



DVA Issues



Defence and Veterans Legal Service.

We heard from Madeleine Antrum, she said:

I am a solicitor working in the Defence and Veterans Legal Service, here is an overview of the Defence and Veterans Legal Service.

The Defence and Veterans Legal Service (DAVLS) is a national service that provides free and independent information and legal advice to support Australian Defence personnel and veterans, as well as their families, carers and supporters, to safely share their experiences with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (the Royal Commission).

DAVLS is an Australia-wide service and, in the ACT, it operates through the ACT Office of Legal Aid. DAVLS is independent and separate from the Royal Commission, the Department of Defence, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

DAVLS can provide legal advice about:

- taking part in the Royal Commission;
- your legal rights when sharing information with the Royal Commission; and
- available legal protections when sharing information with the Royal Commission.

DAVLS can support you in:

- making a submission to the Royal Commission;



- arranging a private session with the Royal Commission; and
- connecting you with other services, like counselling, advocacy, and other legal support not related to the Royal Commission.

We are not replacing ex service organisations in their valuable work representing veterans in their claims for compensation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

All discussions between clients and our lawyers are treated in confidence and at no charge to the individual.

Contact details:

The DAVLS contact telephone is 1800 33 1800 or you can visit the website at <https://defenceveteranslegalservice.org.au>. If you are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment, you can contact DAVLS using the [National Relay Service](#). If you require an interpreter, you can request one on the call to DAVLS or you can call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

For immediate help in a crisis, please contact one of the following services:

- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467
- Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636
- Open Arms – 1800 011 046
- Defence All-hours Support Line – 1800 628 036
- Triple zero - 000



If you have any questions, please also feel free to contact me directly on 02 6243 3411.

Kind regards

Madeleine.

Suicide and Mental Health Literacy Workshops.

Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling, in partnership with RSL Australia, is offering free training opportunities to those seeking to help family, friends, co-workers or others in the veteran community.



These suicide intervention and mental health literacy workshops are delivered in RSLs and major Ex-Service Organisations (ESO) around the country.



If you are an ESO and would like to get involved with this training, please contact MSHP@ClinicalProgramsandPolicy@dva.gov.au or call 1800 011 046

For more information about the workshops and other programs offered by Open Arms, visit www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/treatment-programs-and-workshops.

Saluting their Service Grants.

Ex-service and community organisations across the country can now apply for a share in \$3.5 million for commemorative projects through the latest round of the Saluting Their Service grants program, which is now open. The Saluting Their Service program has seen hundreds of worthy projects across Australia funded in recent years, to help local communities pay tribute to Australians who have served during wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations. Almost every city or town has some form of memorial, shrine or commemorative project, and many have received funding through different grants programs.



The Saluting Their Service program ensures Australia's wartime history is preserved and the sacrifice of those who have served is remembered. Funding is available to support a wide range of projects, from new memorials and refurbishment costs, to exhibitions, digital resources and publications.

Saluting Their Service is a national grants program. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available for community-based commemorative projects and activities, while Major Grants up to \$150,000 are for initiatives that are significant from a national, state, territory or regional perspective.



Assessment of applications is divided into three batches: .

- applications submitted between 9 February and 9 June 2022;
- between 10 June and 11 October 2022; and
- between 12 October 2022 and 7 February 2023.

This allows organisations to submit multiple applications throughout the year.

To apply for a grant, or to learn more about the Saluting Their Service Program, please visit the Community Grants Hub [website](#) or the Department of Veterans' Affairs [website](#). You can contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 or at support@communitygrants.gov.au for further information or assistance.

Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the end of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

Planning is underway for a range of significant events around the country to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War in 2023. The war ended for Australia on the 11th January 1973.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

CUN/66/0161/V



Australian support for South Vietnam in the early 1960s was in keeping with the policies of other nations to stem the spread of communism in Europe and Asia. In 1961 and 1962 Ngo Dinh Diem, South Vietnam's leader, repeatedly requested security assistance. Australia responded with 30 military advisers. Their arrival in South Vietnam in July 1962 was the beginning of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

In August 1964 the Air Force sent a flight of Caribou transports to the port town of Vung Tau. By early 1965, when it had become clear that South Vietnam could not stave off the communist insurgents and the North Vietnamese for more than a few months, the US commenced a major escalation of the war. By the end of the year it had committed 200,000 troops to the conflict.



L-R: Trevor Pratt, Colin Geraghty, George Harrison, Trevor Etheridge.

As part of the build-up, the US government requested support from other countries. The Australian government dispatched the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) in June 1965 to serve alongside the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in Bien Hoa province. In March 1966 the government announced the dispatch of a taskforce to replace 1RAR, consisting of two



battalions and support services (including a RAAF squadron of Iroquois helicopters), to be based at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy province. Unlike 1RAR, the taskforce was assigned its own area of operations and included conscripts who had been called up under the National Service Scheme, introduced in 1964.

All nine RAR battalions served in the taskforce at one time or another – at the height of Australian involvement it numbered some 8,500 troops. A third RAAF squadron (of Canberras) was also committed in 1967 and destroyers of the Royal Australian Navy joined US patrols off the North Vietnamese coast. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) also contributed a clearance diving team and a helicopter detachment that operated with the US Army from October 1967.

In August 1966 a company of 6RAR was engaged in one of Australia's heaviest actions of the war, near Long Tan. After three hours of fierce fighting, during which it seemed the Australian forces would be overrun by the enemy's greater numbers, the Viet Cong withdrew, leaving behind 245 dead and carrying away many more casualties. 18 Australians were killed and 24 wounded. The battle eliminated communist dominance over the province.

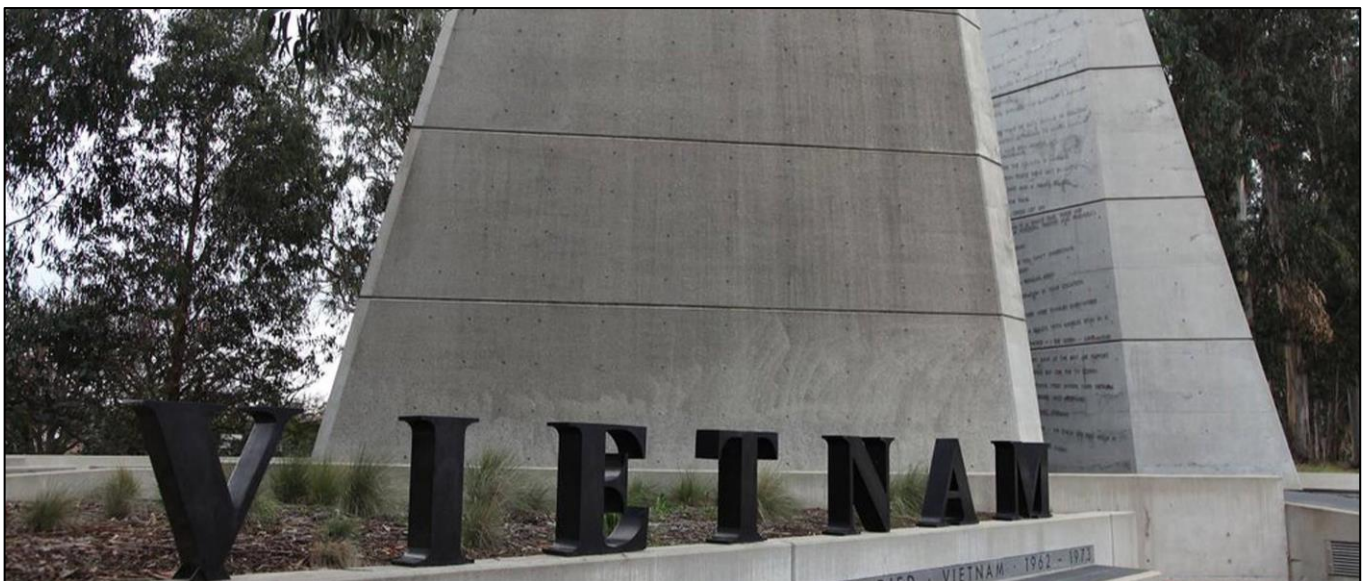
Australian Government has committed \$6 million to ensure this important milestone is marked with appropriate respect and appreciation for all those who served and those who gave their lives in Vietnam. "Almost 60,000 Australians served in the Vietnam War, 521 lost their lives and more than 3,000 were wounded.

