



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

MEDIA RELEASE

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SUPPORTING VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT

The Morrison Government is continuing to provide mental health and employment support for veterans and their families as part of our economic recovery plan to guarantee the essential services Australians rely on.

The 2020-21 Budget measures are aimed at ensuring veterans and their families continue to have access to the support they need by helping them find a job after service, and supporting their physical and mental health needs.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester says, "the Government continues to put veterans' and their families' first with our record investment in funding for mental health services and support for those in the ex-service community."

The Government has provided \$101.7 million over four years to further bolster mental health support.

The funding for veteran mental health and wellbeing includes:

- \$94.3 million over four years to improve mental health outcomes and ensure high quality care for our older veterans and their families, and to better support their transition to civilian life by increasing fees paid to mental health, social work and community nursing providers.
- \$2.4 million over four years to expand eligibility for the Coordinated Veterans' Care program, which provides GP-led team-based care, to White Card holders with an accepted mental health condition.
- \$5.0 million over four years to expand the 24/7 Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms), especially in regional and remote areas.

The Government has long recognised that the transition process from leaving the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and re-entering civilian life, including finding meaningful employment, is a crucial step. Building on successful initiatives to-date, the Budget will invest \$23.7 million for increased transition and employment support.

"This funding includes \$17.7 million over four years to establish a Joint Transition Authority (JTA) in Defence, which will ensure all transition services and supports are working together for ADF members and their families during this critical phase," Mr Chester said.

"While most ADF personnel experience a smooth transition and go on to contribute to the community in their civilian lives, we know that this period can be quite challenging for some and the JTA will give all transitioning ADF members the best opportunity for success."

Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling provides free and confidential support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Help is available 24/7 on 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

In addition, the Government is continuing its investment in veteran employment with \$6 million to increase civilian employment opportunities for veterans and provide support for ADF personnel considering starting their own business.

“Through the successful Prime Minister’s Veterans’ Employment Program we have seen some incredible examples of veteran entrepreneurship and we know veterans bring many sought after qualities to the civilian workplace,” Mr Chester said.

“Funding provided in this Budget will help those veterans interested in starting their own business with training, advice and resources, giving them the support they need to get their ideas off the ground.”

The Morrison Government is also continuing the Prime Minister’s Veterans’ Employment Program, which promotes the wide ranging skills of our ADF personnel to employers and rewards businesses for initiatives that support veteran employment.

The Budget also includes responses to two important reports.

First is the Independent Review into the Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Payment by Mr David Tune AO PSM.

The Government is responding to issues identified in this report and providing \$25.9 million over four years to deliver additional assistance, including increased support for those TPI veterans that live in rented accommodation.

Second is the Productivity Commission’s report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*.

Minister Chester says “the Productivity Commission report is one that I know has been of great discussion in the ex-service community and since the Government tabled it, I have received a wide range of feedback about its recommendations and findings.

“An interim response to the Productivity Commission will be tabled in the Parliament in the coming days, however, the ex-service community can be assured that recommendations relating to the Gold Card will not be accepted by this Government. I trust this provides certainty about our commitment to the ex-service community.”

“This year has been a difficult one and I want to assure veterans and their families that they are at the forefront of the Government’s thinking and urge anyone who is struggling to reach out. Help is available and you don’t have to go it alone,” Mr Chester said.

More information on all of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs’ (DVA’s) 2020–21 Budget measures is available on the DVA website.

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