans also report that not only do employers not always recognise their skills, but that sometimes the ADF does not award full civilian qualifications. This means that veterans can find it very difficult to gain employment in the same profession or trade. TAFE NSW’s Ranks to Recognition program supports ex-serving members and their partners to transition into the civilian workforce. It offers a wraparound service including careers advice, skills assessment, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning and training gap analysis, to identify skills and knowledge acquired in the ADF and the pathway to obtaining civilian qualifications. Participants can also access TAFE NSW support services, including counselling, disability services and study support.

Since the launch of our first Veterans Strategy in 2021, TAFE NSW has successfully supported 1,897 veterans through the Ranks to Recognition program. This support includes personal counselling, Recognition of Prior Learning assistance, and enrolling veterans under the Department of Veterans’ Affairs Exemption, as well as other government initiatives.



## **Outcome 2: Organisations understand that veterans have transferable skills and capabilities.**

Members of the ADF receive first-class training, and many of the skills and capabilities that veterans have developed are readily transferable to the civilian workforce. The VEP educates employers on the competitive advantage that hiring veterans can provide, and also speaks at Command courses run by the Navy to ensure that it is aware of employment opportunities for veterans once they have discharged from service as well as the NSW Government's Reserve Support Program. This program helps the ADF maintain its capability via reserve service.

The convenor of an ADF Naval course spoke to the work of the VEP team:

*"[I'm] very grateful for the work you and your team complete in ensuring our sailors have [the] opportunity to gain employment in the NSW Government. Thank you for taking the time to come and educate the class, we look forward to you presenting on our next course in 2025."*

Annual Employment Roundtables held at the Anzac Memorial also help public and private sector organisations, including Ex-Service Organisations, to network and share information about available services and initiatives to support veteran employment.

## **Outcome 3: Peer networks connect veterans to information in the workplace.**

Veterans have spoken to us about the value in finding other veterans with shared experience who can serve as informal buddies. They said that it was invaluable to have someone who really understood the challenges on their side as they navigated new ways of working. Pilot veteran networks will help to steer new recruits through the challenges and opportunities of civilian employment.

## 2. Employment and Training

No.	Action	Lead
<b>Outcome 1: Veterans and their spouse/partner have tools and resources to assist them to participate in employment</b>		
2.0	<b>Veterans Employment Program – connecting veterans with resources</b> Provide veterans with tools and resources to help them apply for roles in the public service. Support hiring managers through communication and education. Network with the ADF, the Australian Government and other state and territory governments and local government to create awareness of the transferable skills and capabilities of veterans.	OVA
2.1	<b>Job ready workshops for veterans</b> Provide resources and workshops for veterans to support them to apply for NSW public sector employment by unpacking the NSW Capability Framework job application process from job search, to interview.	OVA
2.2	<b>Promote employment opportunities to veterans</b> Promote veteran friendly employment opportunities through partnerships and communication channels.	OVA
2.3	<b>Career resources for partners</b> OVA will develop a digital road map for spouses and partners that will mark the opportunities and challenges spouses and partners experience in their employment journeys; connect them with resources to assist and educate employers, policymakers, and stakeholders about their experience.	OVA
2.4	<b>Ranks to Recognition</b> Support veterans and their spouse/partner to achieve a formal qualification that maximises civilian employment opportunities by providing career advice, skills assessment, training gap analysis, recognition of prior learning, other support services, and vocational training.	TAFE NSW
<b>Outcome 2: Organisations understand that veterans have transferable skills and capabilities</b>		
2.5	<b>Veterans Employment Program – educating organisations</b> Support hiring managers through communication and education. Network with the ADF, the Australian Government and other state and territory governments and local government to create awareness of the transferable skills and capabilities of veterans.	OVA
2.6	<b>Local Government employment partnership</b> Continue to build a network of local councils committed to employing veterans and promote local councils as an employer of choice for veterans.	OVA
2.7	<b>Veteran Employment Roundtable</b> Hold an annual employment roundtable chaired by the NSW Minister for Veterans with private and public sector stakeholders to increase awareness of the skills and capabilities of veterans and their spouse/partner.	OVA
<b>Outcome 3: Peer networks connect veterans to information in the workplace</b>		
2.8	<b>Public service – community of peers</b> Government will pilot networks, including buddy programs for veteran employees. These networks and buddy programs aim to help veterans connect and help ensure that veterans employed have information about events and support for veterans.	OVA and other agencies
2.9	<b>Veterans’ annual networking event</b> Held before Anzac Day each year, this event brings NSW Government employers and veterans together to network.	OVA

