

MODULE TWO

The role for Community Housing Organisations

A TOOL KIT FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING ORGANISATIONS

The role for Community Housing Organisations

The growth of community housing organisations (CHOs) across Australia is resulting in further development and management of community and affordable housing.

Photo: Australian Army Part-Time Officer Commissioning Program graduation ceremony at Holsworthy Barracks, Sydney.
Photographer: SGT Nunu Campos

The role for CHOs

It is important for all CHOs to understand their local community to enable them to establish the local housing needs. The consultation process for the development of this Toolkit identified that housing specific for veterans that is well designed, fit for purpose, safe, secure and affordable is important to support veterans to address other needs.

CHOs may choose to consider the housing needs of veterans as part of business planning processes to implement planning to strengthen their management and support of tenants who are veterans.

A simple first step is to identify the number of veterans who are currently being housed by your organisation. One way to identify veterans is by undertaking an analysis of the number of tenants and housing applicants who receive some form of benefit from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). It is important to note though that this will not identify all veterans as not all veterans will be clients of DVA or be eligible for or choose to receive support from DVA.

Identifying the number of tenants and applicants will help build an awareness of the size of the group currently being housed and identify the number of applicants requiring housing. Analysis of current veteran tenancy records will assist to identify any issues relating to tenancy sustainability and will support the identification of any trends impacting the veteran cohort. This can then assist the development of effective responses to effectively support veterans to sustain their tenancy.

Some CHOs already manage veteran specific housing. Such housing allows CHOs to manage these properties in a manner that is specific and appropriate for veterans, including having a focus on linking veterans with appropriate advocates and/or supports and encouraging linking veterans to social networks beyond veteran specific services and supports. Practice experience from these CHOs identifies the need to have effective sustaining tenancies practice operating across tenancies to support successful tenancies.

Investing time in getting to know veteran tenants and building a rapport with them can be effective at helping to build a relationship they trust.

For CHOs who do not have veteran specific housing, these CHOs could consider implementing a local allocation strategy (within the relevant state-based guidelines and funding requirements) to allocate particular properties to known veterans. It is recommended that such an approach is used with the input and advice from local Ex Service Organisation/s (ESO) and DVA's Triage and Connect team to find out the number of veterans they are assisting who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and the areas that those veterans are located in.

Regardless of whether it is possible to offer veteran-specific housing, support options should be explored with veterans.

Some considerations include respectfully exploring:

- current advocacy services linked to the veteran and whether any referrals could be made
- current veteran specific services linked with the veteran, such as the DVA, Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (Open Arms) and Ex Service Organisations (ESOs) and whether any referrals could be made
- current support network and social connections and exploring whether there are local support and social connections that could be recommended to the veteran (in particular veteran specific networks and connections)
- whether referrals to mainstream support services might be useful

Strengthening practice and processes to support effective assessment, allocation and ongoing tenancy support of veterans is explored in Module 3 of this toolkit.

Emerging practice: Community Housing Ltd SA

Community Housing Ltd (CHL) is a Tier 1 community housing provider operating in all states of Australia. In South Australia (SA), CHL manages around 1,100 properties for customers on low to moderate incomes, homeless or at risk of homelessness. In SA, their housing is predominantly in the north-eastern and northern suburbs of Adelaide. The housing SA CHL manages is mainly long-term housing

CHL SA identified the challenge they experience with veteran status not being identified through the SA housing application process. This has required staff to intentionally ask all housing applicants if they have ever served in the Australian Defence Force. There is also no structured way of currently recording this in applicant and tenant records. They have done this for all new tenants at the point of letting but have also incorporated this question into discussion with current tenants where possible.

Through participating in the toolkit pilot, CHL SA focused on developing a solid working relationship with Open Arms. This partnership is growing and operating well. They have also established a strong working relationship with RSL Care SA Andrew Russell Veteran Living.

