



Australian Government
Department of Defence



The Commanding Officers' Handbook

DEFENCE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION
Connecting with your community



Australian Defence Force

Family Covenant

We recognise the significant contribution of ADF families to operational effectiveness

We pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice of ADF families in support of Australia

We acknowledge the unique nature of family and community life in the ADF

We honour the inherent strength and capacity of ADF families

We pledge to work in partnership with ADF families to enhance their self reliance

We commit to listening to ADF families and responding effectively to their emerging needs



| | |
|--|----|
| Table of Contents | |
| WELCOME | 4 |
| DEFENCE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION | 5 |
| Organisation | 5 |
| Contact | 6 |
| CRITICAL INCIDENT AND CASUALTY SUPPORT | 7 |
| Fatal Casualty (FATALCAS) | 7 |
| Casualty Notification | 8 |
| Disposal of Effects for ADF Members Declared Deceased or Missing | 9 |
| Multiple Casualties | 9 |
| Primary Emergency Contacts (PEC)..... | 9 |
| Condolence Letters | 10 |
| Australian Dangerously Ill Scheme (AUSDIL) | 10 |
| Defence Family Financial Emergency Fund (DFFEF) | 11 |
| National Welfare Co-ordination Centre (NWCC) | 11 |
| All Hours Support Line..... | 11 |
| ABSENCE FROM HOME SUPPORT | 12 |
| PEC 1 Contact..... | 12 |
| Pre-Mid and Post Deployment Briefs | 12 |
| Emergency Support for Families Scheme (ESFS)..... | 12 |
| Special Accommodation for Emergencies (SAFE) | 13 |
| Publications..... | 13 |
| SELF RELIANCE SUPPORT | 14 |
| Community Capacity Building..... | 14 |
| Family Support Funding Program (FSFP) | 14 |
| Support to Groups and Activities..... | 14 |
| Partners in Defence | 15 |
| Social Work Services | 15 |
| Workshops | 15 |
| Information and Referral..... | 15 |
| COMMAND MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ADVICE | 16 |
| Morale and Welfare Support..... | 16 |
| Advice and Assessments | 16 |
| Career Management | 17 |
| Training..... | 17 |
| Compassionate Return to Australia/Unit | 17 |
| Compassionate Posting or Retention | 17 |
| General Situation Reports | 18 |
| Advice to Members/Families | 18 |
| ADF Transitions Services..... | 18 |
| Making Referrals to DCO | 21 |
| MOBILITY SUPPORT | 24 |
| Welcome Information Packs | 24 |
| Defence School Transition Aides/Transition Mentors..... | 24 |
| Regional Education Liaison Officer – REDLO | 24 |
| Partner Education and Employment Program (PEEP)..... | 25 |
| Dependents with Special Needs Program - DWSN | 25 |
| Defence Child Care Program | 25 |
| Extended Child Care Program | 25 |
| CONTACT AND RESOURCES | 26 |

WELCOME

This handbook has been prepared by the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) for Commanding Officers and their staff. The purpose of the handbook is to provide you with information about DCO nationally.

Service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) places unique demands on members and their families. The wellbeing of Service families is integral to the efficiency and effectiveness of the ADF and is a shared responsibility between the ADF and the member. It is accepted that the ADF has a responsibility to ameliorate, or, if that is not possible, to minimise the disruptions occasioned by the exigencies of the Services (DI (G) PERS 42-1).

Defence is dedicated to recognising the very important and valuable role of ADF members and their families in the achievement of the Defence mission. While carrying out their daily tasks, whether here in Australia or deployed overseas on operations, our personnel need to be assured that their families are well cared for and have the support they need. For this reason Defence has tasked the Defence Community Organisation to support Commanders in looking after the welfare of Defence families. We do this by providing a wide range of services that all members and their families can access to help them cope with aspects of the Defence lifestyle which may be new or different to them and may present challenges which they have not previously experienced.

DCO has a Client Service Charter which has been included on the inside back cover of this handbook. This is DCO's statement of the standards by which we will operate and provides the client with a level of assurance that their issues will be heard.

DCO's strategic direction focuses on a long term strategy of family self reliance. The theme "Thriving in the Defence Community" underpins DCO's approach to building opportunities and setting the conditions for success for Defence families. The key to this is the message: A strong family produces a stronger and more capable ADF member. In support of this direction, the CDF has signed the ADF Family Covenant, which is included on the inside front cover of this handbook.

We have endeavoured to include as much relevant information as possible in this guide however if you have specific needs or require further information that is not covered please feel free to contact us. Similarly, if you have found this handbook useful, your feedback would be appreciated. DCO looks forward to developing positive working relationships with you. Our professional reputation is very important to us and we are keen to provide a valued and quality service to the Defence community.



