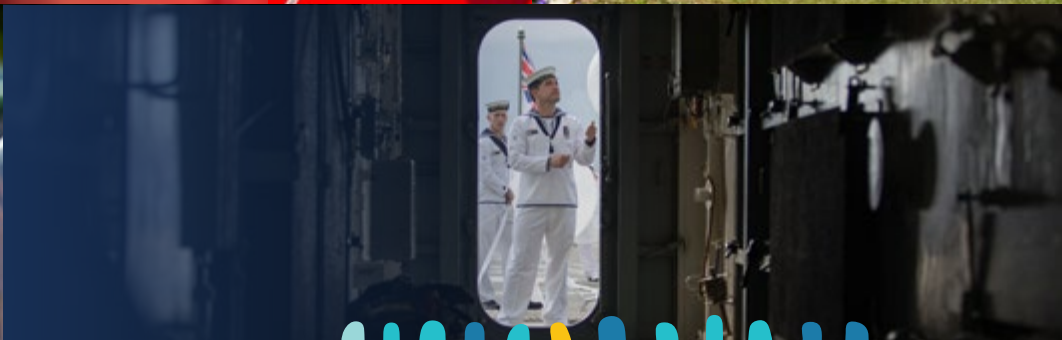
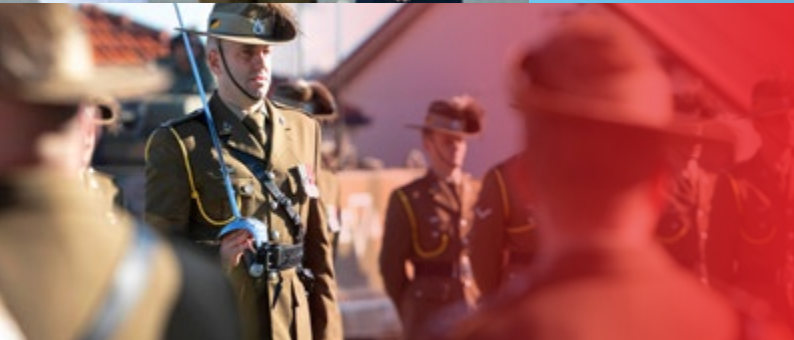




Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**



Veterans and Families Strategy



Message from the Minister

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Western Australian Veterans and Families Strategy.

Australia is not an aggressive nation and yet war and conflict has left an indelible mark on our history. It has helped define our national values and character.

Commemorating the service and sacrifice of previous generations provides insights into our history and our place in the world. It is a unifying national story that can inspire, humble and caution in equal measure. However, this story is not just about our past, it is also about our future.

Today, there are several thousand Australians deployed overseas in the service of our nation. They are the current custodians of the Anzac tradition.

They are members of the 'fourth wave' of veterans, taking their place among the tens of thousands of Australians who have served the nation in peace and war since 1999.

Our servicemen and women are amongst the best in the world. They are highly trained, experienced professionals who have committed to serving something bigger than themselves.

Our challenge is to best utilise those veterans when they leave the Australian Defence Force, to harness their skills, their knowledge and their sense of public service.

The Western Australian Veterans and Families Strategy seeks to do just that. It provides a framework to guide the development of policies and initiatives that welcome veterans and their families and commemorates the service and sacrifice of Australian service personnel.

When we enable the social and economic participation of our veterans and their families, we strengthen our communities.

Hon Peter Tinley AM MLA
Minister for Veterans Issues

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Overview

Purpose

The Veterans and Families Strategy will guide the activities of the Veterans Issues portfolio. Its purpose is to:

- 1 Recognise and support veterans and their families.
- 2 Encourage and enable their ongoing participation and contribution to the broader community.
- 3 Understand who and where Western Australian veterans are, and their interests and needs.
- 4 Commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian service personnel.
- 5 Educate the broader community on the significance and impact of Australia's wars on our nation.





Rationale

The Australian taxpayer invests considerable resources in training and developing our sailors, soldiers, airmen and airwomen. These men and women are carefully selected, expertly trained and tested by a range of experiences at home and overseas. They are among the best in the world.

All military careers end and our men and women in uniform will inevitably become civilians again. Some will come home to Western Australia, while others will choose to make our state their home.

It is the responsibility of the State Government to make the most of these Western Australians, facilitating their participation in all our state has to offer, maximising the social and economic benefit to the community and to the veterans and their families.

The Australian Government, through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), has primary responsibility for developing and delivering programs that support ex-service members and their dependents.

The State Government also has a role in providing, where appropriate, additional means of supporting and recognising veterans and the veteran community that augments and complements, rather than replicates or replaces, the services provided by DVA.



