



Welcome to the twelfth issue of *Advocacy News*.

In this edition we celebrate the Queen's Birthday Honours awards presented to eight of our advocates and profile Peter McNamara and David Waddle. We learn about Alternative Dispute Resolution at the Veterans' Review Board, see how many people are now involved in the ATDP and how training is progressing, and learn about the new website and the Authorised Advocate Register and more. Hope you enjoy this issue.

1. A message from the Chair



It's hard to believe it's now been three years since we conducted our first Recognition of Prior Learning Level 2 pilots in Sydney in August 2016. We now have over 700 advocates that have been accredited in the Course in Military Advocacy with over 900 individual qualifications having been issued. Further, over 100 of these newly qualified advocates have entered the program via the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) learning pathway with average ages noticeably under that of the former Training and Information Program (TIP) cohort.

I am also pleased to report that a third of these are women who have decided to undertake training in their ESOs to provide services to the veteran community.

Since my last message, work has been completed on the design of the Compensation Level 3 Consolidation and Assessment (C & A) material and the Train the Trainer element has also been completed. The pilot for the Compensation Level 3 C & A is programmed for November 2019 with a number of former TIP -trained advocates and Learning Pathway candidates either ready, or close to ready, to be invited to this pilot.

Workshops have been completed in Sydney on the final component of the ATDP curriculum, the Compensation Level 4 Consolidation and Assessment material and we would expect the Pilot activity to be undertaken in the first half of 2020. I would like to thank the Subject Matter Experts involved for bringing their many years' experience to the table in helping develop this material with our Registered Training Organisation, Major Training Services.

Also, as you may be aware, we have recently released the new ATDP Website Front Page which you can use to navigate to the ATDP website. On 1 October 2019 this became the default front page with the option to use the older front page up until 31 October 2019 remaining. We are also busy building additional functionality on our website and in coming months a new Blog will replace the Orderly Room. <https://theorderlyroom.blogspot.com/>

Recently, the Accredited Advocates Register (AAR) has also undergone some additional development work to assist ESOs and improve the experience of our clients. The ex-service community can now nominate two authorised persons to manage the AAR records of their authorised accredited advocates and to nominate people for RPL or pathway training. Clients can now access a map based on a tool from *Google Maps* to help them locate ex-service organisations with AAR listings that can provide them with accredited advocacy services.

A range of new continuing professional development activities have been released since 1 July 2019 to provide more options so that accredited advocates not progressing via the Learning Pathway can increase their skills and knowledge in areas of interest and by means of their choosing. A continuing professional development program is also now in place for our dedicated team of trainers and assessors which is overseen by Major Training Services. Pleasingly, we have recently had three new very experienced advocates express interest in these roles and they are about to undertake the required training courses to complete the relevant professional qualifications.

Since my last communication the Welfare Support Officers (WSO) Handbook has been completed and the Wellbeing Handbook updated. These handbooks along with the updated Compensation Handbook can be located on the ATDP website. <https://web.atdp.org.au/>

We will be conducting workshops in coming weeks with a view to producing a Compensation Support Officer (CSO) handbook by year's end. For ex-service community organisations that have experienced advocates and want to continue to assist clients but do not wish to seek accreditation the WSO and CSO handbooks outline the valuable contribution they can continue to make without the requirement of holding formal qualifications, or having professional indemnity insurance cover for providing advice.

Unfortunately I'm not in a position to provide any further comments on the impact on advocacy of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report *A Better Way to Support Veterans* or the *Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study* as these reports are still being considered by the government but hopefully I will be able to say more in coming issues of the Advocacy News.

Once again I would like to thank all of you that are providing advocacy services to the veteran and ex-service community, some of whom have been recognised with Order of Australia and other awards over the past few months. I look forward to touching base with you all again just ahead of the Christmas break.

Jenny Walker

Chair, Strategic Governance Board
Advocacy Training and Development Program

2. Queen's Birthday Honours Awards 2019

Eight members of the ATDP family were recognised in this year's Queens Birthday Honours.

Congratulations to Maureen Costello - Kingaroy RSL, William Kaine - Ulverstone RSL, Raymond Kemp - Submarines Association Australia, Peter McNamara - Sandgate RSL, Francis Radford - Townsville RSL, John Rogers - Granville VVFA, Bill Tittley - Brisbane Legacy and David Waddle - Hobart Legacy. Peter McNamara and David Waddle are profiled in this edition of Advocacy News and we plan to cover two or three more of our OAM advocates in the Xmas edition.



