



Australian Government

**VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service**



Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service
A service founded by Vietnam veterans

newsletter

edition 2 July 2008

PUT YOUR MIND

Life isn't always smooth sailing.
We may sometimes feel like reaching
out for some help or advice, but not
know where to turn.

We may struggle with drugs or alcohol, anxiety or perhaps just a feeling that something simply isn't right. Don't worry, you are not alone, one in five people will suffer from mental illness at some stage of their lives.

Your mental health can affect every part of your life, from the workplace to your home and everywhere in between. Poor mental health may even have a negative impact on your physical health.

Department of Veterans' Affairs has developed 'At Ease' to help veterans access information to help them achieve good mental health and wellbeing. 'At Ease' encourages veterans and their families to understand and recognise the signs of mental illness and take action to improve it. The web site directs veterans and their families to available help, such as the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

The 'At Ease' website is specialised for veterans and their partners, carers, sons and daughters. Providing access to relevant information on mental health, it includes:

- * information about mental health
- * self help/diagnosis tools and information about how and where to get help
- * advice for their own personal situation.



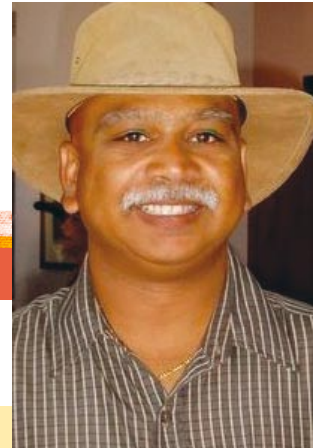
This veteran-specific website brings mental health awareness into the homes of veterans. It will challenge beliefs for those who have, or know of someone with a mental illness, but it will empower them to get help.

Veterans and their family members are often not aware of the various kinds of help available. 'At Ease' aims to break down the stigma attached to mental health and make it easier for veterans and their families to accept and reach the support out there.

If you are concerned about a mate or family member, or just want to look for more information for yourself check out www.at-ease.dva.gov.au

You could also contact your GP or call the VVCS on **1800 011 046**.

from the Director of Perth



VVCS Perth

The VVCS Centre in WA is on a quiet street in suburban Applecross in the shadows of the iconic Raffles Hotel. Less than a minute's stroll is the Swan River with sweeping views of the City. Here since May 2006, VVCS WA is 12 kilometres from the city centre.

The Perth centre has seven clinical staff, three administrative staff, a deputy director and centre director. Together we provide quality services to the veteran and defence communities. There are currently 57 Outreach contractors covering all parts of the state except for the Pilbara and Kimberley regions. We also contract four group facilitators to conduct group programs on our behalf.

With the large military and naval bases in Western Australia, there are a growing number of younger veterans and their families accessing services, either in the Centre or via Outreach.

Group programs available in WA include Heart Health, Lifestyle Residential, Partners Residential, Anger Management, Sleep and Relaxation as well as specific programs tailored to the needs of veteran's partners and sons and daughters.

We maintain good relationships with the ex-service community and have developed strong partnerships with the Hollywood Clinic where the inpatient and day PTSD programs are held, the WA General Practitioners Network, Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and the medical and psychology staff at the military and naval bases.

Supporting Younger Veterans and their families

Recently DVA, through Mental Health Policy and Community Mental Health, provided funding to the WA GP Network for the 'Supporting Young Veterans and their Families' project. Its aim was to raise awareness in the GP and the wider community about the mental health issues faced by younger veterans and their families.

Brochures and posters for display in GP practices are available and GP and practice manager education sessions have been developed.

The first session included a presentation by Ms Lidia Genovese, a well known psychologist in the WA mental health community as well as an ex-DVA psychologist. She presented on Mental Health in context, the impact of separation and the impact of mental health problems on veterans, partners and children.

The second education session – 'A day in the life of service member' – will be presented by a recently discharged veteran and the spouse of a current serving ADF member. Including interactive exercises, representatives from the Hollywood Clinic (the PTSD program), VVCS, School Psychology and GP Divisions will attend.

This has been an exciting project and VVCS Perth looks forward to maintaining close working relationships and partnerships with DVA, the WA GP Network, Defence, Ex-service Organisations and other community representatives.

Glen Menezes
Director
VVCS Perth

Did you know VVCS is for partners and families of younger veterans too?

VVCS has always provided services for partners and children of Vietnam veterans for issues relating to the veteran's war-service. Recently there have been more requests for counselling and support services for family members of younger veterans, peacekeepers and current ADF personnel.