Mick Callan
Director General
Defence Community Organisation

DEFENCE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

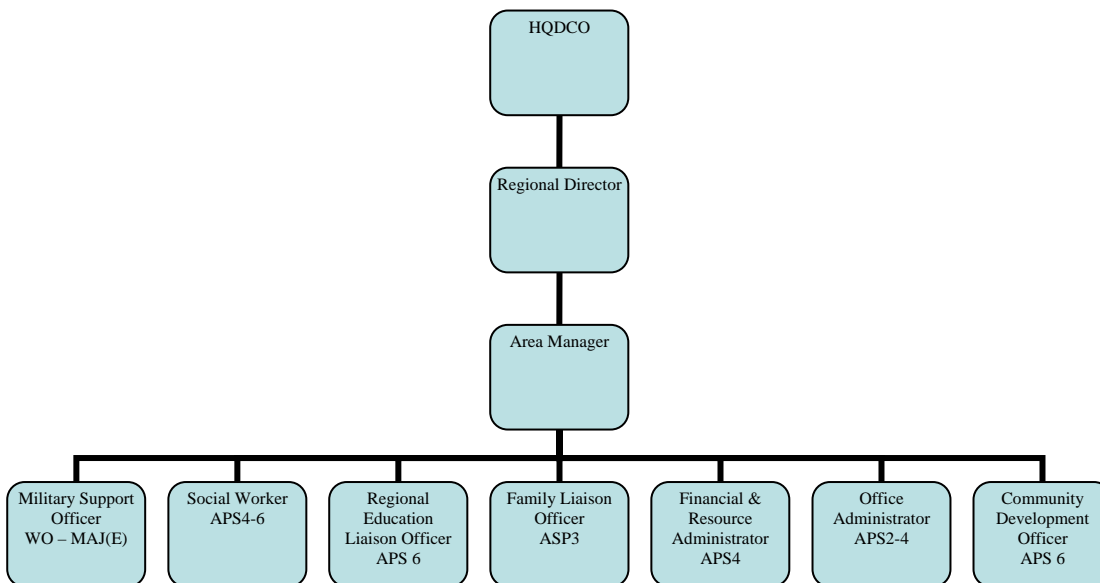
The DCO was established in 1996 and currently sits within the Defence Support Group's Defence Support Operations Division headed by HDSO. DI (G) PERS 42-3 outlines the role and operations of DCO. Its role is to build the capacity of the Defence Community to allow families to thrive and, in doing so, improve the capability outcome through the provision of a range of individual and program related services to the ADF community. The five output streams of DCO are:

- critical incident and casualty support;
- absence from home support;
- self reliance support;
- Command management and policy advice; and
- mobility support.

Output streams are covered in detail in later chapters.

Organisation

The reporting structure and make up of the DCO nationally is illustrated below:



Regional Directors (RD) provide management and professional leadership to DCO area offices. Regional Directors are social workers.

Area Managers (AM) manage the office operations, workload distribution and professional supervision of staff. Area Managers are social workers.

Defence Social Workers (DSW) provide professional social work services including assessment reports, brief interventions, bereavement support, community development, group work, educative programs and referrals of Defence families to appropriate specialist community services and agencies.

Regional Educational Liaison Officers (REDLO) have teaching qualifications and teaching experience. The REDLO provides educational advice and information to ADF families in relation to spouse and children.

Community Development Officers (CDO) have relevant tertiary qualifications and Community Development experience. The CDO role is to establish new partnerships, developing inclusive and collaborative projects, and enhancing mutual understanding between the Defence community and the broader community.

Family Liaison Officers (FLO) provide local information and resources to assist Defence families to settle into new communities, provide assistance to Defence community groups and deployment support to families.

Military Support Officers (MSO) are experienced military personnel with the primary role of providing Command, Defence members and their families with advice and information on military issues.

Financial and Resource Administrators (FARA) are employed in larger DCO offices to assist with office budgets and program administration.

Administrative Officers provide administrative and financial support to the local area team and are often the first point of contact in your DCO office.

Contact

DCO Offices are staffed from 0830 to 1700, Monday to Friday. All requests for emergency DCO assistance outside core business hours and on public holidays must be directed to the NWCC on 1800 801 026 (if calling from overseas +61 2 6128 4145). Contact made directly to DCO staff work or personal mobiles will be directed back to the NWCC during these times.

NWCC will not transfer callers directly to DCO but, where necessary will pass a request for assistance to a DCO Duty Officer who will return the call. DCO assistance out of hours will be available in emergency situations only. Any non-emergency cases will be referred for follow-up assistance during normal business hours.

CRITICAL INCIDENT AND CASUALTY SUPPORT

Critical incident and casualty support includes areas of operation such as the death or serious injury of a member, Commissions of Inquiry, Special Accommodation for Emergencies (SAFE) and the Emergency Support for Families Scheme (ESFS).

Fatal Casualty (FATALCAS)

References:

- A. DI (G) PERS 11-2 *Notification of Australian Defence Force and non-Australian Defence Force casualties* (AL4 20 May 2008)
- B. DI (G) PERS 20-6 *Death of Australian Defence Force personnel* (AL2 20 May 08)
- C. DI (G) PERS 20-5 *Funerals, Graves and Associated Matters* (25 Sep 01)
- D. DI (G) PERS 42-6 *Defence Community Organisation support to the next of kin of deceased members of the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Defence Force Cadets* (23 Aug 02)
- E. [ADF Commanders Guide](#) – *Looking after families following a Service Death by SQNLDR Kay Ellis, CSC*

DCO is responsible for the case management of funerals and the support of the next-of-kin (NOK), families and other close associates of Defence members who die while in service. In addition, DCO can be made available for support to the person representing the deceased at the hearing and the immediate family members at any resulting Commissions of Inquiry (COI). DCO carries out these duties on behalf of Command and in conjunction with the Command chain.

With each fatality, DCO appoints a Bereavement Support Team (BST), headed by a DSW and supported by a MSO to case-manage the bereavement. The BST's role is to support the family and, to a lesser extent, the unit through the bereavement, which includes the funeral. The key to a successful process is good communication between the family, the BST and the unit but we must always be mindful that any arrangements are the decision of family. One of the most difficult aspects of the role of the BST is keeping the balance between the family's wishes and those of the military – or sometimes, political - desires.

The BST will visit and liaise with the family in relation to making appropriate arrangements. It is very important that unit members visiting the family do not make any promises or advise of any entitlements provided through DCO that have not been approved by DCO or that they are unsure of. It is best to refer this area to DCO for follow up to ensure currency and accuracy of information provided.

The DSW's professional role is in the case-coordination and bereavement support to the family. There are no hard and fast rules to bereavement support because every case – indeed, every family - is different.

DSW's are trained in making family assessments and being able to analyse information in order to develop appropriate case plans. Case plans will be discussed with units wherever possible, with permission from the family.