4 men were awarded the Victoria Cross, they are:

Kevin Wheatley (1965)
Keith Payne (1969)

Peter Badcoe (1967)
Ray Simpson (1969)

At places like Long Tan, Nui Lei, Binh Ba, Coral and Balmoral, Ap My An and many others, Australians served with distinction, in the finest traditions of the armed forces.





Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam conflict will be an important opportunity for Australians to express the pride, gratitude and respect of the nation. "The Vietnam War and its aftermath exacted a heavy toll on all those who served and their families. The treatment of our diggers upon their return home by some of their fellow Australians remains a source of hurt and pain for many. The 50 year commemoration is another important step in helping to heal the wounds that were inflicted back in Australia.

The centrepiece will be a national commemorative service at the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial on Anzac Parade in Canberra.

Further announcements on the details of specific commemorations and the consultation process will be made on the Department of Veterans' Affairs website in due course.

Age Pension rate changes and eligibility

Pension and super changes that could affect your retirement plus your entitlements.

Australians are currently [eligible for the Age Pension](#) at 66½, changing to 67 in July 2023. If you are set to reach that milestone this year, you should look closely at the Age Pension application 13 weeks before your birthday. You can then address any hiccups well ahead of when your first payment would be due.



If you already receive an Age Pension or part pension, make sure Centrelink has your latest details and update key criteria as necessary. Check that Centrelink has the correct and updated value for your car or caravan and that household contents are realistically valued.



Pensioner entitlements

If you receive an Age Pension, make sure you are receiving these entitlements:

- gas rebate
- electricity rebate
- water rebate
- council rates discount
- driver's licence and registration concession.

Rapid antigen tests.

Age Pensioners and anyone with a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card(CSHC) or a Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) card can receive 10 free rapid antigen tests. Changes to your income and assets may mean you now [qualify for a CSHC](#), which entitles you to much more than assistance with medical and pharmacy expenses. Even some self-funded retirees may be eligible.

Budget changes that will affect retirees.

Key announcements in the May 2021 Budget are set to come into effect on 1 July 2022. You are likely to be affected if you are:

- between 66 and 74, not working, and want to put more money into super.
- looking at downsizing and are aged 60 or over.
- want to draw down a lump sum using the government's Home Equity Access Scheme (formerly the Pension Loans Scheme).

Working and the Age Pension.

Do not assume that the Age Pension is unavailable if you are of Age Pension age and working. Check the eligibility rules [here](#).

Home Equity Access Scheme.

This [scheme](#), called the Pension Loan Scheme until 31 December 2021, now has a lower rate and offers older property owners more flexibility. On 1 January 2022, the scheme's interest rate was cut from 4.5 to 3.95 per cent and from 1 July 2022, homeowners aged 66 and over can receive two lump-sum payments a year, capped at 50 per cent of the annual Age Pension rate. Also from 1 July, a No Negative Equity Guarantee will be introduced to ensure that no participant will need to repay more than the equity he or she holds in the property used to secure the loan.



Veterans' Health Check.

After your transition to civilian life, you can have a comprehensive health check with your general practitioner (GP).



The health check.

A Veterans' Health Check is a comprehensive health assessment with your GP to help you better understand and optimise your health and wellbeing. It provides an opportunity to access early intervention care and appropriate referrals when you need it.