Peter McNamara OAM

Peter was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours for service to veterans and their families. Peter has very close ties to the ATDP and was the inaugural ATDP Regional Manager for Queensland and the Northern Territory (Region 1).

Peter served in the army for 23 years and discharged in 1995. He is the current president of the Sandgate RSL, the former vice president, treasurer and grants officer, an ATDP Wellbeing Advocate Level 2 and Compensation Advocate Level 3, the Welfare and Pension's officer (since 2011) for Sandgate RSL, extraordinary Minister (Catholic faith), Justice of the Peace Queensland since 2001 and a member of the Mates4Mates program since 2014. Peter is also very active in the community and was the deputy chair, Centenary of ANZAC committee in the Electorate of Lilley in 2013-14.

Peter has also received an Australian Service Medal 1975-1989 with clasp SEASIA, Defence Force Service Medal with First Clasp, Australian Defence Medal and he is also a recipient of a Lilley Australia Day Award in 2015.

Advocacy News asked Peter what was instrumental in him wanting to help people, he said, "during my time in the Army I recognised that people needed help and I knew I had the will and drive to provide this assistance - and that there was a real need for it". Peter said that the defence environment equipped him with transferrable skills and after leaving the army he travelled Australia and the world applying those skills in a myriad of roles including logistics, security, shipping and facilities management and worked for a number of companies including Boeing Australia and owned a shipping company!

Peter mentioned that some of his motivation to help veterans stemmed from his own DVA claim process which took a number of years, and a toll, before it was completed. So there was always that need to help veterans and the demand was certainly there. Peter completed his TIP training



in 2007-2008 and when the ATDP arrived in 2016 he knew this was what was needed 'it was leaps and bounds ahead of TIP', and there was a huge demand for professional advocacy services; especially for advocates who knew the three Acts and could assist in preparing claims with the knowledge of what each Act meant, and the differences this knowledge made to the claims process.

The Update asked Peter what the award of an OAM meant to him, he was a little speechless at this question and dug deep for his words.

"It reminds me of the Mimosa plants on the river, you look at the individual blossoms and they represent the people and the multiple relationships – I look back at the number of lives I have helped", he reflected briefly and said. "This award has really taken the wind out of my sails." *

****(Ed note) Meaning he has been extremely honoured receiving the award and a little stunned by all the well-wishers).***

Well, congratulations Peter on an OAM well deserved and a life well lived.

David Waddle OAM

David Maxwell Waddle was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in this year's Queens Birthday Honours for service to veterans and their families. David was born in Launceston Tasmania and educated at Queechy High School. After leaving school he entered employment with the insurance firm of Harvey Trinder in 1961.

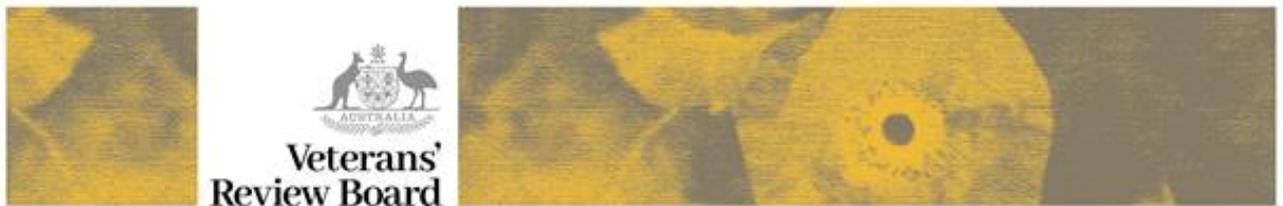
David was called up for National Service from 1965-1967 and served in Vietnam with 6 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (6RAR). On his discharge from the army he resumed employment with Harvey Trinder. He was moved to Hobart and after becoming self-employed for 12 years he retired from business and then joined Hobart Legacy in 1998. He served on the welfare committee as an Education officer. A Child Welfare Officer and a General Board Member all between 2003 and 2013. As early as 2004 he undertook advocacy training with the Training and Information Program (TIP) and soon became a Presenter in which capacity he took a major role in training volunteers in both Welfare and Compensation advocacy skills. He maintained his Legacy work and not only provided advice and assistance to the widows in their claims for welfare and compensation assistance, but also began to support the advocates in assisting with their workloads in the compensation arena.



David carried a huge workload in working with claims for Legacy widows and their dependents and in supporting TIP training and accepted a management position on the TIP Tasmania Program. He attended management meetings interstate and became a nominee of the National TIP Welfare Committee and was instrumental in assisting with the writing of the TIP National Welfare Handbook. He chaired a number of sub-committees which oversaw production of this publication and its eventual promulgation was in no small measure due to his input and commitment. He also fulfilled the role of the TIP State Training Manager and implemented training courses throughout Tasmania. He travelled extensively to the North, North West and East coast of Tasmania in his TIP training role and as a Presenter of Training.