The MSO as the military arm of the BST is the main communication conduit between the family and the unit with regard to the funeral and any other ceremonial support, such as repatriation. The MSO also undertakes most of the military administration associated with death.

Sometimes, the funeral/bereavement process looks very different to Command than they believe it should be. DCO is directed by the family and DCO encourages the family to exercise this power as it is their loved one who has died. However, it is not always what the military thinks is “best”. It is important to remember the centrality of the family in the bereavement process. Please communicate with the BST if you have any concerns.

Casualty Notification

In the event of a casualty, a FATALCAS/NOTICAS notification is actioned immediately in accordance with Reference A by the administrating/command unit at the time. Defence has a responsibility to notify the nominated Primary Emergency Contacts (PEC)*. The relevant service/group will coordinate the tasking of Notification Teams, with support from DCO if required. For Navy, HQ DCO will task and coordinate Notification Teams on behalf of Chief of Navy through Commanding Officers at Navy establishments closest to the location of the PEC.

In all cases the Notification Team is to provide the PEC with appropriate military telephone numbers and advise the PEC that a DCO representative will make follow up contact. For more detailed information on notification see References A and E.

DCO conducts Notification Training to equip officers with the knowledge and skills to make appropriate notifications.

It is extremely important not to create expectations with families that are unable to be met. DCO has unfortunately experienced several cases where, with the best of intentions, unit personnel have made statements regarding various types of support to families of deceased members that are unable to be met. The result is often families who are angry and distrustful of all Defence representatives, having been misled whether intended or not, from the initial contact phase. If you are unaware of the support available, please refer the family to DCO, or directly contact DCO for information. There are many occasions when the request has to be approved at the highest levels. DCO is the appropriate organisation to do this on behalf of members’ families.

Families are not obligated to have the military involved in their bereavement. Some choose to have part military involvement and others choose no military involvement at all where DCO funds the reasonable costs of a civilian funeral. DCO respects these wishes and acts accordingly.

**:

- Primary Emergency Contact (PEC) : An individual nominated by the Defence member and registered on PMKeyS, as the person to be advised first in the event that the member becomes a casualty. The PEC may not necessarily be the same as the NOK.
- Next of Kin (NOK): the individual nominated on PMKeyS is taken to be the closest relative and means:
 - Spouse or interdependent partner (see Note 2); or

- Closest legally recognised relative, for example, parents, siblings, children.

Notes:

1. *The NOK may be separate from the Primary Emergency Contact (PEC) or the person nominated to act as an Executor/Executrix. The nomination of a NOK on PMKeyS does not legally bestow any rights or obligation on that person to manage or dispose of the personal estate of the member.*

2. *A Defacto or Interdependent Partnership does not need to have been recognised by Defence for support to be provided under the provisions of this manual.*

Disposal of Effects for ADF Members Declared Deceased or Missing

HQ DCO is the authority to release personal effects. In the first instance, the unit needs to immediately quarantine all the member's personal effects located at a military establishment or in the field. An Estate Management Team (EMT) is to be appointed. EMTs are to comprise a minimum of two persons, which will include a Team Coordinator of a minimum rank of Army Lieutenant (equivalent), and a Witness of a minimum rank of Corporal (equivalent). Other members assisting the EMT may be of any rank. At least one team member should be of the same gender as the deceased. The DET must complete an inventory of the member's personal effects and forward to DCO as soon as practical. DCO will seek release of these effects.

At no stage should the DET attempt to destroy anything (for example, pornographic material).

Multiple Casualties

In the event of multiple casualties the process, in particular notification, becomes very complex and control needs to be established (Reference E). DCO has well-developed procedures to coordinate casualty notifications in conjunction with the three Services and the NWCC (Reference A). Whilst it can never be predicted when casualties will occur, the numbers are usually small and therefore can be readily managed through the normal day-to-day activities of DCO.

Once the public is aware of a casualty, the unit may receive numerous calls. COs need to consider:

- an embargo on the unit's external communications to their own families – to avoid 'notification by default',
- selecting suitable people to staff unit phones, and provision of an appropriate script for them (sourced via chain of command),
- activating Critical Incident Mental Health Support (CMS) at an appropriate location for other staff (if necessary), and
- assistance from other Units to undertake multiple notifications.

Primary Emergency Contacts (PEC)

While it is the member's responsibility to keep their PEC/NOK information updated on PMKeys, it is important that units ensure that this is done. Accurate PEC information (including contact numbers, alternative contacts and addresses) is imperative when it comes to notifications and has been the source of significant problems in the past.

It is generally advisable that those under the age of 18 years are not listed as PEC 1 given the nature of the information that is being conveyed. Being PEC does not automatically entitle them to benefits or entitlements from Defence as a result of the member's death or injury.

Condolence Letters

HQ DCO will prepare the condolence letters for MINDEF, CDF and Service Chief.

Australian Dangerously Ill Scheme (AUSDIL)

References:

A. DI(G) PERS 11-1 *Defence Force Sponsored visits to Service members suffering serious illness or injury—The Australians Dangerously Ill Scheme* (AL6 25 Sep 01)

B. DI(G) PERS 11-2 *Notification of Australian Defence Force and non-Australian Defence Force casualties* (AL4 20 May 08)

The purpose of AUSDIL is to enable NOK, other relative or nominated person to be transported to provide family support to a *very seriously ill/ injured or seriously ill/injured* member of the Defence force who is hospitalised. The medical status of a patient must be established by a medical practitioner, either military or civilian, before approval of an AUSDIL can be granted. The medical practitioner must also recommend that the visit by the nominated person will positively benefit the member. The cost of an AUSDIL is borne by DCO and is limited to travel, accommodation, meals and some telephone calls.

Once a recommendation for AUSDIL has been made by the treating military or civilian doctor, the member's Commanding Officer immediately raises a signal that an AUSDIL is required in accordance with the message format provided in Annex A of DI (G) PERS 11-1.

