



Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities Workshop 3 Report Ex-Service Organisations Workshop

The third Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities consultation workshop was held at the Nowra RSL sub-Branch on 6 February 2020. The workshop focus was on bringing Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs), other than RSL sub-Branches, operating 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 ESOs and other agencies that will need to work with and be linked to the proposed Nowra VWC. A many of the participants were veterans who would be potential beneficiaries of the Nowra VWC. Their personal, lived experiences and expectations were helpful in adding real context to the workshop outcomes.

The outcomes from the 6 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. It was also clear that there will be a need to develop a shared vision, with realistic expectations, about what the proposed VWC will be able to deliver within the resources available. Defining the services to be delivered and modes of operations would be vital as would a close connection with ESOs that needed 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 3 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 design of Nowra VWC in the snapshots included:

- Outreach services – hub and spoke approach where sub-Branches could act as part and host services, as well as promote their presence to local veteran community
- Central point of contact for crisis cases, where veterans need urgent assistance particularly where there are mental health issues requiring specialist support
- A welcoming place where veterans can form new networks away from the ADF which share a common experience of military service, and build peer support in the civilian community
- Need different forms of information – info sheets and on-line facilities
- Nowra VWC to be seen as a veteran resource which is trusted and used
- Getting services to older veterans may be more difficult
- Funding sustainability in an ad hoc funding environment – need to secure longer term funding arrangements not just annual grants
- RSL Clubs can provide secure funding arrangements using their liquor and gaming revenue streams to deliver a beneficial and meaningful charitable purpose
- Support from key service providers to professionalise, better link and coordinate services
- Shoalhaven Memorial Hospital redevelopment needs to cater for the veteran community young and old
- Nowra VWC needs to be seen as an honest broker which is focused on supporting veterans and their families

- Building veterans' self-esteem and building on strengths rather than seeing everyone as totally broken
- Encourage peer to peer engagement and network to build mutual support, self-confidence and resilience
- Advocate qualifications are currently strangling the flow of volunteers: timely training is important. A qualification requirement mismatch across states is also hampering service delivery.
- A Veterans Retreat would be useful to help veterans take time out in the company of other veterans. A proposal for the retreat is currently being developed.
- The DVA online DIY application facility is currently causing many problems: incorrect answers to seemingly simple questions have a great (often negative) effect and causes problems and delays when needing intervention help to correct applications. The system has also introduced significant delays in processing applications.
- Most veterans leave the ADO disenchanted and do not trust the ADO, DVA, and often Government provided services. Good information, client outreach and perception management are important.

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:

Welcoming Place

- Non-judgmental
- Waiting room is engaging and manned for a chat – calms an individual down and then they won't walk out
- Welcoming place that veterans want to go
- Connection / community / belonging
- Ex veterans as a first point of contact

Strengthening Wellbeing

- Empowering
- Defining
- Self autonomy / self management
- Wellness focus / holistic
- Poor nutrition, impaired fitness, isolation and mental health need to be addressed in building veteran wellbeing

One Stop Shop

- One stop shop for access to agencies to meet veterans requirements of wellbeing
- A hub where all ESOs can run programs out of
- Somewhere to go to seek assistance, guidance for services in the Shoalhaven
- Keep in mind not restricted to Shoalhaven
- Lifestyle or hub idea is ideal: lifestyle referrals are also important
- Mobile outreach

Accessibility to services

- Coordination of existing services
- Easier access to what help is available
- Internet and phone access – MyGov and Open Arms
- Direct line to DVA and other help services

Information and advice

- Veterans want to be heard – listen, analyse, advise, follow up
- Transition advice – exit date out the gate – Maslow bottom of hierarchy needs
- Handover from DCO on discharge
- Difficulty in accessing information on ‘welfare’ – pensions, jobs, housing etc
- Employment opportunities
- Medical arrangements

Immediate support

- After hours service that can assist/direct veterans in need of immediate support
- Not a parallel health system
- Assessment teams (allied health) for quick referral
- No duplication

Family friendly

- Support centre for families
- Safe place for families

Professional staff

- Professional staff with an ability to answer questions correctly
- Specialist facilitators to determine veteran needs in order of priority
- Professionalised support

Discussion points made in this session included:

- The importance of encouraging self-management as well as being able to get assistance and support
- Focus on referrals and helping veterans to navigate system
- Importance of outreach to more remote villages
- A common public perception has developed that the majority of veterans have mental health issues and are ‘broken’ in some way. The VWC will need to counter this trend.
- Veterans often feel alienated after their discharge date when they can no longer access ADO services, or visit friends and peers on bases where they no longer have permission to enter. The US scheme of ‘still a member, just not serving’ eases the transition process and allows veterans to access facilities that do not require a security clearance.

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.

Key themes that emerged from this session included:

Facilities

- Kids room!!
- Friendly and safe kids area
- Coffee shop
- Outreach – large caravan manned by 3-4 people
- Bomaderry RSL Club would be great re-branded with no bar and no pokies
- Have a self-contained building
- Private rooms
- Private reception
- Internet facilities
- Open plan area with lounges, TV, coffee and staff walking around
- Interview rooms
- Conference room
- Internet cafe

Accessibility

- Close to public transport to access the VWC
- Cater for travelling veterans

Information

- Organisation newsletters
- Web Pages
- Posters about organisations on notice boards in foyers
- Have Plan Ahead Packs and Health Information Packs
- At transition seminars have a recently transitioned veteran to let people know what affected them and what they could have done better
- Here's what we do and here's what we don't – but you can find it here!
- Present at local units as to what VWC does – hopefully they will also tell their mates!

