

## Peacekeepers Health Study

- Aim: To examine the long-term effects on mental health status, health service use and quality of life of peacekeeping or peacemaking deployments among Australian veterans.
- Funding: \$550,000 GST exclusive
- Sample size: Over 1,000 study participants from seven United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions between 1989 and 2002, who had transitioned out of full-time service in the Australian Defence Force.

### Key findings

- 65 percent (65%) of peacekeepers reported that they were in good, very good, or excellent health.
- Reported health service usage was high with 68% having recently seen a GP.
- 20% of participants showed moderate levels of mental ill health and vulnerability; a further 10% reported more severe problems

## Rwanda Deployment Health Study

- Aim: To examine the longitudinal health and compensation outcomes of veterans of two operational deployments of Operation TAMAR.
- Funding: \$197,000 GST exclusive.
- Sample size: data for 680 veterans.

### Key findings

- About half the cohort has an accepted compensation claim, with 31% having a claim or treatment for PTSD.
- Claims were mainly lodged around the time of discharge not at incident; the majority accepted 11-15 years after the deployment.



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

# Peacekeepers and Rwanda Studies

The research aims were to investigate the health of Australian veterans of deployments on UN sanctioned peacekeeping missions to Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia, Namibia, Western Sahara and East Timor, over the period 1989-2002.

The study examined the long-term effect of peacekeeping on the mental and physical health status, health service use and quality of life of veterans who had transitioned out of full-time service. Participants completed a self-report questionnaire and a psychological health interview.

The study found that 65% of peacekeepers reported they were in good, very good, or excellent health. However, 30% of peacekeepers had at least one diagnosable mental health condition.

Reported health service use by the peacekeeper sample was high, with 68% having seen a GP in the previous three months, 35% a medical specialist, and 37% an allied health provider. Those with diagnosed mental health conditions were particularly likely to have used health services – over 80% had consulted a GP, 32% a psychiatrist, and 20% a psychologist. Only 17% of peacekeepers with a mental health condition had not seen any clinician or therapist in the previous three months; 41% were not satisfied with their health care.

The research provides a better understanding of the long-term pathways to care and usage of health care services for peacekeepers.

### Rwanda Deployment Health Study

The study aimed to examine the health and compensation data of Rwanda veterans and investigate whether there were differences in outcomes between the different groups deployed. The study undertook a data match and analysis process using personnel, compensation, health and mortality data.

Of the cohort, 32.6% had an accepted claim for a mental health condition; this was second only to musculoskeletal conditions at 34.3%.

The health of the Rwanda cohort is characterised by a high rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that is

expressed in two compensation peaks, five and 11 years after the deployment.

The study notes that medical personnel had fewer claims than the other Rwanda veterans and suggests that this may be because of their older age at deployment, experiences of medical trauma and because their psychological training had a protective effect.

### Support

Treatment and compensation is available for medical conditions caused by Australian Defence Force (ADF) service. DVA can also provide free treatment for any mental health condition through Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC), without needing to prove the condition is related to ADF service. Through NLHC, DVA funds a comprehensive range of mental health support services, including services provided by a GP, psychologist, PTSD program, and DVA-approved alcohol or other drug community-based program.

Free and confidential counselling is provided by Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling (Open Arms). Open Arms provides nation-wide counselling and support for mental health and wellbeing conditions for all veterans and families. For support, call 1800 011 046 or visit [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au).

Peacekeeper veterans who are unsure of what DVA services or support they can access are encouraged to contact DVA by calling 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or +61 2 6289 1133 for international callers.

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS). Details available [here](#).

You can also complete the general enquiries form on the [DVA website](#).

*The final reports for these studies are available on the DVA website: [Peacekeepers' Health Study](#) and [Rwanda Deployment Health Study](#).*