The delegate for approving authority for an AUSDIL is DGDCO or the HQ DCO after hours Duty Officer (who can provide interim approval). Generally, a Notification of Casualty (NOTICAS) signal precedes an AUSDIL however a signal applying for an AUSDIL iaw DI(G) PERS 11-1 Annex A is required before an AUSDIL is approved.

DCO's role in AUSDIL is to undertake a social work assessment, organise the transportation and accommodation of the nominated person(s) and provide them with support ranging from the practical (transport, assistance with paperwork, liaison with medicos and units) to the emotional (social work assistance including referral to appropriate community services or just listening).

In some instances DCO is reliant on units to assist; for example, assisting in the transportation requirements of the family. It is important not to underestimate the importance of involvement by the unit in reinforcing to the patient and family that they are cared for and supported by their mates. This knowledge is important for their peace of mind and consequently their healing. It also creates very positive relations that may have longer term positive effects for Defence generally.

It is important to ensure clarity of communication for all so DCO would appreciate being informed of relevant communications the unit has with the family. There is much happening for families at these times, which can result in confusion and conflict if communications

aren't clear, and consistent information is not provided. If the unit is unsure of entitlements or any area where families seek information, please refer to DCO rather than provide well-intended but incorrect information.

Defence Family Financial Emergency Fund (DFFEF)

The aim of DFFEF is to provide immediate short-term welfare relief and support to families to solve **emergency financial** problems. The fund is managed by DCO on behalf of the DFFEF and interest-free loans will be offered at the discretion of DCO. The approving authority is DGDCO or Director of Military Support (DMS) in DCOHQ. Assistance provided under DFFEF is FBT reportable.

National Welfare Co-ordination Centre (NWCC)

Along with the DCO out of hours emergency response system, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) also provides a 24 hour, 7 day a week point of contact for families and next-of-kin of ADF personnel who are away from home.

The NWCC is a call-in centre, but do not provide specific family care. They do provide timely, accurate information, reassurance and referral to other family support agencies.

NWCC and the DCO work closely together to provide appropriate support to ADF members and their families. The NWCC, as a welfare and family support referral service, is part of the wider Defence family support network.

The NWCC can be contacted 24/7 on **1800 801 026** (FREECALL) or via e-mail at: nwcc.australia@defence.gov.au

All Hours Support Line

Defence provides the All Hours Support Line as a part of the ADF Mental Health Strategy. This is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Members can call the All Hours Support Line for any mental health or wellbeing advice, including, but not limited to:

- Mental disorders
- Wellbeing and resilience
- Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Suicide prevention
- Grief and loss

FREECALL within Australia **1800 628 036**. Outside Australia **+61 2 9425 3878**

ABSENCE FROM HOME SUPPORT

Members need to know that their families are supported when they are away on exercise or deployment overseas. DCO is the lead agency within Defence for the provision of deployment support services to families and is assisted in this task by the National Welfare Coordination Centre.

DCO prepares comprehensive member and family support plans, in consultation with the deploying units, in advance of operations. Deployment programs and services for families are then advertised widely through local Defence community newsletters and unit pre-deployment briefings. Examples of the support provided within these plans include social work assistance, psycho-educational programs, information and support functions and out-of-hours emergency support (including emergency financial support). Support services are specifically tailored to local Defence population needs and to the nature of the particular deployment.

PEC 1 Contact

At the time of writing DCO contacts the PEC 1 of deployed members on a regular basis. Deployment lists are supplied and updated by NWCC however, the member must have ticked the box on their Family Registration Form, giving DCO permission (under privacy legislation) to contact their PEC 1, otherwise DCO is unable to make this call.

Many partners miss out on this supportive phone call, much to the dismay of some partners, because this permission was denied.

Pre-Mid and Post Deployment Briefs

DCO offices nationally give presentations and supply literature to members at unit deployment briefs/decompression training. The presentations focus on strategies to assist families in their adjustment as opposed to members' mental health which is covered by ADF psychologists. Sometimes, units organise mid-deployment briefs for partners to give them an opportunity to engage with other partners and be reminded of strategies designed to assist their coping with the separation.

Emergency Support for Families Scheme (ESFS)

DCO sponsors the Emergency Support for Families Scheme (ESFS), which is a program of support to ensure there is practical assistance available to families facing a crisis when the ADF member is absent from home for Service reasons. ESFS can provide services such as child care, home help, or flying in a family member to help. The scheme ensures support is activated until the immediate family crisis situation is stabilised. The support provided under this Scheme can be provided for a period of up to five days.

It should be noted that the guidelines state that all other avenues of support should be explored before ESFS is employed. This may include consideration of transfer of the compassionate travel entitlement for members to another family member in their absence.

There are very strict conditions around the implementation of this scheme. The situation must be a genuine, unforeseen emergency. For example, the early arrival of a baby is not considered an emergency. A support plan is discussed with the unit and must be agreed to by Command and then approval is considered by the DCO Area Manager. Due to the strict Fringe Benefits Tax implication, it is advisable that where possible, the member is informed and his/her agreement sought to use ESFS.

Application for ESFS can be actioned through the use of web form AD570 or [PACMAN](#) Annex 8.5.A but in most cases, DCO is notified through NWCC or by the spouse directly. DCO would then contact the unit to begin the formal assessment process.

Special Accommodation for Emergencies (SAFE)

The SAFE scheme provides accommodation for the dependants of ADF members in situations of extreme domestic crisis where the family members cannot remain in the family home (or service residence). In exceptional circumstances, SAFE can be extended to cover the member and family.

Where family or other forms of support are available, it will be used in preference to SAFE. Similarly, where on base or other accommodation is available and appropriate, these will be used before SAFE is approved and arranged.

SAFE is most frequently used in cases involving domestic violence.

