



Australian Government

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



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

newsletter

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VVCS Case Management

Sometimes complex personal or social problems can affect mental health and wellbeing. Some people benefit from having a case manager to help with setting goals for improving health and identifying services to help manage their situation.

Can case management work for you?

Every person is different and every situation is different.

Your case management service would be designed just for you and your situation.

You and your case manager, along with key people in your life, would work out a plan of action to improve your capacity to deal with problems. A case management service is most suited to people who need help to manage the multiple issues that affect their mental health.

Case managers can coordinate services you might need—medical, pharmaceutical, psychological, psychiatric, social, family, vocational and financial—while helping you to maintain family and social relationships, and to build on your ability to be independent and active in your community.

To find out more about VVCS case management, contact your local centre on 1800 011 046.

Getting my life back!

Barry—63, a Vietnam veteran, contacted VVCS, suffering from anxiety and depression and needed help to manage a complex situation. Barry said, ‘everything seemed to be happening at once—moving from Adelaide to Noosa Heads—and I realised that I needed a little bit of help.’

As well as having health problems, Barry and his partner were also having difficulties with accommodation, finance, adjusting to their new surrounds and becoming the primary carers for their two young grandchildren who needed to start school.

Barry worked with his VVCS case manager to identify and prioritise his goals. Together, they coordinated the services he needed, while also developing the family’s support networks.

“My family and I are now able to manage a lot better. We went through a bit of an adjustment period but we are getting back on track. Now I feel like I can work with my counsellor, to better manage my anxiety and depression symptoms.”

from the DIRECTOR OF DARWIN



The VVCS centre in Darwin is located at Palmerston, about 25 kilometres from Darwin City and adjacent to Robertson Barracks. VVCS Darwin is co-located with other DVA business groups. The NT office has four clinical staff, two administrative staff and a Director.

VVCS Darwin provides counselling services through an outreach program to remote locations such as Nhulunbuy, (the location of a Norforce depot) and out to Kununurra and Wyndham in Western Australia.

While Vietnam veterans, their partners, sons and daughters continue to access VVCS, an increasing number of younger veterans, current serving members and their families are using the service. There are approximately 6500 defence personnel located in the region, including some 4000 at Robertson Barracks (the home to the Army's 1st Brigade). Most of the remaining 2500 personnel are at Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force bases in the area. Recently 1st Brigade deployed at least 1400 troops from Robertson Barracks to several overseas locations including Afghanistan and East Timor.

VVCS Darwin has developed a strong relationship with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) including the Defence Community Organisation and the Defence Families

Association. These links are building our understanding of the problems faced by ADF families, and helping us to provide better services.

DVA also has strong links with the local Defence Transition Services (DTS), which helps some 600–800 discharging members each year. The number of referrals to VVCS programs such as Stepping Out is expected to increase as a result of the department's work with DTS and the Integrated People Support Services (IPSS) project.

Darwin's group programs are changing to better meet the needs of our client group. Lifestyle programs now consider the impact of recent deployments on personal relationships and anger management programs are well-attended by current serving members. With the high level of deployments out of Darwin, partners are seeking opportunities to network with others in similar positions and participate in our partners health programs. ADF training and deployment demands and the need to access short-term care for children result in greater demand for shorter programs with options for follow up.

For more information about VVCS programs in the Northern Territory, or for counselling assistance, contact us on 1800 011 046.

Irene Stark

Director
VVCS Darwin

Depression: your questions answered

What is depression?

Being depressed is not just about being sad or flat. It is a mood disorder that affects the whole person, both body and mind. Many people with depression can find it hard to function effectively every day.

How common is depression?

Research indicates that depression is very common. Around one million Australian adults and 100,000 young people live with depression each year. On average, one in five people will experience depression at some point in their lives (one in four females and one in six males).

What are the common symptoms of depression?

As a general guide a person may be depressed if for more than two weeks they have:

- felt sad, down or miserable most of the time, or
- lost interest or pleasure in most of their usual activities,

and experienced three or more of the following:

- significant sleep difficulties—too little sleep, too much sleep, difficulty getting up
- fatigue or a lack of energy most of the time
- negative thoughts and feelings about themselves
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- others observing that the person is physically agitated or physically slowed down
- a considerable weight loss or weight gain while the person is not on a diet
- a significant change in appetite
- persistent thoughts of death including suicide.

What causes depression?

Many people assume that depression is caused by recent social or personal difficulties. While this can be the case, ongoing difficulties such as long-term unemployment or living in a violent or uncaring marriage are more likely causes. Depression can

also run in families and some people will be at increased genetic risk. However, if a parent or close relative has had this illness, it does not mean that you will automatically experience depression. Illnesses and other conditions can trigger depression in some people.

What help is available for depression?

A range of health professionals are able to assist you in obtaining information and treatment for depression. These include your family doctor, a counsellor, psychologist or social worker. Psychiatrists can also help with assessing levels of depression and prescribing medication and/or offering counselling.