Open Arms staff have presented to CHL SA staff on the services they offer, referral pathways and importantly, an exploration of the importance of asking all individuals the important question “Have you ever served in the Australian Defence Force”? Through asking this simple question, staff have been able to identify clients who are veterans or veteran family members and have been able to provide them information on services available to them to support their health and wellbeing. This has included on one occasion assistance to initiate a referral to Open Arms for example.

CHL SA staff have also presented to Open Arms staff on the housing products available through their service, the application, assessment and allocation process and the importance of establishing effective working relationships to help veteran tenants to sustain their tenancies.

There is a commitment from both organisations to further strengthen their working relationships plus build options to prevent veterans becoming homeless.

A key insight identified by CHL SA during the pilot was as follows:

“The issues veterans face are real. During this pilot we have seen the flow-on effect into the next generation with one tenant experiencing significant issues as a result of his father’s experience in a war zone (the son was being supported by Open Arms).”

Practice responses for CHO to strengthen your response to housing veterans

Where a CHO has identified a commitment to strengthening their response to housing veterans, they might want to consider how they raise their profile and increase awareness of their housing services amongst the veteran community. Such CHOs might be a specialist disability CHO or an aged care specialist CHO for example.

In addition to strengthening their assessment, allocation and tenancy management practices to support veterans, a CHO might consider the following actions to further develop their housing response:

1. Seek out their local ESOs and meet with them to explore opportunities to collaborate. This could include increasing awareness of the services offered by both services and raising knowledge across staff teams to build or strengthen working relationships.
2. Aboriginal veterans may choose to gain their support through Aboriginal health services so CHOs might want to consider the working relationships they have in place with their local Aboriginal Medical Service to support effective collaboration processes.
3. Initiate contact with DVA through the Triage and Connect team to explore opportunities to connect with key designated staff to commence strengthening the working relationship between both organisations. This connection must be made by the CHO, internal DVA business areas or veteran advocate/ support service and NOT the veteran. The aim of this will be to assist with the identification of veterans who may require housing and other assistance, and to strengthen referral pathways and build understanding of the comprehensive range of health services and supports available to veterans.

4. Establish local relationships with Open Arms to strengthen understanding of health and support services available to veterans to facilitate warm referrals for veteran mental health support if required. Information on Open Arms can be found here <https://www.openarms.gov.au/>
5. Contact the local Open Arms to support development of a working relationship with the Community and Peer Engagement Team. The peer support roles in particular will provide a responsive connection for veterans as they engage with Open Arms.
6. Consider having a designated worker who has a focus on engaging with veterans and is able to support colleagues to build their skills and abilities to engage with veterans. Webinars are available on the Open Arms website that CHOs can utilise to explore some key aspects such as ‘Understanding the veteran experience’ <https://www.openarms.gov.au/health-professionals/professional-development-military-awareness>
7. Consider your own employment strategy and explore opportunities to intentionally employ veterans and veteran family members.

CHOs have extensive skills and expertise in establishing and strengthening collaborative working relationships with support services relevant to their tenant groups to enable those tenants to be supported effectively. As part of complying with the National Registration System for Community Housing, CHOs are required under Performance Outcome 1: Tenant and Housing Services to facilitate access to support for social housing applicants and tenants with complex needs. Developing a partner strategy to support engagement with veteran support services would fall within this performance outcome. Working effectively to support veteran applicants and tenants will be strengthened by CHOs establishing such networks with a range of veteran support organisations.

Emerging practice: CHL QLD

(CHL QLD) is part of the Community Housing Ltd group of companies. CHL QLD manages 1172 properties across Queensland that includes managed, owned and head leased properties. Their offices are located in Robina, Maryborough and Roma and provide housing services to the Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Ipswich, Maranoa region and the Fraser Coast region.

CHL QLD identified the challenge they experience with veteran status not being identified through the QLD housing application process. This has required staff to intentionally ask all housing applicants if they have ever served in the Australian Defence Force. There is also no structured way of currently recording this in applicant and tenant records.

CHL QLD has focussed on developing a working relationship with Open Arms to help develop clear referral pathways and increased understanding of the services offered through both providers to strengthen the service response for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

A focus is on each provider delivering training to both housing and support staff on referral pathways, housing products that are available through CHL QLD and support services available for veterans and their families.