316,900+

Australian veterans as at 30 June 2017
(DVA estimate)



Veterans and their service

A veteran is defined as someone who has served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

The mission of the ADF is to defend Australia and its national interests. To fulfil this mission, the ADF prepares for and participates in a spectrum of operations that involve the application of both violent and non-violent military power.

It is well established that the demands of training, service life and deployments give veterans distinctive characteristics and health needs.

The training is frequently physically and mentally arduous, and involves extended periods away from families and friends. Operational service, whether on peacekeeping or warlike operations, can involve exposure to a range of confronting and traumatic experiences.

Military service is legally, ethically and morally unique. Service members can be compelled to undertake actions that they know could result in their own death or that of their comrades. And they can be compelled to lawfully take the life of another person.

Over 100,000 Australians have been killed serving the nation in our armed forces. Australia's participation in war and conflict has shaped our history and helped define our national values and character.

This is not to suggest that service members and veterans are superior to those who have not served, nor does it seek to elevate military values above the values of the broader community. Rather, it recognises the inherently unique nature and demands of military service and its role and impact in the life of our nation.



100,000+

Australians have been killed serving the nation in our armed forces

The Western Australian Veteran Community

Previously, the term veteran was used synonymously with 'returned' servicemen or women and was reserved for those who rendered 'war-like' service, as defined in the various rehabilitation and compensation Acts.

The new and more inclusive definition recognises the unique nature of military service and responsibility of the Australian Government to those who have rendered that service.

The Western Australian Government does not distinguish between types of service; what matters is the spirit in which the service was offered.

There is no definitive number of veterans in Western Australia (WA) or indeed Australia. While data collection is improving, there remains gaps in the profile of the veteran community.

DVA estimated there were 316,900 veterans as at 30 June 2017. This figure includes veterans from all conflicts and operations from the Second World War up to the post 1999 era.

It also includes the 147,400 members of the 'Peacetime Defence Force' of 1972 to 1994. However, it does not include those members post 1994 who did not serve overseas.

Using the basic rule of thumb, with ten per cent of the population, WA may have more than 30,000 veterans resident in the state.

Between 2013 and 2017, 1,583 ADF members left full-time service in WA, 308 of them were discharged for medical reasons.

Objective

The development and implementation of policies and initiatives that promote the wellbeing of WA veterans, commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian service personnel and firmly establish WA as a state that welcomes and supports veterans and their families.

Themes, outcomes and initiatives

The Veterans and Families Strategy has identified five themes. They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they listed in order of importance. They are, to varying degrees, mutually supporting. High level outcomes and initiatives have been identified for each theme.





Recognition

For over a century, Australians have been serving in theatres of war and conflict. At its very best, this service has been characterised by courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice. These values have helped define our national character.

We also recognise the key role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans. Indigenous service personnel have fought in all our conflicts, despite experiencing discrimination and bigotry. They not only served the nation in war, they advanced the cause of equality.

Current service personnel and veterans are the custodians of the Anzac tradition and legacy. Their service and the enduring Anzac legacy deserves recognition.

By providing this recognition we ensure:

- their service and sacrifice are valued and appreciated; and
- veterans and their families are valued and socially included.

To achieve this, we will:

- 1.1** Continue to support the Veterans Advisory Council, which recognises veterans by providing them with a forum to advise the Government on issues affecting the WA veteran community.
- 1.2** Develop a set of guiding principles to inform the provision of State Government concessions to the veteran community, recognising the value of their service.
- 1.3** Ensure the Veterans Issues portfolio is consulted when State Government agencies propose policy changes that directly affect the veteran community.
- 1.4** Continue to work with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions through the Veterans' Ministerial Council.

Baidoa, Somalia
Private Graeme M. (Brownie) Brown



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Understanding

The absence of a definitive number of WA veterans presents a challenge for service design and delivery.

Additionally, in contrast to previous generations, fewer Australians have family or friends who serve or have served in the ADF. While the ADF remains one of the nation's most respected institutions, service in the ADF is often poorly understood.

Perceptions of Australian veterans and their experiences can be shaped by other cultural influences, such as the experience of American veterans. Additionally, there are often negative misconceptions that surround military service, notably that it is authoritarian and chauvinistic. This can create a narrative around Australian veterans that is unhelpful when they seek to re-enter the broader community.

Comprehensive, consistent and reliable data is essential to developing effective policies at all levels.



By improving our understanding of the veteran community, we will ensure that:

- policies, programs and services are evidence based and meet the needs of the veteran community; and
- the effectiveness of policies and programs can be measured and evaluated.

