

## Government actions in relation to serving and ex-serving ADF members since the data were collected in 2015

- The 2018-19 Budget delivered \$100 million in additional funding to veterans and their families.
- The funding will help reform DVA processes to ensure veterans and their families receive the services and support they need during transition.
- Included in the new funding is:
  - \$10.8 million for eligible veterans undertaking approved full-time study as part of their rehabilitation plan
  - \$4.3 million for additional services to help veterans enter the workforce
  - \$4 million for the ongoing implementation of the Prime Minister's Veterans' Employment Program, and
  - a \$2.2 million expansion of access to mental health treatment for Reservists without the need to link the condition to the person's military service.
- The 2017-2018 Budget delivered more than \$58 million in additional mental health support for serving and ex-serving ADF members and their families, including:
  - expanded access to mental health care
  - an expansion of services to families, and
  - two new suicide prevention initiatives to pilot new approaches to supporting vulnerable veterans experiencing mental health conditions.
- In October 2017, a \$31 million package of support was announced as part of the Government's response to the Senate Inquiry into Suicide by Veterans and Ex-service Personnel and the Jesse Bird Inquiry, including:
  - \$16.1 million over four years for a new Veteran Payment for financially vulnerable veterans claiming mental health conditions
  - \$7.1 million over four years to extend support for families of veterans
  - \$2.1 million over four years for an annual health assessment for ex-serving ADF members for the first five years post-discharge
  - \$4 million over two years to pilot a case management service for transitioning or recently discharged ADF members, and
  - \$1.7 million over two years to undertake a scoping study to professionalise veterans' advocacy.

## Access to Defence health care for serving ADF members

- Since the data were collected in 2015, government agencies including Defence and DVA have invested in a range of programs targeting transition, suicide prevention and support for families.
- Defence provides the best holistic health service in Australia delivering health services and programs that are safe, efficient and effective.
- Through the Defence Health Care System ADF Members undertake periodic and opportunistic assessment of risk factors for chronic disease to facilitate early intervention
- ADF members, their families and the community can be confident in the system that supports the health and wellbeing of serving members.
- Defence takes a whole-of-organisation approach to health support, mental health and wellbeing, from time of recruitment, through military and public service careers, to transition and life beyond Defence.
- Equity with Medicare is what underpins Defence health policy, which is designed to ensure the range of subsidised health services that are available to the general community, are also available to all ADF members.
- Defence aims to always provide and support access to member centred, command responsive and recovery-focussed health care with the goal of enabling our people to return to duty, or return to work. Where this is not possible we endeavour to find them a more suitable role or to provide assistance for their transition into civilian life.
- Defence acknowledges the contribution that people leaving the ADF have made during their time in service, and works closely with DVA to improve coordination and support arrangements to assist ADF members as they transition to civilian life.
- Defence regularly reviews and evaluates its policies and programs to ensure it continues to deliver best practice health care.
- Defence actively seeks feedback from ADF members to ensure treatments and recovery programs best meet the needs of our people.

## Transition

- The Government is committed to improving transition outcomes for current and former serving ADF members and their families.
- Many ADF members and their families manage transition from the military to civilian life well. The Government recognises that for some people transition is a period of significant change and result in increased vulnerability to physical and mental health stresses.
- The Government is focused on improving the way veterans and their families' transition from the Defence environment, and acknowledges the ongoing work of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in its examination of transition from the ADF.
- The Government looks forward to reviewing the findings and recommendations of this Inquiry to further inform the way it supports current and former serving ADF members and their families through transition into civilian life.
- A significant amount of work is already underway to improve the transition experience for ADF members and their families, including:
  - implementing the Government's 2016 election policy to Support Veterans and their Families - Creating a Better Veteran's Transition Process, including the establishment of a Transition Taskforce. The Taskforce identified barriers and enablers to an effective transition experience. The Taskforce report is available on the DVA and Defence websites
  - reviewing and improving support for families, including enhancements to the partner employment assistance program
  - piloting new initiatives to deliver integrated approaches to transition services, including the Transition Health Assessment, the Special Operations Forces and Case Management pilots
  - increased information sharing allowing for earlier engagement with transitioning members to proactively offer support
  - establishing processes to deliver continuity of care for medically separating members
  - improving mental health and wellbeing support provided to members and their families during and after military service, and
  - conducting joint research to develop our understanding of veterans' needs, particularly in relation to mental health.

## Transition from the ADF

- Approximately 5,500-6,000 members leave the military each year, with approximately 20 per cent transitioning for medical reasons.
- The Government provides comprehensive transition support service for all members completing a period of full-time service.
- Traditionally, DVA has only been aware of around 1 in 5 people who had served in the ADF. The Department is now aware of, and able to reach out to, every person who joined the ADF since 1 January 2016; and those who left the ADF after 27 July 2016. To date, more than 15,500 current and former ADF members who have not made a claim or otherwise approached DVA have been registered with the department.
- DVA acknowledges that some veterans have had a difficult experience dealing with the department and is committed to putting veterans and their families first. To that end, DVA is progressing its own transformation to meet the current and future needs of all veterans and their families.
- In 2017-18, the Government provided \$166.6 million over four years to support the department's continued transformation. An additional \$112 million was included in this year's budget to ensure that this reform program continues.

## Veterans' employment

- We know the best type of support for our ex-service men and women is the economic independence that comes with a job.
- The Government encourages Australian industry to recognise that employing veterans is a smart business decision. Former ADF members have an extensive range of skills, abilities, training and attributes that make them valuable employees in the civilian workforce.
- In November 2016, the Prime Minister launched the Veterans' Employment Program, which aims to encourage industry to recognise and appreciate the unique skills and valuable experience that members of the ADF can bring to the workplace. Importantly, an additional \$8.3 million was provided towards support for veteran employment opportunities in this year's budget.
- In July 2017 Defence introduced a post transition follow-up call, which occurs approximately four weeks after the member has transitioned, and an electronic survey to stay connected with former members.
- Data from the Defence's Post Transition Survey (as at 22 August 2018) shows that four months after separation from the ADF, 44 per cent of transitioned members are working full-time, 11 per cent are working part-time and 13 per cent are looking for work. The

balance of transitioned members surveyed are either studying, working and studying, retired or not looking for work.