Effective Staff and Systems

- A facility where veterans can feel comfortable and can discuss their issues with qualified support officers
- Follow up service – not just one call but continual follow up - especially for problems that develop after a longer period such as that experienced by Vietnam Veterans
- Navigation executives
- Beware of Old Boys Network with staff – Friends, Brothers, In-laws (FBI)
- Out of hours contacts
- Reverse charges for visitor transport or telephone
- Training and support of personnel
- Identify professional service providers

Governance

- Once in a lifetime opportunity to coordinate existing / emerging services and treatments
- Branding of VWC is extremely important – not RSL
- The centre needs to be a standalone, yet have the ability to offer multiple services
- Independent of all other organisations – company limited by guarantee
- Leadership of the organisation vs management
- Ensure public impression is VWC is not part of Defence or DVA
- Close working relationship between ESOs and Nowra VWC
- Expectation management – rely on ESOs to reach out to their members, don't overkill the concept

Discussion points made in this session included:

- Importance of well trained staff who have the attributes to be a resourceful navigator of the system
- Could be a mix of paid staff and volunteer staff
- Provide an independent entity for veteran support and linkage to multiple relevant services
- Expectation management is an important consideration – don't over stretch resources available

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
Ex-Service Organisations

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 Corder</p>
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**Attachment C
Consultation Workshop Participant List**

**Needs & Priorities Workshop @ Nowra sub-Branch Hall on 6th February 2020
Representative List – Ex-Service Organisations**

Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia (FAAAA)

Illawarra Veterans' Entitlement Service (IVES)

Keith Payne VC Veteran's Benefit Group

Legacy Nowra

NSW Office of Veterans Affairs

RSL Lifecare

Sussex Inlet RSL Sub Branch

Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Veterans' Association

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club

Summary of Nature and Extent of Services Ex-Service Organisations

Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia (FAAAA)

The FAAAA is a not-for-profit organisation with the following aims:

- to unite former and serving Naval Aviation personnel;
- to maintain the bonds of friendship and *esprit de corps* in Naval Aviation;
- to assist with the welfare of former and serving Naval Aviation personnel and their families;
- to support Australia's Fleet Air Arm Museum;
- to foster the preservation of the history of Aviation in the RAN; and
- to provide a forum for Naval Aviation issues.

Illawarra Veterans' Entitlement Service (IVES)

Mission and Purpose:

To represent current & former Australian Defence Force People who are seeking Entitlements, Advocacy or Welfare services from the Repatriation Commission.

Services:

Provide free service from our home office at Warilla RSL Sub Branch. Also conduct outreach visits to Southern Highlands, Shoalhaven region, Dubbo , Raymond Terrace and South West Rocks on a rostered & regular basis.

Initiatives:

Support the ATDP programme by becoming a 'Community of Practice Hub' assisting all ESO trainee pension officers in the RSL Central Southern District.

The Keith Payne VC Veteran's Benefit Group

Mission and Purpose:

Advocating for Veterans at the Strategic Level with Ministers and Government agencies for the betterment of like after Service.

Services:

Pension advocacy
Welfare advice
Veteran support

Initiatives:

Annual Digger Day event.
Operation Walk to Talk.
Operation Surf.

Legacy Nowra

Legacy is a charity providing services to Australian families suffering after the injury or death of a spouse or parent, during or after their defence force service.

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).

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

Initiatives:

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.
- The Local Government Rank to Grade Guide. 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.

RSL Lifecare

Mission and Purpose:

RSL LifeCare is a charitable organisation caring for over 7,500 residents in our 25 retirement villages and 26 Aged Care Homes across NSW and the ACT.

Services:

Home care and assisted living support
Retirement living homes
Aged care homes

Veterans' services, including accommodation on a short stay basis. There is no other dedicated homeless accommodation for contemporary veterans in Australia.

Sussex Inlet RSL Sub Branch

Mission and Purpose:

Sub-Branch under Charter of RSLNSW operates as a not for profit charity dedicated to supporting veterans and their families and commemoration.

Services:

Accredited Welfare Officer to provide military welfare advocacy services.T

- Pensions & Compensation Officer to provide military rehabilitation and compensation advocacy services. Sub-Branch services are linked in to IVES for referrals.
- The sub-Branch operates to support veterans in the local community and holds its management committee and general meetings on a monthly basis.
- Holds functions to foster camaraderie among local veterans and their families.
- Undertake its Commemoration Program for key dates of the year: ANZAC Day (25 April), Combined Commemoration Day (18 August) and Remembrance Day 11 November).
- Education Program linked with its Commemoration Program to foster knowledge and understanding of Australia's military service.
- Fundraising Program
- Administrative services to Members who need assistance in completing forms and lodging applications on-line and by mail.

Initiatives:

The sub-Branch has active Welfare, Pensions, Commemoration, Fundraising and Education Programs involving its members. The sub-Branch is supporting the establishment of the Nowra VWC. The sub-Branch has recently completed a major Memorabilia Project and a 100th Anniversary of Armistice War Memorial at the sub-Branch Hall.

Totally and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) Veterans' Association

Mission and Purpose:

To provide information and communication for ex Service personnel who are eligible for, and granted, or in receipt of, TPI and Special Rate (SR) compensation payments.

Services:

Pensions Officers

Welfare Officers

Social and Welfare Clubs

Initiatives:

TPI Association of NSW Scholarship with the help of the Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

An Association dedicated to the support of Vietnam Veterans, disseminating information about that conflict, and advocating for members to secure entitlements.

Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club

A motorcycle club that provides advocacy services and camaraderie for veterans.

**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