# Advocacy and Community Engagement

**A new focus for theme 3, 'Advocacy and Community Engagement', will help ensure that veterans and their communities know where to get help, and that government, across Australia, works together to achieve better coordination allowing veterans and their families to receive support wherever they live. When we understand veterans' needs, and when we share our good work, the community prospers, and we are all better placed to respond to the unique challenges that service life can bring.**

**Outcome 1: Government, within NSW and across Australia, is better coordinated so that veterans can receive support wherever they live.**

Advocacy is a key part of OVA's remit. We listen to the veteran community and engage with them through community forums and regular meetings with Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs). This helps us to understand the needs of the veteran community and to ensure that government service delivery is responsive. We participate in inter-governmental forums, and work closely with the Australian Government, other government departments and ESOs to build a connected network of support for veterans and their families. New initiatives include our commitment to brokering better services for veterans and their families, by advocating for a national funding agreement to ensure that veterans' wellbeing initiatives are appropriately resourced. We will also develop new resources to ensure that service providers recognise the importance of culturally sensitive service delivery and have the skills and knowledge to work with veterans and their families.

When we work together, change is achievable - whether it's raising awareness of the challenges facing different groups or securing support for the veteran community. Ultimately, we aim to create a more inclusive society and to foster a deeper understanding between veterans and the communities they return to.

**Outcome 2: The veteran community is engaged and connected to trusted information.**

Life in the military is highly structured, and the community is tight knit. Support is provided for everyday activities, which are underlined by a sense of camaraderie, trust and mateship. Veterans told us that when they moved into civilian life, the loss of structure and support meant they had to navigate the demands of everyday life alone. The loss of community could also be confronting, and for specific cohorts of veterans this can be a risk factor for social isolation and loneliness,<sup>6</sup> which can impact health and wellbeing outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

We have heard that women veterans can face challenges meeting others with similar experiences. They said that their experience within the military could be isolating, as there are still relatively low numbers of women in service, and that this sense of isolation could continue into their life as a veteran. In response, we established an annual networking event at the Anzac Memorial on International Women's Day.

<sup>6</sup> Kuwert P, Knaevelsrud C, and Pietrzak R (2013) 'Loneliness Among Older Veterans in the United States: Results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study', *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*

<sup>7</sup> AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare), (2024), 'Veteran Social connectedness', AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 25 October 2024. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/veteran-social-connectedness/contents/social-isolation-and-loneliness>



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The Women Veterans Networking Event, International Women's Day 2024. Photo by NSW Government.

Attendees told us:

*"I found the event very enjoyable and empowering. It was possibly the first time I felt my service was recognised as valuable.*

*I particularly appreciated the diverse range of attendees. Their stories and insights shed light on various aspects of womanhood, from professional achievements to personal struggles. It was empowering to hear from women representing different backgrounds, industries, and other perspectives."*

The importance of community, of connection and bringing people together with shared experience has long been understood. In the 1930s the Anzac Memorial at Hyde Park was imagined and constructed both as a memorial and as the heart of the veteran community – somewhere for all returned soldiers, sailors, and nurses to come together and be supported. Today, our vision for the Anzac Memorial remains the same – a place that welcomes the veteran community and inspires a sense of community and participation in events, programs, and initiatives.