What does VVCS offer family members?

VVCS provides counselling services for dependant family members with issues relating to the operational service of the partner or parent.

VVCS also provides some group programs specifically designed to meet the needs of all partners and Vietnam veteran sons and daughters.

Family members can access the after-hours crisis counselling telephone service – Veterans Line on **1800 011 046**.

VVCS can also provide education, self-help resources and referral services for families.

Who in the family can attend counselling?

VVCS is committed to supporting the partners, spouses, widows, sons and daughters of eligible younger veterans and peacekeepers.

Are parents involved in their children's counselling?

Yes. While counselling is aimed at assisting the whole family the counselling may focus on helping parents manage difficulties their children may be having. Family members may receive counselling individually or as combinations of various family members.



How do family members arrange counselling with VVCS?

Parents of children under 18 can contact VVCS. The VVCS Intake counsellor may speak to selected family members and will then arrange an initial session with a counsellor to assess the needs of the family. In some cases, other services in the community may better meet some of the needs of the family members. In these cases, VVCS will provide a referral or case management service to ensure that all the families' needs are met.

For further information on available services for family members, please contact your nearest VVCS centre on **1800 011 046**.

ANGER...AGGRESSION...VIOLENCE.....

These issues are all part of a continuum and sometimes there can be a fine line between each, especially when anger gets out of hand and leads onto abusive behaviours. They are just some of the issues WVCS supports clients with through our counselling or group programs.

Clients can be concerned about experiencing a lack of control in relation to their angry feelings, or about the impact of their anger on their partners and children. Other clients may be worried about another family member's behaviour, or seeking advice about how they can respond differently, or how to ensure their own safety.

Anger is a universal human emotion and when channelled constructively, can serve an important purpose. For example, if we feel angry about the way we are being treated, it may motivate us to stand up for ourselves. But anger can become destructive if we stand over people and develop relationships based on fear.

Violent behaviour is not only about hitting someone, but also about being controlling over others (for example, controlling another person's spending, who they see, where they go), and sometimes all it takes is an intimidating look to make someone feel afraid.

The critical issue about anger is to recognise it, take responsibility for our actions, and learn how to manage anger appropriately. Managing anger is essentially about separating the feeling from the behaviour. It's not about 'I must never feel angry again', but more about 'how can I express this differently'.

For those living with people who are often angry, the priorities are about 'how do I keep myself and those I love safe?' 'how do I avoid being caught up in this cycle?' and 'what are my options?' Since children learn directly from their environment, it helps for parents to role model alternative and healthier ways of expressing their emotions.

Military training draws partly on the elements of anger and adrenalin to serve the purpose of survival



against the enemy. For those affected by war-related stress, anger is often a part of their arousal symptoms, with some tendencies to over-react to certain triggers. While this may help to understand the prevalence of anger reactions amongst veterans, it is not a license to act on one's anger.

If you identify with any of these issues and would like support and to learn some useful strategies for helping to control your anger, rather than your anger controlling you, WVCS offers a range of services. These include individual counselling and Anger Management group programs. In a crisis situation you can call any of the following nation-wide services:

- **Veterans Line 1800 011 046**
- **Mens Line Australia 1300 789 978**
- **Lifeline 13 11 14**

Remember, there's a difference between feeling angry and acting on that feeling.

Q&A Questions and Answers

The Questions and Answers page is a regular feature of WVCS News. Do you have a question about WVCS, our eligibility, services or questions about you and your family's health and wellbeing? We encourage you to contact us with your questions – don't be scared to ask. You never know how many people want the same question answered.

Q1 My counsellor suggested I attend an anger management group to help with my short fuse, I am a bit nervous about sitting with a lot of people in one room, why would going to a group be better than talking one on one?

A: Many WVCS clients have expressed the same feelings of discomfort about going to group programs, the good news is they usually tell us after the group program that they were very glad they attended and it was much better than they thought it was going to be!

WVCS encourages clients to attend group programs as it can be really beneficial to work with a group of people who have the same issues. Participants can help and support each other, share stories of how they manage and it can be great way to make friends.

Your counsellor will be able to help you work through this, so the first thing to do is have a chat with them. Other strategies that have helped include:

- Visiting the venue before the course to scope it out
- Talking to the facilitator and letting them know of your concerns so they are aware and can support you
- Talking to other veterans that have managed and see how they did it
- With your counsellor practise ways to cope with any distress you may feel and have a plan written down that you can take into the group.

