

Brief – Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Space

Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner Work on Family and Domestic Violence

- Oversee the ongoing implementation of Department of Veteran Affairs' (DVA) inaugural *Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020-25* as a member of the Strategy Implementation Group.
- Participated in the National Women's Safety Summit in 2021 and represented the experiences, challenges and barriers faced by veteran families. Military and veteran families are listed for the first time ever as a priority cohort in the Stakeholder Consultation Report that came out of the Summit.
 - Following the Summit, delivered recommendations to DVA and Defence. These have been adopted by DVA into their list of activities to implement the Family and Domestic Violence Strategy.
- Participating in a cross-community Family Domestic/ Intimate Partner Violence Community of Practice, working towards a coordinated whole of community approach, focused on the elements unique to veteran families. Presented at the STOP DV conference in December 2022 with Dr Sean Cowlshaw from Phoenix Australia on the experiences of veteran families, to help mainstream services understand how to assist families seeking help.
- Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner and the Community of Practice is working with 1800 Respect (support and counselling service) and DVA to help inform them about Defence and veteran families' experience of Family Domestic Violence.
- Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner and the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Commissioner meet regularly to raise awareness of the unique experiences and barriers faced by veteran families, so civilian services are better equipped to respond to veteran families.
- The Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner and the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Commissioner are also looking to work together and collaborate on ways to better support veteran families.

Family and Domestic Violence Reports and Strategies

- An [ANROWS report, on key stages and events in male-perpetrated Intimate Partner Homicide \(IPH\) in Australia](#), reported 1 in 4 IPH offenders were exposed to hegemonic masculine communities, of which military service is included. 1 in 10 IPH offenders in the research reported exposure to war zones during their life, either as civilians or members of the military. This evidence indicates there are high risk factors associated with serving and ex-serving communities.
- DVA has commissioned Phoenix Australia to undertake "Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Military and Veteran Populations" research, to estimate the prevalence of IPV in the Australian military context. This is to be published and released this year.
- [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#), includes **military and veteran families as a specific priority cohort** for the first time ever.
- The [DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020–25](#) is DVA's commitment to the wellbeing of veterans and their families and outlines our approach over the next five years to improving the support for those affected by family and domestic violence.
- The Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023-2028 is due to be released this year. Aims to build a culture of safety and support for those experiencing family and domestic violence and contribute to a safe and supported Defence community (Current – [Defence Family & Domestic Violence Strategy 2017 – 2022](#))

- The [Personal Safety Survey \(PSS\) by the Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) was released on the 15th March 2023. An ADF service status question was asked to be included. This question will give DVA a better indication of prevalence in the military community.
- The [2022 ADF Families Survey](#). The information provided will be summarised and provided in a report to Defence leaders and Defence family support organisations to enhance the support provided to families.
- The [Australian Military and Veterans' Family Study](#) through the Australian Institute of Family Studies and jointly funded by DVA and Defence. Reports have been submitted to the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs. Insights from the study will be shared with a range of stakeholders to potentially inform the design and delivery of policies, programs and services for military and veteran families.
- DVA commissioned Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health to investigate how intimate partner violence is addressed within veteran support services. [Understanding encounters with Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) among Australian veterans and families](#)
- Intimate Partner Violence among current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel and families: Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme Data Analyses Project.
DVA has commissioned Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health to examine the rates of intimate partner violence among current - and ex-serving ADF personnel, using data from a large-scale study of current and recently transitioned ADF personnel and their families.
 - [Intimate Partner Violence \(IPV\) in Military and Veteran Populations: A Systematic Review of Population - Based Surveys and Population Screening Studies](#)
 - [Health Service Interventions for Intimate Partner Violence among Military Personnel and Veterans: A Framework and Scoping Review](#)

Current Research

- DVA is advocating for the inclusion of a veteran indicator in the DSS/ANROWS longitudinal study, “the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey” (NCAS). The study will show how serving and ex-serving members of the ADF understand violence against women, their attitudes towards it, what influences their attitudes, and if there has been a change over time. This will help DVA identify policy opportunities for prevention and early intervention, for all forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, within veteran families.
- [Strengthening and Protecting Veteran Family Relationships](#) is a research study being conducted by Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and Open Arms who funded and sponsored the study, supported by the Department of Defence. The study is running from July 2022 until late 2023, looking at programs or services that aim to strengthen couple relationships where one (or both) partners are current or ex-serving Australian Defence Force members. The research team will share insights from the study with a range of stakeholders to inform the design and delivery of policies, programs, and services for military and veteran families. Key findings will also be shared with research participants and other military and defence force family forums, in a way that does not reveal the identity of individual participants.