As his reputation as an advocate grew he became more and more in demand, not only to assist and prepare claims but also to appear before the Veterans Review Board (VRB) and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). His expertise has been recognised very widely and he has given most generously of his time and skills to assist veterans and their families over a substantial period. He was made a life member of RSL Tasmania at their congress in early 2017.

With the phase out of TIP and the advent of the Advocacy Training and Development Program David stepped up and took the role of Training Manager /Co-ordinator for Region 3 and in January 2018 agreed to be the Deputy Regional Manager. He has sustained a huge workload over an extended period of outstanding service to the veterans of Tasmania. David has also been substantially involved in the local RSL Sub Branch at South Arm in Tasmania. His service to Hobart Legacy and the RSL has been without equal and his dedication to the welfare of others has been a most notable feature of his long service. He is widely recognised within Department of Veterans' Affairs circles as a dedicated and outstanding practitioner and has earned the admiration of a large number of the veteran community in Tasmania. His efforts have greatly contributed to the welfare and betterment of many veterans in Tasmania and he is most worthy of an award in the order of Australia for service to Veterans and the Community.



3. Alternative Dispute Resolution at the Veterans' Review Board

Since 1 January 2019, all applications for review by the Veterans Review Board (VRB), in every location in Australia, have automatically entered into the VRB's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program. There are a number of ADR measures we use at the VRB: Outreach, Conference, Case Appraisal and Neutral Evaluation. A matter can be finalised via ADR if there has been:

- a favourable decision on the papers (DOP);
- an agreement reached between the applicant and DVA and formalised in a VRB decision;
- a withdrawal of an application; or
- a dismissal with the consent of the parties.

ADR has significant benefits:

It is **facilitative**. The VRB will actively assist the veteran and advocate to find ways to resolve the application, including exploring avenues for a favourable decision to be made.

It is **accessible**. This is important for all applicants; - those that are represented and those that are not.

It is **informal**. Unlike a VRB hearing, ADR is not recorded. A veteran and advocate can have confidential communications with the VRB Member or Conference Registrar conducting the ADR

event. What you say or the questions you ask in ADR will not be repeated to a panel conducting the hearing in the event the application cannot be resolved by ADR.

At an ADR event, the applicant is not required to give oral evidence; thereby reducing potential stress and anxiety.

It is **quick**. We are continuing to see applications being resolved by ADR in half the time it used to take before ADR, and when we had no option other than to go to VRB hearing. On average, applications in the ADR program are resolved after 1.5 Outreaches. Even those matters that have gone through ADR and have been unable to be resolved and need to go to hearing, ADR can help to narrow the issues, so that the hearing is used most effectively and the risk of adjournment is reduced.

It is **economical**. When functioning effectively and as it is designed to, ADR is less expensive than a hearing by a panel of 3 VRB members. It means that the VRB is able to ensure its allocation of resources reaches the widest number of veterans and veterans' family members, and is both equitable and fair. We want to be able to ensure that every veteran or family member who makes an application for review by the VRB has their case dealt



with in a timely manner. Whether it is a widow who may be elderly and frail, or a young veteran who is at financial or psychological risk, it is important that their applications are progressed without delay.

What we have found is the success of ADR is reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of applicants and the advocates who represent them in their applications. This means:

- Ensuring compliance with the listings the VRB has set. Unlike courts and other tribunals, the VRB Registry contacts the advocate to ensure each proposed listing date and time is suitable. The VRB prides itself on this personal service, recognising that many of the advocates who appear at the VRB are volunteers and may have other commitments and responsibilities. It is important, however, that advocates take part in VRB events when they have indicated their availability to do so. Failure to attend a scheduled ADR event or hearing risks another veteran or family member missing out. Given our notice requirements, we cannot often fill the spot at the last minute. If an advocate finds that he or she is unable to attend a VRB event and has been unable to organise another advocate from their organisation or other organisation, please contact the VRB Registry and we can assist, including with coordinating all of your listings.
- Being prepared in advance of the first VRB Outreach. It is important to ensure you have spoken to the veteran or family member you are representing prior to the first VRB Outreach and have explored avenues for resolution. In addition, obtaining additional evidence before the first Outreach will help with the progress of the case; - remembering that often it may be quicker to get the material yourself rather than asking the VRB to direct DVA to do so. It can also give the veteran more choice over the material sourced and more control over the case.

