

Advocacy News

December 2023



Important update for 2001 Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel participants

In 2001, the Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (SHOAMP) was commissioned by the Department of Defence to investigate health outcomes in aircraft- maintenance personnel who carried out fuel-tank repairs between 1975 to 1999 as part of the F- 111 Deseal/Reseal programs.

Some of these personnel volunteered to be participants of the study and donated their blood- serum samples for long-term storage to support the study over time, for example conducting further testing should scientific developments enable future analysis.

At the time of the study, some participants agreed to their samples being stored for a period of 50 years and were advised that they would be informed of any changes to serum-sample storage arrangements.

To ensure continued long-term storage, and with the support of the SHOAMP Serum Management Committee (of which Air Force Association is a member), serum samples donated by study participants have been moved from their original storage at QML Pathology to state-of-the-art bio-banking facilities at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute in Brisbane.



The Australian Institute of Family Studies has been contracted — with the support of the SHOAMP Serum Management Committee — to manage on-going storage of the data-linkage key which contains the information that allows a participant sample to be identified and withdrawn from storage.

Participants can withdraw consent for their sample to be used in further research. Any SHOAMP participant who wishes to withdraw their consent can contact the Australian Institute of Family Studies on shoamp-requests@aifs.gov.au or complete the online form at www.aifs.gov.au/shoamp-request.

Ethics approvals were granted by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee prior to the changes in SHOAMP storage arrangements.

Participant privacy continues to be a primary consideration. At no time has Defence or DVA received identifying participant information.

As outlined in the original information provided to study participants, de-identified participant study data is held by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

There is no impact on, or change to, SHOAMP Health Care Scheme entitlements. Click [here](#) if you would like information about the SHOAMP Health Care Scheme.

For more information, visit www.dva.gov.au/shoamp-storage-arrangements.



DVA Wellbeing and Support Program (WASP)

The DVA Wellbeing and Support Program (WASP) is a free and voluntary program providing intensive, face-to-face case management support aimed at improving veteran wellbeing and building capacity towards self-management.

Veterans participating in this program will be supported by DVA case managers, and community case workers to identify their wellbeing goals. The case management team will link the veteran and their family to suitable services or programs administered by the department, as well as mainstream health support services.

The aim of the Program is to support veteran engagement with psychosocial activities to improve social and community connection by providing a strong therapeutic alliance with the veteran, their family and treating health professionals

The Wellbeing and Support Program is available to veterans across Australia who provide their consent to participate in the program.

For more information, visit www.dva.gov.au/get-support/health-support/work-and-social-life-programs/wellbeing-and-support-program-wasp.

Phone: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) Email: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

It is now easier for eligible DVA clients with diabetes to obtain Continuous Glucose Monitors (CGM) to monitor their diabetes

From 1 November 2023, eligible Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) clients with diabetes can see their General Practitioner (GP), diabetes clinic, diabetes educator, a Registered Nurse (RN) or their specialist to be prescribed a Continuous Glucose Monitor (CGM).

Use of CGMs have been found to improve the lives of people living with diabetes by providing them a greater understanding of their condition, enabling them to better manage their glucose levels and reduce the risk of complications.

Why are these changes happening?

Previously, the initial request for a CGM had to be made by the client's Endocrinologist. The new prescribing arrangements make it easier for eligible clients to access CGMs funded by DVA, particularly in regional and remote areas. It will also be easier for clients to access CGM consumables (for example CGM sensors) through a three monthly DVA subscription service.

Who is eligible?

Clients must hold a Veteran Gold Card (and have diabetes), or a White Card (with a DVA-accepted condition of diabetes) and must live in Australia.

DVA clients do not require a state or territory diabetes membership to access DVA-funded diabetes products. For further information about how DVA reimburses diabetes memberships go to www.dva.gov.au/diabetes.

What do clients need to do?

To access a DVA funded CGM and sensors, the first step is for eligible clients to:



1. Visit one of the following health professionals:
 - General Practitioner (GP);
 - Diabetes educator;
 - Diabetes clinic;
 - Registered Nurse (RN); or
 - Specialist.
2. The provider will then complete and submit the DVA [Diabetes Product Order Form](#). For CGM's and consumables, the order form only needs to be completed once. After this, DVA will place the client on a subscription service which will provide three (3) months' supply of the CGM sensors. These will be delivered to the client's door by DVA's contracted suppliers on an ongoing basis, at no cost to the client.



Please note: The health provider will give the client a copy of the form so that the client can notify the DVA supplier if their circumstances change (e.g. if their residential address changes or they no longer require CGMs).

Accessing other DVA-Funded diabetes products

Eligible DVA clients can also access fully-funded DVA diabetes products through DVA's contracted suppliers and have them delivered to their door, at no cost to themselves.

Who is eligible?

Clients must hold a Veteran Gold Card (and have diabetes), or a White Card (with a DVA-accepted condition of diabetes) and must live in Australia.

