



Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities Workshop 4 Report RSL Central Southern Districts Workshop

The fourth Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities consultation workshop was held in concert with the RSL Central Southern District Council (CSDC) Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Goulburn Soldiers Club on 9 February 2020. A primary aim of this workshop was to bring the 31 RSL sub-Branches operating in the greater Shoalhaven, Illawarra and Southern Highlands areas together, acquaint them with the intent of the proposed Nowra VWC and seek their active support. Helping to define the role and modes of operation for the proposed Nowra VWC were key considerations. Most of the participants were veterans, and represented veterans, who would be potential beneficiaries of the Nowra VWC. Their personal, lived experiences and expectations were vital in adding real context and will be important in informing the direction taken by the Nowra VWC.

Conduct of this workshop within the CSDC AGM, combined with the special nature and experience of the RSL sub-Branch delegates in supporting veterans, dictated a slightly different approach to the other three workshops. The Manager of the Veterans Centre Sydney Northern Beaches gave a briefing on the operations of that Centre from within the Dee Why RSL Club. Although the context is different to the proposed Nowra VWC, this provided useful information.

The outcomes from the 9 February 2020 Nowra Veterans Wellbeing Centre Project Needs & Priorities consultation workshop held at the Goulburn Soldiers Club 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. Geographic and demographic considerations across the CSDC area of operation would be important factors. Defining the services to be delivered and modes of operations would be vital as would a close connection between RSL sub-Branches and their communities 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 4 are requested to complete and return to the Nowra VWC Project the Feedback Form at attachment D.

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 of responses to key questions to enable aggregation and analysis of workshop outcomes both as individual workshops and across all workshops to provide a comprehensive picture.

The fourth consultation workshop focused on 31 RSL sub-Branches in the Central Southern RSL District (CSDC) who provide various levels of support to veterans and their families when they leave the ADF and onwards.

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

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

An Overview of Services Provided by RSL NSW sub-Branches is at [Attachment C](#).

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

Snapshots: Nature & Extent of Current Veteran Services

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

- Provision of appropriately qualified advocates – paid if volunteers lacking.
- Training of advocates needs to be extended beyond ATDP regarding interpretation of DVA Acts
- Possible transition support (who is qualified?)
- Suitable premises – seek a rent free space from local government
- Funding and lack of volunteers may impede success
- Need to distribute Allan Anforth's Competent Advice paper
- Evident problems in working with DVA Acts
- Availability of pro-bono legal assistance
- Comprehensive outline of current CSDC services and future services to be available as a result of the Nowra VWC project
- Experience, qualified and committed advocates struggling with financing and administration costs
- Outreach to the north Illawarra

Workshop Outcomes: Needs & Priorities of Veterans and their Families

The workshop consolidated the presentations and discussions focusing on the question of the most important veteran needs that could be addressed in the design of the Nowra VWC. The key themes that emerged from this session included:

Compassion and Understanding

- Compassion and understanding
- Understanding
- Direction
- Assessment of needs
- Knowing there is someone out there that cares for them
- Trust the RSL contact
- Relaxed and welcoming place
- Appropriate environment
- Image of RSL needs to be improved to welcome veterans

Build Confidence

- For veterans in an area we could have an equivalent to a Men's Shed for all vets (male and female)
- Build confidence with someone over their needs
- Self-generating success
- Encouragement
- Reassurance that somebody cares
- Reassurance that somebody is listening
- Reassurance that they can do something about it sooner than later

One-stop Shop with Outreach

- The ability to get a rapid response to any questions that they may have
- Assistance to contact the necessary services to help understand the needs of a veteran
- Need for advice
- Reach out centre
- Outreach services
- RSLNSW needs to have all the veterans support services on their web page for all veterans to access
- Immediate advice or referral service
- First contact point
- Not be like a Centrelink type set up
- Concierge to direct to appropriate services
- Service directory
- List of contacts of all available services – referrals
- Marketing the VWC product
- Marketing, email, drop in centre – all to be connected
- Nowra VWC to be promoted
- Drop in centres for veterans to be advertised
- VWC to become a centre of knowledge for veterans and serving members

