

Continuing THE Mission

Understanding and responding to the changing needs of the veteran community



VASEY RSL CARE 



Continuing ^{THE} Mission

Vasey RSL Care

Our Purpose:

Serving Those Who Served

Our Vision:

That veterans and war widows live with independence, control and dignity, feeling safe, valued and respected.

Our Promises:

Traditional Values, Security, Care, Camaraderie, Dignity, Fulfillment and Quality.

Our Legacy:

Formed from the merger of RSL Care Victoria and Vasey Housing Victoria in 2004, Vasey RSL Care seeks to honour the mission of these two founding bodies: to provide the best possible support and services to all generations of veterans in Victoria (RSL Victoria) and to honour their ethos of 'accepting all who are in need'; to promote and protect the interests of war widows (War Widows Guild) and to keep alive the vision and legacy of Mrs Jessie Mary Vasey.



Foreword

“Our veterans and their families are a special group of Australians who have been prepared to make important contributions for our country’s national interests.”

Air Chief Marshall Sir Angus Houston AK, AC (Mil), AFC (Retired), speaking at the 2015 launch of a research project aimed at mapping the needs of veterans and families.¹

Every ANZAC Day we pause to reflect on the invaluable contribution our defence forces have made in shaping our nation, and protecting values we hold dear, through their service in times of peace and conflict. We pause every 25 April to remember the sacrifices of young men and women on battlefields afar, honouring the fallen; and we show our pride to the living veterans, parading past on this one day a year.

But beyond our few annual days of remembrance, a grateful Australian community must embrace the year-round needs of ex-service personnel and their families, regardless of age and circumstance. Lest we forget.

This is the Vasey RSL Care mission in Victoria – to serve those who served. We are well-known for the aged care services we provide, including specialist services to meet the unique needs of the ex-service community. Every day we witness the ongoing camaraderie that comes from shared experiences and the honour and respect held for each other.

It takes a special team of people to care for our veterans and their families – people with a knowledge of their unique needs.

However, relatively little has been written about the changing needs, and indeed changing demographics, of our ex-service community. With a lack of understanding comes service gaps, requiring organisations like ours to constantly evolve and fulfill these needs.

Since 2004, when RSL Victoria and the War Widows’ Guild of Australia (Victoria) established our organisation, Vasey RSL Care has been there for Victoria’s veterans and war widows, serving those who served.

We are now Victoria’s leading specialist in veterans’ housing, care and support, providing residential accommodation and care for more than 850 people, mostly ex-service. We are the only aged care organisation in Victoria that prioritises veterans, regardless of their financial circumstances.

We owe it to our ex-service community to better understand their changing needs and ensure those who have supported our nation continue to be supported. Our mission continues...



Mike O’Meara OAM
Chair, Vasey RSL Care

¹ Aspen Foundation, Media release ‘Mapping project to inform Australia’s Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) for the 21st Century’ launched in Canberra, 15 December 2015

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Executive Summary

Victoria's ex-service community is changing and the services that surround its members must adapt. Contrary to popular belief, the need is not in decline, though the needs are changing with the demographics of veterans and their families.

In 2020, it is estimated that of the 600,000 Australians who served in WWII, fewer than 3000 remain alive nationwide with a 20-year-old in 1940 now 100 years of age.²

The majority of veterans and their widows now in aged care are mainly from the WWII and Korean War ex-service community. However, that dynamic is changing, and growing numbers are presenting from the Vietnam War (1962-1975), Indonesian Confrontation (1963-1966) and Malayan Emergency (1950-1960) generations, with a 20-year-old in 1960 now celebrating their 80th birthday. These campaigns mark the third wave of conflicts involving serving Australians, following the two world wars.

Moreover, a fourth wave of ex-service men and women make up a younger cohort of veterans with their own unique set of needs. This generation of veterans is post the Vietnam War: it includes those who served in the First Gulf War (1990-1991) and are now in their 50s and 60s and a younger generation of ex-service personnel who served in pacific peacekeeping missions (1997-2013) and the Second Gulf War (2001-present). A veteran who was aged 20 in 2000 is now just 40 years old. Many such younger Australians form part of the ex-service community, having served in East Timor (Timor-Leste), pacific interventions, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 2020s will see continued growth in aged care needs with some 960 veterans and widows expected to require a place in Victoria alone by 2030. Although veterans over the age of 60 account for the majority of the ex-service community, one in four are currently under this age and this proportion will increase as the decade progresses.

