



Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities Workshop 2 Report Key Service Providers Workshop

The second Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities consultation workshop was held at the Nowra RSL sub-Branch on 5 February 2020. The workshop focus was on bringing key providers of services to veterans in the greater Shoalhaven, Illawarra and Southern Highlands areas together. Mapping services currently provided, identifying gaps and helping define the role and modes of operation for the proposed Nowra VWC were key considerations. This workshop usefully contributed early steps towards creating a network of agencies that will need to work with and be linked to the proposed Nowra VWC (and each other). A number of the participants were also veterans who would be potential beneficiaries of the Nowra VWC. Their personal experiences and expectations were helpful in adding real context to the workshops outcomes.

The outcomes from the 5 February 2020 Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities consultation workshop held at Nowra RSL sub-Branch are reported here. We thank all workshop participants for their willing and constructive contributions. One outcome was clear: all participants could see the proposed veterans' wellbeing centre adding considerable benefit to the veteran's journey. Defining the services to be delivered and modes of operation would be vital, as would a close connection with local service providers that need to be connected to support each veteran's journey.

The Current State Analysis & Service Profile Report will be derived from analysis of the outcomes from the four Needs & Priorities workshops.

All participants in Workshop 2 are requested to complete and return to the Nowra VWC Project the Feedback Form at attachment E.

Phase 2 Consultation Workshops - Develop the Nowra VWC Business Case

A second round of consultation workshops designed to assist in developing Business Case for funding the Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre will be held at the Nowra RSL sub-Branch on 11 and 12 March 2020, with a third workshop at Anzac House, Sydney on 31 March 2020. Invitations to these workshops will be provided separately.

The first and second workshops will engage key local stakeholders (service providers and ESOs) who provide essential services to transitioning and ex-service veterans and their families. Essential veteran services include health, housing, education and skills, social support and connection, income and finance, recognition and respect.

The third workshop will engage key stakeholders in the process of developing the draft Business Case, and will focus on governance, costings and capital works arrangements.

Needs & Priorities Consultation Workshop Outcomes

A series of consultation workshops were undertaken to identify the needs and priorities of veterans and their families, and explore opportunities to address these through the service profile, modes of delivery and design of the Nowra VWC. Workshops follow a consistent format to enable aggregation and analysis of workshop outcomes both as individual workshops and across all workshops to provide a comprehensive picture.

Background information about the Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Business Case Development Project is provided at [Attachment A](#).

The Consultation Workshop Program is at [Attachment B](#).

A list of workshop participants is found at [Attachment C](#).

A summary of the services provided by agencies who participated in this workshop is provided at [Attachment D](#).

A Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project, Needs and Priorities Workshops: Feedback Form is provided at [Attachment E](#).

Snapshots: Nature & Extent of Current Veteran Services

Workshop participants were invited to provide a five minute snapshot about their current service role in transitioning veterans, and their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of current arrangements and ways of working. These were shared with the group in turn with discussion and questions around the workshop.

Points made in relation to veteran needs and the design of Nowra VWC in the snapshots included:

Holistic support

- Needs to be a holistic facility that is not just a place to meet, but a place that can offer health (both physical and mental) arrangements
- Facilities such as Grand Pacific Health need to be investigated as they are a holistic provider

Younger veterans

- The main driver for the VWC revolves around the Afghanistan and Iraq Vet, the sub-Branches in this area would have very few members/vets under the age of 50 on their books
- Any facility that is currently associated with the RSL would not attract younger/contemporary veterans

Sustainability

- Sustainment of the facility – history has shown that RSL sub-Branches are reluctant to give out money to aid veterans and have a ‘save money for a rainy day’ attitude
- Any initiative has to be sustainable over a protracted period
- Communication / Expectation Management will be important

Families and network opportunities

- Veterans will benefit if their families are well-prepared and well-supported through the transition process and beyond as their veteran re-adjusts to civilian life
- Access to some support is unavailable to partners and families as soon as the member discharges- eg. Partner Employment Assistance (unless medically discharged), the Defence Family helpline, education assistance for children, social workers, family/community events arranged by DCO. Some of these services are mirrored in the community via ESOs, but families may need assistance in navigating the support
- Access to on-base services such as community centres also becomes unavailable, so a physical location, where the family feels welcome, is important
- Opportunities to establish support networks in the ex-serving and civilian communities- social activities, interest groups, volunteering etc
- Families may be looking for connections with other defence/veteran partners.