DVA clients do not require a state or territory diabetes membership to access DVA-funded diabetes products. For further information about how DVA reimburses diabetes memberships go to www.dva.gov.au/diabetes

What do clients need to do?

To access a DVA funded diabetes products, the first step is for an eligible client to follow Step 1, as outlined in the CGM advice, above, (i.e. visit their health professional).

The health professional will complete the DVA [Diabetes Product Order Form](#) which allows the client to receive up to three (3) months' supply of products at a time. The health professional will submit the form to a DVA contacted supplier and diabetes products will be delivered to the client's door at no cost to themselves. The health professional will need to give the client a copy of the form in case they need to advise the DVA supplier of a change of circumstances (address or no longer wish to receive diabetes products)

Please note that DVA have advised health professionals they must complete a DVA Diabetes Products Order Form every two (2) years.

For more information on [diabetes products](#), or our diabetes support services and resources visit the [DVA website](#).

For more information on eligibility and how to assist a patient make a claim, visit the DVA website or call 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372).



ADF Firefighters

The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Regulations 2019 has been amended to include eight prescribed types of cancers for subsection 7(8) of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988, with a commencement date of 05 October 2023.

The eight prescribed types of cancer, and qualifying periods of service as a firefighter for those diseases, that have been added for the purposes of item 13 of the table in subsection 7(8) of the Act are:

- (1) Primary site lung cancer with a qualifying period of 15 years;
- (2) Primary site skin cancer with a qualifying period of 15 years;
- (3) Primary site cervical cancer with a qualifying period of 10 years;
- (4) Primary site ovarian cancer with a qualifying period of 10 years;
- (5) Primary site penile cancer with a qualifying period of 15 years;
- (6) Primary site pancreatic cancer with a qualifying period of 10 years;
- (7) Primary site thyroid cancer with a qualifying period of 10 years; and
- (8) Malignant mesothelioma with a qualifying period of 15 years.

The changes to the regulations will make it easier for veterans who served as firefighters to establish liability for the following forms of cancer for the purposes of compensation and rehabilitation.

The changes form part of a package of legislative amendments for firefighters which included amendment to the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-Related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA) through the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Miscellaneous Measures No.2) Act 2023 and aligns coverage for Australian Defence Force firefighters with changes made for their civilian counterparts in late 2022 under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988.

The amendments apply to decisions made under the Act (including a decision on reconsideration or review under Part IV of the Act) after the amendments commence, and apply to a prescribed cancer sustained by an employee on or after 4 July 2011.

These provisions apply only to firefighting service by members of the Defence Force prior to 1 July 2004, which is covered by the DRCA.

All firefighters employed by the ADF from 1 July 2004 are covered by the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004. Claims under the MRCA are assessed in accordance with the Statements of Principles for the relevant condition. There are no prescribed conditions provisions under the MRCA.

For more information, visit [22.4.5 ADF Firefighters | Military Compensation SRCA Manuals and Resources Library, Liability Handbook, Ch 22 Declared Occupational Diseases, 22.4 Specific Types of Service](#)

Improving DVA medical assessment forms

In May 2023, we commenced a project to review medical assessment forms to improve how DVA obtains medical information from doctors for veteran's compensation claims. The first seven forms are now in use and have been published on DVA's web page for health care providers. A further eight forms will be released in November 2023, with the review continuing through to mid-2024.

The review of the compensation medical forms is one initiative to gain efficiencies in the claims process and to respond to feedback from medical providers, advocates, veterans and families on the forms complexity.



The review will deliver forms that are consolidated, simplified and easier for medical providers to understand. While also assisting delegates to obtain and understand the information they need to make a decision on a claim. These outcomes will help to improve claim assessment times.

The other focus of the project is to prepare the compensation medical forms for digitisation and the possible efficiencies that can be gained through the use of digital forms and compatibility with medical provider software.

The review process included internal consultation and external consultation with medical providers and their representative organisations, ex-service organisations and the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government.

The project outcomes achieved to date include:

- Stage one - 19 most frequently used forms consolidated into seven forms, reducing 33 pages to 17 pages.
- Stage two - 20 MRCA/VEA forms consolidated into eight forms, reducing 56 pages to 22 pages.

To find the new medical impairment assessment forms on the 'Find forms' page, to search for them via title using the term 'Medical Impairment Assessment'.

If you have any questions or any feedback on the new or existing medical forms please email Business.Improvement.CBD@dva.gov.au

For more information, visit [Compensation claims information for providers](#).

Client Support Officers

If you submit an Initial Liability claim for one of your clients you are likely to speak to one of our Client Support Officers (CSOs) at the beginning of the investigation. CSOs have been used more frequently in recent months to start our claims and allow our delegates to focus on the critical aspects of their role: interpreting the legislation and issuing decisions efficiently. Over the years a barrier to that goal was the administration delegates faced in gathering the required medical information to reach the determination stage. By having a dedicated team at the front end that is trained and working in conjunction with delegates, we are endeavouring to provide a completed claim (all the required evidence) to a delegate. Allowing the delegates to use their skills and energies on reviewing the information and making a decision.

