



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Dear Doctor

This letter is to bring to your attention information that may assist you in managing patients who are current or former members of the Australian Defence Force and who may have experienced sexual or physical abuse during their defence service.

The Australian Government has implemented a number of measures to better assist members or ex-members of the ADF who experienced abuse during their defence service. The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) administers the Non-Liability Health Care (NLHC) program which provides for treatment of certain mental health conditions.

Whilst care for survivors of abuse is a particular focus, anyone who has ever served in the permanent forces of the Australian Defence Force is now eligible for free treatment through the NLHC program, for certain mental health conditions, without needing to prove that the condition is linked to service, and without needing to lodge a compensation claim.

The mental health conditions covered under NLHC are:

- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- depressive disorder;
- anxiety disorder;
- alcohol use disorder; and
- substance use disorder.

DVA will need to confirm the applicant's identity and service, but NLHC may be accessed by current or former ADF members without the need to complete an application form - an emailed or phoned request is all that is required (details below).

Further, a diagnosis of one of the above conditions is no longer required prior to being approved for NLHC treatment. However, a diagnosis from a general practitioner, psychiatrist or clinical psychologist must be provided to DVA within six months of approval. This allows time for a thorough mental health assessment and diagnosis process, and for treatment to commence. Once a diagnosis of one or more of the above mental health conditions is provided, treatment approval becomes permanent.

Treatment is provided through a DVA Health Card – For Specific Conditions (White Card), which also allows the holder to access counselling services through the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service – VVCS.

Health providers who would like to find out more about NLHC, or confirm a White Card holder's eligibility for treatment, can call the DVA Health Provider Line on 1300 550 457 (Metro) or 1800 550 457 (Non Metro). To assist a patient to make an application, please email NLHC@dva.gov.au or phone 133 254 (metropolitan) or 1800 555 254 (regional).

Veterans who are in need of immediate mental health and wellbeing support can seek help from the VVCS. The VVCS provides free, confidential, nation-wide counselling and support for veterans, eligible current and former ADF members and their families and can be contacted at any time on 1800 011 046.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Gardner', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Ian R Gardner
Principal Medical Adviser
Department of Veterans' Affairs

20 December 2016