Facilities

- Concierge or case management service depending on the needs of the veteran and family
- Intake/welcome/on board process to identify needs, plan development, link in with services (on site wherever possible)
- Family friendly- safe for children, play area. Multi-purpose spaces for group activities and break out spaces for individual/confidential support
- Consideration should be given to creating a place where partners can access the facilities whether the Veteran is with them or not.
- The home base for ESO service delivery should have medium size auditorium, kitchen facilities and private interview rooms. These basic amenities are required for service delivery, training or conducting seminars and workshops.
- Minimum requirements are having an auditorium, kitchen facilities and interview rooms

New Service Delivery Models

- Establish a new ESO service delivery model operating from home base that is identified by clients and volunteers as being independent, autonomous and neutral
- Attainment of achieving 'professional standards' in service delivery
- Focus on improving volunteer skills on veteran issues
- Identify any new initiatives and promote those programs
- Ignorance in the presently dysfunctional ESO fraternity
- Veteran Counsellors/Mentors are preferred over staff with no military background, and can provide peer to peer perspective
- Need to have counsellors who have civilian experience and accreditation so that they can speak the 'civilian language' while understanding veteran culture and environment
- Case Studies from other agencies can inform improved service delivery
- Stigma - need right staff to understand veteran needs
- Ensure current and competent DVA Advocates are on site

Veterans Employment

- Partnership with local Council to support Veterans Employment Program (VEP) and develop their own VEP

- Partners should have access to employment assistance programs - the nature of supporting a serving member's career impacts on a partner's employment history and opportunities.
- The NSW Government Rank Grade Guide helps veterans to identify which employment levels with the NSW Public Service match their military skill set
- TAFE supports training for employment schemes such as a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) service, free placements for veteran rehabilitation cases, and scholarships
- Assistance for veterans who wish to start a business, either on a self-employed basis or bigger, by providing information on process and legal requirements

Collaboration among VWCs

- Collaboration between various wellbeing centres that have, and are being, developed across the state. In particular to see how the development of the Nowra centre might provide lessons for other veterans wellbeing projects

Workshop Outcomes: Needs & Priorities of Veterans and their Families

The workshop consolidated the presentations and discussion focusing on the question of the *most important veteran needs that could be addressed in the design of the Nowra VWC.*

Key themes that emerged from this session included:

Supportive environment

- Provide information and support to build autonomy in a supportive environment
- Tell their story ONCE, and not need to repeat it for every service provider referral
- Sense of purpose
- Community links/sense of belonging
- Community – hosting events and connections
- Purposeful club – hobbies, persons shed
- 3rd party referrals
- Veterans – peers, confidants, mentors
- Open scope in future to first responders such as emergency services

Recognise needs of different veteran ages

- Older veterans and their families are in our area
- Ease of access to services – a range of services depending on where they are on their journey
- Flexibility of service delivery and referral management
- Simplify the search for services that individual veterans require

One stop shop – Hub with Outreach

- One stop shop for service information
- Hub for outreach – provide one stop shop service to locations away from the VWC base
- Veteran services hub – online portal

- One stop locality for information, referral to services to meet needs

Crisis management coordination

- Crisis management coordination
- Access to crisis/emergency accommodation
- Links and connections to crisis services

Information

- Commonwealth Super information
- DVA information on entitlements
- Financial services
- RSL – what's available, aged care information, young veterans services
- Which concessions are available, especially under RSL DefenceCare – eg. DefenceCare education

Advocacy and Legal Support

- Specific veteran-focused legal support to assist veterans who don't have experience, finances or opportunities to pursue cases
- Support with DVA applications
- DVA advocacy
- Veteran focussed legal services such as Operational Services Australia
- Advocates for other (non-DVA) services

Training and Employment

- Employment assistance
- Jobs for veterans within the VWC where possible and Govt agencies/departments
- Training
- Education – rehabilitation link
- Training sessions

Business Opportunities

- Veteran Business Chamber
- Shared workspaces for small business
- (Self) employment

Family Services

- Family services – Domestic Violence – workshops and information
- Flexible childcare services are becoming increasingly important as is building community linkages for families
- Focus on wellness – family, community functions and programs

Discussion points made in this session included:

- There are opportunities to develop self-employment for veterans and their spouses, not only looking for jobs but creating businesses
- Skills equivalency is being used in matching veterans with jobs in the NSW Government through the Capability Framework and Rank Grade Guide
- Trade skills equivalency is still more difficult for older veterans
- Specialised legal services for veterans is emerging
- Importance of family support not just veteran support
- There is a priority need to deal with mental health crises and homelessness
- Veterans don't necessarily identify with the 'wellness' word; the word should be dropped from title of VWC (other centres are simply Veterans Centres)
- The RSL NSW Sub Branch network would be a good starting point for outreach services and facilities, however the RSL brand is considered damaged by younger veterans

