

defence FAMILY

MATTERS

May 2001

Our Mission - To provide Defence Families with real information about the real Defence environment

DCO Web Site Launched By The Hon. Bruce Scott

The new Defence Community Organisation (DCO) web site is an exciting step forward in assisting Defence Families, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Bruce Scott, said at the official launch on 2 April.

The new-look site will go a long way to allaying the "fear of the unknown" experienced by Defence families posting to a new locality, Mr Scott said.

Using the drop down menus available, the Director General of DCO, Lindsay Kranz demonstrated how users could now access a range of locality-specific information such as housing in Darwin, employment in Wagga Wagga, education in Frankston and much more. He also demonstrated a new addition to the site, the Events page that lists local activities such as Welcome Mornings and Employment Seminars.

In accordance with Government guidelines, the site is also available in a text-only format for ease of accessibility.

While the site is coordinated by the Family Information Network for Defence (FIND), information on individual areas is provided by regional DCO staff who will regularly update data to ensure its accuracy and relevance.

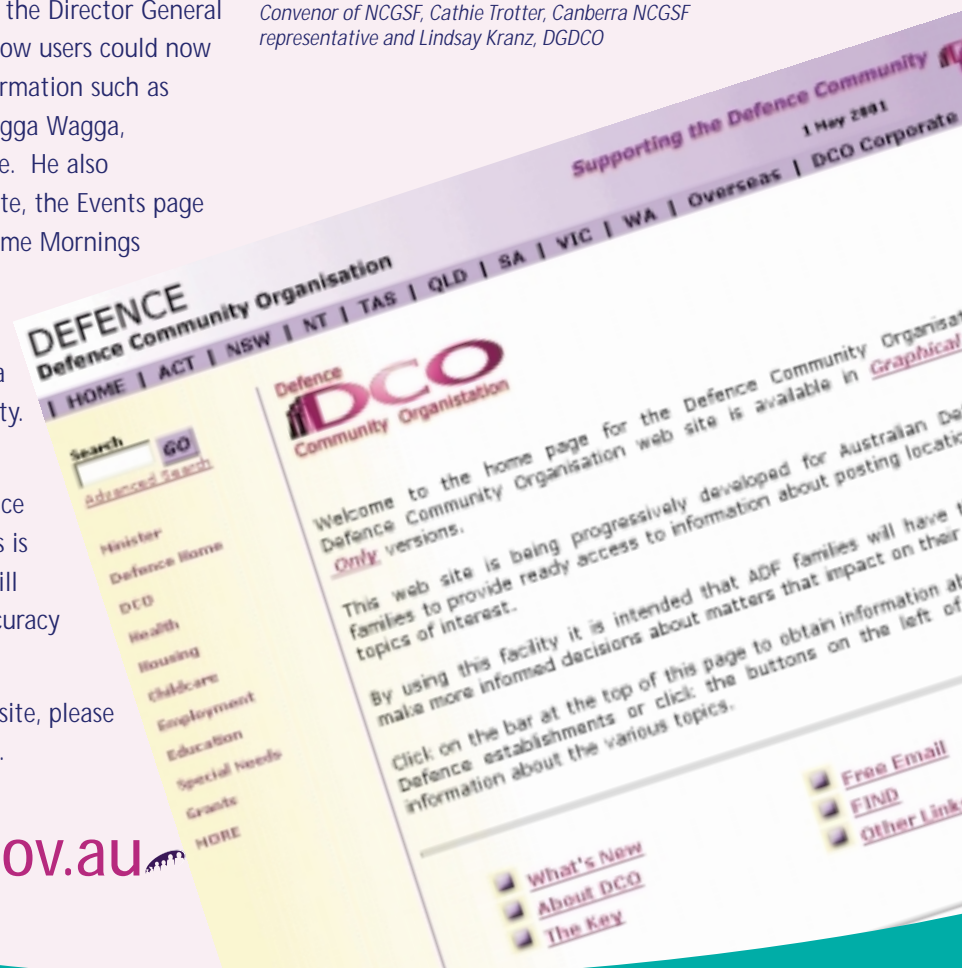
If you have any queries regarding the site, please contact Karen Lange on 02 6266 4367.

