



The Hon Andrew Gee MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel
Federal Member for Calare

MEDIA RELEASE

18 August 2021

Ex-Service Organisations convene support for Afghan Veterans

Ex-service organisations from across the nation have met with the Australian Government today to throw their support behind efforts underway to assist veterans and families impacted by the situation in Afghanistan.

The Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans' Affairs convened the extraordinary meeting of the Ex-Service Organisations (ESO) Roundtable, bringing together key players in the Defence and veteran community, to coordinate veteran mental health outreach and support.

"We have a network of incredible veteran and community groups across the nation who are, everyday delivering much needed services and support," Minister Gee said.

"I hosted a meeting this morning with our ESOs to join forces to support the veterans who served in Afghanistan and other conflicts, and also their families.

"Community and ex-service organisations play a critical role in the support of the veteran community and today they reiterated their commitment working with the Australian Government to deliver a united effort at this difficult time," Minister Gee said.

Organisations in attendance included the Air Force Association, Australian War Widows, Defence Families Australia, Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association, Defence Reserves Association, Legacy Australia, Partners of Veterans Association of Australia, Returned and Services League of Australia, TPI Federation Australia, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia and the Vietnam Veterans' Federation of Australia.

"Over the last 20 years, Australia has been a steadfast contributor to the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. Now the Defence and veteran community need to know that we are steadfast in our commitment to their wellbeing at home.

"Earlier this week I directed the Department of Veterans' Affairs to phone the families of ADF members who lost their lives in Afghanistan, as well as veterans that the department is aware of who could suffer adversely as a result of what is currently happening in Afghanistan, and let them know that support is available if it's needed.

"I encourage anyone in need of help to access the services that are available to them and their families.

“I would also encourage Australians to pick up the phone to say g’day to any veterans you may know. Now more than ever it’s vitally important to stay connected. A friendly voice can make all the difference to a mate who may be in need.”

Support services:

- **Open Arms** – Veterans & Families Counselling service is available 24/7 on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046)
- **Safe Zone Support** on [1800 142 072](tel:1800142072) is a free and anonymous counselling line for current serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families available 24/7
- **Defence Family Helpline** available for ADF members and their families, available 24/7 – dial [1800 624 608](tel:1800624608)

Minister Gee’s office: 0459 966 944