- Preparing written submissions in advance. Unfortunately, the VRB sometimes sees written submissions being handed up on the day of, or shortly before, the VRB hearing. This may occur even where the application may be more than 6 months old and has been through Outreaches in the VRB's ADR program. I encourage advocates to ensure that all submissions are provided to the VRB as soon as possible, and ideally at least 7 days before the VRB hearing. This will help to ensure the panel understands what the issues are, allowing them to focus on those issues and reducing the risk of the hearing being adjourned.

I thank advocates for their support of the VRB's ADR program and I look forward to seeing you at VRB Advocates' Forums throughout the year.

Jane Anderson

Principal Member

4. ATDP Training Update

The ATDP is a partnership between DVA, the ESOs and the Department of Defence. However, ESOs are the principal service provider of advocacy services and they have developed an extensive network of military advocates across the country to support veterans and their families. The experience gained by these experienced advocates has been critical to the ATDP in developing the Course in Military Advocacy curriculum, related policy & procedures, and a growing suite of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities and on-line resources.



NATIONALLY RECOGNISED
TRAINING

These on-line resources currently include the recently updated Wellbeing Handbook and Rehabilitation and Compensation Handbook and the new Wellbeing Support Officer (WSO) Handbook. In addition, a Compensation Support Officers (CSO) handbook is currently under development.

The WSO and CSO handbook roles require specialised skills and knowledge but do not require accreditation through ATDP. However ESOs should be aware that:

“Any advice to veterans or veteran’s families MUST come from trained and accredited Compensation or Wellbeing Advocates who have been authorised by their ESO to provide these services on their behalf.”

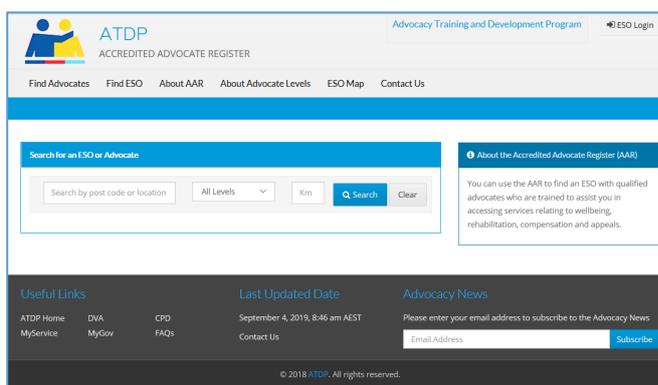
Once both the WSO and CSO Handbooks are published ESOs can discuss with their volunteers what roles might be best suited to their particular circumstances. There are a wide range of important functions that former TIP trained volunteers who do not wish to undertake Recognition of Prior Learning can undertake to assist the veteran and ex-service community. WSO and CSO positions may also provide an entry point for volunteers just starting out who wish to get a feel for the various support roles available to them in an ESO setting.

These on-line resources can be found at (www.web.atdp.org.au). Refer to documents on the Right Hand Side of the webpage under ‘**Documents**’.

5. Accredited Advocate Register

The ATDP Accredited Advocate Register (AAR) was launched in January this year and now has listings for around 300 ESOs with accredited advocates that are available to provide services to clients in their catchment areas. These records are maintained by the Authorised Persons in the ESOs who have taken on this role with great enthusiasm and professionalism. By keeping these records accurate they have assisted the many clients who have used the AAR since its release to seek the services of an accredited advocate.