The DCO site can be found at

www.dco.dod.gov.au



(left to right) The HON. Bruce Scott, Minister Assisting the Minister of Defence, Karen Lange, Executive Officer Communications and Information (DCO), Judy Swann, Convenor of NCGSF, Cathie Trotter, Canberra NCGSF representative and Lindsay Kranz, DGDCO



Newsletter

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Study of Sole Parents and Deployment to East Timor – Call for Volunteers

The experiences of serving personnel and their partners before, during and after deployment to East Timor is to be the subject of a PhD research project by Monash University student, Philip Siebler.

The project, which is being conducted through the University's Department of Social Work, will benefit the Defence Community Organisation by providing a better understanding of the needs of ADF families who experience lengthy separation.

In particular, Philip would like to talk with sole parents with dependant children about their experiences. If you agree to take part, the interview will take about one-and-a-half hours at a time and place convenient to you. Philip will travel to your location. Your name and address will not be identified in any way with anything you may say.

For further information, please contact Philip at DCO-Puckapunyal on 03 5735 7723 or 03 5735 7731 during business hours.

This will not place you under any obligation to proceed with an interview. 

Below: Australian Military personnel in East Timor



Defence Safety Management Agency

As an employer, Defence recognises the need to make its various workplaces, whether ships, tanks, aircraft or offices, as safe as possible. The Defence Safety Management Agency (DSMA) was formed to achieve this.

DSMA is the peak body for safety management within Defence. It has staff from all three Services as well as civilian personnel, most of whom are qualified in safety management.

All work environments have potential risks and we must all be aware of these as individuals and take the necessary precautions to avoid hazards or danger. This responsibility applies whether you are a member of the military, a civilian or a contractor. Given the complexity and diversity of Defence, a heightened awareness of our work environment is vital.

DSMA provides the policy guidance, professional advice and the tools (including a dedicated web site and 24-hour telephone help-line), to enable all commanders and managers throughout Defence, to provide and maintain safe workplaces and work practices for all their employees and contractors.

While the change to safer workplaces and work practices may not occur overnight, the promotion of safety within Defence, and the provision of professional advice and user-friendly tools to all personnel, will decrease in the number of injuries to Defence employees. The Chief of Defence Force and

the Secretary of Defence have the vision of Zero Injuries, and it is up to all employees, with the assistance of DSMA, to work towards this.

Defence understands that when something happens to an employee, civilian or military, it affects not only the person, but also their family. While some of you may have already faced the trauma of being injured, or having a family member injured at work, the DSMA is working with all Defence commanders and managers to try to prevent such injuries occurring.

However, it is important to note that every employee has their part to play in safety, whether at work, on the way to or from work, or at home. Their families also have a responsibility to remind them about their need to work safely, and their right to a safe working environment.

Should a Defence employee suffer an injury related to their employment, they are required to report the incident by completing a form AC563, an Incident and Fatality Report, and are encouraged to complete a claim for compensation. These forms, and additional safety related information, are available from the DSMA web sites:

DEFWEB

<http://dsma.dcb.defence.gov.au>

Internet

www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dsma/

The DSMA also has a 24-hour help-line on

1800 019 955

Contact: Satish Rajah

email: satish.rajah@cbr.defence.gov.au 

Defence Safety



Management Agency

Removals Australia Web System

Removals Australia has introduced a new and easier way to move house with the launch of their new Removals Australia Web System, or RAWS.

Using RAWS you can organise each step of your domestic or international household move online, all from the one web site.

RAWS means more contact between you and Removals Australia, and also between you and your mover. You will receive emails confirming what stage your move is at, including contact details of the company who will be doing your actual move.

The biggest benefit of RAWS is that your inventory is stored online, so you only have to enter it once and can make amendments each time you move, rather than re-entering the entire inventory. Furthermore, the inventory is readily printable so you can keep that all important hard copy.

RAWS is very easy to use, as you are guided intuitively through each step of the process:

- logon using your password, and then enter your personal details
- enter your move details and either enter your inventory, or make any changes to your existing inventory

- enter how many carton kits you need, and when you would like them to be delivered
- once you have submitted your information, you will receive an email confirming your details
- your removalist (move provider) will then be selected, and you will receive an email to confirm these details

At the end of this online process you will also have the option of purchasing some extra services not covered by Defence. For instance, www.movinghome.com.au can help you with gas, phone and water connections as well as mail redirection at both ends of the relocation. These optional services are available at your own expense.