Support for veterans and their families

DVA

- Launched a dedicated webpage for [Family and Domestic Violence](#) (FDV) for veterans and veteran families. The intention of the page is to support clients (or any interested party) to identify FDV, and outline supports offered by DVA in simple digestible language consistent with trauma informed practice. It is also in keeping with crisis sensitivity, providing short succinct information and a quick exit option.

Open Arms

- The [Open Arms model of care](#) is family inclusive, recognising the importance of engaging family members to address the potential impact of mental health issues and military service on veterans and their families.
- Families have needs in their own right and are able to access Open Arms services independent of the veterans, who may or may not access the service themselves.
- Open Arms services include counselling for individuals, couples and families; group programs to enhance support; lived experience peer support (including family peers); after-hours telephone counselling; and mental health literacy training.
- Open Arms has 10 dedicated Family Peer Workers nationally, who utilise their lived experience to support partners in their role as carers, and children affected by veteran mental health issues.
- Open Arms has partnered with Centacare in New South Wales and Relationships Australia in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Townsville to provide specialised counselling to couples and families.
- Open Arms crisis accommodation support aims to provide 'time-out' accommodation, allowing time to alleviate a crisis situation. The short-term accommodation provides the client, including family members, time to arrange alternative accommodation and seek support from Open Arms.

Crisis Payment

- A [crisis payment](#) is a non-taxable, "one off" payment to financially assist eligible people following a range of defined circumstances. To be eligible for a crisis payment from DVA, the person must be in receipt of or be eligible for a Service Pension, Income Support Supplement or Social Security Age Pension (paid by DVA).
- The Crisis Payment is designed to assist the person to establish themselves in a new residence following extreme circumstances forcing departure from the home such as natural disasters, or, for a victim of domestic or family violence to re-establish their current residence after the perpetrator of the violence has left or been removed from the home. A Crisis Payment may also be payable following release from lawful custody.
- The Crisis Payment is a flat rate equal to one week's service pension paid at either the maximum single or partnered rate according to whether the person is single or partnered.
- The current rate of Crisis Payment is \$493.80 for a single person and \$372.20 for a member of a couple.

Partner Service Pension

- Partners of veterans in receipt of the [Partner Service Pension](#) (PSP), who separate because of the veteran's abusive behaviour, may continue to receive the payment indefinitely. This was a commitment in the *Fourth Action Plan - National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, which extended eligibility to support more former partners experiencing family and domestic violence.

DVA Website

- DVA has developed a dedicated webpage for Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) for veterans and veteran families, which is now live on the DVA website. The intention of the page is to support veterans and families (or any interested party) to identify FDV, and outline supports offered by DVA in simple digestible language consistent with trauma informed practice. It is also in keeping with crisis sensitivity, providing short succinct information and a quick exit option.
- You can access the FDV webpage here: [Family and domestic violence help | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](#)

South Australia

South Australia's three fact sheets are on the [Government of South Australian Office for Women](#) under the [safety and wellbeing](#) heading. Below is an extract from the page that refers to FDSV in the military community.

The experience of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) for families in the military community is unique and complex. Family members may be isolated from traditional support networks due to regular relocation and unsure where to get help. In partnership with Veterans SA, the Office for Women has developed three fact sheets to help members of the current or ex-serving military community experiencing abuse, FDSV agencies and those who suspect it may be happening to someone they know. Each offers practical guidance, support and additional resources, such as how to start an important conversation about someone's wellbeing.

Fact sheet 1 - Experiencing Family Violence

[Are you in the current or ex-serving military community and experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence? \(PDF 142.5 KB\)](#)

Fact sheet 2 - Helping Someone Else

[What can I do to help someone from the military or veteran community experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence? \(PDF 106.5 KB\)](#)

Fact sheet 3 - Working for an Agency

[Are you an FDSV agency working with a current or ex-serving military family experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence? \(PDF 94.2 KB\)](#)

More information

[Defence Housing Australia](#)

[Military Justice System - Department of Defence](#)

[Military \(ADF\) spouse employment and career development report by Amanda McCue - Churchill Trust](#)

[National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children: Stakeholder Consultation Report - Australian Government](#)