CHL QLD has also engaged with the Salvation Army who are in partnership with RSL QLD to deliver a responsive service to homeless veterans. They are continuing to build a solid working relationship between both organisations to assist the Salvation Army as they set about exploring possible long-term housing options for veterans they are assisting.

CHL QLD continues to explore ways to strengthen their understanding of ways to establish sustainable tenancies for eligible veterans.

Engaging in homelessness prevention approaches with the veteran community

It is important to note that in this section, the term veteran refers to those who have left the ADF as well as those who are in the process of transitioning from the ADF.

CHOs are a critical service provider in the journey to prevent and end homelessness amongst veterans.

There are some steps that a CHO can implement as part of housing management practice that will have a significant positive impact for veterans over time.

Ways that a CHO can help respond to prevent homelessness amongst the veteran community include:

- Engage with your local veteran support services to build a solid understanding of the work they do and explore the development of a service partnership to strengthen referral pathways. This would include Ex-Service Organisations such as the RSL and other veteran services such as Open Arms.
- Veteran and Family Hubs are in the process of being established across Australia <https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/work-and-social-life-programs/work-and-social-support/veteran-wellbeing>. Veteran and Family Hubs will provide a 'one stop shop' approach to the delivery and integration of a range of services and supports that veterans may require access to. CHOs might wish to explore building your connections as these centres are opened.
- If your CHO is located close to an ADF base, explore opportunities with veteran support services and Defence Member and Family Support to attend events where your organisation can staff a booth and provide information on the housing services offered locally. Further information about such events can be located in the below section 'Department of Defence' and information on ADF transition can be found here: <https://www.defence.gov.au/members-families/Transition/default.asp>
- Distribute brochures on the housing services offered by your organisation to local veteran support services so that they are able to provide information to veterans who engage with them.
- Explore ways to engage with the veteran community through your organisation's website and social media to highlight the work your organisation does in relation to housing.
- Seek feedback from veterans when you engage with them and utilise this to inform practice and build cultural competency in working effectively with veterans.
- Consider asking housing applicants or new tenants if they have served in the Australian Defence Force. This will alert you to explore whether there are any veteran specific advocates / services they would like to be linked with, and will assist your organisation to establish a sustainable tenancy plan, if considered appropriate for the veterans' support requirements (if any). (It is suggested that this approach be used with new tenants as a prevention strategy to assist with sustaining the tenancy from the start of the tenancy and therefore avoid the veteran being at risk of homelessness through potential tenancy issues such as breaches to the lease agreement).

Marketing community and affordable housing to veterans

Many CHOs have identified that the greatest barrier to their ability to meet the needs of their clients is the shortage of community and affordable housing stock.

The increase in demand for community and affordable housing is reflected by an increase in both the length of social housing waiting lists and waiting times. Therefore, a perception may be that there isn't any need to market community and affordable housing because the demand outstrips supply.

However, it is important for CHOs to remember that a critical role for CHOs is to identify and respond to the housing needs of their community, this includes veterans, and to inform those in housing need of the options that are available. As the research shows that many veterans are not aware of housing services available, marketing these services to veterans is important.

The above section covers some suggested marketing strategies to the veteran community.

Other suggestions obtained during the consultation process for the design and development of this Toolkit to market CHO services to veterans, include providing information / a specific page relating to housing options on:

- Veterans' social media pages
- Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) website and DVA TV (YouTube)
- Open Arms social media sites
- Returned and Services League's (RSLs) websites
- Other ex-service organisation's (ESOs) websites.

CHOs can also promote their services for free on the Department of Defence Engage website.

This is where ESOs and other not for profit organisation's promote their services and is easily searchable by ADF members, veterans and their families as well as other service providers: <https://engage.forcenet.gov.au/>

Marketing could also include holding an open day and/or publishing information sheets or packages (in a format to suit veterans) and distributing them to other community organisations, ESOs and the state/territory housing department's local client service teams.