RAWS has a great frequently asked questions page where you can go to for online help with every step of this new and innovative removals process. RAWS also has a help desk number, 1800 819 167, if you would like more help with any aspect of registering your relocation details.

RAWS can be found by visiting the Removals Australia web site at:

www.removalsaustralia.com.au



National Welfare Coordination Centre

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) was raised in September 1999 in response to the deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to East Timor. Call operators provide families with 24-hour, free call access to welfare and family support services. Experienced personnel from each of the three services staff the NWCC and assist family members with their enquiries.

On 27 April 2001, the NWCC hosted a presentation of certificates in telecommunications (call centres) to three staff members by Optus College representative, Ms Renate Walsh.

CPO Darryl McLean, CPO Mark Mobley and WO1 Terry Beer were awarded with their certificates after a rigorous assessment process coordinated by Mr Martin Gerada from Education, Training and Development Branch in Sydney.

The award of this nationally recognised qualification represents a first for Defence and is the result of collaboration between Optus, a registered training organisation for call centres, and Defence. Families can be assured that NWCC provides a professional service that matches exacting industry standards.

Families are welcome to contact the NWCC and speak to an operator on

1800 801 026 at any time. 🐾

Mobility Research Project

The Defence Community Organisation has been discussing with the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), the educational issues facing ADF members and their families resulting from the mobile lifestyle.

These discussions have resulted in a joint research project being undertaken to explore the impact of mobility on education. Other groups who experience a mobile lifestyle will be included in this research.

DETYA have advertised the project nationally and are awaiting tenders from interested groups.

In the future, Defence families will be invited to participate in this project. At this early stage no details of how this will happen is available but in the next issue of *defence FAMILY MATTERS* further details will be shared.

This is exciting for Defence families as many of the anecdotal stories that we have all shared will be validated through this research and in the long term those issues identified may be used to inform other research and prompt further action.

Keep reading *defence FAMILY MATTERS* for updated information.

For further information I can be contacted at DCO Headquarters on 02 6266 4427.

Joan Gilbert, Manager, Education Policy and Special Needs. 🐾

NWCC Certificate Recipients



Moving the family? A change is on the way

In the last edition of *defence FAMILY MATTERS* we told you how things at the Defence Housing Authority are changing.

In this edition we aim to clearly outline our new role in streamlining the relocation process and how this will significantly reduce the stress and disruption for your family when moving.

From 1 July 2001, Defence Housing Authority (DHA) will be responsible for arranging not only your accommodation solutions, but also your relocation requirements.

You may know that from 1 July last year, DHA assumed full responsibility for almost all aspects of the housing process including allocations, house hunting trips and the provision of a comprehensive maintenance service. In addition to these services, from 1 July 2001, DHA will also assume the relocation and itinerary functions, previously managed by the Defence Relocation Centres.


DHA will be responsible for:

- calculating, authorising and processing your removal entitlements and allowances
- booking travel for postings
- booking temporary accommodation
- assisting in finding your new accommodation through HomeFind
- coordinating the uplift, storage and removal of your furniture and effects with Removals Australia

DHA is taking a dual approach to delivering these services. It has established a National Service and Support Centre (NSSC) that will operate as the main point of contact for your relocation requirements. All information regarding your relocation will be entered into DHA's database, enabling any of our Customer Service Officers to answer your relocation inquiries.

The centre will also open for extended hours, allowing families greater access to information and assistance. Furthermore, the process will also cater for short notice postings, which will reduce the added stress caused by this type of move.

DHA will continue to provide face-to-face assistance through regional Relocation Consultants, using the NSSC to better meet your needs.

Our Relocation Consultants will work with you through the housing selection process, and will assist you with any other relocation requirements you may have. They will also offer confidential case management support if required. 



Defence Housing

AUTHORITY

the home of service



HomeFind - viewing new locations over the Internet

In line with the introduction of the new relocations processes, and as part of our review of customer service initiatives, DHA is undertaking a project that will allow you to view potential homes over the Internet.