What if I submit a complete claim with all the evidence?

That's great! Upon registration it will be allocated to a CSO who will review the claim and confirm that it is ready to be investigated and transferred to a team of delegates. This is still the quickest way for your claim to get to the determinations stage: if at lodgement you provide all the information and evidence that supports the contention. By doing so you will have made your client's claim process far quicker.

We also know there are instances when you will be unable to provide all the required evidence and in those situations the CSO will be in touch and work with you on what is required, or organise the appropriate appointments.

Most importantly, the CSO process will not delay the claim getting to a delegate. The CSO will be striving to get the claim in 'ready to investigate' shape (all the evidence is on file, ready to review) and passed on to a delegate, as soon as they have everything they need. The CSO role serves to enhance and quicken the claim evidence gathering stage, so don't worry if it's a CSO that you first speak to. The delegate is on the way as soon as we have all the required information, working with the CSO will be the fastest way to reach that end.



Community Support Advisors in DVA

Working within a nationally dispersed team, your local DVA Community Support Advisor (CSA) offers local, focused support and guidance to strengthen the capabilities of ex-service organisations, veterans and family groups.

CSAs offer information sessions about DVA services, supports and social health programs, and support to ESOs who are interested in creating collaborative opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families. CSAs are here to support your organisation, to support your members.

Veterans' Health Week is an annual event promoting one of the 4 health pillars of Mental Wellness, Social Connection, Physical Health, and Nutrition. With up to \$720 available to support events run by veteran support organisations, this year's VHW saw over 660 applications accepted nationally, proving the program's success and popularity.

Veterans' Health Week often inspires the creation of small, one-off events, courses and workshops and some of these initiatives may be eligible for **Health & Wellbeing funding**. This seed funding provides the start-up funds for ongoing health and wellbeing programs with an initial financial investment of up to \$2000 to help get them off the ground.



Photo – Veterans of Australia – Hervey Bay. L to R – Kenneth, Peter, Shayne, Barry and Kevin with guitars and music equipment they purchased with Health and Wellbeing funding in 2023.

Successful applications have included funding for surfboards, camping equipment, guitars and musical instruments, lawn bowls, gardening tools, and yoga equipment for ESOs to run ongoing group activities and programs, supporting their local community's health and wellbeing.

With a range of support programs on offer, including Heart Health, Men's Health Peer Education and Veteran Health Check, the Community Support team encourage veteran and family focused groups to connect and find out more. Please see <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/health-support/work-and-social-life-programs/community-support-team>

Support for veterans and their families over the Christmas period

DVA will continue to provide support to veterans and families during the holiday season. However, please be aware that some services will be impacted.

For more information, visit <https://www.dva.gov.au/news/latest-stories/dva-services-during-holiday-season>.

Open Arms: 1800 011 046 | www.openarms.gov.au

Safe Zone: 1800 142 072



Supporting veterans with in-home community nursing services

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) funds in-home community nursing services through the [Community Nursing program](#). The Community Nursing program is designed to support eligible veterans and veteran card holders by providing clinically required nursing and personal care services, to support them to remain independent in their own homes. Services can include assistance with medication, wound care, hygiene, showering, dressing and palliative care.

The Community Nursing program aims to improve health outcomes and quality of life, and avoid early admission to hospital or residential aged care. Community nursing services may be provided where an assessed need for care at home is required by a Veteran Gold Card holder, or for a Veteran White Card holder where the care is for an accepted service-related condition.

Services are delivered by DVA contracted Community Nursing providers (Panel of Community Nursing providers). A written referral must be obtained and sent directly to the closest provider available. The referral must be from one of the below authorised referral sources:

- General practitioner (GP)
- Treating medical practitioner in a hospital
- Hospital discharge planner
- Nurse practitioner specialising in a Community Nursing field.



The Panel of DVA contracted Community Nursing providers can be found on the DVA website: [Panel of community nursing providers](#).

Once the DVA contracted Community Nursing provider receives the authorised referral, their registered nurse will contact the client to arrange an in-home assessment. There is no co-payment required for DVA community nursing services.

You can download the Community Nursing services booklet '[A guide for veterans, family members and carers](#)' from the DVA website. Alternatively you can request hard copies of this booklet by emailing: nursing@dva.gov.au

For further information:

Visit the DVA website: [Community Nursing program](#)

Ph: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

Email: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2024.

As another year comes to a close, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank all the advocates and their associated ESOs for their efforts in supporting veterans and their families.

We hope you enjoy some time with your own loved ones over the Christmas period, or spend some time reflecting by yourself if preferred.

Merry Christmas to all, thank you for your continued support of the ATDP, and we look forward to seeing what 2024 brings.