Workshop Outcomes: Opportunities for Nowra VWC to Address Veteran Needs

The workshop consolidated the opportunities to address needs and priorities of veterans and their families in building a Service Profile for the Nowra VWC. The key themes that emerged from this session included:

Welcoming and Accessible

- Welcome atmosphere / space
- Accessible
- Social connections, especially with peers
- Friendship support
- Space for commemoration and reflection
- Discreet, safe, comfortable, welcoming entry
- Disability access

Staffing

- Identification and selection of staff who have an understanding of veterans to build trust and confidence, while still having civilian experience to provide perspective
- Current advocates – young and factual using up to date forms and assist in completing applications
- Focus on face to face
- Advocates and specialised staff available
- Access to health professionals
- Case management with connections to treating GP and GP to Advocate
- IT and staff – use veterans to set up
- Hire veterans and spouses where possible

Information Support Systems

- IT based service directory

- Build self-management
- Tech platform – virtual as well as physical
- Reduce confusion with DVA Apps

Facilities

- Staff reception
- Private rooms for onsite service offerings
- Social gathering space for community events – connection
- Kitchen facilities
- Meeting rooms
- On-site computer access
- Veteran business support facilities
- Reference (navigation) centre to build connections and refer to services
- Family facilities
- Recreational facilities
- Catering facilities
- IT/Business facilities
- Pre-existing facilities in a well-known area or venue
- Focus on wellness – gym, yoga spaces
- Emergency accommodation

Knowledge and Research

- Veteran research
- Large serving and veteran community locally who could be involved in workshops and surveys

Governance

- How to govern VWC will be an important consideration

Funding

- How the VWC will be funded and supported going forward will be an important consideration. The NSW RSL & Services Clubs are very keen to be involved and to provide financial and other support, including access to sporting and other facilities
- RSL LifeCare is also keen to provide substantial support

Discussion points made in this session include:

- The need for small business start-up facilities at the Nowra VWC
- Encourage camaraderie among veterans at the VWC
- The importance of better research and information to be built into the VWC system so that veteran services can be better focused

Workshop Conclusion

The workshop concluded with a summary overview of the workshop outcomes and follow up documentation of workshop outcomes to follow.

There are four workshops scheduled to discuss needs and priorities in terms of transition, key service provider, ex-service organisations and RSLNSW Central Southern Districts sub-Branches.

The next steps in the process were outlined as the preparation of the draft Current State Analysis and Service Profile Report, which would be provided for feedback and validation.

The project sponsor thanked all participants for attending the workshop and providing valuable input early in the process of establishing the Nowra VWC. We look forward to and value your feedback. The lines of communication between the Nowra VWC Project and key stakeholders and service providers will remain open as the project progresses into implementation.

Background Information about the Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Business Case Development Project

The Commonwealth Government is moving towards a *wellbeing model* that seeks to enable and empower veterans to achieve greater independence for themselves and their families. All current and former serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members (veterans) and their families should have convenient access to affordable, high quality, comprehensive wellbeing services. Good support through accessing a range of wellbeing services provided in local communities will help veterans and their families live their best lives during and after their service.

Access to a broad range of support services for veterans and their families at a local level is important. It can be fostered through Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), business, community, non-government organisations, local, state and federal governments working in partnership in locations where there are significant numbers of still serving veterans living in the community, transitioning from military to civilian life, and living and working in the community after completing ADF service.

In honouring its 2019 election commitment, the Commonwealth Government has announced an investment of \$30m to pilot a national network of six Veterans' Wellbeing Centres (VWCs) to be located in Townsville, Perth, Adelaide, Wodonga, Darwin and Nowra. The Nowra VWC has been allocated \$5M in funds for its establishment over a 3 year period from July 2019 to June 2022. The Project will need to demonstrate how the VWC will be sustained over the next 10 years.

Role of the Nowra VWC

Currently there are many businesses, government, ESOs and community organisations involved in supporting key elements of support in fostering the wellbeing of veterans and their families. The **role** of the Veterans' Wellbeing Centres is to **facilitate, co-ordinate and enable integrated support** to local veterans and their families, while helping DVA to reach out with core services. It provides an opportunity to leverage complementary service channels and **link support services together** to create streamlined access to them.

RSLNSW is the lead ESO in NSW established under legislation (*RSLNSW Act 2018*) with its Constitution focused on the Charitable Purpose of respecting, supporting and remembering veterans and their families. In accordance with its welfare charter, RSLNSW embraces a holistic approach to wellbeing of veterans through its programs and services.