HomeFind is an exciting new online tool that will enable you to view homes, area maps, school locations and other information in your new location. For the first time, your entire family will have the ability to view your potential new home.

The HomeFind project involves gathering information and photographs for each of our properties. This will require a visit from a DHA staff member to write up detailed descriptions of the building and inclusions. Photographs of the streetscapes, the exterior and interior of each property will also be taken during the visit. However, interior photographs will only be taken with the permission of the tenant.

This information will be entered into our database, allowing you to have comprehensive details and photographs of available properties. DHA expect this innovative tool will greatly reduce the stress associated with moving by assisting you to pre-select a home anywhere in Australia.

You will be able to access HomeFind yourself via the Internet, or our Relocations Consultants will have laptop computers to assist you through the process. HomeFind will also be available at your local Housing Management Centres. 

If you have any questions in relation to relocations, HomeFind, or any of DHA's services, feel free to contact your local Housing Management Centre or our

Customer Service Line on
1800 249 711

Watch this Space

Military Superannuation Benefits Scheme (MSBS) is re-branding. The scheme name remains the same, but watch this space for the new banner. Why? Promotion of a great scheme, of course!

Comsuper will run a regular column in *defence FAMILY MATTERS* to keep you informed about Military Super. In each issue we intend to uncover each of the below key highlights of the scheme.

'What are the highlights of the scheme?'

- The Employer Benefit is calculated on your salary in the last three years of service, complemented by an excellent employer benefit accrual rate
- Excellent insurance coverage (death and invalidity)
- No fees or charges payable by the member—all are met by the employer
- Attractive lump sum/pension conversion rates and pensions are payable for life and are subject to full CPI updating
- The Member Benefit accumulates separately from the employer-funded benefit

However, if you need information now, please contact ComSuper on

132 366 



What is the NCGSF?

The National Consultative Group of Service Families (NCGSF) is a representative group that has been working with the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Bruce Scott, Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) and Head of the Defence Personnel Executive (HDPE) to ensure the concerns of Defence families are taken into account in all areas of ADF personnel policy.

The NCGSF, which has been operating for 13 years, is an independent organisation that works directly with the office of Major General Simon Willis, HDPE.

The NCGSF has been highly effective over the years in changing areas of Defence personnel policy that may have had negative implications for families. The NCGSF has also contributed significantly to the formulation of new policies that help to improve the quality of life for all Defence families.

Some of the areas that have benefited from NCGSF involvement are:

- The formation and production of this newsletter. For many years the NCGSF has been concerned that there are some pockets of Australia that do not receive any informative newsletters or Service papers. The NCGSF was involved with the consultations that led to the communication team at the Defence Personnel Executive producing this newsletter. Now, every Defence family can receive consistent and accurate current news and advice, mailed regularly to their home address.
- The NCGSF sits on the DHA Board of Directors. The DHA Board comprises 12 people of varying professions and experiences. They are committed to meeting the needs of Ministers and the ADF. Amongst these people are four Senior Officers of

the ADF and the NCGSF Convenor. This allows all DHA tenants, serving members and families, to have a voice at the managing level of the DHA.

- The NCGSF holds positions on various committees and forums. The NCGSF holds positions in different committees to represent ADF families. For example the RSL Conditions of Service Committee and the Gulf War Health Study Consultative Forum.
- Working with DHA. The NCGSF has been very involved with the recent changes to the core businesses of DHA. Recently the NCGSF has convened forums of ADF spouses to meet with DHA to have input into all areas of new DHA activities. For example:
 1. HomeFind (choosing homes over the internet)
 2. Cleaning of houses- the introduction and ongoing review of this service for families
 3. Tenant Information- timeliness and quality of information in welcome packs, farewell packs and the new tenant handbook
 4. Recent reviews of the allocation service and how this can be improved
 5. The new relocation service that DHA takes on after 1 July 2001
 6. Security of houses, location and new development projects across the country.
- Working with Removals Australia. The NCGSF has worked with Removals Australia in the launch of their new web site and online facilities for ADF members and families. NCGSF monitors feedback from families after removals to ensure the high quality of workmanship and service. Removals Australia regularly reviews its processes and information for members and families and NCGSF works closely with them to accurately represent the needs of their biggest client.
- Representing Defence families to the Government. The NCGSF worked very closely with Minister Scott and Defence in the FBT exclusions under the reporting arrangements in 1999 and 2000. Also the