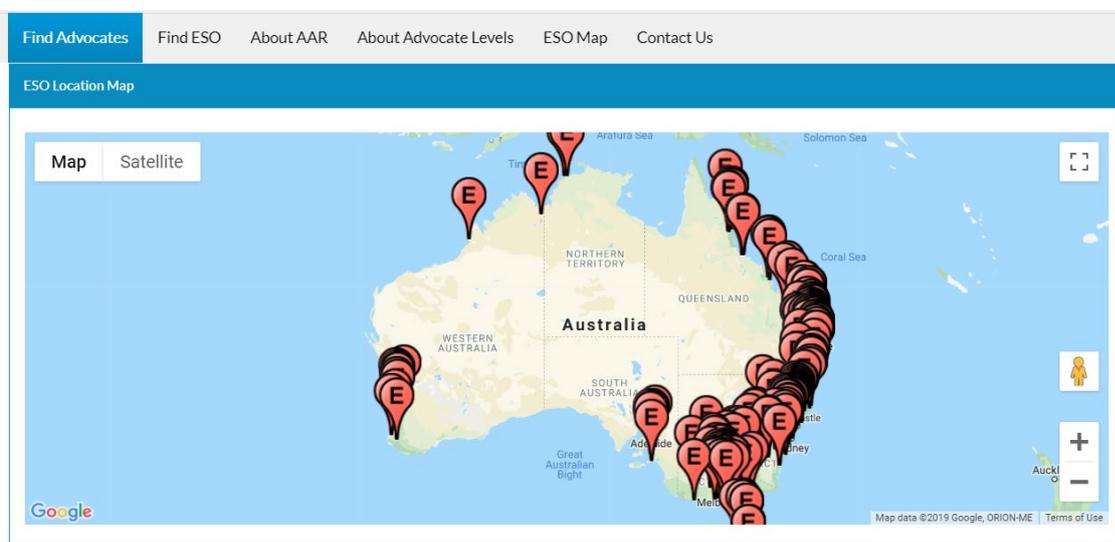
Please note that the records that ESOs keep in the AAR are in addition to the records that each ESO keeps relating to authorised advocates for their own and/or their insurer's requirements.

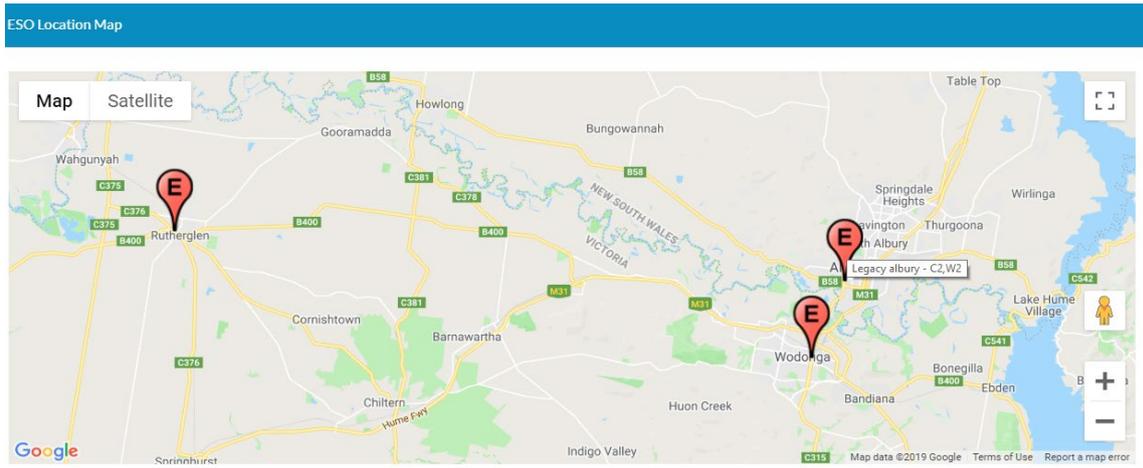


The Accredited Advocate Register is available at www.advocateregister.org.au or via the ATDP website: www.web.atdp.org.au

Recently two new features have been added to the AAR. One assists veterans and their families to search for advocates and the other assists ESOs in the management of their records and the nomination of candidates for training.

In the case of clients seeking advocacy services an ESO map has been added which gives a visual presentation of ESO locations and this can be found under 'ESO Map' in the AAR. (Refer examples of maps below.)





Also an option for clients to search by level/type of advocate is now available in both the Search for an ESO or Advocate fields.

To further assist ESOs they can now nominate a second Authorised Person to manage their AAR records.

ESO's AAR Authorised Persons (AP) specific responsibilities currently include managing which ATDP advocates are linked to their ESO in the AAR and maintaining and updating their ESO's AAR contact details.

Each nominated person will have an equal role in undertaking these duties on behalf of their ESO.

In coming months this responsibility will also include nominating candidates for ATDP Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Learning Pathway training. This will help to ensure that nomination processes are expeditiously followed so candidates are not delayed in their professional development.

If you have any questions regarding the AAR please contact the relevant Program Support Officer. (NB: Contact details can be found on Page 17 of the **Advocacy News** or on the ATDP website <https://web.atdp.org.au/call.php>)

Visit the ATDP website www.web.atdp.org.au for more information.

6. How many Accredited Advocates are there?

As at **8 October 2019** the ATDP has helped **706** advocates gain accreditation to be available to help veterans and their families across a range of disciplines. In total **935** individual Units of Competency in the Course in Military Advocacy have been issued to these advocates with many qualified to assist with a range of client advocacy needs.