More details can be found on the DCO website at the following address:
<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dco/wellbeing.htm#6>

Publications

DCO offices hold a vast range of deployment support publications available to Command, members and families. Often these are presented at pre-deployment briefs and made available at deployment support functions but units can access these publications at any time through their local DCO office. The publications include fact sheets on deployment (e.g. child behaviour), pamphlets on Relief out of Country Leave (ROCL) and adjustment, booklets on reunions and deployment, colouring books for younger children, and activity books.

SELF RELIANCE SUPPORT

DCO promotes self reliance through continually forging relationships with units and community support agencies. DCO encourages Defence families to link in with their local support systems and to utilise existing community and government services which are often available in many locations to which a member may relocate. This supports effective transitions, self-determination and independence, understanding that families cope best when they establish their own support systems.

Community Capacity Building

The Community Capacity Building Program aligns with the whole-of-government social inclusion strategy principles. The program seeks to build stronger networks between the Defence community and the broader community and recognises that ADF family members are an integral part of their local area.

As part of the Defence White Paper, DCO has been provided with additional staff to implement this strategy. Community Development Officers (CDOs) will be assigned to DCO area offices to work with local communities, Defence organisations, Defence community groups, ex-service organisations, local and state governments and families. CDO's will build on existing work done in the area offices by establishing partnerships, developing inclusive and collaborative projects, and enhancing mutual understanding between the Defence community and the broader community.

DCO will use the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model to achieve this. ABCD, along with the additional staff, will enhance DCO's efforts in discovering and mobilising the resources that are already present in communities. The ABCD model targets the existing strengths in ADF families and the local community, and works collaboratively to build projects, relationships, and participate in activities that are meaningful and relevant to all the community members.

Family Support Funding Program (FSFP)

The FSFP was established by DCO to financially support Defence groups and activities. In order to access this annual funding, groups must be incorporated under their relative state government laws and can apply through their local DCO office.

Applications are due by 30 April each year. Interested parties can contact DCO for more information.

Support to Groups and Activities

In addition to the FSFP, DCO assists the Defence community through information and support to smaller and self help groups and activities. DCO staff members are available to

attend groups and activities to provide information, assistance at a unit activity or simply interact with families present.

Partners in Defence

The Partners in Defence Web Resource provides key information for families on military service, conditions and benefits, services and programs. It is designed to help address some of the difficulties and challenges Service families face due to some of the special contingencies of Service life.

More details can be found at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/partners/index.html>

Social Work Services

A significant aspect of the promotion of self reliance in a community is the social work assistance provided to the individual and/or family. Social work assistance includes assessment, brief intervention and referral to specialist community service providers.

DCO Social Workers also case-manage the deaths of military members. DCO Social Workers undertake bereavement training.

Workshops

Psycho educational workshops are also provided to Defence families to provide information and foster understanding of proactive and preventative strategies which assist in increasing self reliance.

Information and Referral

When a client initially contacts DCO, they are connected with the intake officer of the day. This Social Worker will make an assessment of the client's need and take appropriate action which might be to refer them to an appropriate specialist community service through a simple or supported referral, make an appointment to come into the office, or refer them to another staff member (such as the FLO for information) or back to the unit if it is an administrative issue. Members contacting DCO with psychological issues will be referred to their Psych Support Section. DCO does not provide long term support.

The FLOs have a significant amount of information available for families relating to mobility and relocation, as well as child care options, local community supports and networks, sporting venues etc. DCO offices also carry numerous helpful publications to assist members and families to access assistance and information in their local community.

Our MSOs are available to assist ADF members and families with queries about ADF Conditions of Service, processes, and other military-type enquiries. Information provides members and families with a greater capacity to manage their own lives and make informed decisions.

COMMAND MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ADVICE

The Defence Community Organisation (DCO) is the key Defence agency that supports Commanders in meeting their formal responsibilities for the welfare and morale of their people. We do this by delivering professional social work and allied support services to you, members and their families. This section covers some of the compassionate and administrative matters linking DCO and Command and the basic referral process used in most situations.

Morale and Welfare Support

DCO is available to offer Command support and advice in relation to family circumstances when it comes to the morale and welfare of their members.

Compassionate situations are the largest area of concern linking Command/units and DCO. Circumstances can develop in the life and work of members or their families, which may require the exercise of **compassionate** consideration on the part of a member's Commanding Officer or supervisor.

DCO's input can take the form of informal guidance by telephone or formal assessment and report to Command of a member's compassionate circumstances. It is important to note that our aim is to provide objective professional advice and assessments that assist in your decision making process. DCO's role is one of support, complementing Command action.

While rare, there are some occasional difficult situations where managing the balance between supporting Command and respecting the individual member's legal right to Privacy in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 can arise. If you have any concerns in this regard, please contact your DCO Area Manager (AM) to discuss the situation.

DCO staff are acutely aware of Defence's need to maintain operational capability and we endeavour to work with all members and their families to create options that facilitate the member's ability to continue to offer unrestricted service.

Advice and Assessments

DCO provide advice and assessments across a range of areas including:

- Compassionate Return to Australia (CRTA)
- Compassionate Return to Unit (from exercise or course) (CRTU)
- Compassionate Posting (COPAS)
- Compassionate Retention
- Compassionate Discharge
- General Situation Reports in relation to the member and/or family
- Conditions of Service
- Attendance at Commanders' Meetings
- Conducting Briefs to Command

When requested, a DSW can provide you with a social work report detailing the family situation and where able, verifying the authenticity of information. In addition, in some cases the DSW is able to provide a range of strategies that may be implemented to address or alleviate the problematic or unfortunate circumstances of the family. The latter may include recommended action that DCO, the unit, the member and his/her family can take to improve the member's family circumstances. These are recommendations only as DCO is aware that the Command is the body with the holistic view of the situation and the delegate for decisions with respect to the member.