To achieve this, we will:

- 2.1** Work with DVA and other stakeholders to further build the profile of the WA veteran community.
- 2.2** Work with DVA's Indigenous Veterans Liaison Officers network to identify the number of Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans.
- 2.3** Identify opportunities for veterans to voluntarily self-identify to State Government agencies to improve service delivery.
- 2.4** Work with the Veterans Advisory Council and the broader veteran community to enhance our understanding of veterans and their families, their needs and interests.

Bien Hoa, South Vietnam
Sergeant Tom Birnie (right) and an
unidentified soldier

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Support

Many veterans have found their military service professionally and personally rewarding. They will have overcome challenges and adversity, and enjoyed a unique sense of comradery. Their service may have provided them with experiences and habits that positively influences their post-service life.

However, their service exposes them to a range of risk factors and it can result in unique health and support needs during and after their service.

State Government agencies are frequently the first point of contact for veterans accessing medical, mental health or housing services. The State Government has a role in ensuring the services it provides, including those funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), meet the needs of veterans and their families.

The State Government also has a role in providing, where appropriate, additional means of supporting and recognising veterans and the veteran community that augments and complements, rather than replicates or replaces, the services provided by DVA.

By providing this support, we ensure that:

- we honour our obligation to those who served;
- veterans and their families receive the support they need; and
- veterans and their families are valued and socially included.

To achieve this, we will:

- 3.1** Listen to the Veterans Advisory Council and the broader veteran community to understand issues of concern.
- 3.2** Advocate on behalf of the WA veteran community with the Australian Government and the Veterans' Ministerial Council.
- 3.3** Advocate on behalf of classes of veterans who need collective representation.
- 3.4** Identify areas where the State Government can work collaboratively with the Federal Government to improve and enhance service delivery to veterans.
- 3.5** Advocate on behalf of the WA veteran community across the State Government, informing agencies of the particular needs of the veteran community.
- 3.6** Undertake a review of the existing Western Australian veterans legislation to ensure they remain fit for purpose and meet the needs of the veteran community.
- 3.7** Work with DVA to ensure support provided to Western Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans is culturally appropriate.
- 3.8** Develop a set of guiding principles to inform the provision of State Government concessions to the veteran community, to ensure veterans receive the support they need.

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Participation

Each year approximately 5,000 service members transition from the ADF and a significant proportion of them will have served on one or more overseas operation.

The majority will look to join the civilian workforce and commence the next phase of their lives. Maximising their participation in all our state has to offer will benefit the broader community and the veteran and their family.

There is also a key role for veterans to play in supporting and developing Western Australian Defence industries.

Some veterans, in their post-service life, will also seek opportunities to serve their community in new ways. This public spiritedness should be harnessed and encouraged.

By promoting veteran participation, we ensure:

- improved transition to civilian life for ex-service members;
- employers across all sectors of the economy have the opportunity to benefit from the human capital produced by the ADF;

- there is a skilled and experienced workforce for our Defence industries;
- community groups have the opportunity to benefit from the experience and knowledge of veterans; and
- veterans and their families are valued, and socially and economically included.

To achieve this, we will:

- 4.1** Promote the benefits of employing veterans in the private sector and encourage the development of veterans' networks.
- 4.2** Promote the benefits of employing veterans in the public sector, including in local government.
- 4.3** Investigate opportunities for veterans to work and partner with State Government networks and stakeholders.
- 4.4** Work with training and educational institutions to provide transition pathways for veterans' skill enhancement.

**Phuoc Tuy Province, South Vietnam
Private Peter O'Halloran**



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Commemoration

Australia has been shaped and influenced by its experience of war. Commemoration plays an important role in recognising the service and sacrifice of Australian service personnel in wars, conflicts and peace keeping operations.

It deepens our understanding of our nation's history and our appreciation of the service and sacrifice of previous generations.

It is appropriate that the State Government supports the commemoration of significant anniversaries in our nation's military history.

Commemorative events can ensure:

- the service and sacrifice of previous generations is valued and appreciated;
- remembrance and understanding of significant events in the history of our state and nation;

- people connect with their own family history;
- local communities engage with the history of their area; and
- points of connection are provided between veterans and ex-service organisations (ESOs) and the broader community.

To achieve this, we will:

- 5.1** Work with ESOs to support commemorative events.
- 5.2** Coordinate a range of commemorative activities across various State Government agencies.
- 5.3** Develop a repository of products and programs to mark significant milestones in Australia's military history.

Following the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001, Australians fought in Iraq and Afghanistan



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