Transition Support

- Transition of veterans to DVA
- Transition management

- Transition of vets to civilian life
- Assistance from DVA if required
- Source of information on all aspects of after service life
- What sort of information is given to each defence establishment to say what sort of support you provide for them? (eg. brochures that they can understand)
- Provide sub-Branches in NSW to transitioning ADF members
- Integration into the community
- Market information through defence system

Family Support

- Family support eg. Legacy
- Family welfare
- Family must be supported

Accessibility of Services

- Inventory of sub-Branches (350)
- Accessibility
- Depends on the age of the veteran
- Ease of access (contact via email etc)
- Somebody to answer phone without being put on hold for ages
- Email address and answered asap
- Initial contact point for veterans
- Location of local support for veterans
- Advice
- Local support
- Direct marketing
- Communication
- Improved computer links
- Ease of access
- Closest access point

Health Services Access

- Medicare needs
- Medical disability
- Reasonable access to health professionals
- Services should be a priority
- Guidance on health
- Health
- Health
- Medical care – hospitalisation

Mental Health Services Access

- Referral to mental health: area appropriate psychiatrists are not interested in DVA work
- Assistance for those with mental health problems
- Mental health
- Assistance to those with mental health problems and mental conditions
- Assistance organised with mental health issues

Advocacy and Legal Services

- Access to DVA Advocates where sub-Branches do not have them
- Rural advocacy services – book local appointments, marketing at local level
- Reasonably quick access to a Mentor or Advocate
- Legal services
- Legal representation
- Advocacy services

Pension and Claims Services

- Assistance with disability claims
- Pension application assistance
- DVA claims to be speeded up
- Assist with claims and liaison with DVA
- Advice to veterans and their families on DVA matters such as hospitalisation, DVA claims
- Access to DVA entitlements

Housing Assistance Services

- Resettlement

Financial Advisory Services

- Help with finance
- Financial advice

Employment Assistance

- Assistance with referral for employment
- Linkages to training and employment
- Employment skills – how to apply for a job
- Employment assistance
- Access to jobs
- Service qualification to show civilian compatibility
- Assistance with employment

Discussion points made in this session included:

- Geography and the demography of the Nowra VWC area of operation must be an important consideration. Outreach services will be vital to success.
- Importance of RSL sub-branches supporting the Nowra VWC rather than holding onto funds ‘ice-cream licking’
- Expectation management – success may mean there is a big demand for services that cannot be met

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:

Safe and Welcoming Place

- Safe place - inviting friendly, professional with privacy
- Family friendly
- Have a welcome atmosphere
- Have a comfortable waiting/service area
- Veterans need to want to go to the Centre without being embarrassed or causing more worry

Facilitate transition from ADF

- Close association with discharge cells at military bases
- Website – supply this to defence bases
- Requires current ADF support in disseminating information on a national level
- Requires ADF to provide referrals and case history
- Help young ex-defence personnel transition into productive employment so that they can be involved in feeling part of and continue to serve their community and country

Hub and Outreach

- Outreach
- Need to ensure Nowra VWC does not suffer from ‘creep’ in providing services due to its success – both within and outside the CSDC area and demand of veterans
- Need to establish boundaries and limits around the extent and level of services that can be afforded by Nowra VWC, and in what areas.
- Record which sub-Branched are prepared to offer their facilities to be used by Nowra VWC
- Understanding of services required
- Helpline as well as pop-in centres
- Printed information available to Health Centres and Community Centres
- Mobile services to rural areas
- Ability to travel to help clients
- Outreach services to lobby DVA on sub-Branch behalf
- Identify current sub-Branch resources implementing the core elements of the proposed Nowra VWC project
- Other ESOs in your local area other than Nowra
- Other ESOs should be involved
- Sub-Branched be used as one of the initial points of contact for people seeking assistance – advertising and promotion
- Identify current sub-Branched who have these services in operation

Accessing Services

- A referral centre, with limited internal capacity – use technology
- Access to all available services
- Demographic of population of veterans – somehow being able to target who may need help
- Need to manage expectations of veterans’ community – could be a threat in lieu of opportunity
- Out of hours service
- Dissemination of information – do not try to exceed capabilities
- Focus the services based on the types of needs that are asked for