Units of Competency issued in the Course in Military Advocacy	
Unit of Competency	Number
Military Compensation Level 1	87
Military Wellbeing Level 1	61
Total number of Units of Competency at Level 1	148

Military Compensation Level 2	375
Military Wellbeing Level 2	330
Total number of Units of Competency at Level 2	705
Military Compensation Level 3	72
Military Compensation Level 4	10
Total number of units issued to accredited ATDP advocates	935

7. DVA train has arrived

An upgrade to DVA train was released on 1 July 2019. The changes make the Learning Management System more accessible, more stable and give DVA Train a more contemporary look and feel. There are also additional and enhanced functions.

DVA train houses ATDP's e-learning for the training pathway and enables advocates to work on and complete the modules that have been opened to them.



The front page looks a lot different from the former page but you will still find all the courses and functionality – and more.

One of the benefits of the upgrade, is that DVA train is now compatible with all devices: PCs, laptops, tablets and mobiles. DVA train can be found at: <http://dva.pulselms.com/Central/>

In a related development the ATDP is currently working with an IT Contractor to convert all training modules we use to HTML 5 and Kando. This will ensure all of the modules meet current industry standards and remove old technology with all of the associated benefits to our training users. The MRCA Basic module, our most frequently used module, is the first to be converted to this new technology and work is currently underway. The work on the MRCA Basic should be completed by October 2019. For further information about Kando you can access the learning video at: <http://kando.interactiontraining.net/demos/video/centralUserIntro.mp4>

8. The new ATDP website

The Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) has a new website (www.web.atdp.org.au) which has replaced the previous website developed to support the administration of the Training and Information Program, the forerunner of



the ATDP. The new website has been developed using feedback from advocates and other users and has a range of upgraded features and functionalities. It also provides an easy means for ex-service organisations, advocates, mentors, trainers and clients to:

- identify and support training and development ;
- undertake continuing professional development;
- view personal profiles and your enrolment overview;
- view and search for courses and other learning resources;
- access DVATrain to undertake e-learning;
- access the Accredited Advocate Register to view, and if authorised, to update records; and
- provide general information on the ATDP.

The old ATDP website will be available until 31 October 2019 to give users plenty of time to become familiar with it.

On 31 October the new website's address will revert to www.atdp.org.au. Don't forget to add the new website as a Favourite on your web browser.

If you would like any help with the new website please contact ATDP Communications at: ATDP.COMMUNICATIONS@dva.gov.au

9. Veteran Payment and Centrelink Concession Cards

Veteran Payment provides interim income support to eligible veterans who have lodged a claim for a mental health condition under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988.

Veteran Payment offers a higher rate of fortnightly income support than most other government payments. However, clients who switch from Centrelink benefits to the Veteran Payment will lose access to the Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card.

DVA offers health care for all conditions related to service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). In addition, all current and former full-time members of the ADF, and Reservists with certain service, are eligible for treatment for any mental health condition through DVA arrangements.

However, DVA does not have an equivalent of the Health Care Card to assist a client to pay for treatment for conditions that are not related to ADF service or mental health.

Depending on their income, some Veteran Payment recipients may be able to receive the Low Income Health Care Card from Centrelink. More information about this is available on the Department of Human Services website, at:

www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/low-income-health-care-card

For current Centrelink clients, the benefits of the Veteran Payment may outweigh the loss of a concession card, but each person will need to make that decision based on their own circumstances.

DVA appreciates the important role advocates play in ensuring that, where appropriate, their vulnerable clients are accessing financial help through Veteran Payment while they await decisions on their claims.

10. DVA Provisional Access to Medical Treatment (PAMT) trial extended

As part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (DVA) commitment to improve veterans' access to health services, the Provisional Access to Medical Treatment (PAMT) trial has been extended from 30 June 2019 until 30 June 2020. This means:

- new claims will be accepted until 31 March 2020
- treatment under the PAMT trial will cease for all claims on 30 June 2020.



from clients who have gained access to medical treatment through the PAMT trial.

The PAMT trial has successfully delivered real benefits to veterans and their families for the past 12 months, providing eligible clients with access to medical treatment for one or more of the 20 most commonly accepted conditions before their claim is approved. This gives clients access to treatment sooner and reduces their risk of further deterioration of their condition. DVA has received overwhelmingly positive feedback

from clients who have gained access to medical treatment through the PAMT trial. The data collected from the trial is helping DVA build a better understanding of the unique impact of military service, linking common conditions with length of service and enabling the Department to expand the number of conditions available for immediate approval on online claims. The data is also driving a greater understanding of veterans' needs to enable DVA to be more proactive reaching out to veterans offering support early.