Career Management

To assist Career Management Agencies (CMA) DCO conducts assessments and interviews to determine family suitability for remote locality postings, remote overseas postings and in some cases overseas postings where there are special family circumstances. This involves assessing the family's ability to manage in the new posting area and undertake the full tenure of the posting as well as providing them with relevant information of the area.

Training

DCO is responsible for providing training for Notification Officers in accordance with DI(G) PERS 11-2 *Notification of Service and non-Australian Defence Force Casualties* (16 November 2009).

DCO assists with the identification of unit welfare training requirements through provision of training programs as requested by Command.

DCO can also provide presenters for unit induction training.

For all training requirements contact your local DCO Office.

Compassionate Return to Australia/Unit

Requests for CRTA/U are passed from the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) to the appropriate DCO for assessment. It is imperative that background information is collated by the unit prior to making the request. For example, DCO needs to know if the family is aware that DCO will be contacting them; if the member has been in touch with his/her family; and what other options have been explored. DCO also needs accurate contact information.

CRTA/U situations often require corroboration by the family's treating doctor or other family members. This is not always possible or good practice in the middle of the night so please be patient. DCO recognises that timeframes are important however, information does need to be verified and DCO may need to access third parties to do this. DCO endeavours to be thorough to provide Command with a quality report to utilise in your decision making.

Compassionate Posting or Retention

Where a member requests to be posted or have an intended posting deferred or cancelled for compassionate reasons, the relevant CMA may request through the unit that these circumstances be assessed by DCO and a report be provided.

The unit must submit an AC698 - *Request for DCO Support*, in order for DCO to investigate and provide an assessment report.

General Situation Reports

A general situation report can be requested by Command where clarification and evaluation of the member's situation or circumstances is necessary before appropriate action can be identified. Circumstances may be a family situation or personal issue which impacts on the member's ability to offer unrestricted duty.

Advice to Members/Families

DCO can provide support in the management of members if they are having family issues. This may involve social work assistance including referrals to outside agencies.

Units can make referral to DCO or the member can self-refer. Self-referral is preferred because this encourages self-determination and demonstrates that the member is taking responsibility. Units can counsel their members to this end.

Where units have not made a formal request for an assessment of family circumstances, DCO is unable to provide feedback from member contact without the member's consent, in accordance with requirements of the Privacy Act 1988. However, DCO does talk to members about this and the importance, in some cases, of the unit being well aware of a member's circumstances in order to continue to support them.

ADF Transition Services

Separation Administration

Defence assists separating ADF members and their families through Transitions Support Services. Transitions Support Services supports families with:

- preparing for their post separation life; and
- ensuring that all Defence administrative requirements are completed.

Members receive a transition support service that is tailored to ensure a successful transition. Notwithstanding the reason for transition, the regional ADF Transition Centre can assist a member, and the member's family, with successfully transitioning from Defence to civilian life.

The ADF Transition Centre provides information that will support the member to prepare for separation, as well as ensuring that they are 'linked' into other support services, such as rehabilitation and compensation, training and employment.

What will the ADF Transition Centre do?

- Provide information on, and link members into Defence and other government support agencies, such as:
 - ADF Rehabilitation Program
 - Defence Community Organisation
 - Department of Veterans' Affairs
 - ComSuper
 - Centrelink
- Advise on Defence procedures, such as choosing separation dates;
- Assist with completing Defence requirements; and
- Assist the member and their family with becoming separation ready.

What are the administrative requirements?

All separating ADF members must complete their separation through the regional ADF Transition Centre. This will ensure that all separation requirements are completed prior to the date of separation. If the member does not complete these requirements the ADF Transition Centre will advise the Career Management Agency, who determines whether the separation date needs to be extended.

The ADF Transition Centre will assist with completing these requirements.

What to consider when leaving Defence?

One of the most important considerations when leaving Defence is what date to choose to separate. For example it is recommended that members consider separating on a Monday, or the day after a public holiday. Other considerations can include the date of any upcoming pay rises; the anniversary of enlistment date for Military Superannuation and Benefit Scheme or Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefit Scheme or Long Service Leave.

Separating from Defence can impact upon many aspects of a member's life, such as pay, housing and other service conditions. It is recommended that members discuss the implications of their separation with their family prior to submitting their application to separate.

It is also important to identify any support services that members may need once they leave Defence, such as medical, rehabilitation or special schooling needs for your children.

What should you do before you leave?

- Attend your local ADF Transition Centre
- Obtain copies of medical documentation
- Submit any compensation claims
- Submit superannuation application
- Apply for Civil Accreditation
- Apply for Recognition of Prior Service
- Update your Will
- Transfer military licences to civilian licences

ADF Transition Seminars:

ADF Transition Seminars assist ADF members and their families to prepare for separation through providing information and advice on various aspects of transition such as:

- Reserves
- Your Career and You
- Transition Support Benefits
- Superannuation
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- VVCS - Veterans and Veterans' Families Counselling Services
- Your Money and You
- Separation Support and Administration

Policy:

ADF Pay and Conditions Manual Chapter 2 Part 2 Career Transition Assistance Scheme

Phone:

Details for regional ADF Transition Centres are provided on the Directorate Transition Support Services website.

Website:

<http://www.defence.gov.au/transitions/>

Making Referrals to DCO

COs or supervising seniors can refer members by telephone with the member's permission, or through the use of the AC698 for formal requests. Feedback via a report or case discussion with the relevant supervisor will be provided.

Form AC 698 can be mailed, emailed or faxed to the DCO but it must be supported by relevant information and documentation. The more information and detail that can be provided at the initial referral stage, the greater the likelihood that a quick 'turn-around' response can be made.