Q2 I live in a small regional area which does not have many community services. I recently visited my GP who suggested I improve my general health and fitness. A mate who recently moved from Brisbane suggested attending the WVCS Heart Health program. The area I live in has no gym or fitness facilities – is there a Heart Health program for regional areas and if so how do I sign up?

A: There is a program available called the Outreach Heart Health Program which was designed to support veterans in rural and remote areas of Australia. It is a 12-month correspondence program with participants having their own tailored physical activity program and health education modules. The program covers a range of topics including setting healthy goals, eating well, lowering alcohol consumption, communication and stress management, quitting smoking, taking care of your body, solving problems and maintaining a healthy heart.

Participants are supported by their GP and a Health Consultant, who guide participants through the program. Participants have a dedicated online forum, giving veterans the chance to chat, socialise, swap ideas and learn from each other.

The program is delivered by Australian Health Management (ahm), on behalf of WVCS. Find out more about the Outreach Heart Health Program by contacting WVCS on 1800 011 046.

If you have a question for our WVCS staff please call us on **1800 011 046** or send us an email to **wvcsnews@dva.gov.au**

Changing the Mix – Alcohol Correspondence Program

The Changing the Mix (CTM) Team received an overwhelming response from readers of the last edition of the VVCS Newsletter with potential participants eager to change their drinking patterns.

The main benefit of the CTM program is that it allows you to address your drinking without having to leave the comfort of your own home. No need to drive into town, locate a building or pay for parking – just open the front door and walk to your mailbox.

The CTM program is free to Australian veterans, peacekeepers, their partners, adult sons and daughters and ADF members.

Changing the Mix is based on a 2004 trial project where those who finished the program more than halved their weekly consumption of alcohol!

We do not ask you to stop drinking. We believe you know what is best for you in regard to your own alcohol consumption. We provide you the opportunity, information and motivation to assist you to change the patterns of your drinking.

The CTM team has a flexible and professional approach and are keen to work with participants who want to achieve their drinking goals.

The program includes setting goals, managing relapses, planning ahead and maintaining the changes made.

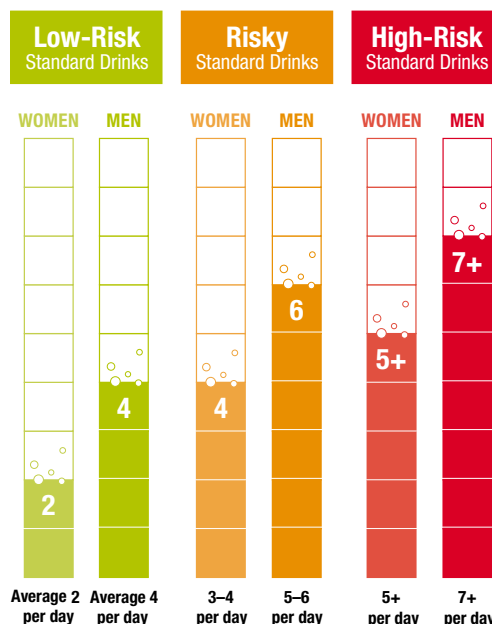
Low risk drinking means

FOR MEN

- * An average of no more than 4 standard drinks per day
- * No more than 6 standard drinks on any one day
- * And 1-2 alcohol-free days per week

FOR WOMEN

- * An average of no more than 2 standard drinks per day
- * No more than 4 standard drinks on any one day
- * And 1-2 alcohol-free days per week



Changing THE MiX 1800 1808 68
Alcohol Correspondence Program

Why should I enrol?

- * Has someone been concerned about your drinking recently?
- * Do you drink more than six standard drinks on any one occasion?
- * Do you struggle with anger or stress and then drink to take the pressure off?
- * Have you previously tried to reduce your drinking and been unsuccessful?

If you answered yes to at least two of the above it would probably be worthwhile for you to consider the program.

Call the CTM team during business hours on **1800 1808 68**.

To access further information on alcohol management visit The Right Mix website - www.therightmix.gov.au

VVCS News Flash – Tele-counselling pilot program improving services for the rural veteran community

VVCS has an extensive outreach program which contracts counsellors in rural and regional areas to provide services to veterans and their families. Whilst this program has been very successful, there are a high number of eligible veterans and family members who have to travel long distances to a DVA/VVCS provider.

As part of improving our service delivery to veterans out of reach of counsellors, VVCS is introducing a new pilot program focusing on counselling via communication technology.