The next year of the PAMT trial will continue to improve the outcomes for veterans and their families, providing more clients with almost immediate access to medical treatment. Details about the trial, including the 20 commonly accepted conditions, are available on the DVA website: PAMT trial. Subscribe to **DVA Provider News** (<https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/dva-provider-news>) for updates on DVA health arrangements.

11. Veterans Health Week

26 October to 3 November — Mental Wellness

This year Veterans' Health Week (VHW) will be held from *Saturday, 26 October, to Sunday, 3 November.*

For more information see:

<https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/health-events/veterans-health-week>



12. More choices for a longer life

As part of the 2018 – 19 Budget, the Government announced three measures to support older Australians. These measures include changes to the work bonus scheme, the Pension Loans Scheme and changes to the means testing of lifetime income streams. A summary of each measure is detailed below.



Work Bonus

The work bonus is an incentive for older Australians to participate in the workforce without reducing their pension.

- From 1 July 2019, eligible pensioners will be able to earn \$300 per fortnight (up from \$250) before their pension is reduced.
- The maximum Work Bonus Bank amount is also increasing from \$6,500 to \$7,800.

In addition, income from self-employment will count towards the Work Bonus discount from the same date. However, self-employment income must be earned through active participation in the workforce, such as a plumber, rather than through passive activities, such as a person managing their own investment portfolio.

For more information on the Work Bonus Scheme, see Factsheet IS99 – Work Bonus.

<https://www.dva.gov.au/factsheet-is99-work-bonus>

Pension Loans Scheme

The Pension Loans Scheme is a voluntary reverse equity mortgage that offers older Australians an income stream to supplement their retirement income.

From 1 July 2019, the amount available through the Pension Loans Scheme will increase to one and a half times the rate of a person's pension. This means that those who receive the maximum rate of Service Pension will now be able to access the Scheme to improve their standard of living.

Accessing the Pension Loans Scheme will no longer require a person to be getting a pension or to meet income or asset tests. Applicants only need to be of pension age and eligible for Service Pension or Income Support Supplement.

The maximum loan amount depends on the value of the property offered as security, and loan payments cease when the maximum loan amount is reached.

For more information on the Pension Loans Scheme, see Factsheet IS116 – Pension Loan Scheme. <https://www.dva.gov.au/factsheet-is116-pension-loans-scheme>

Lifetime income streams

Income streams are a regular series of payments, mainly for retirement, that are made to a person for their life or a fixed term. These are purchased with a lump sum of money or from accumulated superannuation and paid to the person from a financial institution or superannuation fund.

If the person also receives a payment from Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs, these income streams, together with other income and assets, are taken into account when calculating the person's income support from the Australian Government. New means testing rules will apply to lifetime income stream products purchased on or after 1 July 2019.

The new rules will assess a fixed 60 per cent of all lifetime income product payments as income, and 60 per cent of the purchase price of the product as assets until aged 84, or a minimum of five years from commencement (whichever is later), and then 30 per cent for the rest of the person's life. Additional rules apply for products with high surrender values or high death benefits.

For further information, go to: www.dss.gov.au/seniors-budget-measures/means-test-rules-for-pooled-lifetime-income-streams.

13. Do you have an advocacy story you would like to share?

Do you have a story about how you assisted someone with their claim, or with a wellbeing issue which you would like to share with your fellow advocates? Human interest stories are always the most widely read and if they are related to advocacy, then that's what **Advocacy News** is all about.



If you do we would like to hear from you with a view to publishing your story in this newsletter. We don't need long articles, say up to 400 words, but longer if you want. We will help with the editing and will make sure you are happy with it before we go to print.

The next edition of Advocacy News will be the Xmas edition. If you have anything you would like to submit please send it to

ATDP.Communications@dva.gov.au by the end of November 2019.

Looking forward to receiving your articles. Ed note (*The ATDP reserves the right to publish, or not to publish, individual articles*).

14. Veteran Health Checks for all former ADF members

DVA understands that staying on top of our health can be a challenge, especially when schedules are jam-packed and it seems like there are a lot of other priorities to attend to. We might notice that we're not feeling as fit as we used to be, or haven't been getting much sleep or have a lot on our minds. While sometimes we can get back on track pretty quickly, other times we may need some extra help from a doctor or other health professional.



To support veterans after transition from the Australian Defence Force to civilian life, there are One-off Veteran Health Checks available for all former members of both the permanent and reserve forces. They are accessible at any time. Veterans can access these even if they are not a DVA client, using their Medicare card (there is a Medicare rebate for this). Additionally, if members leave the ADF from 1 July 2019, they can gain access to fully-funded Veteran Health Checks every year for five years after transition.