How can you help someone who is depressed?

If you have a friend or family member who you think may be depressed, you may not know how to approach them. It is important to know that talking about depression will not make things worse. It is okay for you to say you are worried about someone if they seem to be behaving differently. It is okay to say you don't know what to do. It is okay to discuss what professional help is available.

Finding Assistance

VVCS (and after hours - Veterans Line)	1800 011 046
Lifeline	13 11 14
Suicide Help Line	1300 651 251
Lifeline Mental Health Info Line	1300 131 114
Carers Counselling Line	1800 007 332

Websites

DVA At-Ease	www.at-ease.dva.gov.au
VVCS	www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs
Beyond Blue	www.beyondblue.org.au
Lifeline	www.lifeline.org.au
Kids Help Line	www.kidshelp.com.au

OPERATION Life

A National Suicide Prevention Strategy for the Veteran Community



The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) is offering suicide awareness workshops under the Operation Life program. The workshops aim to help members of the veteran community recognise the warning signs and respond helpfully and appropriately to people at risk.

Operation Life workshops range from four hours to two days, including a one-day refresher workshop. Workshops are free and open to people who are concerned about family, friends, mates or others in the veteran community. The emphasis is on suicide prevention—helping a person at imminent risk stay safe and seek further help.

Operation Life was first launched in September 2007 to follow on from ProgramASIST, a suicide awareness workshop coordinated by local, state and territory ex-service organisations (ESO) representatives. ProgramASIST was also funded by DVA.

From January 2009, workshops will be offered and managed through VVCS centres across Australia. Until then, state and territory ESOs will continue to promote, identify and prioritise areas of need for Operation Life until the new workshops begin.

In addition to increasing the number of workshops being held, Operation Life workshops will be available to those in rural and regional areas and some limited assistance for travel and accommodation will be available for participants.

For more information on how you can help prevent suicide in the veteran community, contact VVCS on 1800 011 046.



VVCS – continuing to provide a quality service

VVCS has commenced assessment to gain national standards for mental health services accreditation. Accreditation is formal recognition that explicit standards have been achieved by an organisation.

VVCS previously passed the Quality Improvement Council's (QIC) accreditation review process in 2000 and again in 2004. Accreditation from the 2004 cycle expired at the end of 2007. The Quality Improvement Council accreditation system assesses the extent to which the standards have been achieved. There are also criteria to guide the awarding of accreditation.

The assessment will be conducted by Quality Management Services (QMS), one of three agencies licensed to conduct external reviews in Australia. VVCS will be assessed against the most recent Health and Community Services Core Standards Module 5th Edition.

The process of gaining quality assurance can help VVCS to:

- improve service user outcomes;
- improve organisational efficiency and national consistency;
- improve teamwork and staff satisfaction;
- benchmark and control costs.

The review cycle will take three years and will include feedback from our clients and stakeholders and onsite centre reviews. VVCS has already sent out a large number of surveys to clients and other stakeholders to find out how we can improve and what we are doing well.

After completing the onsite external review, the Review Team will write a report about how VVCS measures up against the national QIC Health and Community Services Standards. The report will include commendations and recommendations for how we could do better. We will then use the report to guide us in planning for the future.

If you would like to provide feedback on our services or if you have any questions about the QIC review then please contact VVCS by email: vvcsqicreview@dva.gov.au

Some facts about the Minister's National Advisory Committee for the VVCS

On 21 July 1981 the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Tony Messner, announced the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS). The Minister decided that the VVCS would be monitored by a National Advisory Committee (NAC) reporting directly to him.

In the early days the NAC advised the Minister on establishing and operating the counselling service. It also advised on staff appointments, sites for centres and other relevant matters.

The NAC membership has been extended to reflect the changing VVCS client group. The NAC now includes a veteran's partner (added in the year 2000), a younger veteran/peacekeeper/peacemaker (added in 2004), a veteran's son/daughter (added in 2007) and a general practitioner (added in 2007).

The NAC is impartial and aims to act in the best interests of the wider ex-service community. All information received by the committee, regardless of source, is reviewed on this basis.

A stakeholder consultation mechanism was introduced in 2003 to gather feedback from individuals, client groups, ex-service organisations, and serving members of the Australian Defence Force.

In April 2007 the service was re-named as VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, to better reflect the service's client group.

The NAC has a work plan and conducts workshops and reviews to deal with special requests from the Minister and VVCS management.

More information about the NAC, terms of reference, current membership, minutes of meetings and future meeting dates can be found at:
<http://www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs/nac/index.htm>

Contact the NAC

Please contact the NAC with your feedback, ideas and suggestions so that they may be incorporated into the direction and development of VVCS. You can provide feedback to the NAC by:

- Email: vvcsnac@dva.gov.au

OR

- Post:

VVCS NAC Secretariat
Department of Veterans Affairs
PO Box 21, Woden ACT 2606

Locations and Dates of NAC meetings for 2009

Location	Dates
Hobart	18 – 19 February 2009
Southport	10 – 11 August 2009
Darwin	19 – 20 November 2009

A new year; a new you...

