

National Carer Support Services

For the Veteran and Ex-service Community



For carers, partners, veterans,
their families, and ex-service
organisations supporting the
veteran community

National Carer Support Services For the Veteran and Ex-service Community

On 1 September 2009, the Department of Veterans' Affairs contracted Carers Victoria to provide National Carer Support Services for the veteran and ex-service community across Australia.

National Carer Support Services (NCSS) are aimed at helping carers to enhance their own health and wellbeing while caring for others. Services include interactive educational opportunities, community development initiatives, and events that encourage social connectedness.

- Workshops, educational programs and information sessions
- Conference presentations
- Resource development
- Community development initiatives
- Consultation – on carer and partner issues and inclusiveness
- Articles for your newsletters

Who are National Carer Support Services for?

National Carer Support Services are available for:

- Carers and partners within the veteran and ex-service community
- Veterans and ex-service members who are caring for others
- Ex-service organisations
- Consultation is also available to community organisations wanting to enhance their ability to support ex-service members and their families



Who is a Carer?

A carer is someone who cares for a family member or friend who needs assistance with aspects of daily living due to illness, chronic or acute health conditions, mental illness, disability or aged frailty.

People care for others because of the history and relationship they have with them.

The role as carer is in addition to the role of partner, spouse, wife, husband, brother, sister, daughter, son, mother, father, friend or other family member.

The word 'carer' is best understood as a collective name that encompasses these relationships and acknowledges the extra dimension that the relationship takes on.

Why do Carers need supports and services?

While caring for your family member or friend can be a very rewarding experience, it can also be very challenging at times. Carers take on a lot of extra tasks, demands and responsibilities that are over and above what would normally be associated with the relationship if there was no health condition present.

Sometimes the carer takes on the extra responsibilities gradually over time as the person they care for requires more assistance or becomes less able to contribute within the household. Others take on the carer's role quite suddenly as the result of an acute event such as a stroke, injury, etc.

Many carers struggle on alone trying to fulfil all of the needs of the person they care for, and are often unaware of other supports and services that may be able to assist them. Sometimes carers know about other supports and assistance but are reluctant to use them, often believing that the care role is their sole responsibility. As a result carers can often feel overwhelmed by fatigue, loneliness, social and emotional isolation.

Carers often neglect their own health and wellbeing needs as they don't see them as being a high priority. This can leave carers vulnerable to depression and stress related illnesses.

Carers need adequate and appropriate supports to assist them, whether in an educative capacity, through resources, or hands on assistance. Our services help carers to explore these, and other, issues through supportive educational opportunities.

How can National Carer Support Services help?

Our services are primarily education focused and tailored to the needs of particular groups within the context of ex-service communities.

Sensitivity and understanding of the impacts of defence force training, lifestyles and experiences are the cornerstones. We take into account post service challenges including transitions into civilian life, relationship and lifestyle changes, and the effects of illness, injury, service related experiences and trauma.

Issues are explored from the carers' perspective and sessions offer the opportunity to explore the impact of caring through a range of topics, and to share and gain effective strengths based strategies.

A range of interactive workshops is available to ex-service organisations wanting to provide further training to their volunteers, advocates, Welfare and Pension Officers and staff.

Consultation is available to community service providers and ex-service organisations seeking to enhance their carer / partner inclusive practice, or wanting to gain greater understanding of caring families within the veteran community.



Educational workshops and programs

National Carer Support Services offer an extensive range of educational workshops, programs, and information sessions developed specifically for the veteran and ex-service community. Many are outlined in this brochure.

Sessions can be further tailored to meet the needs of your particular group and new workshops can also be developed by request to meet other identified needs in relation to the carer experience.

Educational workshops and programs are available as individual sessions or multi-session programs. Most sessions are two hours in duration.



Workshops for partners/carers

Adapting to change

A sense of longing for what was, or what could have been, is often experienced when significant changes occur as a result of illness. These changes are experienced as loss and grief although they are not always recognised as such. In this workshop partners explore the impact of change in the context of illness.

Building resilience

The level of extra responsibilities, tasks, and demands placed on family carers can become overwhelming at times. Building and enhancing resilience enables you to bend rather than break when times are difficult and enhances your enjoyment and quality of life.

Caring for yourself

Caring for yourself doesn't mean neglecting the person you care for, in fact it can enhance your ability to care for others. In this workshop, practical strategies will be identified to help overcome psychological barriers that can affect your ability to acknowledge and address your own needs.

