



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 13 December 2017

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VETERANS OPEN OVER CHRISTMAS

Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Simon Lewis said today that crucial support services for the veteran community will continue to be available throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

Mr Lewis said that providing veterans with continued access to support services was particularly important during this festive time of year because it can be a challenging period for many veterans.

“Christmas is a time of celebration for most Australians, but it’s important to remember that for veterans it can bring on a reminder of what has been lost, of the men and women who didn’t make it back home from service overseas and of those continuing to serve our country far from their families and loved ones.

“I wish to reassure veterans and their families that while some DVA services will be reduced during this break, help and support, including mental health support, will remain available throughout the holiday period and they can continue to access crucial DVA services during this time,” Mr Lewis said.

The services that will remain available to veterans include:

- **Counselling** – The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) offers free and confidential, nation-wide counselling and support for current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families. This service is available toll free on 1800 011 046, 24/7.
- **Access to DVA’s online mental health information and support** – Veterans can visit DVA’s *At Ease* mental health portal wherever they are at www.at-ease.dva.gov.au
- **Transport** – DVA staff will be available to process transport requests for medical treatment between 27–29 December. The transport booking service will be closed on 25–26 December and 1 January. If transport is required during this period but has not been pre-booked, DVA clients can pay for the transport up front and seek reimbursement when offices re-open. Alternatively, transport can be booked and

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 8 8241 45 46). VVCS is a service founded by Vietnam veterans.

reviewed, and travel expenses can be claimed online through DVA's *MyAccount* at <https://myaccount.dva.gov.au>.

- **Hospital admissions** – Doctors can admit DVA patients into hospital and request retrospective approval for the admission, where required, when DVA resumes full services on 2 January.
- **Defence Service Homes (DSH) Insurance** – Help with policy and claim enquiries is available 24-hours a day on 1300 552 662. Payments can be made on 1300 304 989 or via the DSH website www.dsh.gov.au.
- **Pharmaceutical approvals** – providers seeking prior approval for pharmaceuticals can call the Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC) 24-hours a day on 1800 552 580.

All DVA offices will close at the end of business on Friday, 22 December 2017 and will resume full services on Tuesday, 2 January 2018.

Mr Lewis added that there would be no change in pension payment dates this year over the Christmas–New Year period.

“To all members of the veteran and Defence community and their families, on behalf of the Department I wish you all the best for the festive season and 2018,” Mr Lewis said.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

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