DVA, with advice from NSW Office of Veterans' Affairs (OVA), identified RSLNSW as the lead organisation for the formation of a VWC in Nowra NSW. RSLNSW appointed its Central Southern Districts Council (CSDC) to develop a Business Case for the establishment, development and sustainable operation of the Nowra VWC.

Development of Business Case for the Nowra VWC

This project aims to prepare a Business Case and related documentation to obtain Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) funding which seeks to achieve the vision and objectives of the Veterans' Wellbeing Centre (VWC) Program through the establishment, development and sustainable operation over 10 years of the Nowra VWC within an establishment budget of \$5M budget to be expended by 30 June 2022, and will form part of a national network of Veterans' Wellbeing Centres.

It is important that key service providers delivering the wellbeing elements of *health, education and skills, housing, social support and connection, employment, income and*

finance, recognition and respect and the ex-service veteran community are informed, involved and updated on progress with the Project.

Through this project, key service providers and key stakeholders (including clients) are encouraged to engage and participate throughout the process to inform the design and development of a Business Case for funding the establishment of the Nowra VWC. Contact us to register interest at NowraVWCProject@rslnsw.org.au.

Consultation Process

The Business Case for funding the establishment of the Nowra VWC is being developed in consultation with key service providers and key stakeholders. It aims to build broad community support. A Steering Committee, Working Group and Reference Group comprising key service providers and key stakeholders have been formed to facilitate the project.

The first phase of consultation requires a current state analysis of service delivery, identification of gaps and synergies, and an assessment of needs and priorities of local veterans and their families. This analysis informs future service model options to recommend a service profile, modes of service delivery and design concept for the Nowra VWC is based on best available information. From this, a Business Case for funding the establishment of the Nowra VWC will be developed involving a second phase of consultation.

Needs & Priorities Workshop Program
Key Service Providers

Timeframe	Agenda Item	Activity	Presenter/Facilitator
1245-1300 15 minutes prior	Workshop Registration	Introductions Check attendance and details on contact sheet	CSDC Secretary
1300-1310 10 minutes	Welcome Introduction and Overview of Workshop Agenda	Presentation Questions of Clarification	Working Group Facilitator Lynn Webber
1310-1330 20 minutes	Background and Purpose of the proposed Nowra VWC	Presentation on Background Info Paper Questions of Clarification	Project Sponsor Lee Cordner
1330-1430 60 minutes	Nature and Extent of Current Veteran Services , strengths and weaknesses	Five Minute Snapshot from each organisation represented Snapshot Form (Att)	Facilitator Nominated representatives
1430 - 1440 10 minutes	Break		<i>Facilitator</i>
1440-1520 40 minutes	Most Important Veteran Needs that could be addressed in the design of the Nowra VWC. What are the priorities?	What do you see as the most important Veteran needs? Build a framework of key needs. Overall priorities are identified.	Facilitator Workshop Participants
1520-1550 30 minutes	Key Opportunities to address these identified Veteran needs and priorities in building a service profile for the Nowra VWC?	List key opportunities and share these with the group. Discussion about what may impede these opportunities.	Facilitator Workshop Participants

<p>1550-1600 10 minutes</p>	<p>Workshop Conclusion</p> <p>Next Steps in Consultation Process</p> <p>Thank you for attending</p>	<p>Summary overview of workshop outcomes</p> <p>Documentation of Workshop Outcomes</p> <p>Opportunities for further contribution</p> <p>Next step draft Current State Analysis & Service Profile Report provided for stakeholder feedback and validation.</p>	<p>Project Sponsor Lee Cordner</p>
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**Attachment C
Consultation Workshop Participant List**

**Needs & Priorities Workshop @ Nowra sub-Branch Hall on 5th February 2020
Representative List – Key Service Providers**

Defence Child Care - Tingira Child Care Centre

Defence Families Australia

Shoalhaven Ex-Servicemen's Club

Open Arms

Operational Legal Australia

RSL NSW Auxiliaries

Veterans Employment Service

RSL LifeCare

Summary of Nature and Extent of Veteran Services Key Service Providers

Defence Child Care - Tingira Child Care

Mission and Purpose:

To deliver quality education and care. Transforming challenges into possibilities with people and communities.

Services:

Delivering childcare to Defence personnel families and local community.

Initiatives:

Tingira has a quality improvement plan goal to strengthen links and relationships with the community (which embraces our Defence community).

Defence Families Australia

Mission and Purpose:

DFA's role is to directly inform the Minister for Defence Personnel and the Chief of the Defence Force on issues affecting ADF families. Our goal is to ensure quality of life for all Defence families by providing a recognised forum for their views and by reporting, making recommendations and influencing policy that directly affects families.