Younger ex-serving people face unique challenges as they transition to civilian life, trying to adapt to a new workforce that often does not recognise their special training and skills, and integrating into a society that does not have the extensive ADF support structures. Mental health issues can be particularly acute for ex-service personnel and an 18 to 24-year-old male who has left the ADF is up to twice as likely to end his life through suicide as another Australian man of the same age.³

² Dunn, Amelia (SBS News), 2020

³ AIHW, Incidence of suicide among serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force personnel 2001-2014, November 2016, p2

Particularly concerning is that there are estimated to be some 5800 veterans experiencing homelessness in any 12-month period in Australia, a rate significantly higher than the rest of the population.⁴

Much more must be done to ensure those who have served our nation are treated with dignity and respect, and have the support services they need through the different stages of their life.

This white paper presents some of the research undertaken by Australian veteran organisations and health agencies, identifies service gaps, and outlines Vasey RSL Care's vision to better support our ex-service community.

Specifically, this paper sets out how to achieve four key objectives:

1. Work towards ending veteran homelessness;
2. Adapt aged care services to better support the needs of retired and older veterans and war widows;
3. Offer long-term affordable accommodation; and
4. Build support services around the needs of younger ex-service people.

⁴ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 'Homelessness amongst Australian veterans', 2019



Chapter 1

Scoping the Problem



Key Points

- ❁ **It is estimated that by 2030 there will be approximately 960 veterans in Victoria in need of a place in residential aged care.**
 - ❁ High demand for residential aged care, dementia care and palliative care is anticipated.
- ❁ **Vasey RSL Care is the sole aged care provider in Victoria that gives priority to ex-service people.**
- ❁ **While aged care needs for Vietnam War-era ex-service people continue to grow in the 2020s, this overlaps with a growing need for services for younger veterans.**
 - ❁ Department of Veterans' Affairs figures show that nearly one in three, or 31 per cent, of veterans in Victoria are aged under 60.
- ❁ **Younger veterans have unique challenges transitioning to civilian life.**
 - ❁ Male ex-service personnel aged 18-24 are particularly at risk, with a suicide rate twice that of other Australian men of the same age.
 - ❁ While highly trained and team-orientated, younger veterans may need support to market the transferability of their skills to a civilian workforce unfamiliar with ADF capabilities.
- ❁ **It is estimated that there are several hundred veterans in Victoria who are homeless.**
 - ❁ From 2010 to 2018, those who recently transitioned out of the ADF experienced homelessness at a rate of 5.3 per cent, compared with the general population at around 1.9 per cent: of this population, around half were considered to be transitionally homeless, while a quarter were homeless for a significant period of time and a quarter were defined as chronically homeless.

1.1 Changing Demographics of Veterans and Their Families

With World War I and World War II resulting in the first two generations of Australia's ex-service community, it is the generation of Vietnam War, Indonesian Confrontation and Malayan Emergency veterans, now in their 70s and 80s, who are beginning to dominate the aged care sector as the 2020s progress.

Australia's ageing population will place increasing pressure on aged care services. By 2030, 13 per cent of all Australians will be over 70 years. The Commonwealth's set formula for estimating the number of aged care places needed is 7.8 per cent of people over 70. Using this formula, it is estimated that Australia will need 36,312 additional places by 2030. Applying this formula in conjunction with DVA's Treatment Population projections, it is estimated that by 2030 there will be approximately 960 veterans and widows in Victoria who will require a residential aged care place.

Despite the comparative increase in operational tempo over the last decade, the number of Australians deployed to the modern theatres has only recently surpassed the numbers deployed to Vietnam and has not approached the scale of World War II deployments. Older veterans and their dependant widows still represent the largest proportion of the ex-serving population. DVA Treatment Population statistics suggest that veterans and dependants over 70 years make up around 57 per cent of the Victorian ex-service community.⁵

While aged care needs remain strong, the 2020s will see an era of overlapping demand from a younger fourth generation of ex-service people now aged between 20 and 65 who face substantially different support requirements.

1.1.1 Younger Veterans

Younger veterans already form a significant group of ex-service personnel, and will increasingly change the shape of ex-service needs over the coming decade. Department of Veterans' Affairs figures indicate that 31 per cent of veterans in Victoria are under 60, with this percentage expected to increase.⁶

Finding stable accommodation remains a challenge for many transitioning to civilian life, especially for those injured and medically discharged, and those facing mental health difficulties. Already, 15 per cent of Vasey RSL Care's ex-service accommodation housing residents are aged under 65 years, with some as young as 35.

