



EXPANSION OF OPEN ARMS – VETERANS AND FAMILIES COUNSELLING

This initiative expands mental health and suicide prevention services delivered by Open Arms, specifically by increasing the number of Open Arms Peer Workers and introducing web-based support. An outcomes monitoring framework will also be developed to determine clinical and wellbeing outcomes and monitor the performance of the service.

Open Arms — the Veterans & Families Counselling service is the cornerstone of the Government's veteran mental health support response, delivering free, confidential, nation-wide counselling and support for veterans and their families. The service is a legacy of the Vietnam veterans, now available to all current and ex-service personnel and families.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Expanding the existing Community and Peer Teams, comprising clinicians and peer workers, will enhance the support provided to vulnerable veterans and families, especially those at risk of suicide. Community and Peer Teams provide specialist clinical coordination as well as an ADF lived experience peer, who provides a role model of recovery and a bridge to clinical services.

The initiative will add an additional two teams to the existing network of 18 teams, providing coverage to areas of high demand, ensuring there is a team to support the future Veteran Wellbeing Centre in Nowra, and the veteran community in Maryborough.

The introduction of web-based forums, conducted by the Community and Peer Teams, will significantly improve Open Arms' ability to provide support to veterans and their families who are geographically or socially isolated. The program will target veterans and families living with vulnerable and at-risk individuals, those bereaved by suicide, veterans living with chronic trauma symptoms and families caring for individuals.

The development of an Outcomes Monitoring Framework to ensure Open Arms is providing effective and high-quality services responds to the Recommendation 17.2 from the Productivity Commission report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*. This framework will allow Open Arms to benchmark against other state and community services.

WHO WILL BENEFIT?

This provides increased access to mental health services for highly vulnerable individuals, especially those in regional and rural areas. All current and former Australian Defence Force (ADF) members with at least one day of service, along with their families, can access mental health support through Open Arms, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

DATE OF EFFECT

These initiatives will be implemented from 1 January 2021.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

\$5.0 million over the forward estimates.