Caring and self esteem

Carers/partners can experience isolation and reduced self esteem when the care they provide is unacknowledged, unappreciated or the carer feels invisible. This workshop considers strategies for increasing self esteem.

Communicating effectively: Tips and strategies

We often blame other people for not understanding us when we try to communicate, yet, the problem could be that the message itself is not clear. In this workshop you will have the opportunity to ensure your communications are effective every time.

Communicating effectively: Impact of personality

Our moods, personality and expectations can affect our ability to communicate, particularly in diverse and challenging circumstances. In this workshop you will have the opportunity to explore different personality characteristics and how they help or hinder communication.

Continuing bonds

Even though significant changes can occur to relationships due to the effects of illness, dementia, brain injury, and cognitive decline, the bond continues in a changed form throughout the course of illness and even when the person has died. This workshop explores the nature of the continuing bond from a common sense approach that is consistent with most people's lived experience.

Dumping the junk

We often hold on to emotional junk, like hurtful comments, and mentally replay them over and over again. This workshop explores emotional hoarding: how to identify the junk and why we hold on to it. We consider how to dump the junk by changing our self talk from negative to positive.

Exploring boundaries, challenges and strategies: caring for special needs children

Parenting is a tough job and setting behavioural boundaries is an area that many parents struggle with. This workshop explores the impact of caring for special needs children, acknowledges parental expertise and encourages sharing of knowledge and strategies.

Helping you, helping me

Why do we think differently about mental illness? This workshop explores stigma and normalises mental illness by exploring ways of opening up conversations to raise awareness and reduce isolation.

Humour and caring

Humour can be therapeutic. It can change our perception and makes difficult situations less stressful. This fun, informative workshop can be used to reinvigorate your sense of humour and help reduce the stress associated with illness and caring.



I'm OK - I'll manage!

Wearing your superwoman suit all the time adds extra burden to your care role and impacts on your ability to seek and accept help. This workshop allows you to assess your own health and wellbeing needs and develop daily strategies to prevent burnout.

Preparing for end of life care

Death, like birth is a normal part of the life cycle but when end of life approaches for those we care for, it can be a confronting and anxious time. This workshop offers an opportunity to talk openly about what is likely to occur during this time and to learn about what to expect, and to consider services and supports that will enable quality of life during end of life care.

Reacting differently: responding to emotive and manipulative behaviours

Carers/partners often deal with manipulative behaviours and unrealistic demands. This workshop assists in making informed choices and developing new response patterns to create positive and sustainable change.

Retail therapy - therapeutic?

We often use shopping to engage socially, to combat loneliness or to avoid relationship difficulties and other issues. This fun and informative workshop explores all the reasons we have for shopping - the good, the bad and the ugly! If you enjoy a bit of retail therapy, this workshop is for you.

Surviving carer stress

Stress is a part of everyday life, particularly when caring for a partner/ family member suffering from war or service related illness or trauma. This workshop looks at the cumulative effects of stress and explores coping strategies to help minimise or prevent negative health impacts.

Taking time out – is it the right thing to do?

Carers often feel as though all of the caring is their job alone. However, when carers neglect their own health and wellbeing needs and fail to take a break they risk illness and burning out. This workshop explores practical strategies for making time for yourself and feeling good about it.

Walking on eggshells – surviving the crunch

Caring for someone with a mental illness can often feel like walking on eggshells. This workshop looks at the impact of mental illness on the carer/partner and offers coping strategies for better health outcomes.

We can move on

War and service related trauma can also impact partners and family members. This workshop enables carers/partners to move on to better health outcomes by making changes that will sustain both themselves and the person they care for.

You, me, and PTSD

Carers/partners can feel isolated and alone when managing the effects of PTSD, particularly over prolonged periods of time. This workshop explores how PTSD can affect the person and family members and offers coping strategies and supports.



Workshops for men

Men care too

In the veteran community many male carers have their own health issues, which can add to the demands associated with the carer role. This workshop explores emotional and practical aspects of caring and considers strategies to enhance health and wellbeing.

You're not listening to me!

Everyone communicates differently. This workshop offers an opportunity to consider the ways men and women communicate and helps develop strategies to overcome difficulties and improve the relationship.

Surviving with humour

We often take humour for granted. This fun, informative workshop considers the therapeutic benefits of humour and how it can help reduce the stress associated with illness and caring.

Men's health forums

A range of men's health forums with various topics of specific interest to men can be organised.

Workshops for ex-service organisations

Interactive workshops and information sessions are available to community organisations and ex-service organisations and their members who want to enhance their understanding of caring in the veteran context. A range of workshops specifically designed for volunteers working within veteran community are also available to assist in enhancing work practice.