⁵ Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Treatment Population Statistics*, 3 January 2020

⁶ Ibid

Support for younger veterans transitioning to civilian life will be a key priority for the 2020s. An ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study in 2010 found that the rate of suicidal thought and planning among defence force personnel was more than twice that of the rest of the Australian community. Furthermore, a US Study by researchers at Yale and the US Department of Veteran Affairs in 2018 found that US Veterans with a history of homelessness are five times more likely to attempt suicide than other veterans.⁷

In 2016, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) identified a particular cohort of ex-service personnel who were at a statistically significant higher risk of suicide death than their general community counterparts. Between 2002 and 2014, ex-service men aged 18 to 24 accounted for one in six suicide deaths (23 deaths, or 17 per cent) – twice as high as other Australian men of the same age.⁸

Diagram 1: The Generations of Conflict⁹

Major Wars and Conflicts			Age 20 in:	In 2016	In 2021	In 2025
		WWII (1939-1945)	1940	96	101	106
	Occupation of Japan (1946-1951)		1945	91	96	101
Korean War (1950-1953)		Malayan Emergency (1950-1960)	1950	86	91	96
			1955	81	86	91
Vietnam War (1962-1975)	Indonesian Confrontation (1963-1966)		1960	76	81	86
			1965	71	76	81
		1970	66	71	76	
			1975	61	66	71
"The Great Peace"			1980	56	61	66
			1985	51	56	61
		First Gulf War (1990-91)	1990	46	51	56
			1995	41	46	51
Second Gulf War (2001 to present)	Pacific Peacekeeping (1997-2013)		2000	36	41	46
			2005	31	36	41
			2010	26	31	36
			2015	21	26	31
			2020	16	21	26
			2025	11	16	21

7 Addressing Veteran Homelessness to Prevent Veteran Suicides, Jack Tsai, Ph.D., Louis Trevisan, M.D., Minda Huang, M.A., Robert H. Pietrzak, Ph.D., M.P.H, 2018 <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ps.201700482>

8 AIHW, Incidence of suicide among serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force Personnel 2001-2004, November 2016, p2

9 Information from Australian War Memorial Website www.awm.gov.au, accessed 2016

1.2 Accommodation Challenges

An Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) study for DVA in May 2019¹⁰ reported that:

- 5.3 per cent of recent transitions from the ADF from 2010 to 2018 experienced homelessness in a 12-month period (approx. 5767 nationally); this is almost three times the proportion of the general population experiencing homelessness (1.9 per cent).
- Of these, half were considered transitionally homeless, one quarter homeless for a significant period of time, and one quarter chronically homeless.
- Only 39 per cent of this group had sought assistance from mainstream service organisations, citing a number of barriers to access. Those who did seek assistance reported a high rate of dissatisfaction with the service provided.
- Veterans are reluctant to access mainstream support services. Veterans experiencing chronic homelessness require active case management and ongoing wraparound support services, including housing. Very few veteran-specific services offer the level of support required and preventative services often do not reach those who are most at risk.
- The main reasons reported by veterans for not seeking assistance for homelessness were; firstly not knowing what services were available, and secondly not trusting services that were available. It is notable that distrust was not an issue for veteran-specific homelessness services.
- The qualitative data confirms that many veterans experiencing chronic homelessness have reached a state of ill-health and crisis that requires intensive, holistic support, including active case management and practical assistance. Few services currently provide this level of support, and this is a key service gap. A small number of specialist homeless veteran programs do offer accommodation and this level of support.
- Note: this report used data only for members of the ex-service community who had recently transitioned (from 2010 to 2018).

¹⁰ Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, 'Homelessness amongst Australian Veterans: Executive Summary: Key Points', pp.1-2

Regional Living with Ex-service Mates



Vietnam War veteran Kevin 'Butch' Brady and his wife Val have lived at Vasey RSL Care's Bell Park Ex-Service Accommodation in Geelong for 20 years.

Now aged 81, Kevin enlisted at age 18 in 1957. His first overseas posting was to Malaya in 1961 as part of Australia's contribution to the lesser known anti-communist campaign referred to as the 'Malayan Emergency'.

In 1966, Kevin served in Vietnam, joining the Task Force at Nui Dat. He was wounded following an ambush of his troop during Operation Hobart.

Kevin volunteered for a second tour to Vietnam in 1969 and went on to serve with the Australian Army Training Team as an adviser to the South Vietnamese.

He switched from Infantry to the Aviation Corp and saw out his service at the Army Aviation Centre in Oakey, Queensland, retiring after 23 years' service.

"Our experiences in New Guinea and Malaya taught us how to live in the jungle. We could be out there for between 12 and 18 days. We wouldn't shave, or shower or cook, because the enemy could pick up sounds and smells for a couple of kilometres in the jungle," Kevin said.

Kevin and Val are active in the life of the community. "We don't live in each other's pockets. Everyone gets on. And occasionally we sit down and have a beer and talk about our experiences," Kevin said of the importance of living among others with similar ex-service backgrounds.

