



## Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service – expansion

This measure will extend access to the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) to partners, dependants, immediate family members and former partners of Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel.

### Why is this important?

It is often family concern and/or engagement in counselling that supports a current or former ADF member to seek mental health care from VVCS. The Government understands that partners, families and former partners of ADF personnel are an important part of the ex-service community and that they too are affected by military service. In recognition of this, the 2017–18 Budget expands eligibility for VVCS.

Enabling access to VVCS during, and following, family breakdown aligns with the Government's commitment to support ADF families. It could minimise the ongoing adverse effects of family breakdown on all parties and greatly improve long-term health outcomes for all involved.

### Who will benefit?

The partners, children and immediate family members of veterans, who have had at least one day of full-time service will have access to the services and support provided by VVCS, including counselling and group programs.

Former partners of ADF personnel will also be able to access VVCS up to five years after a couple separates or while co-parenting a child under the age of 18.

VVCS counselling services are available nationally, 24 hours a day 365 days a year, and are delivered through a flexible and agile clinical service model comprising:

- counselling centres in every capital city and across a range of major regional centres
- a strong outreach provider network with over 1,100 private clinicians
- group programs
- an after-hours phone counselling service
- video and online counselling.

### Date of effect?

As soon as possible.

### How much will this cost?

This measure will provide funding of \$8.5 million over four years.