



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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\$9.4 MILLION TO IMPLEMENT SUICIDE STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Australian Government is allocating \$9.4 million in additional funding to boost mental health services for veterans and ex-serving personnel, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, announced today.

The Government has accepted all of the recommendations of the *Independent Study into Suicide in the Ex-service Community*, which was released today. The study was a 2007 election commitment by the Rudd Government, and was undertaken by Melbourne University public health specialist Professor David Dunt.

The study examined broad issues of suicide in the ex-service community and a number of specific cases of suicide in the past three years.

The Government has already met with ex-service organisations to discuss the report.

Several recommendations have practical implementation issues that will need to be discussed with the ex-service community. Mr Griffin said the Government would continue to work in partnership with the ex-service community regarding these issues.

"Changes that will be made include the strengthening of mental health programs, including suicide prevention, and the further simplification of administrative procedures faced by those transitioning out of the Australian Defence Force, or applying for compensation. More experienced case managers will be assigned to support clients with complex needs and DVA will increase access to mental health clinical expertise.

"The Government has ensured that funds are available so that Professor Dunt's programs and initiatives can be implemented in a timely manner.

"Mental health in the ex-service and veteran community is a critical issue and the Government is allocating \$9.4 million to fund the appropriate support.

"This funding is in addition to the Government's recent commitment of \$83 million over four years to address the gaps identified in mental health care in the ADF and transition through discharge," Mr Griffin said.

While the suicide study found some evidence to suggest veterans may be at increased risk of health problems, and studies have shown some evidence to indicate elevated suicide risk among Australian veterans, this evidence is by no means conclusive.

However, Professor Dunt has made a series of recommendations that will help ensure the system will be more 'user friendly'. This should ensure those who use DVA services, and are at risk of self harm, will find it easier to get the support that they need.

Full text of the study and the Government's response can be found at www.dva.gov.au

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