Veterans and their families have also told us that it can be difficult to navigate support services, and to understand where to turn when help is needed. Some veterans and families said that face to face information can be preferable, but others told us that social media and online information was best for them. Therefore, we have expanded the ways that we provide information. We hold annual veterans' forums and regularly attend Australian Defence Force Member and Family Transition Seminars. We connect with Veteran and Family Hubs to ensure that information about government services is available, and that appropriate referrals can be made to local health and other services. We also provide clear, trusted information through a range of media, such as our quarterly newsletters, our social media channels, and our Service NSW webpage which provides direct links to government concessions.

### 3. Advocacy and Community Engagement

No.	Action	Lead
<b>Outcome 1: Government, within NSW and across Australia is better coordinated so that veterans can receive support wherever they live</b>		
3.0	<p><b>Government advocacy</b></p> <p>OVA represents and supports veterans across NSW. We work to ensure that government service delivery is responsive to the unique demands of military life and that relevant government strategies take account of veterans as a unique cohort.</p>	OVA
3.1	<p><b>Government coordination and connection</b></p> <p>OVA will chair and facilitate an inter-departmental committee to ensure that where possible, government service delivery is coordinated.</p>	OVA
3.2	<p><b>Consideration of DVSRC recommendations</b></p> <p>OVA will collaborate with the Australian Government through the Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee to consider DVSRC recommendations including the development of a National Veterans' Data Asset.</p>	OVA
3.3	<p><b>A National Funding Agreement – DVSRC Recommendation 88</b></p> <p>The NSW Government will advocate for adequate funding to ensure that veteran wellbeing initiatives are appropriately resourced.</p>	OVA
3.4	<p><b>Veterans' Ministerial Council</b></p> <p>The NSW Government Minister for Veterans will participate in the Veterans' Ministerial Council established to consider how Australian, state and territory governments can better collaborate in supporting the wellbeing of veterans, their families, and the broader veteran community.</p>	OVA
3.5	<p><b>Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee for veterans</b></p> <p>OVA will participate in the CSTC to ensure coordination and collaboration across governments.</p>	OVA
3.6	<p><b>Veterans' data</b></p> <p>OVA will continue to create dynamic data reports that provide demographic information about veterans in NSW for government and community use.</p>	OVA
3.7	<p><b>Advocate for Veteran Hospital Liaison Officers</b></p> <p>OVA will advocate for the introduction of Veteran Hospital Liaison Officers in areas where there are high concentrations of veterans.</p>	OVA
<b>Outcome 2: The veteran community is engaged and connected to trusted information</b>		
3.8	<p><b>ESO collaboration</b></p> <p>Chair and facilitate bi-annual meetings with key ESOs to facilitate communication and collaboration.</p>	OVA
3.9	<p><b>Veterans' forums</b></p> <p>Hold annual veterans' forums throughout NSW to share insights, information, and build connection.</p>	OVA
3.10	<p><b>Anzac Memorial – veteran community participation</b></p> <p>Identify and embed initiatives to increase the active participation of the veteran community at the Anzac Memorial.</p>	Anzac Memorial/ OVA
3.11	<p><b>Media and communications</b></p> <p>Communicate to veterans, their families and the wider defence community the range of activities, programs and supports available using social and traditional media.</p>	OVA

<p><b>3.12 Service NSW page</b></p> <p>Maintain the Service NSW webpage for veterans, which provides information about the wide range of concessions, benefits, and services available to veterans.</p>	<p>Service NSW</p>
<p><b>3.13 Connection to transitioning Australian Defence Force serving members</b></p> <p>Attendance at Australian Defence Force Member and Family Transition Seminars to promote NSW Government services, supports and the Veterans Employment Program.</p>	<p>OVA and other agencies and organisations</p>
<p><b>3.14 A guide to government</b></p> <p>Develop resources to help the veteran community better understand supports provided by different levels of government.</p>	<p>OVA</p>
<p><b>3.15 Cultural competency resources</b></p> <p>OVA will share available resources or develop resources to ensure that NSW Government staff recognise the importance of culturally sensitive service delivery and have the skills and knowledge to work with veterans and their families.</p>	<p>OVA</p>
<p><b>3.16 Veterans and Families Hubs</b></p> <p>Assist the delivery of Veterans and Families Hubs by brokering support for new Hubs in areas of demographic need.</p>	<p>OVA</p>
<p><b>3.17 Connect Veterans and Families Hubs to NSW Government</b></p> <p>Connect Service NSW with hubs to help ensure that information about NSW Government services is available.</p>	<p>OVA/ Service NSW</p>



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The Central Coast  
Veteran and Family  
Hub

# Support

**While there are a wide range of supports and services in NSW that veterans and their families can access as members of the general population, the final theme, ‘Support’, recognises that some veterans require tailored supports and services. The Australian Government is mainly responsible for providing this type of support. However the NSW Government also has a range of veteran specific support and services to assist those who are most vulnerable and aims to provide this support in a culturally sensitive way.**

Supporting veterans to navigate transition successfully requires recognition that veterans and their families are diverse and will have different needs at different stages in their post-service lives. Some veterans and their families need support to deal with injuries or conditions that arise from their service, including challenges for mental, physical, and psychosocial health. Others are at an increased risk of homelessness. Research has shown that the strongest risk factors for veteran homelessness are psychological distress during service, relationship breakdown, and unemployment following transition.<sup>8</sup> This research reviewed data from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) and found an estimated 5,767 (or 5.3%) veterans who recently left the ADF met the ABS definition of experiencing homelessness over a 12-month period.<sup>9</sup> In addition, a study conducted by Flinders University and published in October 2023 found that a poor experience of separation from the ADF was heavily associated with social disconnection, substance misuse and eventual criminality.<sup>10</sup>

## **Outcome 1: Support is available for veterans and their families who may require additional assistance.**

In NSW, we provide a range of bespoke services to assist veterans with additional challenges. These include:

- The National Centre for Veterans’ Healthcare (NCVH), which offers integrated outpatient care for physical and mental health care needs. With a multidisciplinary team, the NCVH provides holistic and coordinated clinical care. Recognising families are an important part of the recovery journey, clinicians seek to ensure that families are engaged and supported as much as possible. To facilitate this, Fussell House at NCVH offers comfortable and welcoming accommodation for veterans along with their families and carers, when travelling from regional areas or interstate.
- Legal Aid NSW’s ‘Veterans’ Advocacy Service’, the statewide specialist service, which gives free independent advice about rights and entitlements under veterans’ entitlements legislation and represents veterans in these matters at the Veterans’ Review Board, Administrative Review Tribunal and Federal Court.
- Homelessness support through a rental subsidy program and Homes NSW’s telephone hotline that provides a 24/7 information and referral service.
- Corrective Services NSW and Defence Community Dogs’ Veteran Assistance Dog Program, which sees dogs trained by inmates at the Bathurst Correctional Centre under the guidance of professional dog trainers and matched with veterans who need physical and mental health support.

<sup>8</sup> Hilferty, F., Katz, I., Van Hooff, M., Lawrence-Wood, E., Zmudzki, F., Searle, A., Evans, G., 2019, Homelessness amongst Australian veterans: Final report of the AHURI inquiry. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

<sup>9</sup> Hilferty, F., Katz, I., Van Hooff, M., Lawrence-Wood, E., Zmudzki, F., Searle, A., Evans, G., 2019, Homelessness amongst Australian veterans: Final report of the AHURI inquiry. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

<sup>10</sup> Wadham et al. (2023) Research into experiences of ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel in corrective services systems in Australia.





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The Defence  
Community Dogs  
program. Photo by  
Defence Community  
Dogs.

- A range of concessions, which are available from different agencies, including travel concessions, licence, registration and driving, energy and utility, and National parks concessions.

New to this Strategy is work to better support veterans in custodial settings, both as staff and inmates. The Corrective Services NSW Veterans Strategy will ensure staff who are veterans are recognised and supported to meet the distinct needs of veterans in correctional facilities. The Office for Veterans Affairs is also working with the Office of Responsible Gambling (ORG) to develop tailored resources for veterans and their families on gambling harm minimisation and the support services available. An Australian study found that Australian veterans are a high-risk group in relation to experiencing gambling harm, and experience gambling harm at higher levels than the broader Australian community.<sup>11</sup> The ORG is also building the capacity of gambling support services to support the veteran community, and ex-service and other support organisations to identify and refer veterans who are experiencing gambling harm.

OVA is also proud to be partnering with RSL NSW and Monash University in research that aims to understand and improve support services for women veterans in NSW. According to the 2021 Census 21.5% of current serving members of the ADF, and 11.7% of those who had previously served, were female, reflecting the increasing number of women in Australia serving in the military and in time becoming veterans. While women experience lower rates of suicide than ex-serving men, ex-serving females were more than twice as likely (107% more likely) to die by suicide than Australian females after adjusting for age.<sup>12</sup>

Traditionally, veteran wellbeing services have focused on men, making it harder for women to access and use these services. There is now a growing awareness about the need for gender-sensitive care that considers the unique needs of all genders. However, we still do not fully understand the challenges women veterans face when using these services, such as balancing caregiving, dealing with women's health issues, and coping with service-related stress and trauma.

Our research project with RSL NSW and Monash University will review existing literature and use surveys and interviews with women veterans to learn more about their experiences, challenges, and what they need for better support.

<sup>11</sup> Dr Olivia Metcalf, Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood, Ms Jenelle Baur, Dr Miranda Van Hooff, Professor David Forbes, Professor Meaghan O'Donnell, Ms Nicole Sadler, Dr Stephanie Hodson, Ms Helen Benassi, Dr Tracey Varker, Professor Malcolm Battersby, et al 2022, *Gambling problems, risk factors, and implications in Australian veterans*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne

<sup>12</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023) *Serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members who have served since 1985: suicide monitoring 1997 to 2021*, catalogue number PHE 327, AIHW, Australian Government.

## 4. Support

No.	Action	Lead
<b>Outcome 1: Support is available for veterans and their families who may require additional assistance</b>		
4.0	<p><b>The National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare</b></p> <p>The National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NCVH) at Concord Repatriation General Hospital offers specialist physical and mental healthcare services for veterans. Clinicians work together with the client, their family, and carers, along with other primary healthcare providers as a collaborative recovery team.</p>	NSW Health
4.1	<p><b>Fussell House</b></p> <p>Veterans accessing treatment at NCVH from regional areas or interstate can access accommodation at Fussell House. Fussell House has been designed as a safe space for veterans and their families to stay together and share experiences in a friendly and relaxed environment, while receiving support and treatment from the specialist health professionals at Concord Repatriation General Hospital.</p>	NSW Health
4.2	<p><b>Health cultural awareness</b></p> <p>Demonstrate culturally sensitive care at the NCVH to ensure that veterans feel comfortable in the hospital environment.</p> <p>In addition to the NCVH, promote the delivery of culturally sensitive care across NSW public health facilities, including Macksville Hospital.</p>	NSW Health
4.3	<p><b>Assistance dogs for veterans</b></p> <p>Train assistance dogs for current and former ADF members who need physical and emotional support for mood, depressive and anxiety disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder. The dogs are trained by inmates at the Bathurst Correctional Centre under the guidance of professional dog trainers.</p>	CSNSW and Defence Community Dogs
4.4	<p><b>Rent Choice Veterans</b></p> <p>Partner with RSL LifeCare to support eligible veterans and their families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• find or retain a lease on a private rental property</li> <li>• pay a subsidy towards the rent for up to three years</li> <li>• gain skills and work opportunities to help sustain a tenancy and achieve housing independence in the private rental market</li> </ul>	Homes NSW
4.5	<p><b>Link2Home Veterans and Ex-Service</b></p> <p>Provide veterans and ex-service personnel who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless with a dedicated 24/7 state-wide information and telephone referral service providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about local services</li> <li>• An assessment to determine what kind of help is needed</li> <li>• Referral to a service, including a homelessness service, support service, veterans' services, temporary accommodation, or a community housing provider.</li> </ul>	Homes NSW
4.6	<p><b>Improve data on veterans who are sleeping rough and link them with housing and support</b></p> <p>Use a new homelessness registry to improve service coordination for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness and improve data on how many veterans may be sleeping rough.</p>	Homes NSW
4.7	<p><b>The NSW Suicide Monitoring System</b></p> <p>The NSW Suicide Monitoring System commenced in October 2020 and reports on suicides in NSW. Since March 2021, notifications of reportable deaths by NSW Police include provision for the collection of data on whether a person suspected to have died by suicide was known to be a current or past ADF member. Where this data is collected, it is provided to NSW Health.</p>	NSW Health/ DCJ

<p><b>4.8 Free legal support for veterans</b></p> <p>The Veterans' Advocacy Service (VAS) is a statewide specialist service of Legal Aid NSW. It gives free independent advice about veterans' rights and entitlements under the veterans' entitlements legislation. It also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gives advice on the merits of lodging claims and appeals and the chances of success</li> <li>• can represent in these matters at the Veterans' Review Board, Administrative Reviews Tribunal and Federal Court</li> <li>• provides assistance with claims for retrospective invalidity pensions with the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation and applications to the Australian Ombudsman.</li> <li>• can provide advice on a range of other legal issues including housing, consumer law, mental health and the National Disability Insurance Scheme and other issues in civil law, together with family law and crime.</li> </ul>	<p>Legal Aid NSW</p>
<p><b>4.9 Support for veterans in custodial settings</b></p> <p>Corrective Services NSW will develop a strategy to assist veterans in custodial settings, including both inmates and custodial officers.</p>	<p>CSNSW</p>
<p><b>4.10 Support for problem gambling</b></p> <p>The Office of Responsible Gambling has developed resources for veterans and their families to provide support for those who may be affected by problem gambling.</p>	<p>ORG</p>
<p><b>4.11 Concessions</b></p> <p>The NSW Government provides a range of concessions to support eligible veterans and family members. Eligibility is generally based on Gold Card EDA or TPI status.</p>	<p>OVA – Whole-of-government</p>
<p><b>4.12 Research partnership - shaping support services for women veterans</b></p> <p>OVA, RSL NSW and Monash University will undertake a research project to understand and improve support services for women veterans in NSW. With input from an expert advisory group, researchers will review existing literature, and use surveys and interviews with women veterans to learn about their experiences, challenges, and what they need for better support.</p>	<p>OVA</p>
<p><b>4.13 Supporting veterans' families enrol in public schools</b></p> <p>Greater flexibility of school enrolment requirements for the children of veterans until a family has secured housing</p>	<p>DOE</p>
<p><b>4.14 Supporting the children of veterans at school</b></p> <p>Review and promote resources to support Defence-connected families and students at various transition points in schooling and relocation.</p> <p>The resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an information pack for staff to refer to when helping Defence-connected students</li> <li>• a checklist to guide school staff to effectively support Defence-connected students as they transition into their new school and their overall school experience</li> <li>• a social and emotional awareness guide for schools, providing guidance on supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Defence-connected students</li> </ul>	<p>OVA/DOE</p>



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Wreaths laid at the Remembrance Day service in Martin Place, 2024. Photo by NSW Government.

# Other information

## Governance of the Strategy

This is a whole-of-government commitment, and the agencies which are responsible for individual commitments are identified in the Strategy. Each agency is responsible for the implementation of its initiatives. Some actions are shared, and agencies and organisations will work together to ensure delivery. Where this is the case, the Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) will generally assist in coordination.

This will be a live document that responds to changes and emerging needs.

## Reporting

We will evaluate the Strategy using different methods and will liaise with lead agencies to collate a biennial report.

The OVA will also maintain regular contact with lead agencies through the year to monitor progress and identify any issues in implementation or delivery.

## Continuing consultation

The Strategy includes a commitment to regular consultation with key stakeholders, including veterans and their families and representatives from Ex-Service Organisations.

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## NSW Government

Information about concessions and supports

[service.nsw.gov.au/guide/veterans](https://service.nsw.gov.au/guide/veterans)

Veterans Employment Program

[vep.veterans.nsw.gov.au](https://vep.veterans.nsw.gov.au)

Office for Veterans Affairs

[veterans.nsw.gov.au](https://veterans.nsw.gov.au)

Veterans Advocacy Service

<https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/my-problem-is-about/my-right-as-a/veteran/veterans-advocacy-service>

Ranks to Recognition program

[tafensw.edu.au/study/pathways/ranks-to-recognition](https://tafensw.edu.au/study/pathways/ranks-to-recognition)

Anzac Memorial

[anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au](https://anzacmemorial.nsw.gov.au)

Volunteering portal

[volunteering.nsw.gov.au/volunteer-now](https://volunteering.nsw.gov.au/volunteer-now)

Link2Home Veterans and Ex Service

1800 326 989

National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare

[slhd.nsw.gov.au/concord/ncvh](https://slhd.nsw.gov.au/concord/ncvh)

## Australian Government

Department of Veterans Affairs

[dva.gov.au](https://dva.gov.au)

Defence Member and Family Services

[defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/family-programs-services/support-for-families](https://defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/family-programs-services/support-for-families)

## Endorsements

### RSL NSW

As the state's largest ex-service organisation and leading voice for veterans and their families, RSL NSW welcomes the NSW Government's Veterans Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030. Beyond their service, veterans remain a vital asset to Australian society. Their leadership, resilience, and unique skills, forged in service, make them highly valued contributors to the communities in which they live and work. RSL NSW is pleased that the NSW Government has been guided by the findings of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in developing its Veterans Strategy and Action Plan, which provides a comprehensive framework for supporting ~150,000 current and former serving ADF veterans and their families who call NSW home. RSL NSW is committed to working with the NSW Government and ex-service organisation sector in NSW to improve outcomes for veterans and their families.

### RSL LifeCare

RSL LifeCare has proudly served Australia for over a century, with its origins on Bare Island at Botany Bay in 1911 and has been caring for Australia's war veterans and seniors ever since. Today, we provide a range of veteran-centric services, including transitional accommodation for homeless veterans, financial assistance, DVA claims advocacy, employment support, Veteran and Family Hubs across NSW and the ACT, an equine program, home care, residential aged care and retirement living. We work closely with the NSW Government to meet veterans' evolving needs and endorse the NSW Veterans Strategy, which provides essential direction for supporting the veteran and family community. This includes the Government's Rent Choice Veterans to support veterans and their families who are experiencing homelessness. We look forward to working together on its successful delivery.

### Legacy

Sydney Legacy was established in 1926 and, nearly a century later, continues to support the families of those who have given their life or health for their country. We work closely with the NSW Government, helping to ensuring that they are aware of the needs of the families of veterans. The Veterans Strategy fosters collaboration and coordination, which are key to ensuring that services and resources are responsive to the veteran community's needs.

### Families of Veterans Guild

The Families of Veterans Guild, proudly owned and operated by Australian War Widows NSW Ltd is pleased to see the NSW Government's efforts to support the veteran community. This Strategy provides an actionable plan that outlines support available to this community in NSW.



Anzac Day March,  
Sydney 2024.  
Photo by Salty Dingo