- Responsiveness to veterans' needs – who do I call?
- 'Suck and see' approach
- Handouts
- Support for sub-Branches in delivery of advocacy services
- Ensure follow up is 100%
- 24 hour contact
- Centre presentation to veterans should be one of the veteran coming away with some satisfaction and want to go out
- Comprehensive directory describing what other ESOs do
- Central information
- Use sub-Branch resources already available
- Ensure no denigration of DVA – with all their faults they retain the backing of governments - they are the bank re pensions
- Follow up communication
- Need a call back capability
- Financing of sub-Branches compensation advocates and administration costs

Facilities

- Housed in ADF facilities or RSL at no cost
- Family area and quiet room
- Reception that can identify what services are needed
- Accessibility of location
- Telephone
- Lift for older veterans
- Accessible to public transport
- Car parking

Staffing and Systems

- A system where veterans can seek advice and assistance out of working hours
- Concierge to greet and direct veteran to correct person to handle their problem
- People with real experiences – eg. ex-military with the appropriate skills (well screened)
- Website on App that can be accessed
- There must be face to face contact – modern communications equipment does not always work
- Website
- Social media presence
- Have the centre open as staffing allows 3-5 days per week
- Use electronic claim forms – most veterans today are computer literate and also the ability to save data and reproduce it as necessary
- Use of electronic forms gives an audit trail for future government grants
- Regular contact from Nowra VWC to sub-Branches electronic or postal of services available
- Website explaining services
- Get local businesses to advertise employment through VWC
- Establish web site with relative services available
- Appointment times to be held on time so veterans not sitting around

Marketing and Branding Nowra VWC

- Marketing

- Marketing of local sub-Branches services
- Opportunities to be in line with expectations
- 'Wellbeing' is a trendy word that vets do not relate to
- All in the Nowra Veterans' Lifestyle Centre
- Branding – suggest call it RSL Networks or something similar – wellbeing leads to the connotation that the person is 'sick' and this will likely turn people away (too much pride)
- Include the RSL name somewhere
- Term 'wellbeing' may put veterans off

Discussion points made in this session included:

- Considerations of labelling it the Nowra Veterans' *Wellbeing* Centre

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.

**Attachment B
Consultation Workshop Participant List**

**Needs & Priorities Workshop 4 @ Goulburn on 9th February 2020
RSLNSW CSDC sub-Branches Representative List**

Note: 31 sub-Branches are listed here. Delegates from 27 sub-Branches participated in the CSDC Workshop.

Albion Park	Culburra Beach – Orient Point	City of Queanbeyan
Austinmer Thirroul	Dapto - Pt Kembla	Shoalhaven Heads
Berry	Gerringong	St Georges Basin
Bomaderry	Goulburn	Sussex Inlet
Bowral	Huskisson	Taralga
Braidwood	Kiama - Jamberoo	Warilla
Bundanoon	Milton - Ulladulla	City of Wollongong
Callala Beach	Mittagong	Woonona - Bulli
Coledale	Mossvale	Yass
Corrimal	Nowra	
Crookwell	Picton - Thirlmere - Bargo	

Attachment C

Overview of Services Provided by RSL NSW sub-Branches

The Returned and Services League of Australia (New South Wales Branch) is a corporation constituted under the RSL NSW Act. RSL NSW is a not-for-profit statutory corporation which was established, and continues to operate, as a charity.

The primary purpose of RSL NSW sub-Branches is to: support veterans and their families through access to services that improve their health and wellbeing; assist in transition to civilian life, connection to community, foster camaraderie, and commemorate service.

The primary charitable objective of RSL NSW and each sub-Branch is to provide assistance, care, relief and support to Veterans and their families. Specifically, this is done through:

- a) providing and supporting the provision of welfare support services and assistance, financial and nonfinancial to Veterans 'in need';
- b) organising, conducting and participating in commemoration activities; and
- c) promoting and facilitating social connection and camaraderie between serving and ex-serving members.

**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