Change of Phone Number

The National Consultative Group of Service Families (NCGSF) phone number on the fridge magnet is now incorrect. The new number is **1800 100 509**



NCGSF are often invited to make submissions to the Government to officially represent the views of Defence families. Recently the NCGSF provided submissions to the Defence White Paper and the Posting Turbulence Review Team. Currently the NCGSF is preparing submissions to the Government's external review into ADF remuneration and the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade review into ADF retention.

- Working with Defence. The NCGSF works very closely with the Defence Directorate of Entitlements to provide official ADF family views on new policies or discussion papers. Recent discussion papers that the NCGSF provided comment on have included; review into ADF Leave, review of Overseas Removal Procedures and Uniform Maintenance Allowance. The NCGSF has also provided feedback to the Directorate of housing policy on ensuites in 4BR homes, HPAS, HPSEA and air conditioning policy.

If you would like to be involved with the work of the NCGSF or need more information please visit our web site at www.defence.gov.au/dpe/ncgsf or call the National Convenor, Judy Swann, on 02 6266 2768. 🗺️

The National Consultative Group of Service Families (NCGSF) will be holding regional meetings across the country on 26 June 2001. The purpose of these meetings will be to establish the issues that are concerning Defence families in each region. Issues that have previously been raised through these meetings have included

- air conditioning in Adelaide
- family support during deployments in Rockingham
- childcare in Darwin and Sydney
- spouse employment and schooling in Puckapunyal etc.

Please call NCGSF on

1800 100 509 if you would like to attend a meeting. Alternatively please call if you have an issue you think should be raised. 🗺️

Do you receive Family Allowance?

The NCGSF would like to advise that the Family Assistance Office (Centrelink) has recently changed the way it records your income for the purposes of some family payments.

If you choose to receive Family Tax Benefit as fortnightly payments or Child Care Benefit as a reduction in fees - the Family Assistance Office (FAO) will use the estimated family income that you have provided to them.

At the end of the financial year the Australian Taxation Office will provide your actual family income to the FAO for comparison.

If you have over or under estimated the income, the FAO will take appropriate action - either pay you the difference or have you repay any overpayments.

The NCGSF has been contacted by several families concerned about the particular implications this has for mobile Defence families and spouses who stop/start jobs when moving.

You are best advised to call the FAO whenever your income changes. You can change your estimated income as many times as needed through a simple phone call to the FAO. This will keep your estimated income closely aligned to your actual income and minimise any over/under payments from the FAO.

They can be contacted on 13 61 50 and more information is available at www.familyassist.gov.au

If you have any further questions please call the NCGSF on

1800 100 509 🗺️



Photo of Aileen Travis National Delegate for Vic/Tas, Peta Renwick National Delegate for NT, Judy Swann Convenor and Maureen Greet National Delegate Hunter/Sydney CBD holding Peta's daughter Georgia. Photo taken at the NCGSF Workshop in Sydney, April 2001.



Spotlight on Duntroon Community Centre

The Duntroon Community Centre may be located within the grounds of RMC, but it has more to do with playdough and cubbies than marching and uniforms.

The Centre is funded through the Defence Community Organisation to provide a unique tri-service facility for all Defence families in Canberra. The Centre is managed by a group of highly-skilled and organised people (parents!) and its use is only limited by the imagination and interest of Defence families in the ACT.

A large meeting room/play room, excellent outdoor equipment, lots of toys and a great kitchen are at the disposal of all who use the Centre.

The best part is that it's free, apart from a small donation to cover the cost of any materials used.

Centrally located only 10 minutes from Jerrambomberra, and not much further from almost anywhere else in Canberra, it is a safe and convenient facility that is a bit of a "Canberra Secret".

Currently, the Centre is used as a Playschool for three-year-olds, four mornings a week. The classes are for a maximum of 20 students, who benefit from the experience of two trained teachers leading them through a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Sessions cost \$11.

It is incredible to watch the development in the children as they learn to listen closely to instructions, follow new routines and rules, and play with others.