Other activities that a CHO might engage in to increase understanding of the housing application process for veterans and veteran support services include:

- Providing a clear map of housing options and pathways to long term housing for veterans
- Clearly explaining the housing process, including the application for community and affordable housing process:
 - As with all potential applicants, ensure the veteran understands the application questions and requirements and provide assistance to gather relevant information / evidence for the application and provide as much information and assistance as possible to assist with their application
- Keep applicants updated about their application – for example, where they are listed on the social housing waiting list
- Allow applicants access to a computer in the CHO office to access the internet and provide assistance to explore housing options, print relevant information, receive assistance to complete housing related paperwork (including community and affordable housing applications).

It is important to ensure that any marketing by CHOs is clear in relation to eligibility to try and minimise the number of veterans applying for community or affordable housing services and products who are not eligible, i.e. due to income eligibility. There is the risk that applying for a housing service and/or product without being eligible may discourage a veteran (as well as the broader community) from applying for alternative housing options. It is important to note that if a veteran isn't eligible for community or affordable housing or other housing services and products, appropriate referrals should be made to local services who can assist.

Particular consideration and sensitivities should be taken into account for veterans in relation to recognising that some veterans may not identify as being at risk of homelessness and feel shame / pride about requesting assistance (similar to a trend seen by homelessness services and CHOs for older single women). Therefore, sensitive and appropriate language should be used in marketing processes such as highlighting that everyone has a right to housing, there are a range of housing options to consider, and community and affordable housing are some of the options.

You might consider seeking advice from your local ESO regarding the language you use to ensure it communicates effectively with veterans.

Emerging practice: Housing Choices WA

Housing Choices Australia Group is a Tier 1 national, not-for-profit housing provider that delivers high quality, accessible and affordable housing, working with partners to create resilient and inclusive neighbourhoods. They are one of the largest community housing providers in Australia with operations in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales focussed on providing and sustaining housing for vulnerable cohorts across Australia.

Housing Choices Western Australia has over 1,850 properties under management spanning Perth, Peel and the south-west, providing property and tenancy management and individual and neighbourhood capacity building to over 3,000 tenants.

Housing Choices WA has engaged with the new Veteran and Family Hub – ANZAC House Veteran Central - in Perth, the first such centre to open its doors across Australia as well as Open Arms, providing mental health support to veterans and their families.

The aim of the relationships is to generate a shared understanding of needs of veterans and housing services and identify and strengthen referral pathways so that veterans who are identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness can access and maintain affordable housing.

Housing Choices WA plans to deepen their understanding of the demand for housing from veterans accessing Veteran Central and Open Arms services, as well as the support needs for veterans to sustain housing. In return, Housing Choices WA will provide those staff with an understanding of the span and operation of the social and affordable housing system and introduction to low-cost housing options available in WA through Housing Choices WA portfolio of properties.

One example of the immediate benefits of the relationship is the exploration of ways that veterans who are over the social housing income bands but who remain eligible for affordable housing might be assisted.

Linking to employment and education opportunities

Veterans, as with all people, need purpose and there is an understandable focus on linking veterans to employment and/or education once they transition to civilian life. However, it is well established that people need to have safe, secure and affordable accommodation in order to obtain and sustain education and/or employment.

There is an equally understandable focus on linking social housing tenants to employment and/or education.

For veterans that have recently transitioned from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the Department of Defence provides access to the transition programs for up to two years after leaving the ADF. This includes support for career development, employment and education / training.

More information can be found here <https://www.defence.gov.au/members-families/Transition/YourTransition/Default.asp>

While the provision of employment services is outside CHO's core business, a significant proportion of CHOs are taking an active role in assisting their tenants into employment in order to improve tenant outcomes.

The National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) sets performance outcomes which include that CHOs work with others to maximise positive economic and social outcomes for tenants and the community. In addition to these regulatory requirements, CHOs have a collective vision to break the cycle of disadvantage and deliver improved social outcomes for tenants.

CHOs that first identify disadvantaged groups of tenants are then able to offer targeted support that meets local needs. This also involves working with unemployed individuals to develop and co-design training and employment programs

to help ensure programs address the specific needs of the target group.