Generally it is the compilation of the AC698 that causes delays in application processing. On receipt at DCO a check will be made that:

- The form is completed by the unit (quite often forms are received having been completed by the member and the unit does not know what is on the form).
- There is a clear statement of what the unit is seeking/requesting.
- The request is relevant to DCO core business (DCO does not engage in unit administration or Command functions).
- Actions taken by the unit are detailed, in particular contact with the relevant CMA.
- Supporting documents are attached. These can include PE166 for repost/retention, a member's statement, family statements if relevant, medical/specialist reports (these are reports and not clinical notes). All information is treated in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 and secured in locked containers.

The most important supporting document is the member's statement and the member needs to be very clear about what they are requesting and what the background situation is. This process encourages the member to think carefully and seriously about their request.

Depending on the circumstances, the member may also need to authorise DCO to contact family members. Some members don't understand that when DCO needs to investigate family circumstances, the process is thorough and can be perceived as quite intrusive, however, DCO needs to establish that the situation is accurately represented. This may include the family having to organise to give medical practitioners permission to speak with DCO. DCO cannot do this for them. Accurate information provision is achieved through verification and adds to the completeness of the assessment that the DSW is able to provide.

DCO receives many applications for support and needs to prioritise workload accordingly. Please don't hesitate to discuss timeframes when necessary, but please remember that DCO responds as a priority to crisis and critical incidents. This may impact, and at times delay, assessments with a lower priority.

As previously stated, under the Privacy Act, any self referrals will not generally be reported back to the unit without consent of the member. The exception to this is where the personal information has serious implications or consequences for the welfare of the member or others

and /or operational requirements or other mandatory reporting requirements under the Defence Disciplinary Act.

Members and their families can self-refer to DCO for an appointment/interview at any time during normal business hours by telephoning DCO or calling in to the office. If after hours, contact is via NWCC but only cases of emergency will be referred to the local duty social worker.

STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE (After first entry)

Department of Defence

**Official Request for
Defence Community Organisation Support**

• The following information is to be provided for all official requests for support.

**To be completed
by the
Requesting Unit.**

***subject to DCO's
internal priorities***

Data DCO information or
report required for further action

(This date may need negotiation)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| Ship, unit, establishment or base requesting support | | Command | |
| Local DCO section | | Financial counselling provided | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Details of ADF member being referred | | Current violence order issued | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family name | Initials | Warning for drug or alcohol misuse | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Preferred name | Service number | Current service police investigation | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rank | Phone number (Home, work or mobile) | Member advised of referral on | Date |
| Enlistment date | Date of birth | Marital status (Tick most appropriate) | |
| Medical employment classification | Date | Single <input type="checkbox"/> | Married <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For the following question, please provide title and trade number: | | Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> | MWD(S) <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trade, employment, mustering, corps or ECN | | Widow or widower <input type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Date of current posting | Employed as | If 'Other', specify | |
| Administration | | Family details | |
| Does the member have a recognised: | | Partner or next of kin's name | |
| De facto | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Partner or next of kin's address | |
| Dependent | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | City | |
| Categorisation MWD(S) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | State | |
| Posting action pending | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Postcode | |
| effective date | | Country | |
| o <input type="checkbox"/> | | Partner or next of kin's phone number (Home, work or mobile) | |
| If 'Yes', effective date | | Family composition | |
| Administrative warning issued | | (If a blended family, indicate which children are the natural children of each partner.) | |
| Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | If 'Yes', effective date | Name of child | Age |
| Type of engagement | | Where residing if not with member | |
| Superannuation scheme | | | |

STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE (After first entry)

STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE (After first entry)

| | |
|--|---|
| Support request | Support request - Continued |
| Type of support required (Please specify counselling, COPAS investigator, family or pre-deployment info, family support whilst member is absent, etc. This list is not exclusive.) | Action undertaken by referring authority about this issue (Please include a summary of action taken to date, contact with career managers, referral to other service providers, eg chaplains, and advice provided to member. This list is not exclusive.) |
| Clear request of what the unit and member are seeking. This can also include unit background on the case. | What actions have been taken by the unit? Has the relevant Career Management Agency been contacted for Repost/Retention? What was their response? The most desired result is a Service Solution not a compassionate posting. |
| Other details (Please include any other pertinent information, attach supporting documents, eg applications, statements, specialist reports, etc. This list is not exclusive.) | Details of any person who may assist enquiries (Please include contact home, work or mobile phone numbers.) |
| The more information and detail provided will assist in a timely response. Medical/Specialist reports do not need to contain clinical information. All documents are treated with full confidentiality. | Referral Referral on behalf of Family name Given name(s) Rank Phone number Date |
| | Contacts and Referral need to be relevant. The Chief Clerk may have nothing to do with the case. |

STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE (After first entry)

MOBILITY SUPPORT

As relocation is an inherent part of military life, mobility support is a crucial component of assistance to Defence families. This is achieved through programs, information dissemination on new posting localities and education, social work services, and informative literature.

Welcome Information Packs

Information on local and surrounding areas is available through the DCO to assist families to connect with their local environment and to quickly link in and assimilate into their new community. This might be in the form of linking families with sporting clubs or social venues, or finding out what other facilities might be available in the area.

Families are welcome to contact the Family Liaison Officer and discuss their specific needs or to find out generally what is “out there” in their local community.

Defence School Transition Aides/Transition Mentors

Defence, through DCO funding, has placed Defence School Transition Aides (primary school) and Defence Transition Mentors (high school) in selected schools with high numbers of Defence children enrolled. DSTA/DTM are not teachers and are employees of the schools. They may:

- organise activities which welcome and farewell ADF families and help them settle into the new school community
- assist the school to understand the needs of ADF parents and their children
- inform the school and support families if ADF members are deployed
- help families with special needs
- assist families collect work portfolios and academic records or reports for the new school
- act as a point of contact for ADF families in the new school.

The DSTA helps all Defence children at the school should they seek or require assistance. It is not intended that the DSTA work with one child on a long-term basis.

