

DVA Issues

APOD Defence discounts.

DVA has joined with Australian Partners of Defence (APOD), an organisation which “makes it easy for businesses and organisations to offer discounts to veterans and their families”.

To make use of their service you must register, you do that by going to their web site <https://apod.com.au/signup-new-account> and filling in the form. There are two classes of membership, if you are a holder of a Veteran Card (Gold, White or orange) your membership is free, if not, it will cost you \$4.95 per month.



Good luck

We found it a bit complicated, you seem to be jumping all over the place. To obtain a discount you first buy an APOD Gift Card redeemable at the firm from which you wish to buy, then front up to that firm and use the card to make your purchase.

The discounts you are eligible for can be found [HERE](#). It will ask you to allow it to know your current position then it will show you local discounts. Savings are normally 2.5%, ie: on a \$50 purchase you save \$1.25, some will think this worthwhile, others, well !!!

Veterans Card and Lapel Pin.

The Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant serves to recognise and acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the contribution of veterans and their families. The Covenant is supported by the Veteran Card, Lapel Pin and Oath. There will be two versions of the Lapel Pin, one for veterans and one for eligible Reservists. The Covenant provides the opportunity for Australians to identify veterans when they are not in uniform or wearing their medals and offer respect to them and their family.



Employers, businesses, local community groups and the broader Australian public are able to commit their support for the Covenant. The Covenant provides the framework that enables veterans and their families to better connect with their community.

Issue of the Lapel Pin is NOT automatic, you must apply for it. DVA say the reason for this is, based on demographic projections, they estimate there are currently 631,800 living veterans of which only 183,655 are DVA clients. For the remaining 450,000 plus veterans any information that the Department of Defence may have will be in paper records and likely to be out of date and not usable. Secondly, they understand that some veterans and reservists will, for whatever reason, not want a Lapel Pin or Oath. They want to avoid causing any distress so have chosen to send out the pin and Oath only to veterans and reservists who apply to receive them.



Here's how to apply:

Who is eligible?

1. Veterans who have served in the permanent ADF are eligible to apply for all components of the Covenant including the Veteran Card, Lapel Pin and Oath.
2. Reservists who have served one day of Continuous Full-Time Service (CFTS), have engaged in Disaster Relief Service, Border Protection Service, or involved in a serious service-related training accident, are eligible to apply for all components of the Covenant including the Veteran Card, Lapel Pin and Oath. Reservists not included in the above are eligible to apply for the Lapel Pin and Oath.

[More.....](#)

How to apply.

If you have access to the internet and have a myGov account, and you added the Dept Veterans' Affairs to your account, click on the DVA site, this will open the window below which will show you what you can do on this site:



Sometimes the best thing about my job is that the chair spins.



Things you can do	MyService	MyAccount
New Features		
Apply for the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant	✓	—
Claim for incapacity payments	✓	—
Computer based decision making for claims	✓	—
Claims		
Access free mental health treatment	✓	—
Access support for a service-related condition or injury	✓	—
Claim for education assistance	✓	—
Apply for recognition of eligible service	✓	—
Claim for permanent impairment compensation	—	✓

Select **Go to MyService** (MyAccount will disappear shortly so don't use it). You will see a box titled **Request the Veterans' Covenant** (if you don't see it you have either already applied or you're not eligible). Fill in the form and send it.

If you have internet access but do not yet have a myGov account, it's a bit of a job but you only have to do it once and it's definitely worth having, you can see how to get one [HERE](#).

myGov gives you access to the following departments:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Australian JobSearch | Australian Tax Office |
| Centrelink | Child Support |
| Dept Veterans' Affairs | Medicare |
| My Aged Care | My Health Record |
| National Disability Insurance Scheme | National Redress Scheme |

If you don't have access to the internet, you can ring DVA on 1800 838 372 or visit one of their Veterans' Access Network (VAN) offices.



You'll find the list of VAN Offices and their whereabouts [HERE](#).

Veteran Card.

The Veteran Card is a re-design of the existing DVA Health Cards (Gold, White and Orange). There is no change to DVA services and benefits – card holders can continue to use their existing DVA Health Card to gain access to health services and benefits. You do not have to apply for the new Veteran Card as all existing DVA Health Cards will gradually be replaced with the new look Card, either when their current card expires or as part of the card replacement program, whichever occurs first.

The Oath

The Oath is a declaration on behalf of the Australian people recognising the valuable contribution that current and former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and their families make and have made for our country. It is not intended to replace the Ode that is traditionally recited on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day but is an additional commitment of respect to Australia's veterans and may be recited at special community commemorative events.

You can see an example of the Oath [HERE](#)





Simpler access to Medical Treatment for Veterans

Veterans who currently have to pay for their medical treatment upfront and wait to be reimbursed will only need to present their Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) health card to pay for their treatment under changes to the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) passed through Parliament on the 5th December.

Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester said around 4000 MRCA veterans and their families would benefit from the change, which is part of DVA's transformation program to make processes faster and easier for veterans and their families to gain access to the support they need.

"Veterans with conditions covered under the MRCA will now, like other DVA clients, only have to present their DVA health card at the time of their medical treatment for accepted conditions and payments will be then made directly to health providers electronically through the Medicare system," Mr Chester said. "Importantly, this change ensures all veterans can gain access to medical treatment without worrying about claim forms, or being out-of-pocket while waiting for reimbursement—reducing financial pressure on veterans and their families."