It can help you:

- manage and take charge of your own health
- take action to stay well
- address health concerns early
- develop a relationship with your new GP

Watch this [YouTube video](#) to learn more about the types of health check.

You can also download the [Veterans' Health Check flyer](#) and the [Veterans' Health Check poster](#)

Frequently asked questions

For more information about the Veterans' Health Check, read the [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

During the health check:

Your health check will depend on your needs. Your GP may:



- ask about your health and family history
- prescribe treatment
- refer you to other health professionals
- refer you for further tests
- suggest other DVA services and programs to support you

DVA has developed a comprehensive Veterans' Health Check guide to assist GPs to support the Veteran community. You can ask your GP to use this guide. It is also contained in the software of most GP practices. It can also be found online at [Veteran Health Check Providers](#) or by searching 'Veterans Health Check'.

Confidentiality.

Your Veterans' Health Check is confidential and your results will not be shared with DVA unless you ask your GP. GPs have an ethical, professional and legal duty to their patient's rights to privacy and confidentiality. Speak to your GP if you have any concerns.

Who can receive it?

One-off Veterans' Health Check

You are eligible for the One-off Veterans' Health Check if you:

- are a former member of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), including reservists, with at least one day of continuous full-time service (CFTS)
- transitioned out of the ADF at any time.



Annual Veterans' Health Check

You are eligible for the Annual Veterans' Health Check if you:

- are a former member of the ADF, including reservists, with at least one day of continuous full-time service (CFTS)
- transitioned out of the ADF from 1 July 2019.

What does it cost?

- If you use your DVA Veteran Card, there will be no charge to you.
- If you are not a DVA client, use your Medicare card to claim a Medicare benefit for the One-off Veterans' Health Check. Medicare will pay the full amount of the cost – see [HERE](#)



How to book.

Step 1: Find a GP

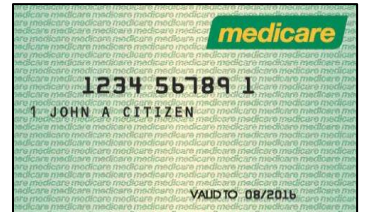
Every GP across Australia can conduct the Veterans' Health Check. If you do not have a GP, search [Healthdirect](#) for bulk-billing GPs near you or call 1800 022 222.

Step 2: call the GP clinic

Ask whether the GP accepts your Veteran Card or bulk-bills (accepts your Medicare card).

Step 3: ask for a 45-minute appointment

Let your GP clinic know your appointment is for a Veterans' Health Check. Ask to receive a reminder for your appointment by a call, text message or email.



What to bring to your appointment.

When you come to your appointment, bring:

- your Veteran Card or Medicare card
- your current medical records (if you are seeing this GP for the first time)
- any questions or concerns you would like to discuss with your GP

If you do not have a DVA health care card, many GPs bulk-bill which means your GP bills Medicare. You do not pay for bulk-billed appointments. If your GP does not bulk-bill, you will need to pay for your appointment. You may be able to claim a proportion of this cost from Medicare. This is called a Medicare benefit.

See [Medicare](#) for what they cover and how to claim a benefit.

Travel Claims.

If you're a Vet and have a DVA Health Care Card and receive medical treatment from specialist people, you are entitled to receive transport to and from your appointment, compliments of DVA. You are not compelled to use that provided transport and can, if you wish, use your own car and if you do, you are entitled to claim the cost.

DVA has made the process of claiming those travel expenses a lot easier. To access the "form" to enable you to make a claim, you have to log onto MyService. To do this you will need a MyGov account. Getting one is a bit complicated but once you have one you will find it very useful.



To make a claim, log into your MyGov account then click onto your DVA link, that will open the window below.