Services:

DFA are the official families advisory body to the Minister of Defence Personnel and the Chief of the Defence Force.

• *Initiatives:*

- Assist our Defence partners gain and maintain meaningful employment. We have recently appointed an Employment officer and started the Defence Partner Friendly Employment Project.
- Advocating for Defence Community Centres in areas that don't currently have a dedicated meeting space. (In the Shoalhaven families have the Shoalhaven Defence Families Association which is well attended).
- Advocating for more flexible housing options for families, better access to salary sacrifice childcare, along with better access to occasional care.

Ex-Servicemen's Club

The Ex-Servos Club is an ex-Servicemans club based in Nowra. It provides recreational and sporting facilities and opportunities for serving and retired Defence personnel and their families, and the general public. They have two locations: club facilities in the Nowra CBD, and a club and outdoor sporting facilities in Worrigea (a suburb of Nowra). They support various programs that assist veterans and their families.

NSW Office of Veterans Affairs

Mission and Purpose:

Committed to ensuring our veterans are honoured with dignity and respect. Promote awareness of Veterans skills and attributes through Veterans Employment Program (VEP). 1000 Veterans hired by 2023 Education Program (\$50K).

Services:

The OVA manages state programs commemorating and assisting veterans in collaboration with all NSW government agencies, the Commonwealth and community stakeholders.

OVA's work is focussed on:

- The Anzac Memorial - NSW's principal war memorial honouring the service and sacrifice of all defence personnel and their families.
- The State War Memorial Committee and Register to help protect war memorials across NSW.
- Community grant programs including the Community War Memorials Fund, the Anzac Community Grants Program and the Minister's Miscellaneous Grants Fund.
- The Premier's Anzac Memorial Scholarship which gives high school students the opportunity to travel on an international study tour to develop their knowledge and understanding of the history of Australians at war.
- Veteran events and commemorations to ensure community remembrance and commemorative activities are maintained
- Veterans Employment and Education - Web Site and attend all ADF Member and Family Transition Seminar in ACT and NSW. Attending DVA employment Workshop Feb 20.

Initiatives:

Current initiatives which are particularly relevant to the Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project include:

- The Veterans Employment Program - an initiative to bridge the gap for veterans ending their military careers and commencing meaningful civilian employment. IN 2019, the program had assisted to place 831 veterans within the NSW public sector. The program is now targeting 1,000 additional placements across the next four years.
- The Local Government Rank to Grade Guide. Local councils in NSW employ approximately 45,000 staff which represents a significant opportunity for veteran employment. The guide outlines the requirements of local government roles and how veteran's military experience can fulfil these needs at all employment levels.
- The Veterans Education Program assists eligible veterans to follow new civilian career paths by funding student fees of Smart and Skilled courses through TAFE NSW.

Open Arms

This civilian organisation primarily provides mental health counselling services to both serving and transitioned ADF members. It was formally known as the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service but has now broadened both its services and variety of client base.

Operational Legal Australia

This organisation provides legal services to veterans and their families. Their specific focus on veterans includes a deeper understanding of the veteran community and the specific legal issues they face that relates to their past Defence employment, as well as dealing with more general legal issues.

RSL NSW Auxiliaries

A non-political non-sectarian organisation that raises funds for Ex & Current Defence Members and their dependants.

Veterans Employment Service

This newly established organisation aims to provide employment assistance for veterans and their families, with a particular focus on preparing clients for self employment and or business establishment. Providing information on business processes and regulatory requirements is seen as an important step to creating successful business ventures.

**Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project
Needs and Priorities Workshops: Feedback Form**
(Document Open for Unrestricted Completion)

Organisation Name:

Contact Name:

Contact Email:

Contact Phone:

Website:

Thank you for attending the Nowra VWC Consultation Workshop to establish current services, needs and priorities of veterans and their families, and opportunities to address these through the Nowra VWC project. We appreciate your time and commitment to the project and would welcome your feedback on the workshop.

What were some of the key benefits of the workshop in your view?

What were some of the concerns from the workshop in your view?

How useful were the workshops to your understanding of the Nowra VWC project?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 not very helpful to 5 extremely helpful) please circle:

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Have the workshop reports helped inform the Nowra VWC project?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 not very helpful to 5 extremely helpful) please circle:

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Other Comments and Suggestions are welcome:

Please send in your Feedback Form and Snapshots to NowraVWCProject@rslnsw.org.au
Workshop Reports are available on line at <https://www.nowrarslsb.org.au/nowra-veterans-wellbeing-centre/> .

We look forward to your continued involvement in the Nowra VWC Project