Examples of how CHOs are engaged in some type of activity to promote education, training and employment among tenants include:

- Offering education bursaries or scholarships
- Providing volunteer work placements i.e. gardening and mowing service assisting frail aged tenants or tenants with a disability to maintain their gardens and sustain their tenancy
- Trainee positions in CHOs in the area of maintenance, tenancy and administration
- Mentoring tenants
- Providing IT equipment or access to IT equipment
- Digi House <https://www.godigi.org.au/digihouse> - to increase the digital skills of social housing residents
- Directly supporting social enterprise in the local community
- Assisting tenants to start their own business, including assisting tenants to access start-up finance
- Engaging tenant services i.e. lawn mowing
- Employing staff with specific responsibility for tenant employment and training
- Providing financial assistance to help tenants transition to work i.e. grace period of non-adjustment of the tenant's rental subsidy; learner driver program to aid mobility and improve employment opportunities
- Financial literacy education
- Employment incentive schemes
- Courses linked to specific employment opportunities
- Provision of employment related accommodation
- Employment ready initiatives (preparing a resume and interview training for example)
- Linking tenants to job search / job network providers
- Social procurement models through the repairs and maintenance service and development projects that have a strong emphasis on training and/or employment

Services are often delivered in partnership with local community organisations and other specialist providers as a way to maximise access and pathways to opportunities.

Practice responses for CHOs who have veteran housing expertise

There are already a small number of CHOs who have specialist skills in working with and supporting veterans as part of their broader housing business.

CHOs who specialise in housing veterans as part of their housing service establish veteran specific housing as part of their housing developments; through local allocation strategies; and/or through partnerships with veteran support services to provide tenancy management services to housing owned by veteran services.

In addition to establishing strong access, allocation and tenancy management practice to support veterans more broadly, CHOs who choose to specialise in working actively to support veterans housing have formalised working relationships with veteran support services and have active partnerships that support sustaining tenancies and support for veterans with complex needs.

Linking with transitioning Australian Defence Force personnel

The 2019 – 2020 Defence Annual Report identifies that the ADF's actual funded strength at 30 June 2020 was 59,760 personnel in active service. Defence continues to deliver services to support the health and wellbeing of ADF personnel and veterans. The services are planned and delivered as a collaborative effort between Joint Health Command, Defence People Group, Navy, Army, Air Force and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.¹

The literature review and consultations undertaken for the development of this Toolkit identified that a number of veterans do not know where to go to explore housing options. This can be because during their service, their housing has been organised and / or subsidised by their employer, resulting in some veterans having little awareness of housing options and / or the costs involved in establishing and maintaining a rental property is a barrier. It has been identified that there is a need to advertise and market housing options from the transitioning stage.

For those CHOs who are located near an ADF base and/or have links with the ADF, DVA or ESOs, there is an opportunity to engage with ADF personnel during the transition phase from the ADF to civilian life.

This is a critical phase to identify those transitioning ADF personnel who may be at risk of homelessness upon exiting the ADF and/or those who may require assistance to obtain safe, stable and secure accommodation².

¹ Australian Government Department of Defence: Annual Report 19-20 pp 134 - 135

² It is recognised that some veterans may not require housing assistance until after their transition period. This Toolkit includes other marketing opportunities for veterans who have transitioned to civilian life.

This is an opportunity to provide housing related information and link transitioning ADF personnel with suitable advocacy and/or support to assist them to obtain, set up and sustain long term housing.

Department of Defence

For a list of defence bases in Australia, refer to the following link:

<https://www.defence.gov.au/bases/>

Veterans can access the ADF transition services for up to 2 years after leaving the ADF. The ADF send out a post transition survey on a quarterly basis for 2 years. This survey provides an opportunity for those veterans to reach back into Defence for additional transition support if required. More information on transition can be found on the ADF website <https://www1.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/health-well-being/services-support-fighting-fit/veterans-ex-serving-members>

The ADF provide advice and guidance to transitioning members and their families, including referral where appropriate to relevant government and community support. It would be beneficial for CHOs to engage with Defence to help explore the local housing needs of some veterans and open potential channels of communication between defence and the CHO.