The Department of Defence's arrangements for the delivery of health services to Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel now includes a provision that allows DVA to use these arrangements so veterans can access mental health services in the community. "I have worked together with Members and Senators with a lived experience of the ADF, in particular Senator Rex Patrick, to eliminate barriers in accessing mental health care for all veterans, regardless of the Act they are covered by. I thank the Senator for his passionate interest in looking after his fellow veterans," Mr Chester said.

"This arrangement provides more options for veterans to access mental health services, including where a veteran transitioning from the ADF requires continuity of care, or where a veteran is having difficulty accessing services due to their geographic location."

Open Arms.

Open Arms, formerly known as VVCS and founded by Australia's Vietnam veterans, is Australia's leading provider of high-quality mental health assessment and clinical counselling services for Australian veterans and their families. They are focused on meeting client needs through a combination of proven clinical practices and new and emerging evidence-based approaches.

The Vietnam War was a difficult chapter in Australia's history. For those who served, the experience forged strong bonds and a commitment to look out for each other.

This deep sense of mateship led Vietnam veterans to lobby for a specialised counselling and





support service for veterans and their families. The result was the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (VVCS) which was established by the Australian Government in 1982.

Since then, access to VVCS has been extended to veterans of all conflicts, their families, and other members of the ADF and ex-service community. In 2007 the service was renamed VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service. Eligibility has further expanded and, in 2018, VVCS became Open Arms.

Open Arms provides free and confidential counselling to anyone who has served at least one day in the ADF. This includes the families of the ex-serviceman/woman.

If you're a current serving Army, Navy or Air Force member, Open Arms can provide individual, couple and family counselling to help improve your resilience, as well as your mental health and wellbeing.

Open Arms counsellors have practical, first-hand experience dealing with many issues related to service life, including:



- Adjusting to the normal pace of life after deployment
- Grief and trauma counselling
- Substance issues
- Depression, anxiety and PTSD.

They can also help work through family and relationship issues to build strong and healthy relationships while you are serving. All current serving ADF members can either self-refer, or be referred through your ADF medical officer or Defence psychologist. If you self-refer, Open Arms counselling is confidential. If you are referred by your ADF medical officer or Defence psychologist, they will be included in your care plan and provided with updates.

If you have transitioned from full-time service in the Army, Navy or Air Force you can request support from Open Arms, even if you are still part of the reserves. Open Arms can provide individual, couples and family counselling. Group programs are also available and can help improve your mental health and wellbeing.

All Open Arms counsellors are trained to assist them in understanding the demands of military service. Some have military experience and know what you might be going through.

Open Arms can help you work though a range of issues, including:

- Difficulty adjusting to the tempo of normal life
- Challenges transitioning to civilian life after leaving the ADF
- Difficulties with relationships
- Managing anger
- Depression and anxiety
- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Past trauma and PTSD.



Sometimes, you may not be able to put your finger on what's going on. You might just feel that something isn't quite right. That's OK. Open Arms counselling or group programs can help you make sense of what you're feeling.

For free support, 24 hours a day, call Open Arms on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046).

Kookaburra Kids – supporting ADF children

Kookaburra Kids is a non-government organisation that supports 8–18 year old children of current and former Australian Defence Force members who may be affected by mental ill-health.

The program delivers evidence-based, age-appropriate prevention and early intervention mental health services using a peer-based social and activity-based format. The children attend camps and other organised activities designed to encourage thought leadership, friendship and camaraderie.



The aim of the program is to empower the children to build resilience and the life-long knowledge, skills and abilities they need to reach their potential.

The Kookaburra Kids Program began in 2017 and is now expanding across Australia, with camps and other activities being rolled out in South Australia and Western Australia from 2020.

Visit kookaburrakids.org.au or call 1300 566 525 for more information, including how to enrol in the program.





Funding boost for Saluting Their Service grants.

Commemorative projects will benefit from increased funding for the Saluting Their Service (STS) Commemorative Grants Program.

The Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel Darren Chester has announced another \$10 million for the STS Program, bringing the total funding to \$14 million over the next four years.

While projects and activities relating to all wars, conflicts and peace operations are eligible, those that commemorate the Second World War and later conflicts are encouraged. Apply now for projects for Victory in the Pacific Day 2020, on 15 August. This is a significant opportunity to commemorate veterans living in our communities who served during the Second World War.



There are two categories of grants available:

- **Saluting Their Service** – Community Grants (STS-CG): Grants up to a maximum of \$10,000 for local, community-based projects and activities.
- **Saluting Their Service** – Major Grants (STS-MG): Grants between \$10,001 and \$150,000 for major commemorative projects that are significant from a national, state, territory, or regional perspective.

Applications close on 31 March 2020. For more information, visit the [Community Grants Hub](#) or [GrantConnect](#).

Community Grants.

Some time ago, the various DVA Grants Schemes, which worked perfectly well for years and which were administered by DVA, were taken from DVA and had handed to the Department of Education and bundled into one huge conglomerate which was called the “Community Grants hub. (See [HERE](#))

They very quickly stuffed it.

A system which used to take a few months from application to (if) success when administered by DVA now takes at least a year, if you're lucky.

But!!



There is hope, there are changes afoot, it seems someone is listening. From now all applications from DVA people or which are DVA related will now go initially to DVA people for initial assessment and if successful will then be passed onto the "Hub" for final approval and payment. Hopefully, this should speed things up, it probably won't get back to where it used to be, but it will be a lot better than the way it is now.

You wonder who the bright spark was who decided to make the change in the first place.



This page left blank.