Tasks

No new tasks

Claims

1 claim submitted >

Payments

\$1,487.90 24 Feb 2022 >

Services and benefits

[Apply now](#)

- [What can I apply for?](#)
- [Request review of decision](#)
- [Claim travel expenses](#)
- [Book transport](#)
- [Lump sum advance](#)

Your information

- [My details](#)
- [Service history](#)
- [Payment destination](#)
- [Representation](#)
- [Accepted conditions](#)
- [Correspondence](#)
- [View all](#)

Report changes

- [Notify of overseas travel](#)
- [Update income and assets](#)
- [Update accommodation costs](#)

Your card

Card type	Gold card
File number	QSS03536
Expiry	01/26

[View card details >](#)

Click the “Claim travel expenses” link which you’ll find in the “Services and benefits” window on the left, (see above) then click “New Claim,” click “Add expense” that opens the window at right, then follow the prompts.

You can download a doc [HERE](#) which will give you further info.

There is more info on MyService [HERE](#).

Appointment details

Purpose of trip

-- Select purpose --

Appointment date (dd/mm/yyyy)

dd/mm/yyyy

Appointment time

-- -- --

Expense details

Cost type

-- Select type --

[Previous](#)
[Add expense](#)

MyGov.

A MyGov account allows you to access Centrelink, Medicare, DVA, ATO and other Government agencies all from the one spot – it is very handy – it takes a few mins to set it up but once it’s done all you’ll need is a logon name and a password.



Here's how to do it:

- Google "Create a MyGov account" then follow the link.
- Read the "Terms of use" then click "I agree".
- Enter your email address, MyGov will send a number code to your email address, open your email and get the code.
- Enter the code.
- Enter your mobile phone number.
- Create a password.
- MyGov now asks you to nominate 3 secret questions and answers. MyGov needs this to identify you if you forget your login or password when trying to log in sometime in the future.



Once you've done this your MyGov account is set to go.

You will find further info [HERE](#).





Ombudsman's report into DVA's Claims Procedure.

In January 2022 the Ombudsman released its report into its investigation into the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (DVA) communication with veterans who make claims for compensation for injuries and conditions related to their service. The investigation considered the appropriateness of DVA's policy and procedural framework for communicating with veterans during the claim process.



Their investigation did not identify any significant concerns about DVA's policy and procedural framework for managing communication with veterans during the claim process however they have made 8 recommendations aimed at strengthening the accessibility and transparency of information available to veterans and the internal guidance available to support DVA's decision makers.

Their recommendations were:

RECOMMENDATION 1: PUBLISH TIMELINESS STANDARDS

We recommend DVA publish and update regularly, current average processing timeframes for claims under the Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related claims) Act 1988.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DIRECT VETERANS TO PUBLISHED TIMELINESS STANDARDS

We recommend DVA include in its acknowledgement letters to veterans, a statement advising that current average processing timeframes are published on its website.

RECOMMENDATION 3: REVIEW INFORMATION ON DVA WEBSITE

We recommend DVA introduce a policy requiring regular review of its webpage design and content about compensation claims to ensure information is published consistent with the Australian Government Digital Service Standards.

RECOMMENDATION 4: UPDATE INFORMATION REQUIRED IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT LETTERS

We recommend DVA update its Guidelines to include all information delegates should include in acknowledgement letters.



RECOMMENDATION 5: PUBLISH INFORMATION ABOUT GENERAL CLAIM PROCESS

We recommend DVA publish information that outlines the general steps involved in the claim process.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DEVELOP GUIDANCE TO ASSIST DECISION-MAKERS COMMUNICATING WITH VETERANS WITH UNALLOCATED CLAIMS

We recommend DVA develop guidance materials to assist its staff to communicate with veterans so they can identify and make decisions on claims that should be prioritised.

RECOMMENDATION 7: DEVELOP POLICY ABOUT FREQUENCY AND MODE OF CONTACT EXPECTED WITH VETERANS

We recommend DVA develop a policy to outline the frequency and mode of contact it requires delegates to have with veterans.

RECOMMENDATION 8: COMMUNICATE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT PROVIDING INFORMATION

We recommend DVA clearly outlines to veterans as early as possible, the potential consequences of not providing additional information.

You can read the full report [HERE](#).



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