Regional Education Liaison Officer – REDLO

Regional Education Liaison Officers (REDLOs) are professionally trained teachers who understand both the different State and Territory education systems and the Defence lifestyle. They can advise Defence families and children on education issues, particularly related to relocating. REDLOs can assist with changing schools between the various State and Territory primary, secondary and tertiary education systems.

REDLOs provide the key link for families to access the type of support that meets the needs of their particular child. REDLOs are also linked to schools and education systems, working

to raise the issues that affect Defence families and ensure that equity of educational opportunity is available to all mobile Defence children.

Partner Education and Employment Program (PEEP)

Defence recognises the difficulty that partners can experience with their careers and employability due to living a mobile Defence lifestyle.

PEEP provides an education and employment allowance of \$12,000.00 for a ten year period to assist recognised ADF partners to better position themselves for employment through a range of initiatives when posted with the ADF member. Funding is capped at \$6,000.00 per posting. All assistance provided under PEEP will attract Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT).

Updated information including Program Guidelines is located on the DCO website.

Dependants with Special Needs Program - DWSN

Some Australian Defence Force families have a dependant with special needs. Special needs in this sense can mean someone who has, for example, a physical, intellectual, sensory, learning or behavioural disability, or a psychiatric illness/disorder. It can also include those assessed as being gifted or talented.

When families are posted they may have difficulties accessing the services they need, as waiting periods may apply. In order to help deal with some of the difficulties which Defence families who have a recognised dependant with special needs may face, the Dependant with Special Needs Program provides a range of assistance measures. Eligibility criteria, conditions and provisions are outlined in the policy which can be found in the [PACMAN](#) Vol 1 Chapter 1 Part 3 Division 2 and Vol 2 Chapter 8 Part 6.

For recognition of a member with special needs use form AC832 from WEBFORMS on the Defence Intranet, or through your local Base shopfront or your local DCO Area office. A interactive CDROM is available from your local DCO office to assist with the special needs process. For further information and assistance, contact your local DCO Area Office.

The DCO also works very closely with the Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG) which provides a national network of peer support to Defence families who have a special needs dependant. On behalf of Defence, DSNSG manages the Circle of Friends Respite Program. For more information about DSNSG visit the [DSNSG](#) website or telephone 1800 037 674.

Defence Child Care Program

The Defence Child Care Program helps mobile Defence families by facilitating priority of access to child care. Defence families who are required to move on posting may seek priority placement at child care centres in selected locations around Australia. The focus of the program is on helping families to get access to some form of child care on arrival in their new locality. You can find more information on the program on the DCO website.

Extended Child Care Program

The purpose of the Extended Child Care Program (ECCP) is to improve the availability and accessibility of work-related child care for Defence families, including occasional care, before and after school care and family day care. The ECCP can provide funding to child care organisations that provide such services, with funding provided on a demonstrated needs basis as part of a competitive process. You can find more information on the program on the DCO website.

CONTACT AND RESOURCES

Finally, we would like to reiterate the importance of ongoing communication between DCO, unit Commanders and their staff. Don't hesitate to clarify any issues or concerns with DCO staff. We encourage open and ongoing information-sharing within the legal bounds of privacy but we also support members to be open with their chain of Command about issues that might affect their productivity, ability to provide unrestricted service, and unit capability.

For current and comprehensive information on DCO and its services, we encourage you to access the national DCO website at www.defence.gov.au/dco This site also links with:

- Defence Families Australia (DFA)
- Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG)
- Defence Housing Australia (DHA)
- Toll Transitions
- Veterans and Veterans' Families' Counselling Service (VVCS)
- Returned Services League (RSL)

Thank You

Client Service Charter

About the Defence Community Organisation

On behalf of Command, the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) provides a broad range of individual and program related services to the ADF community. These services aim to support ADF families to balance the demands of military service with personal and family commitments.

DCO also provides assistance in the case of accident, illness, hospitalisation or other family crises, and in the event of a casualty or in managing estates at times of bereavement. DCO Area Offices operates normal business hours, but can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in case of an emergency or a crisis.

You can expect us to:

- Respect your privacy and confidentiality, meeting our obligations under the Privacy Act
- Be courteous and honest in our dealings with you
- Provide accurate information
- Be sensitive to issues of cultural diversity, disability and other special needs
- Act on your request in a professional and courteous manner
- Respond to phone calls, faxes or emails within 24 hours
- Reply to correspondence within 15 working days

We provide quality services

Our team provides a quality service based on best practice guidelines. We strive to continually improve our services through quality review processes, research and evaluation.

We support your right to:

- Bring a friend or advocate with you to your appointments
- Discuss with the Area Manager if, for any reason, you want to change your Social Worker or Military Support Officer
- Ask to access information held by Defence Community Organisation about you in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act

You can help us by:

- Treating our staff with courtesy
- Giving us sufficient and accurate information to enable us to assist you properly
- Providing feedback and comments on our performance

If you are satisfied

We would like to hear from you if you are happy with the service you have received. This allows recognition of good service by our staff.

If you are dissatisfied

You have a right to raise concerns at any time if you are dissatisfied with our performance or our services. We take complaints very seriously and have a formal complaints process so we can respond quickly. This also allows us to identify areas where we can improve our services.

If you are dissatisfied with our performance, please raise the issue with the case manager involved. We will immediately begin investigating the matter and inform you of the outcome.

If you are still not satisfied, you can follow a number of steps:

- Speak with the Area Manager
- If you are still not satisfied, you can speak or write to the Regional Director
- If you are still not satisfied, you can write to the Director General
- You have the option to write to the Minister for Defence or your local Member of Parliament or Senator

You also have the right to contact the Commonwealth and Defence Force Ombudsman on 1300 362 072.

Contact Details:

We have a network of more than 20 offices located across Australia and we aim to meet your needs locally.

National Address:

Level 4
33-35 Brindabella Park
Canberra ACT 2600
02 6127 2354