Avoiding burnout: Caring for yourself

Excessive or ongoing work related stress can cause burnout. This workshop looks at strategies for avoiding burnout and separating work and personal time in the volunteer context.

Communicating Effectively with Clients

Why do some communications work well, while others cause frustration and conflict? This workshop looks at communication principles and identifies ways to enhance communication in a range of professional settings and situations.

We Can Move On – Supported Screening

This session features a screening of the DVD *We Can Move On: Help and support for partners of veterans* with an interactive discussion about the issues identified.

Understanding Carers

This workshop raises awareness about the impact of caring for someone with an illness or health condition. Raising awareness enables volunteers or workers to consider and suggest appropriate services and supports that might be helpful to the carer and person being cared for.

Humour and Welfare Work

Many volunteer roles involve a level of emotional engagement with the client. This workshop explores the impact of working in an emotionally charged environment and considers strategies for maintaining a sense of humour.

Resources for partners/carers

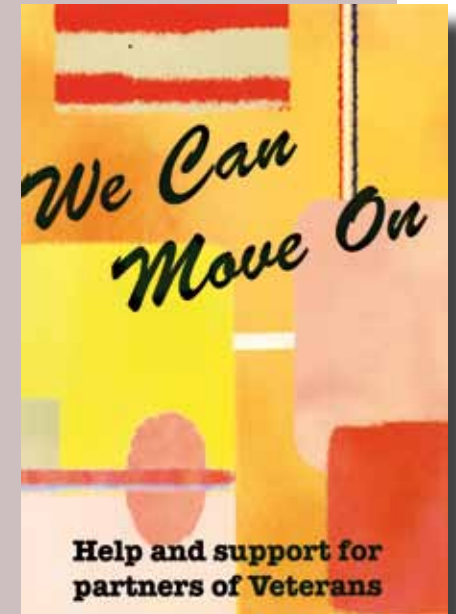
Carers Victoria has developed a DVD entitled, *We can move On: Help and support for partners of veterans* as a resource for the veteran community.

The DVD highlights many of the issues that partners often experience in a moving and powerful way and encourages strategies to enhance health and wellbeing.

The DVD also assists veterans in understanding the impact that their service may have had on their partners.

The DVD is available for purchase from Carers Victoria.

Group screenings and supported discussions can also be arranged.



Meet the NCSS Team

The National Carer Support Services team is composed of Coordinator, Zena Sharples, and two Education and Community Development Workers, Ruth Wein and Jennifer Daddow. The team brings a wealth of experience, knowledge, and sensitivity to their roles as well as a passion for encouraging carers to address their own health and wellbeing needs within the veteran and ex-service community and assisting them through educative options.



Contact us at Carers Victoria on 03 9396 9500 or education@carersvictoria.org.au



National Carer Support Services Logo

Our logo has been designed to help you easily distinguish the National Carer Support Services for the Veteran and Ex-Service Community, from the range of services provided by the Carer Association in your state.

Although we are based in Victoria the National Carer Support Services team will work with you to provide our specialist educational programs and workshops in your location.

Carer Associations

Each state has a Carer Association that provides a Carer Advisory Line and a Carer Counselling Program.

You can contact the Carer Association in your state at www.carersaustralia.org.au or phone 1800 242 636. Have a chat about your carer role and ask about the services available.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Affairs mission is to support those who serve or have served in defence of our nation and commemorate their service and sacrifice.

The website provides a broad range of information relevant to the community including an extensive range of informative fact sheets. You can also call and have a chat to them about your entitlements. To access the website or to enquire about supports and services visit www.dva.gov.au or call 133 254 (1800 555 254 for regional callers). The Department of Veterans' Affairs also supports Carers by funding the National Carer Support Services to the veteran and ex-service community through a contract with Carers Victoria.

Contact National Carer Support Services

To book a session or for more information about the services we offer including our extensive range of educational workshops and programs, you can contact us directly at:

Carers Victoria on 03 9396 9500 and speak to:

Zena Sharples - Coordinator, National Carer Support Services

Ruth Wein - Educator, National Carer Support Services

Jennifer Daddow – Educator, National Carer Support Services

or email us at education@carersvictoria.org.au

Alternatively you can contact:

The Carer Association in your state on 1800 242 636

The Department of Veterans' Affairs on 133 254 or regional callers 1800 555 254

Your nearest VAN office on 1300 551 918

Ask them to pass your contact details on to National Carer Support Services.



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs