

NSW Veterans Strategy

2023-2024
Final Report



A guide to acronyms

ADF	Australian Defence Force (Australian Government)
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Australian Government)
ASC	Australian Sports Commission (Australian Government)
COPE	Concurrent Treatment of PTSD and Substance Use Disorder Using Prolonged Exposure
CSNSW	Corrective Services NSW (NSW Government)
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW Government)*
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice (NSW Government)
DCS	Department of Customer Service (NSW Government)
DMFS	Defence Member and Family Support (Australian Government)
DOE	Department of Education (NSW Government)
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (NSW Government)*
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs (Australian Government)
EDA	Extreme Disablement Adjustment
ESO	Ex-Service Organisation
GEAP	Gender Equity Action Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
NCVH	National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NSW Government)
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW Government)
OLG	Office of Local Government (NSW Government)
OOS	Office of Sport (NSW Government)
OVA	Office for Veterans Affairs (NSW Government)
PD	Premier's Department (NSW Government)
RFS	Rural Fire Service (NSW Government)
RSL NSW	The Returned and Services League of Australia (NSW Branch)
SES	State Emergency Service (NSW Government)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TAFE NSW	Technical and Further Education Commission (NSW Government)
TfNSW	Transport for NSW (NSW Government)
TPI	Totally and Permanently Incapacitated
TSY	Treasury (NSW Government)
VEP	Veterans Employment Program (NSW Government)
WNSW	Women NSW (NSW Government)

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The Hon David Harris MP, Minister for Veterans (centre) hosts the 2024 Remembrance Day Sunrise Service, accompanied by Mr Mick Bainbridge, RSL NSW President and Musician Robin Park, Australian Army Band Sydney. Photo by NSW Government

Minister's Foreword



I am proud to present the NSW Government's final Progress Report for the Veterans Strategy 2021-2024 as a record of the Government's second two-year Action Plan 2023-2024 achievements.

The NSW Government's Veterans Strategy 2021-2024 and associated Action Plans provided the first whole of government and community framework for veterans and their families in NSW and nationally. The Action Plans brought together initiatives across government that aim to support veterans as they transition from the Australian Defence Force, and in their post-service lives and ensure that stories of service are preserved and shared, that our military heritage is maintained and protected and that the contribution and sacrifice of veterans are recognised through events and commemorations.

This report provides a summary of Actions delivered and an update on continuing initiatives with a brief snapshot of the diversity of good work that has been progressing across government to recognise, assist, inform and support veterans and their families in NSW. Each section relates to one of the four themes of the strategy and shares highlights of particular achievements during the 2023-2024 period.

I am particularly proud of our Veterans Employment Program Local Government Initiative which has seen 20% of all Local Councils across the state establish their own form of Veterans Employment Program, helping to support veterans transition into civilian employment. Other highlights include the successful pilot program bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to Sydney from regional NSW to participate in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service in May 2024, the cross-departmental project in 2023 to ensure all DVA Gold Card holders can have their vehicle registration automatically renewed and the inclusion of a Military History Prize in the NSW History Awards, with the first prize awarded in 2023.

In my role as Minister for Veterans, I am honoured to represent the veterans' community and to acknowledge their important contribution to our state. I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to the successes of the 2023-2024 Action Plan.

**THE HON DAVID HARRIS MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS**



>
The Expert Advisory Group for the Veterans Research Partnership meeting at the Anzac Memorial, November 2024. Photo by NSW Government.



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Remembrance Day Service, Martin Place, Sydney 2024. Photo by NSW Government.



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The Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship tour to Japan, 2024. Photo by NSW Government.



>
International Women's Day event at the Anzac Memorial, 2024. Photo by NSW Government.

Recognition and Commemoration

Outcome

The service and sacrifice of every veteran is honoured across the state, in every community.

Highlights

- The 2024 Regional Youth Pilot Program enabled two schools from regional NSW to participate in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service. Funding was made available to cover the costs of travel, accommodation, meals, and additional educational activities while in Sydney for 12 Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander students and four teachers who would not otherwise have been able to attend the Commemoration Service in person. The success of the pilot has led to the program being extended and offered again in 2025.
- The NSW Government plays a pivotal role in delivering the Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, which is attended by over 5,000 people annually, and the subsequent Anzac Day March which sees over 20,000 people line Elizabeth Street to honour current serving members and veterans as they march to the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park. These events are broadcast live on the ABC, allowing those unable to attend in person to commemorate the service and sacrifice of our veterans and current serving members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The NSW Government is committed to further enhancing these commemorations and acknowledging significant dates into the future, to ensure that future generations continue to honour the legacy of our veterans.



>
The 2024 Regional Youth Pilot Program. Photo by NSW Government.



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

- In 2023 and 2024, the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) worked with the Anzac Memorial and Women NSW to deliver a successful and expanded suite of initiatives to recognise the contributions of women in the veteran community. In addition to the delivery of an annual event for women veterans, public programming was developed to recognise the broad contributions of women to the defence of Australia, from women who have served in the ADF to women who support veterans as partners and family members. The expanded suite of initiatives delivered for women in the veteran community during NSW Women’s Week highlighted the importance of women’s contributions and experiences and created opportunities for women to connect with those who have shared experiences.
- In 2023 the Anzac Memorial Trustees established a Military History Prize, offered as part of the suite of History categories in the NSW History Awards administered by the State Library of NSW. OVA supports the Prize financially, including funding the \$10,000 award, and through promotion and administration. The Military History Prize promotes the study and awareness of Australian military service through its focus on works on ‘involvement of Australians in wars, campaigns, battles and/or peacekeeping operations since the granting of limited self-government to NSW in 1855’. The winner in the first year of the award was June Factor for her *Soldiers and Aliens: Men in the Australian Army’s Employment Companies during World War II*. In 2024 the award winner was Kristen Alexander for *Kriegies: The Australian Airmen of Stalag Luft III*. The prize is intended to be ongoing.



>
The inaugural Military History Prize winner June Factor (centre left) with The Hon David Harris MP, Director OVA Caroline Mackness, and Military History Prize judges Professor Peter Stanley, Dr Michael Molkenin and Miesje de Vogel. Photo by Gene Ramirez, State Library of NSW 2023.

1. Recognition and Commemoration

Status of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Status
State-level commemoration			
1.1	Commemorative Events	OVA	OVA and the Anzac Memorial support and acknowledge the delivery of an annual calendar of significant veterans' days each year. Events are delivered in collaboration with the veteran community and are promoted and communicated through the OVA and Anzac Memorial digital and social media channels.
1.1.1	Anzac Day	PD/ OVA	NSW Government, through funding from OVA as well as resourcing from the Premier's Department, support RSL NSW in the delivery of the Dawn Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place and the Anzac Day March on Elizabeth Street. The Anzac Memorial hosts a Consular Service and special 11am commemoration.
1.1.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service	OVA	The NSW Government provides funding and resources to support the delivery of the annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service at the Anzac Memorial. A school resource pack is produced and distributed to all three education sectors.
1.1.3	Remembrance Day	PD/ OVA	The NSW Government delivers the NSW Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney each year. A school resource pack is produced and distributed to each of the three education sectors to help raise awareness across the community of the importance of pausing at 11am on 11 November.
1.1.4	Korean and Vietnam War Receptions	PD/ OVA	In 2023 and 2024 the Premier hosted the Korean and Vietnam War Veterans Reception at Government House. Due to reducing numbers of Korean veterans able to attend the event, it is now a combined Reception open to all veterans who served in Korea and Vietnam.
1.1.5	Recognising Women	WNSW/ OVA	Successful events to support networking and connection amongst women veterans were held in 2023 and 2024 in partnership with Women NSW. In 2023 and 2024 public programs were delivered at the Anzac Memorial to recognise and commemorate the contributions of women to the defence of Australia including commemorative services, lectures, and performances.
1.1.6	War Widows Day	OVA	In 2021 the NSW Government designated 19 October as a special day for the state to officially recognise war widows and widowers of members of the Australian Defence Force for their contribution and personal sacrifice. OVA assisted the Families of Veterans Guild to deliver the inaugural service at the Anzac Memorial and an afternoon tea at Parliament House. In 2023 and 2024 the service took place at the Cenotaph in Martin Place. The Anzac Memorial supported the 'Field of Remembrance' installation.
1.1.7	Kokoda Day	OVA	In 2022 the NSW Government designated 3 November as NSW Kokoda Day to officially acknowledge the Kokoda campaign of the Second World War.
1.2	Anzac Memorial	OVA	Anzac Memorial operations and maintenance, as well as education, public programs and events are ongoing with funding provided by the State Government. In 2024 the Anzac Memorial celebrated its 90th Anniversary. An open day and special twilight commemoration took place on Sunday 24 November.
1.3	War Memorials Register	OVA	OVA collaborated with the State Library of NSW to upgrade the NSW War Memorials Register website software to increase the efficiency and security of the Register and modernise its functions. In 2023-2024, more than 270 new memorial listings were added to the Register and more than 250 existing memorial listings were updated with new photos or information.

No.	Action	Lead	Status
Community-based commemoration			
1.4	Heritage and History Action Plan – Community War Memorials	OVA	Resources have been developed to support the conservation of war memorials through best practice processes and principles to assist with community commemoration. This has included photographing significant war memorial pools and the production of films released through OVA platforms. Initial consultation has also been undertaken to produce updated or new reference documents to support the management of war memorials.
1.4.1	Heritage and History Action Plan – Diverse Voices	OVA	Over 80 diverse stories were published on the NSW War Memorials Register website in 2023 and 2024 that reflected the service of women veterans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service personnel, and contemporary service including peacekeeping.
1.5	Anzac Community Grants Program	OVA	The 2023 Anzac Community Grants Program provided funding to 91 projects throughout NSW communities to acknowledge our veterans and current serving members and their families. The 2024 Anzac Community Grants Program opened in September and closed in November 2024. The round received over 110 applications with 99 applications recommended for funding.
Education and research			
1.6	Premier’s Anzac Memorial Scholarship	OVA	Scholarship study tours were delivered in 2023 and 2024, with a total of 40 students and six teachers participating from across NSW. The program saw a return to overseas travel in 2023 to Singapore and the Northern Territory, and to Japan in 2024. The tours were focused on developing the students’ knowledge and understanding of the history of Australians at war by visiting war memorials, museums and significant military and cultural sites in Singapore, Darwin, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nara, and Osaka.
1.7	Anzac Memorial Trustees’ Military History Prize	OVA/ Anzac Memorial	In 2023 the Anzac Memorial Trustees established a Military History Prize, offered as part of the suite of History categories in the NSW History Awards administered by the State Library of NSW. OVA supports the Prize financially, including funding the \$10,000 award, and through promotion and administration.
1.8	School Education Resources	OVA/ Anzac Memorial	Two school resource packs were produced and distributed to the three education sectors in 2023 and 2024 to align with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commemoration Service in May and Kokoda Day and Remembrance Day in November.
1.9	Recognising and Representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service	OVA/ Anzac Memorial	St Philomena’s Catholic School, Moree, and Carinya Christian School, Tamworth, were selected for a pilot Regional Youth Program in association with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Commemoration Service. Six Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and two teachers from each school participated. Subsidy funding was provided for two nights’ accommodation, meals, travel, and additional educational activities while in Sydney.
1.10	NSW and Commonwealth Government Data	OVA/ DCS	The analysis of the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data was expanded, and an interactive report developed which is available to the veteran community and the public on the OVA website. The report makes the data on veterans in NSW searchable by LGA or region and other markers including gender, age, and type of service. The distribution of current and proposed Veterans’ and Families’ Hubs and ex-service organisation locations is also included. DVA data has been added to the report to indicate numbers of DVA pensioners and treatment card holders in NSW.

Education and Employment

Outcome

Veterans and their partners can participate in education and employment, in a way that recognises their service and sacrifice.

Highlights

- The Veterans Employment Program (VEP) launched in May 2016 and has continually exceeded the targets set. The NSW Government committed to a new target in November 2022 to hire 2,000 veterans by December 2026 (250 per six months). As at 30 September 2024 the interim target of 1,000 veterans has been achieved ahead of schedule with 1,015 veterans hired.
- The Veterans Employment Program continued its partnership with TAFE NSW through the Ranks to Recognition Program to assist veterans to transition into the civilian workforce. The Ranks to Recognition Program includes customised career advice, career counselling, skills assessment, recognition of prior learning, and training gap analysis. The program expanded to offer these services to veterans' spouses and recognised partners in 2021. In the 2023 and 2024 calendar years 1,239 veterans registered for support under Ranks to Recognition with 466 veterans enrolling at TAFE NSW through veteran exemption (DVA Card).
- The Veterans Employment Program has facilitated five NSW Veterans Employment Roundtables since 2020 to bring the public and private sectors together to support veteran employment. The fourth roundtable was held on 5 October 2023 with the theme of collaboration in the public and private sectors supporting veteran employment and the fifth Roundtable was held on 1 October 2024 with the theme of volunteering for veterans wanting to belong to a community organisation.
- The Veterans Employment Program continues to work closely with the NSW Office of Local Government to grow awareness of the Local Government Rank to Grade Guide and transferable skills of veterans. A bi-annual local government networking meeting was held giving councils an opportunity to showcase their work, do some networking and help those thinking about supporting veterans. The VEP team helped plan and participate in the Clarence Valley Council pilot Veteran Employment Program and Reserve Expo showcasing the benefits of employing veterans and Reserve force personnel. In total, 26 NSW local governments had set up their own form of Veterans Employment Program by the end of 2024.



<
 The Veterans Employment Roundtable, October 2024. Photo by NSW Government.



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 The NSW Government Veterans Networking event at the Anzac Memorial, April 2024. Photo by Clare Hawley.



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 ADF Member and Family Transition Seminar, Sydney, 2024. Photo by NSW Government.

2. Employment and Education Status of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Status
Access to education			
2.1	Ranks to Recognition	TAFE NSW	A total of 1,239 veterans registered for support under Ranks to Recognition during calendar years 2023 and 2024 with 466 veterans enrolling at TAFE NSW through veteran exemption (DVA Card).
2.2	Veterans Teaching STEM	DOE	The Department of Education welcomed the opportunity to promote opportunities at DMFS Transition Seminars such as programs focused on Initial Teacher Education targeted for career changers. OVA met with department staff in 2023 to learn more about the Grow Your Own Teacher Training Program and suggested this could also be promoted at Transition Seminars.
2.3	Veterans Skills Program	DOE	Under the Skilling for Recovery COVID response, veterans were a specific eligible cohort for fee free training. This program closed to new students at the end of 2022. From 2023, veterans were not a specific fee free cohort identified for NSW Fee Free. As a result, the recording of veteran enrolment numbers dropped in 2023, but this does not necessarily mean that the actual number of enrolments declined. This was also the case when only 49 veterans or partners were recorded in 2024. There is now a specific veterans waiver flag in place to enable TAFE NSW and other Smart and Skilled training providers to record veteran participation in NSW Fee Free.
2.4	Tertiary Entry	OVA	OVA updated and extended the research undertaken to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information on services, programs and scholarships provided to the spouse or dependent of veterans and/or defence members - services provided by the students at a university to veterans and/or defence members - research undertaken by the university with veterans and/or defence members as the subject of the research - funding or scholarships provided to international veterans and/or defence members.
Pathways to employment			
2.5	Veterans Employment Program	OVA	As of 30 September 2024, 1,015 veterans had been hired against an interim target of 1,000 which means the Veterans Employment Program remains on target to see 2,000 veterans hired in new roles by the end of 2026.
2.6	Veterans Teach at TAFE	TAFE NSW	TAFE NSW Ranks to Recognition Program actively supported and guided veterans in creating a pathway to employment as TAFE NSW teachers. The Teach at TAFE initiative and TAFE NSW were promoted through Transition Seminars, veteran-centric community meetings and a Veterans Newsletter, and by collaborating with veteran-supporting organisations and hosting webinars. The Ranks to Recognition Program has played a crucial role in integrating veterans' prior military experience into the classroom through the Paid to Learn initiative. This 14-week program leverages the skills of current industry professionals by helping them gain a nationally recognised qualification, offering a direct pathway to a teaching career. Additionally, the program has provided comprehensive support by connecting veterans with relevant teaching sections, guiding them through the exploration of a teaching career at TAFE NSW, and assisting with the application process as teaching positions become available.

No.	Action	Lead	Status
2.7	Preferred Employers: Local Government Employment Initiative	OLG/ OVA	Twenty-six NSW local governments have set up their own form of Veterans Employment Program - Lake Macquarie City, City of Newcastle, Campbelltown City, Blacktown City, Cessnock City, Wagga Wagga City, Tweed Shire, Uralla Shire, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional, Port Stephens, Nambucca Valley, Blue Mountains, Parramatta, Sydney City, Narromine Shire, Clarence Valley, Burwood, Northern Beaches, Hawkesbury City, Bellingen Shire, Goulburn Mulwaree, Yass Valley, Mid-Western, Port Macquarie-Hastings, City of Wollongong and Snowy Valley councils.
2.8	Preferred Employers: Corporate Partnerships	OVA	Roundtables were held in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024, chaired by the Minister, bringing together ADF, Corporate, ESO and Private Sector organisations to collaborate on veteran employment annually. The 2024 Roundtable focused on veterans volunteering and collaborating on the benefits of hiring veterans.
2.9	Veteran Workshops	OVA	Five workshops were conducted in the calendar year period 2023-24. Three online workshops were conducted in August 2023, April and August 2024. Two face-to-face workshops were conducted at the Anzac Memorial in March and December 2023.
2.10	Veterans Employment and Business Initiatives	Defence Industries/ Investment NSW	This initiative did not progress following a review of all grants and programs in the 2023/2024 budget.
2.11	Return to Work Needs	WNSW	Resources for women veterans and spouses/partners of ADF members have been provided in the Return to Work Toolkit available on the Women NSW website since 2023. Women veterans were a focus community for the Return to Work Pathways Program offered by Women NSW in 2023. OVA promoted the Return to Work Toolkit and the Return to Work Pathways Program through the OVA newsletter and social media channels.
Support for families and spouses			
3.1	Veterans' Spouses and Partners	TAFE NSW/ OVA	Veterans and their partners (included from 2021) who register via the Ranks to Recognition program, and partners who enrol at TAFE NSW through veteran partner concession, are reported biannually when the VEP figure is released and reported.

Community and Volunteering

Outcome

Veterans are an active and valued part of our community.

Highlights

- The Commonwealth-funded Veterans' and Families' Hubs network continues to expand across NSW. OVA participated in the DVA assessments of business cases for delivery of the Hubs to help ensure the proposals and services would meet the needs of veterans and their families in NSW. New Hubs are being established by RSL LifeCare in the Hawkesbury, Hunter, Tweed/North Coast and Queanbeyan-Palerang regions. Additionally, the Central Coast Veteran and Family Hub was opened in September 2024, providing services to the state's highest population of veterans across all age ranges. OVA has assisted in connecting the Service NSW Centre in Nowra and the Shoalhaven Veteran and Family Hub to ensure eligible veterans and their families have access to programs, services, and concessions.
- OVA hosted Defence and Veteran Community Forums in November 2023 on the Central Coast and in May 2024 in Nowra, attended by state and federal government representatives and veteran support organisations. Over 130 veterans, current serving members, and their families attended these forums which focused on information about services and supports available for veterans and their families in the local area. OVA also consulted with the attendees on how best to acknowledge contemporary service and discussed the next NSW Government Veterans Strategy.

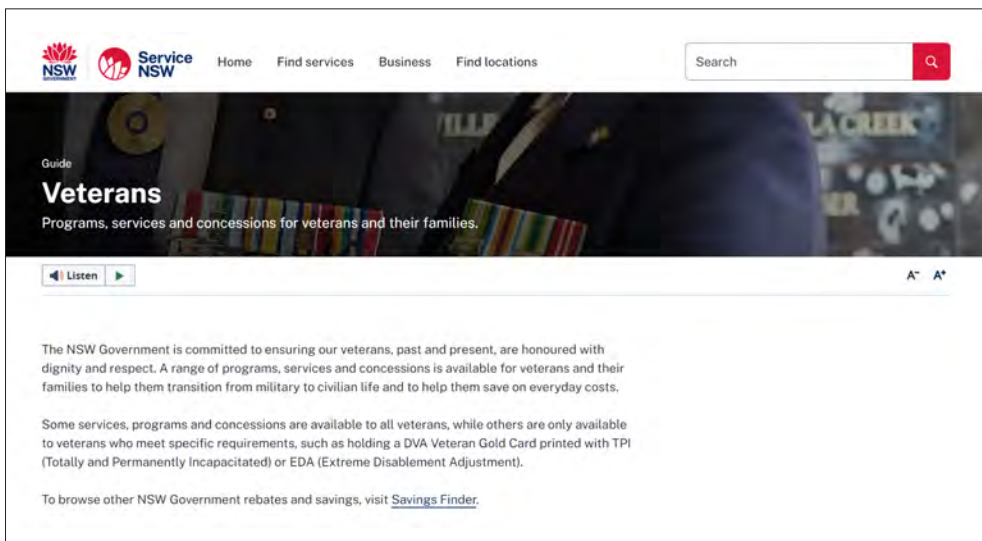


>
The Central Coast Veteran and Family Hub opening, September 2024. Photo by RSL LifeCare.



> The Nowra Defence and Veteran Community Forum, May 2024, Photo by NSW Government.

- OVA has worked closely with Service NSW to ensure the Veterans Information webpage has been regularly reviewed and links updated. This has ensured readily accessible information about the supports and services available to the veteran community, including the Savings Finder program which helps reduce the cost of living through rebates and vouchers. Service NSW and OVA also worked with Transport for NSW and DVA to rectify a long-standing issue for Veterans and Wholly Dependent Partners assessed under the *Military and Compensation Rehabilitation Act 2004* (MRCA). From 1 July 2023, these DVA Gold Card holders have had their vehicle registration automatically renewed and no longer need to visit a service centre in person each year to re-establish their eligibility.



> The Service NSW Veterans' Information Page.

3. Community and Volunteering Status of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Status
Veterans in the community			
3.2	Expanding Volunteering Opportunities	OVA	The Minister for Veterans chaired the Veterans Employment Roundtable in October 2024 with a focus on volunteering opportunities, bringing stakeholders together including NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), NSW State Emergency Service (SES), Surf Life Saving and NSW Disaster Relief Australia. OVA consulted with the veteran community on the importance of volunteering at the Nowra Veterans Forum in May 2023. Attendees reported that their volunteering efforts extend beyond ESOs to organisations such as SES, RFS, Men's Shed, aged care facilities, Marine Rescue NSW, Disaster Relief Australia, and Blaze Aid.
3.3	Expanding Volunteering Opportunities in Sport	OOS	A digital platform to support volunteering in sport and active recreation, in particular by veterans, was developed by the Office of Sport and Invictus Australia, in consultation with community sport organisations and the veteran community. The IP was shared with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) which used it to create the Volunteer Resource Hub, available on the ASC website.
3.4	Supporting Carers	DCJ/ OVA	Veterans who are carers and carers of veterans are listed as focus carer groups in the NSW Carers Strategy: Caring in NSW 2020–2030. OVA consulted with the veteran community on the needs of carers at the Nowra Defence and Veteran Community Forum in May 2023.
3.5	Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031	DCJ	The Ageing well in NSW Action Plan 2023–2024 contained a specific action (Action 51) to provide a positive experience and create an inclusive environment for veterans and improve services and experiences at Service NSW Service Centres.
3.6	NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026	WNSW	The NSW Women's Strategy 2023–2026 lists women veterans and women partners of veterans and service members as a focus community. A key commitment within the NSW Women's Strategy 2023–2026 is the development of Gender Equity Action Plans (GEAP) for government departments. DCJ conducted an internal consultation in October–November 2024 to inform the development of a GEAP.
3.7	Peer Mentoring	OVA/ Uniform agencies	The Veterans Employment Program assisted the Office of the Sheriff and Fire and Rescue NSW to develop a Mentoring/Buddy Support System for veterans transitioning to a role within their organisations. The system supports veterans through transition, training and in their new uniformed career.
3.8	Veterans Forum	OVA	OVA held Defence and Veteran Community Forums in November 2023 on the Central Coast and in May 2024 in Nowra. OVA consulted with veterans, current serving members, and their families on how best to acknowledge contemporary service, discussed the next NSW Government Strategy for 2025–2030, and shared information about services and supports available for veterans and their families throughout NSW and their local area.

No.	Action	Lead	Status
Health and wellbeing			
3.9	Sport	OOS	Following the successful conclusion in 2022 of the VetFit initiative funded by the Office of Sport, Invictus Australia was able to continue the association with the Shoalhaven Veteran and Family Hub to offer sporting programs, including weekly yoga, monthly indoor bowls, and table tennis. RSL NSW is now also leading in this space through the RSL NSW Sport & Recreation Program, providing social connection and supporting wellbeing for veterans and their families.
3.10	Veteran and Family Hubs	OOS/ DCJ/ NSW Health/ OVA	A new Veteran and Family Hub partially funded by the Australian Government and operated by RSL LifeCare was opened on the Central Coast in September 2024. A further four new Hubs will be established by RSL LifeCare in the Hawkesbury, Hunter, Tweed/North Coast and Queanbeyan-Palerang. OVA participated in the assessment of business cases for these new Hubs to ensure they would meet the needs of veterans and their families in NSW, and is actively working with RSL LifeCare to facilitate connections through the Hubs to NSW Government services available to veterans and their families.
3.11	ESO Collaboration	OVA	Formal meetings were held twice per year with key ESOs to share information and discuss issues facing the veteran community. These were supplemented by numerous informal meetings convened as needed.
Access to information			
3.12	Service NSW Veterans' Information Page	Service NSW/ OVA	The Service NSW Veterans' information page was updated in consultation with DVA to provide clarification on the eligibility criteria for concessions and exemptions. OVA regularly reviews the content of the page to ensure the information about services available to veterans and their families in NSW is up-to-date.
3.13	Pathway to NSW	Service NSW	A total of six information sessions were held across the Hunter and Newcastle Region with more than 200 veterans, ESOs, and family members attending the sessions. Service NSW attended DMFS Transition Seminars to share information about the Savings Finder service and other ways Service NSW is able to support veterans and their families. OVA is facilitating links between Service NSW and Veterans' and Families' Hubs as they are opened to support cross-referral and information sharing between Hubs and Service Centres.
3.14	Information through Seniors Card	DCJ	A range of veteran-related information has been published in the Seniors Newsletter from February to December in 2023 and 2024. Topics included ways to participate in key commemorations including Anzac Day and Remembrance Day, the promotion of exhibitions at the Anzac Memorial, as well as various benefits and concessions applicable to veterans and their families.

Support Initiatives

Outcome

Veterans with additional needs receive the support and services they require.

Highlights

- In October 2023, Commissioners Kaldas and Brown from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide visited the National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NCVH) and Fussell House. The visit allowed the Commissioners to see first-hand what can be achieved for veterans when the right combination of care and supports are provided. The Commissioners heard the vision of NCVH "To be the leaders in the provision of comprehensive care to achieve optimal physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life for our veterans" by providing integrated care service at Concord Repatriation General Hospital in Sydney NSW.
- The Commissioners also visited Fussell House which provides onsite accommodation for NCVH clients from regional NSW or interstate to receive care, with support of families or carers. The facility is a safe and comfortable residential setting, with opportunity to develop social connections and friendships with other veterans. Fussell House was funded by a \$6.7m capital contribution from DVA.
- In response to the mounting pressures on veterans and their families with the cost of everyday living expenses, the NSW Government expanded the eligibility for the "Low Income Household Rebate" and the "NSW Gas Rebate" to all DVA Gold Card holders commencing from 1 July 2024. Previously, only DVA Gold Cards endorsed with TPI, EDA or War Widow/er were eligible for the rebates.
- OVA has established a partnership with RSL NSW and Monash University in a research project which aims to understand and improve support services in NSW for women who have formerly served in the ADF. In November 2024, an expert advisory group, including executives from key ESOs and government departments, was formed to offer strategic advice and guidance on the research. In 2024-25, Monash University will review existing literature, and use surveys and interviews with women who have formerly served in the ADF to learn about their experiences, challenges, and what they need for better support.



Above: The Expert Advisory Group for the Veterans Research Partnership at the Anzac Memorial, November 2024. Photo by NSW Government.

Left: Fussell House. Photo by SydneyConnect.

Below: Services and concessions promoted in OVA newsletters.



Concession Park Passes

Eligible veterans can apply for a NSW National Parks Concession Pass. This gives you free motor vehicle entry for a single vehicle into the 45 national parks that charge entry fees.

[Read more >](#)



Get Healthy

The NSW Get Healthy Service is a free, phone-based health coaching service to help NSW adults over 16 years of age set and achieve their own health goals with the support and guidance of an expert health coach.

[Read more >](#)



Using Crown Reserves

There are over 400 Crown Reserves listed in a new directory many of which are for public and recreation purposes. The directory has an interactive map and provides information on the facilities available and the activities undertaken on the reserve.

[Read more >](#)



Veterans' Advocacy Service

Legal Aid NSW can help veterans and their dependants with advice and representation. Legal Aid can also help lodge DVA claims and appeals to the Veterans' Review Board, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Federal Court.

[Read more >](#)



Energy Social Programs

The NSW Social Code provides rebates and the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) scheme to help vulnerable customers, including eligible veterans, pay their energy bills.

[Read more >](#)



Alcohol and Drug Information Service

If you are having issues with alcohol or other drugs, are concerned about someone else's alcohol or other drug use, or just have general questions about alcohol or other drugs, you can call ADiS any time of the day or week for support, information, counselling and referral to services in NSW. They have a 24-hour support line :1800 250 015. There's also an ADiS Web Chat service available 8.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

[Read more >](#)

4. Support Initiatives

Status of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Status
Concessions and supports			
4.1	Gold Opal Card	TfNSW	An online application process is available all year round.
4.2	Energy Rebates	DCCEEW	Information about the NSW Energy Social Programs, which includes energy rebates and the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance crisis support, is included in the OVA newsletters, which are distributed four times per year. Additionally, information was included under Concessions for NSW Veterans in the Seniors Card Newsletter in May 2023.
4.3	National Park Entry Fee Concession	DCCEEW	The National Park Entry Fee Concession to veterans is included in the OVA newsletters, distributed four times per year. Information about this concession was also included in the Seniors Newsletter in March and December 2023.
Housing and homelessness			
4.4	Rent Choice Veterans	DCJ	In 2023–2024 Rent Choice Veterans assisted 70 households.
4.5	Link2Home Veterans and Ex-Service	DCJ	The program supported 581 calls about housing in the 2022–2023 financial year and 792 calls in the 2023–2024 financial year.
Physical and mental health			
4.6	National Centre for Veterans' Healthcare (NCVH)	NSW Health/ OVA	During 2023 and 2024 (January–September) 127 current serving ADF and 215 ex-serving ADF members were provided comprehensive care by the NCVH. During this period, a total of 397 referrals were received. For those that were referred and did not commence services at NCVH, alternate treatment pathways were sought for more appropriate care.
4.7	COPE Pilot Program Evaluation, The Buttery	NSW Health	The pilot program was successfully completed, and an evaluation report was published in September 2023. The evaluation determined that all participants reported an improvement in their reported wellbeing from entry to program exit.
4.8	Get Healthy	NSW Health	The Get Healthy program was included in the OVA newsletters, distributed four times per year. Information about this program was also included in the Seniors Newsletter in July 2023.
4.9	Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services	NSW Health	Information about these services is included in the OVA newsletters which are distributed four times per year.

No.	Action	Lead	Status
4.10	Towards Zero Suicides Initiatives	NSW Health	A further investment of \$143.4 million over four years from 2022 to 2023 has been made in Towards Zero Suicides initiatives. The Framework – Shifting the Landscape for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2022–2027 – has been updated and acknowledges that service men and women, particularly veterans who have been discharged or are transitioning into civilian life, are disproportionately impacted by suicide.
4.11	Data Monitoring to Support Suicide Prevention	DCJ	The NSW Suicide Monitoring System commenced in October 2020. Data on ADF suicides and suspected suicides is provided monthly to NSW Health. Analysis and reporting on all suicides and suspected suicides in NSW is published on the NSW Health website. An interagency working group meets regularly to discuss data collection.
4.12	Working with DVA and AIHW	DCJ	OVA participates in national and state-based meetings with DVA, as well as stakeholders from other states and territories. Data from the AIHW is used to progress initiatives to assist veterans across all jurisdictions.
4.13	Assistance Dogs for Veterans	CSNSW/ Defence Community Dogs	The program has partnered 104 Assistance Dogs with ADF Veterans suffering PTSD since 2014. Twelve assistance dogs were trained and provided to veterans in the 12 months to November 2024. Fourteen dogs are currently in training at the Bathurst NSW Correctional Centre as of January 2025.
Other supports and services			
4.14	Veterans Research Partnership	OVA	OVA has worked with RSL LifeCare Veterans Services, RSL NSW, and Monash University on a research project which aims to understand and improve wellbeing support services in NSW for women who have formerly served in the ADF. An expert advisory group was established and met for the first time at the Anzac Memorial on 5 November 2024. The group includes senior executives of several ESOs and other organisations currently providing wellbeing services. The project will continue in 2025, including the launch of a survey and structured interviews with women veterans.
4.15	You are Welcome	DOE	The You are Welcome resource was launched in June 2023. The professional development resource is available to all teachers and school staff of NSW Government Schools to raise awareness of the needs of Defence-connected students.
4.16	Legal Support for Veterans	Legal Aid NSW	Information on the legal support available for veterans and their families, arising from their service, is included in the OVA newsletters which are distributed four times per year.
4.17	Use of Crown Lands	DPHI	Information on available Crown Land resources is included in the OVA newsletters which are distributed four times per year.