During the transition process, the transitioning ADF member will be advised of how ESOs can assist them and can be referred to other agency support services such as Open Arms to assist them to address any potential complexities that may impact on sustaining their tenancy.

The Defence Member and Family Support Branch facilitate 30 ADF Member and Family Transition Seminars each year. This is a blended program of face-to-face and virtual events. These are one day expos with multiple stages and information sessions. There are booths and stalls for any not-for-profit organisation. CHOs can enquire about having a stall and/or virtual booth to provide housing related information.

For further information about the seminars refer to: <https://www.defence.gov.au/members-families/Transition/YourTransition/seminars.asp>

For enquiries regarding the seminars contact: ADF.transitionseminar@defence.gov.au

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)

DVA offers a wide range of services and supports which veterans and their families may be eligible for. DVA's support officers can check that a person is receiving all the support they are eligible for which may include healthcare, financial support and/or rehabilitation. Financial support may include immediate financial support when submitting mental health claims, compensation for service related injuries or conditions, income support and incapacity payments. Additionally, free, lifetime mental health care is also available to anyone with a single day of continuous full-time Australian Defence Force service.

Further information is available either by calling DVA on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) or on the DVA website www.dva.gov.au CHOs may wish to encourage veteran clients to call this number or alternatively with the veteran's consent could call on their behalf.

VETERAN SUPPORT OFFICERS

Veteran Support Officers (VSOs) are DVA employees who deliver services to ADF members and their families. VSOs visit over 56 Defence bases across Australia and where necessary can deliver support remotely.

VSOs provide personalised DVA advice and services to all ADF members, including:

- educating on MyService and engaging with DVA
- advice on current and future DVA entitlements
- assist in lodging an injury/illness claim
- provide tailored transition support to ADF members and their families

VSOs also refer ADF members to Triage and Connect case management capability if vulnerabilities are identified

CHOs may seek to engage with VSOs to provide information on the housing services available in the location of the ADF base to support the referral of transitioning ADF members to housing options.

TRIAGE AND CONNECT

The transitioning component of the DVA provides a single point of contact by phone or email to a DVA delegate for the transitioning ADF personnel. They focus on vulnerable transitioning personnel.

CHOs can engage with DVA Triage and Connect so that they can be connected to the appropriate staff member involved in transition to better understand the housing requirements being identified.

Access to Triage and Connect can be made via email using the following email address triageandconnect@dva.gov.au or by calling **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)**. Veterans can call DVA themselves on **1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)** to discuss any issues or questions they have about the services they need.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling

CHOs might explore with a tenant to see if they are aware of the supports that might be available to them through Open Arms – Veteran and Families Counselling <https://www.openarms.gov.au>

As a 24-hour, free, nationally-accredited, nationwide, multidisciplinary mental health service, Open Arms offers a wide range of treatment and support options to provide clients with the best opportunity to access the right support, in the right place and at the right time.

Open Arms provides free and confidential access to individual and couples and families counselling, mental health support, case management, psychoeducation workshops and group programs for current and former Australian Defence Force personnel and their families.

Open Arms services are freely available for the following individuals:

- Current serving ADF personnel
- Personnel transitioning to civilian life
- Ex-serving members
- Partners and children or servicing and ex-serving personnel
- Ex-partners who are co-parenting
- Reservists with one day continuous full time service or hazardous service.

Where there has been a death of a service person, parents and siblings can also access Open Arms support.

24/7 Client Assist provides 24/7 telephone support for clients to reach the information and services they need, when they need them. Client Assist is the entry point for Open Arms services across Australia and also provides one-off support and telephone counselling.

CHOs can support clients to refer to Open Arms through contacting Client Assist on **1800 011 046**.