Annual Veteran Health Checks are accessible with a DVA Veteran card.

More information about the Veteran Health Check, including eligibility and answers to frequently asked questions, can be found on [At-Ease](http://www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/veteran-health-check) (www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/veteran-health-check).

from the Australian Defence

Veteran Health Check

DVA provides Veteran Health Checks for all former-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members.



Veteran Health Checks are an opportunity for veterans to access a comprehensive health check with a General Practitioner (GP).



Early intervention and targeted referrals can help you enjoy better health outcomes and manage your health during transition to civilian life.



Find out more about eligibility and seeing a GP:
www.at-ease.dva.gov.au/veteran-health-check

 Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Learn more

Depending on when you left the Australian Defence Force (ADF), you may be eligible for one or more Veteran Health Checks:

- All former ADF members are eligible to access the One-off Veteran Health Check with a GP.
- If you left the ADF from 1 July 2019, you are also eligible for an Annual Veteran Health Check every year for the first five years after you transition.

15. Veterans' Employment Awards

Nominations for the 2020 Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Awards are now open. The Awards recognise businesses and individuals who have made a significant contribution to veteran employment, as well as outstanding veteran employees and entrepreneurs.

If you know an organisation who has made a significant contribution to veteran employment, or a veteran who has been an outstanding employee or entrepreneur? Nominate them for the 2020 Awards.

Nominating is easy and available online at www.veteranemployment.gov.au/nominate. Nominations are open until the 22 October 2019, with the winners to be announced at a ceremony in early 2020.

The breadth and diversity of individuals and businesses which have been recognised for supporting veteran employment demonstrates that the Australian business community is increasingly recognising the unique contribution veterans bring to the workforce. The 2020 Awards will continue to identify and highlight these individuals and businesses.

16. Office of Australian War Graves

Did you know the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) manages 75 cemeteries that commemorate our war dead in Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands? They are amongst the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars and who are at rest in 150 countries around the world.



The OAWG also cares for more than 321,000 individual official commemorations. These final memorials are maintained in perpetuity for post-war dead, and other eligible veterans of wars, conflicts, peace operations and others to which Australia has participated in.

While more than two million Australians have served our nation in uniform, not all of them are eligible for official commemoration. In these cases, responsibility for final commemoration rests with their families, many of whom seek OAWG assistance to acknowledge their loved ones' service. For example, the OAWG will assist in obtaining permission to use the service badge relevant to their service on their memorial plaque or headstone.

The OAWG is here to help. We are committed to ensuring you, our partners in advocacy and veteran care, have the information you need to help veterans access their entitlement. We are working to make information about commemoration simpler and that access to entitlements is easier.

In the meantime, and at any time, we can make sure you have information at hand when you are liaising with families of ex-service men and women. Just speak to a member of our team using our toll free number 1800 555 254 or contact us via email: wargraves@dva.gov.au.

For more information about the OAWG, you can visit us on the DVA website at: www.dva.gov.au/commemorations-memorials-and-war-graves/office-australian-war-graves.

17. Veteran Payment and Centrelink Concession Cards

Veteran Payment provides interim income support to eligible veterans who have lodged a claim for a mental health condition under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* or the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988*.

Veteran Payment offers a higher rate of fortnightly income support than most other government payments. However, clients who switch from Centrelink benefits to the Veteran Payment will lose access to the Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card.

DVA offers health care for all conditions related to service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). In addition, all current and former full-time members of the ADF, and Reservists with certain service, are eligible for treatment for any mental health condition through DVA arrangements.

However, DVA does not have an equivalent of the Health Care Card to assist a client to pay for treatment for conditions that are not related to ADF service or mental health.

Depending on their income, some Veteran Payment recipients may be able to receive the Low Income Health Care Card from Centrelink. More information about this is available on the Department of Human Services website, at:

www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/low-income-health-care-card

For current Centrelink clients, the benefits of the Veteran Payment may outweigh the loss of a concession card, but each person will need to make that decision based on their own circumstances.

DVA appreciates the important role advocates play in ensuring that, where appropriate, their vulnerable clients are accessing financial help through Veteran Payment while they await decisions on their claims.

18. Feedback

If you have any questions, comments suggestions about this newsletter, an email to ATDP.communications@dva.gov.au



or
please send

19. ATDP contact details

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Websites:

- Advocacy Training and Development Program – www.web.atdp.org.au
- Department of Veterans' Affairs – www.dva.gov.au

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