The Centre also runs a playgroup on Monday mornings for parents and children, and is a great meeting place for newly-arrived families.

The Centre is ideal for children's birthday parties, craft groups, Bridge clubs and parents' groups. In fact, a Ma Jong club and a book club are about to start at the Centre, so ring up and find out how you can join in.

This is our facility - why complain about how difficult it is to make friends, when the first move is up to you. Ring up, join the book club, enrol your child in the playschool, or start up a group for others who share your interest.

The Centre coordinator, Jenny Lean, can be contacted on 02 6265 9411 or contact Caragh Waller on 02 6291 7848. 🐾



STOP PRESS

If you would like to put the spotlight on your community centre or your group, please contact the editor, Diane Temperley, on 02 6265 5085.

Parenting and Child Health Information at your Fingertips

The Child and Youth Health web site www.cyh.com was developed for parents who need information anytime, anywhere. It has more than 400 topics on parenting, child health and youth health.

Parenting

The parenting topics cover child behaviour and development from babies to teenagers, from how to settle a crying baby or support a child with a disability, to how to cope with runaway teens, and everything in between. Often-used topics are Child Behaviour and ADHD.

Child Health

The child health topics are about all the day-to-day health issues that parents meet when they have children, and need reassurance or information about. They start from nappy rash and problems of breast feeding, through childhood illnesses, to living with more longer term problems such as diabetes and asthma. Head lice is a favourite health topic with parents.

Youth Health

This section is written for young people and covers issues young people have said they want to know about. It includes topics like drugs and safer sex, but some of the topics that young people access most are about health issues such as healthy eating and acne.

If you can't find what you want

If the information you need is not on the site there is a feedback section to let the site administrator know, and if possible it will be included, either as a new topic or as a Question of the Week. 🐛



Your Child and Education

The National Consultative Group of Service Families (NCGSF) is interested in pursuing the issue of mobility and children's education.

We are delighted to see the proposed research project by DETYA into the "Effects of Student Mobility on Learning Outcomes".

An article on this project appears in this edition of the *defence FAMILY MATTERS* and we strongly encourage families to participate.

The NCGSF is also putting together a report on the anecdotal evidence of families regarding the effects of mobility on children and the entire family.

If you have a 'story' of how mobility has affected your child, particularly through the lack of a national starting age and curriculum, we would like to hear from you.

Please email your story to judy.swann@cbr.defence.gov.au or call

1800 100 509

Please be assured that all information in the NCGSF report will be anonymous. 🐛

Defence Health to Freeze Rates until 2002

Defence Health is to freeze rates for members until 2002, fund General Manager, Ron Coghill, has announced.

"Suddenly our value for money reputation has renewed meaning. Our products are now even more valuable, because we will be holding our May 2000 premiums until at least 2002," Mr Coghill said.

He cited responsible management, controlled growth programs and Federal Government initiatives such as the 30 per cent Rebate and Lifetime Health Cover as the major contributing factors in the financial success of Defence Health.

"As a not-for-profit health benefits organisation, it is important to us that we pass on our success to all our members," Mr Coghill said. "Not only will we be holding our rates, we expect to announce a number of new initiatives in the coming months aimed at improving benefits and services to our members."

Information and brochures are available at DCO offices, Orderly Rooms, and Defcredit and ADCU branches across Australia. Or you can call Defence Health directly on

1800 335 425 



Ron Coghill, Defence Health
General Manager

Posting Plans for Families with Special Needs

Posting is a trying time for any Defence family, even more so, when family members have special requirements.

The Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG) can help you through this sometimes-worrying time by assisting you with a personalised Posting Plan. A Posting Plan is a coordinated plan of action to find and access information on available support and services at your new location.

DSNSG can organise respite, therapy, assist with medical information, housing needs and early intervention, as well

as linking you to any relevant organisations. In addition, in most cases, we can put you in touch with another family that has similar special needs.

This is a free service offered to families registered with the DSNSG. So if you are posted, and have a special needs member in your family, let's work together to make this move as stress-free as possible.

To get your Posting Plan off the ground, ring the National Support & Information Line on

1800 037 674

and speak to Margaret Fisk, DSNSG National Coordinator. 

