



National Newsletter

October 2021



Dear members and friends,

Since the last newsletter, there has been a steady flow of activity in the Defence and veteran community space that has kept DFWA National busy.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions across much of the east coast, the work goes on. Like many organisations, DFWA is embracing technology to ensure that business continues—at least virtually.

DFWA hopes all within the Defence and veteran community are staying safe during the pandemic, particularly those who are experiencing stricter lockdown measures. We are also mindful of the impact recent events in Afghanistan may have on the community.

Please remember there are services available to support your mental health and wellbeing.

			
---	---	--	---

Covid Vaccination Certificates and DVA Gold Cards

As States start to re-open, most are mandating that patrons and visitors to certain venues show proof of vaccination. DVA has provided some [useful information about accessing your Covid-19 vaccination certificate](#).

If you want to get a digital vaccination certificate added to your mobile phone wallet (Apple or Google wallets) or connect your certificate to state check-in apps (such as the Service NSW app) you will need a Medicare number, and to link your Medicare account on myGov.

Most DVA Gold Card holders do not regularly use Medicare or have a Medicare card so may find the process of adding vaccination certificates more involved than the general population.

However, most Gold Card holders will still have a Medicare number – often connected to their parent's, partner's, or children's card.

The Australian Immunisation Register has a dedicated Veteran and Defence Support Line, which can help you get a certificate and find out your Medicare number. **Ring 1800 653 809** and select **option 4**.

DFWA has raised this matter with DVA. We do not expect it will be resolved, so encourage those affected Gold Card holders to connect via Medicare.

National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention

Readers will be aware that when the Government established the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, it also decided it was unnecessary to establish a permanent National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention.

Dr Bernadette Boss CSC had been appointed as the interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention in November 2020. The work of the Commissioner was concluded, and a final report was delivered to Government on 15 September 2021.

[You can read the interim Commissioner's report, here.](#)

The 'Boss Report' is well worth a read. It is detailed and reflects her extensive experience across service in both the British and the Australian armies, the medical profession, the law, and her role as a coroner in the ACT.

DFWA will seek to have the recommendations contained in her Report that can be actioned or implemented now done so. She has provided a road map for the Royal Commission to follow and continue the work. We will keep you updated.

If you have any comments about the interim Commissioner's recommendations, [let us know here using our feedback form.](#)

Summary Discipline Reform

In 2017, Defence undertook a year-long review of the Summary Discipline System – that is the primary discipline system used in units, for relatively minor discipline infractions.

The overwhelming findings of that review was that the current system is overly complex, difficult to use, unresponsive, and does not support an efficient discipline system. Notably, the review found that requiring the application of criminal justice principles at unit level, by non-legally trained members of the ADF, is not conducive to effective and efficient unit discipline.

In August 2021, the *Defence Legislation Amendment (Discipline Reform) Bill 2021* was introduced to parliament, to—if passed—give effect to the substantive recommendations of the review.

In addition to implementing the recommendations of the review, the Bill also creates new offences:

- Failure to perform duty or carry out activity
- Cyber-bullying and refusing to comply with a (cyber-bullying) take-down order
- Failure to comply with requirement to notify change in circumstances

In August 2021, the Bill was referred to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for review; DFWA was invited to make submissions regarding the proposed amendments.

[You can read the DFWA submission, here.](#)

In preparing the submission, DFWA considered the impact of the proposed amendments on the welfare of ADF members. Our view is that the amendments are generally positive – reducing the complexity of the discipline system, while protecting the rights and interests of members.

DFWA did express some concern about the complexity of investigating and dealing with cyber-bullying offences, and recommended that the effect of those new offences be monitored to ensure that any unintended consequences can be identified and addressed.

[You can read the Committee's final report, here.](#)

Consider Donating to DFWA

DFWA advocates to government on a range of issues that affect all cohorts of veterans and their families. We do this on a very tight budget—our main sources of income are through annual membership fees and individual donations.



PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING

So DFWA can continue to advocate on behalf of the Defence and veteran community

[Donate Now](#)

Education Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum is developed by the [Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority](#) (ACARA) and applies to all primary and secondary schools—about four million students. The curriculum is reviewed every six years; the current review will be finalised before the end of 2021.

The proposed history curriculum includes *different historical interpretations and contested debates about the nature and significance of the Anzac legend and the war*. The existing version of the history curriculum includes similar words, but without “contested”.

Alan Tudge is the Federal Minister for Education and Youth. He has objected to the characterisation of Anzac Day as being “contested” and believes it should instead be

“presented as the most sacred of all days in Australia”. This is the predominant sentiment amongst veterans who have reached out the DFWA about the changes.

The Alliance of Defence Service Organisations (ADSO), of which DFWA is a leading member, has called upon the ACARA Chair, Belinda Robinson, to be upfront with veterans and the broader Australian community, to explain why the facts around Anzac Day and other significant historical events are being disputed.

[You can read the ADSO media release, here.](#)

Election

The federal election may be called any time before 21 May 2022, with most analysts predicting a March 2022. Elections are, perhaps, the best opportunities to successfully advocate for issues that affect the veteran community.

Issues that affect individuals and groups because they are Defence members, veterans, or their families are all important, however, DFWA needs to make sure we use our limited resources in the most effective and efficient way we can.

DFWA has developed a draft set of six objectives that we intend to focus on in the lead up to the federal election. We are after your feedback, to make sure we have the best set of objectives we can.

[You can view and comment on the draft objectives here.](#) Please have a read and let us know your thoughts.

Royal Commission Update

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide will hold its first public hearing at the Brisbane Convention Centre on Friday November 26. More details will be announced in the coming weeks. The hearing will explain how the Commissioners will conduct the inquiry. The first block of public hearings where participants will give evidence begins in Brisbane on Monday November 29, 2021.

The ceremonial hearing will be open to the public if COVID restrictions allow. It will also be webcast.

Anyone wishing to make a submission to the Commission can do so on the [Commission's website](#). The Commission will accept submissions until at least the end of March 2022. The closing date will be confirmed later this year.

DFWA will also be making a submission. We will keep you updated.

Once again, thank you all for your continued support.

Take care,

Kel Ryan, President DFWA

Defence Force Welfare Association

Bldg D2 Bruche Road

Royal Military College of Australia

Duntroon, ACT 2600

Australia

newsletter@dfwa.org.au

© DFWA 2021 | Unsubscribe