



Enhanced Family Support Package

Families play a crucial role in supporting veterans. This initiative enhances the existing Family Support Package (FSP) by expanding the services and allowing families greater choice in how they use services provided through the program. The enhanced FSP will be available to more veteran families through expanded eligibility. Intensive support will be available for families to adjust to new or challenging life circumstances, complementing other Department of Veterans' Affairs and Government services.

Why is this important?

For most veteran families, military service is a largely positive experience. However, some may need support to manage challenging life circumstances such as mental or physical health episodes or sudden, significant events such as loss of employment. This initiative provides targeted, intensive support to veteran families, and addresses Recommendation 19.2 of the Productivity Commission's report *A Better Way to Support Veterans*.

- It provides support to more families by removing the need for a veteran to be participating in rehabilitation or to have rendered warlike service. Families at risk of or in crisis for veterans under 65 years, who are eligible for incapacity payments, the special or intermediate rate of Disability Pension, or the Veteran Payment, will be eligible. Widowed partners under 65 years old will also be eligible, including those whose veteran partner's suicide was related to service and War Widow(er)s under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA), Wholly Dependent Partners under the *Military, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA) and partners under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) whose veteran partner died during service.
- It allows families to choose the help they need by removing prescribed limits on childcare, life skills counselling and household services.
- For a veteran or their family member under 65, the following support can be accessed:
 - up to \$7,500 in the first year and \$5,000 in the second year, for household services including cleaning and gardening, counselling for the family and a range of other practical supports.
 - with an additional \$10,000 per year for children under school age and \$5,000 per year for children of primary school age. This support for children will continue until the child reaches high school age.
- For a widowed partner who is under 65 and whose veteran partner's death was related to service or by suicide related to service, the following support can be accessed:
 - up to \$27,835 each year for two years, for household services including cleaning and gardening, counselling for the family and a range of other practical supports.
 - with an additional \$10,000 per year for children under school age and \$5,000 per year for children of primary school age. This support for children will continue until the child reaches high school age.
- It creates equity by making all services available to all recipients.
- It introduces a range of skills-based supports to equip families to manage independently into the future.
- It improves access for widowed partners by providing support from claim acceptance rather than date of death.



Support under the Family Support Package includes covering any gap fees in childcare, household services such as garden maintenance, cleaning and meal preparation, and capacity building support such as:

- ▶ financial literacy and financial management support;
 - ▶ personal organisation/planning;
 - ▶ personal, parenting, or relationship skills;
 - ▶ resilience development, grief and loss support;
 - ▶ mental health first aid;
 - ▶ cooking lessons;
 - ▶ academic and wellbeing support for children, including psychology and
 - ▶ substance abuse and gambling counselling.
- This builds on the announcement in Budget 2021-22 to expand eligibility and increase choice for families, but ensures families have access to the same financial support under the program.

Who will benefit?

- Families of VEA, MRCA, or DRCA veterans under 65 who are eligible for incapacity payments, the special or intermediate rate of Disability Pension, or the Veteran Payment and who are experiencing vulnerabilities that give rise to a need for support. It is expected approximately 430 families each year will benefit from accessing the package.
- Widowed partners under 65, including VEA War Widow(er)s, MRCA Wholly Dependent Partners, and DRCA partners, whose veteran suffered a death related to service or whose suicide was related to service. It is expected approximately 450 widowed partners each year will benefit from accessing the package.

Date of effect?

Subject to the passage of legislation, the expanded package will be available from 1 July 2022.

How much will this cost?

\$36.8 million over four years.