The aim of the pilot is to provide counselling using high quality video conferencing equipment. It is for veterans and families in regions where access to local counselling is problematic or non-existent.

The demand to travel for mental health services can impact on regular attendance and receiving the best treatment resulting in an increased likelihood of drop-outs.

Research over the past few years demonstrates the viability and suitability of videoconferencing. It guides practices to ensure a quality service is provided including issues such as confidentiality, privacy and safety requirements and measures for effectiveness.

What are the benefits?

- * improved access to information for the veteran community

- * improved access to mental health care and high quality counselling
- * reduction in clients dropping out of treatment
- * frequency and number of sessions match the need of the client and are not compromised by need to travel
- * saves on distance travelled
- * reduction in hours and costs for veterans and families travelling to major cities.

Where to from here?

Two VVCS centres have been selected to trial this program – Perth and Sydney. The program is already underway with the equipment installed, and policy, procedures and VVCS staff training are being finalised.

The Central West and the New England regions are potential NSW sites for the pilot and in Western Australia they are the Wheat Belt, Mid West and Pilbara regions.

In the next months, VVCS will hit the road to promote and demonstrate this new service to the veteran and defence communities in the pilot sites.

We hope to see many representatives and those interested in the pilot there.

The pilot will run for 12 months and then be evaluated to decide on the future of the new service.

To find out more about this exciting new initiative, contact your local centre on **1800 011 046** and ask to be referred to the video conferencing project team.

Contacting the VVCS News team

You can contact the VVCS News team by phone (02) 6225 4680 or email vvcsnews@dva.gov.au

Subscribing to the VVCS Newsletter

If you would like to receive the VVCS newsletter electronically, contact the News Team by email vvcsnews@dva.gov.au

You can also download a copy of our newsletter from our website – www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs

If you wish to update or be removed from the VVCS newsletter distribution list, contact the News Team vvcsnews@dva.gov.au or (02) 6225 4680.

VVCS Newsletter is published by VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, PO Box 21 Woden ACT 2606 as a free newsletter for Australia's veteran and defence communities.

WVCS NOTICEBOARD

Are you Stepping Out?

If you are discharging from the ADF, the Stepping Out Program will help you transition from the ADF to civilian life.

Dates & locations of upcoming programs:

Sydney	5-6 August 2008
Darwin	14-15 August 2008
Melbourne	18-19 August 2008
Brisbane	8-9 September 2008
Perth	9-10 September 2008
Wodonga	13-14 October 2008
Nowra	19-20 November 2008

Melbourne	19-20 November 2008
Canberra	26-27 November 2008
Sydney	2-3 December 2008
Melbourne	19-20 February 2009
Wodonga	30 April - 1 May 2009

Call **1800 011 046** for further information or to register for a program in your area.

Please note: whilst every effort is made to ensure advertised groups are run, they cannot proceed if we do not fill the minimum number of spaces allocated. We encourage you to let other ADF members and their families know about this program.

To contact WVCS

Call on our toll free number: **1800 011 046**

To contact your nearest WVCS centre during business hours and Veterans Line, after hours.

<p>WVCS Adelaide 99 Frome Street Adelaide SA 5000</p>	<p>WVCS Launceston 29 Elphin Road Launceston TAS 7250</p>	<p>WVCS Perth 7 Kintail Road Applecross WA 6153</p>
<p>WVCS Albury/Wodonga 81 Hume Street Wodonga VIC 3690</p>	<p>WVCS Lismore Office 6, Level 1 Conway Court (Entrance: Molesworth Street) 17 Conway Street Lismore NSW 2480</p>	<p>WVCS Southport 12 Short Street Southport Qld 4215</p>
<p>WVCS Brisbane 15 Astor Terrace Spring Hill QLD 4000</p>	<p>WVCS Maroochydore 129 Horton Parade Maroochydore QLD 4558</p>	<p>WVCS Sydney 88 Philip Street, Ground Floor Parramatta NSW 2150</p>
<p>WVCS Canberra 6-8 Campion Street Deakin ACT 2600</p>	<p>WVCS Melbourne Level 4, 440 Elizabeth Street Melbourne VIC 3000</p>	<p>WVCS Townsville Nathan Business Centre 340 Ross River Road Cranbrook QLD 4814</p>
<p>WVCS Darwin 2 Chung Wah Terrace Palmerston NT 0830</p>	<p>WVCS Newcastle Unit 1/8 Auckland Street Newcastle NSW 2300</p>	
<p>WVCS Hobart 2 Castray Esplanade Battery Point TAS 7004</p>		