The festive season is over, the days of lounging around in your baggy shorts are gone and your pants are just a little too tight. Sound familiar?

Don't stress! The start of a new year can be the best time to establish a new, healthier routine. Here are five quick things you can do to start the new year with a clean slate.

1. Exercise

If you are feeling lethargic it might seem like a stupid idea to get up earlier. However exercising actually gives you more energy! If you exercise before breakfast it can also help you to lose weight—as you tend to burn stored fat. To ensure you stay motivated,—put your sneakers and work-out gear next to your bed, so when you wake up you have no excuse! Consistency is the key with exercise and doing it in groups or with friends can help. Consider joining a club.

2. Eat a healthy breakfast every day

Start the day with a healthy breakfast. It helps to avoid mid-morning snacking and boosts your metabolic rate for the day (which helps you burn more kilojoules). Try some high fibre cereal and fruit because this will help you stay fuller for longer. It's

good for your waist, your bowels and your heart!

3. Cut down your drinking

Having a “few coldies” is part and parcel of the summer holidays—but drinking every night is not ideal. You should aim for two alcohol free days a week and drink no more than four standard drinks on any one day. But if you are trying to lose weight you may want to consider cutting the drinks out altogether or at least limit yourself to no more than two per day. Many alcoholic drinks contain lots of kilojoules and when you are drinking your body is unable to burn off fat. This can impede your efforts to lose weight.

4. Quit Smoking

Besides adding a decade to your life quitting smoking sharpens your senses, improves your circulation and makes moving around and exercising a whole lot easier. Within a day of quitting your body is already kicking the toxins out so you will feel better quicker than you might have thought. Giving up smoking will have the single biggest effect on your future health.

5. Become a social butterfly

Staying socially connected is more than just fun. It decreases the risk of developing depression as you



Heart Health Group – Agnes Waters Beach Olympics 2008

age. Keeping your mind active through reading, VVCS programs, community courses, volunteering or anything else that stimulates you can also provide protection against Alzheimer's disease.

How can VVCS help?

VETERANS *Heart Health Program*

Registering for the Heart Health Program will get you started on your way to new lifelong health habits. The program runs for 52 weeks and includes two physical activity sessions tailored to your needs and 15 health education seminars. The program can give you the skills to improve and sustain your health and wellbeing by providing you with practical information and access to specialist advice and training. The program is offered in two formats – the Heart Health Group Program and the Outreach Heart Health Program.



Heart Health Group – Agnes Waters Beach Olympics 2008

the changes made. If you are eager to change your drinking patterns, contact the CTM Team on 1800 1808 68.

Changing THE MiX Alcohol Correspondence Program

Changing the Mix—Alcohol Correspondence Program allows you to reduce your drinking without having to leave the comfort of your own home! The program is self-paced and includes setting goals, managing relapses, planning ahead and maintaining

VVCS group programs are designed to help you to live a happier and healthier life. They can help you and your family develop new networks, friendships and support. These programs include depression, anxiety and anger management, sleep, relaxation and couple and lifestyle management.

Call VVCS on 1800 011 046 to start you on your way to a healthier and happier new year and new you!

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.

VVCS in focus... statistics for 2007-08

Centre-based Counselling

Clients	4501
Counselling sessions	21,201
Intake and assessment service	10,949
Case Management sessions	3719
ADF-referred clients (under the MoU)	244
Veterans Line calls	4271

Outreach Program (OP) Counselling

Clients	5427
Counselling sessions	29,182
Outreach counsellors	490

Group Programs

Group programs	345
Participants	3336
Heart Health	82 groups
Heart Health participants	1404
Outreach Heart Health participants	68
Changing the Mix participants	47
Crisis Assistance Program	8
Vietnam Veterans Children Support Program	
registered	65
accessed program	21

Further information on VVCS statistics and activities for 2007-08 can be found in the DVA Annual Report 2007-2008: <http://www.dva.gov.au/media/aboutus/annrep08/index.htm>

To contact VVCS

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

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

VVCS Adelaide
99 Frome Street
Adelaide SA 5000

VVCS Darwin
2 Chung Wah Terrace
Palmerston NT 0830

VVCS Maroochydore
129 Horton Parade
Maroochydore QLD 4558

VVCS Southport
12 Short Street
Southport Qld 4215

VVCS Albury/Wodonga
81 Hume Street
Wodonga VIC 3690

VVCS Hobart
2 Castray Esplanade
Battery Point TAS 7004

VVCS Melbourne
Level 4, 440 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

VVCS Sydney
88 Philip Street,
Ground Floor
Parramatta NSW 2150

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15 Astor Terrace
Spring Hill QLD 4000

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29 Elphin Road
Launceston TAS 7250

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Unit 1/8 Auckland Street
Newcastle NSW 2300

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