

Note: DEFGRAMS need only be retained while the information is relevant. Publications can be accessed on the Defence Intranet at <http://defweb.cbr.defence.gov.au/home/documents/departme.htm>

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS FOR A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE IN REGARD TO COUNSELLING SERVICES BY THE VIETNAM VETERANS COUNSELLING SERVICE TO AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Introduction

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), to provide access to the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS) for ADF members and their families has recently been reviewed and amended.

Purpose of this Agreement

The Department of Defence (Defence) and the DVA have entered a strategic alliance called the Links Project. This arrangement allows Defence personnel to work with VVCS staff for greater exposure to different cases and treatment modalities. The alliance promotes opportunities for joint programs of crisis intervention, counselling, case management and rehabilitation.

The successful association of some Defence and VVCS mental health services could eliminate gaps in delivery and enhance continuity of care, especially for ADF members who are transitioning from ADF to DVA health care responsibility.

While the VVCS has been traditionally identified as a service for veterans, the MoU facilitates the delivery of VVCS counselling services to ADF members without veteran status as well as their families. To address common concerns, guiding principles have been set out below.

Guiding principles

Services will be delivered according to the following guiding principles:

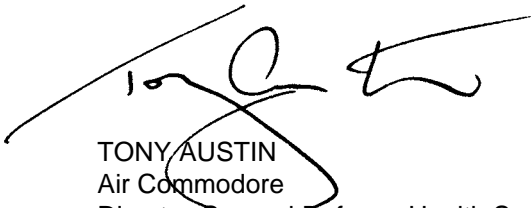
- the primary provider of mental health services remains Defence Health Service Branch, however, VVCS can assist when requested;
- acute psychiatric or psychological cases (suicidal or critical incident mental health support) will be managed through Defence Health Service Branch;
- VVCS will operate as one of a range of service providers available to ADF personnel;
- VVCS and current ADF service providers and personnel will work in a complementary and cooperative manner;
- VVCS will operate within their formal Policies and Procedures adopted for clinical work, and will develop new policies specific to the provision of services to ADF members as required; and
- Defence and VVCS will work in a consultative and cooperative manner to appropriately market the VVCS services to the ADF, taking account of the fact that prime responsibility of VVCS is to provide counselling services to eligible veterans.

Eligibility of Australian Defence Force members and their families

The two components of eligibility are referral and being an ADF member or a member of their family. These terms are defined as:

- **Referral**—ADF members and/or their family must be referred in writing and must have been assessed as requiring treatment of the nature in which VVCS specialises, noting that ADF members who are veterans are entitled to VVCS services without referral and at no cost. ADF members must be referred by an ADF medical officer or psychologist. Family members can be referred by the above or a Defence Community Organisation (DCO) social worker.
- **ADF members and reservists**—All serving members will be eligible for VVCS services within the guidelines of extant policy: Defence Instruction (General) (DI(G)) PERS 16-1—*Health Care of Australian Defence Force Personnel*.
- **Serving members** include the Permanent Forces and Reserve members on continuous full-time service (CFTS). Specific considerations are outlined in the DI(G) PERS 16-1 for other Reserve members serving in other than CFTS.
- **'Veteran' status** as defined by the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* is not a prerequisite.
- **Families**—To be eligible for referral to VVCS services, the individual must be:
 - a partner of an ADF member;
 - a natural child of the ADF member;
 - a child of the ADF member's partner;
 - a child of the ADF member's former partner, who has at any time had a relationship with the ADF member; or
 - a significant other, for example, the parent of a non-partnered member of the ADF.

The complete document can be found at the ADF Mental Health Strategy web site (see www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dhs). For further information about this MoU please contact LCDR John Ashley on (02) 6266 3946.



TONY AUSTIN
Air Commodore
Director-General Defence Health Service

DISTRIBUTION: SDL 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9A, 12, 14