Privacy and confidentiality are important to both current and ex-serving ADF members. Safe Zone Support is an anonymous counselling line providing access to specialised counsellors without the need for individuals to identify themselves. **The 24/7 number is 1800 142 072.**

Free and confidential counselling

A team of psychologists, social workers, mental health occupational therapists and mental health nurses trained in veteran and military culture deliver specialised support and care to individuals, couples and families

Community Engagement & Peer Support

Open Arms Community Engagement Teams consist of Peer Workers with a lived experience of military service or military family life, and of mental health and recovery. The support offered includes Peer Workers working collaboratively with mental health clinicians.

The following is an overview of such support:

- Open Arms Peer Workers connect through their dual lived experiences of military service and mental health recovery to break down barriers to care. Peer Support is about walking along-side veterans and families with

an understanding of the unique challenges involved in military service, offering a positive model of recovery to promote hope, building help-seeking behaviours, supporting connections and providing a bridge to further support.

- Community Engagement Teams engage with hospitals, health, homelessness and community services and networks to break down barriers to care, establishing collaborative care agreements and supporting clients to access and transition between services.
- Community Engagement teams work in collaboration with other Open Arms services (Counsellors, Complex Care Coordinators, Group Programs, Outreach Program Clinicians) to provide assertive outreach and care coordination in areas such as homelessness, bereavement, family violence, alcohol and other drug abuse, family breakdown and gambling.

Crisis Accommodation Program

The Open Arms crisis accommodation program aims to provide crisis ‘time-out’ accommodation. This allows time to alleviate a crisis situation such as a relationship breakdown or relational conflict, or an immediate housing crisis.

Crisis support aims to reduce stress, improve the person’s ability to cope with their current situation and alleviate any potential future crises.

Open Arms will work with the client to address issues that contributed to the crisis and will work to connect the client with a housing service.

Access may be 5-10 nights, depending on the circumstances. In exceptional circumstances, an extension for accommodation may be given.

To be eligible for assistance under this program, the person must be in a crisis situation and needing help, and be:

- a current member of the ADF
- a former member of the ADF
- their partner
- a dependent child.

Psycho-education Workshops

Open Arms offers psycho-education workshops aimed at building mental health literacy and skills for those seeking to help family, friends, co-workers or others in the veteran community, including:

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA): 2-Day workshop
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): 2-Day workshop
- Suicide alertness for everyone – safeTALK: half-day workshop
- Suicide Prevention START: 90 minute online skills training.

Group Treatment Programs

Open Arms offers a range of group programs to assist the serving and ex-serving community, as well as their families, to live their best life.

Group treatment programs, relationship retreats and education programs are offered to both individuals and families and include:

- Recovery from Trauma
- Sleeping Better
- Understanding Anxiety
- Transitioning
- Parenting
- Relaxation and Stress Management
- Managing Anger.

Factsheets and Self-help Tools

Open Arms ‘Living Well’ webpage <https://www.openarms.gov.au/living-well> provides a range of self-help tools, resources and information to manage PTSD, suicide ideation and stress, as well as helping build knowledge and skills for resilience.

These include:

- Resources that support veteran and their families to live well
- Wellbeing case studies, webinars and factsheets
- **Operation Life App** - is designed to help those at risk deal with suicidal thoughts and is recommended to be used with the support of a clinician
- **PTSD Coach Australia App** – helps users learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur after trauma
- **High Res App** - can assist serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel and their families to manage the daily stresses of military life, deployment, transition to civilian life and life post-service
- **The Right Mix App** – will help users manage alcohol consumption by tracking the number and type of drinks consumed and calculating financial and health impacts.

A role for CHOs that have veteran expertise to support the broader CHO network

The CHOs who have chosen to develop specialist skills in housing veterans can provide advice to other CHOs on veteran tenancy management matters to support the upskilling of the community housing sector over time. This will strengthen the housing response to veterans when needed as these providers knowledge of deeper engagement with DVA, ADF and ESOs will provide useful guidance and reflection for services who have not yet achieved this.



Photo: Medals worn by a veteran attending the HMAS Parramatta II memorial service held at Queen's Wharf Reserve, Parramatta, New South Wales. Photographer: LSIS Leo Baumgartner