1.3 Geographic Location

Mapping of Department of Veterans' Affairs ex-service population data by postcode from 2016 shows a high density of those aged 85 years and older close to current Vasey RSL Care aged care residential facility sites.

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) data of ex-ADF clients provides useful postcode locations to help identify areas of high ex-service community populations.

Moreover, the data show potential accommodation service opportunities in several geographic areas not currently served by specialist ex-service housing options.

Table 1: Department of Veterans' Affairs data of ex-ADF client locations in areas currently served by Vasey RSL Care sites, 2016

Local Government Area	Vasey RSL Care Sites	Ex-ADF personnel in council area(s)			
		under 65	65-85	85+	Total
Bayside City Council	Brighton & Brighton East aged care Beaumaris ex-service units	145	306	441	892
Frankston City Council and Casey City Council	Frankston South aged care & Frankston ex-service units	793	1376	1349	3518
Kingston City Council	Cheltenham ex-service units	304	716	963	1983
Banyule City Council	Ivanhoe aged care & ex-service units	527	682	872	2081
Whittlesea City and Nillumbik Shire Councils	Bundoora aged care	747	1015	736	2498
Maroondah City Council	Croydon ex-service units	307	588	808	1703
Darebin City Council	Reservoir ex-service units	386	391	748	1525
Greater Geelong City Council	Bell Park ex-service units	855	1355	1576	3786
TOTAL		4064	6429	7493	17986

1.3.1 Metropolitan Melbourne

As Table 1 shows, aged care accommodation for the ex-service community is already operated by Vasey RSL Care across large parts of Melbourne's north-eastern and southern suburbs with five aged care facilities located in Bundoora, Ivanhoe, Frankston South, Brighton and Brighton East.

Similarly, the organisation provides 237 ex-service accommodation units in greater Melbourne with sites in Beaumaris, Frankston South, Brighton and

Cheltenham in the south and south-east, Reservoir in the north, Ivanhoe in the north-east and Croydon in the east.

DVA data indicate significant veteran populations with no matching specialist ex-service accommodation providers in the city's south-west: neighbouring municipalities of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay have some of Melbourne's highest concentrations of veterans with a combined 2514 ex-service people living across the two councils. This includes 592 veterans and war widows over 85 years, 966 veterans and war widows aged 65-85 and 956 who are under 65 years.

Illustration 1: Metropolitan Melbourne, showing Vasey RSL Care sites, highlighting Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Council regions in Melbourne's south-west with high populations of ex-service people.



- Aged Care Facilities
- Ex-Service Accommodation

1.3.2 Regional Victoria

Gradual shifts have been made by veterans and their dependants to regional areas as 'sea and tree-changers' seek out a country retirement lifestyle. Regional Victoria, which has a long history of ADF involvement, is also home to large concentrated groups of younger ex-service people who lack access to the same level of specialist veteran services as their metropolitan counterparts.

As Victoria's second largest city, unsurprisingly the City of Greater Geelong and its neighbouring Surf Coast Shire have the largest regional ex-service community population with a combined 3642 ex-ADF people living in the area. A particularly large cohort of these coastal veterans (1544 people) is over the age of 85 years. The Geelong suburb of Bell Park is currently home to 38 ex-service independent living units operated by Vasey RSL Care – currently the organisation's only regional facility.

Table 2: Department of Veterans' Affairs data of ex-ADF client locations in regional Victoria, 2016

Local Government Area	Ex-ADF personnel in council area(s)			
	under 65	65-85	85+	Total
Greater Geelong City Council & Surf Coast Shire	803	1295	1544	3642
Ballarat City Council	391	530	585	1506
Greater Bendigo City Council	481	675	722	1878
Mitchell Shire Council	528	397	256	1181
Wodonga City Council & Indigo Shire	840	568	236	1644
Latrobe City Council	235	391	308	934
East Gippsland Shire Council	250	529	376	1155
TOTAL	3528	4385	4027	11940

As Table 2 shows, the next largest geographic regional concentration of veterans is in the City of Greater Bendigo in Victoria's north, which is home to 1878 ex-service people.

Reflecting its general population breakdown, Ballarat has a fairly even age split of its 1506 veterans.

However, two areas on the Victoria/NSW border have a high number of ex-service people who reside more than 250 kilometres from Melbourne. The

majority of East Gippsland Shire's 1155 veterans are in retirement (391 aged 65-85 years) but not necessarily ready for aged care living. Conversely, the northern Victorian municipalities of Wodonga and neighbouring Indigo Shire have a high younger veteran population with 840 of their 1644 ex-service residents under the age of 65 years.

Illustration 2: Regional Melbourne, green highlighting indicating those council regions with higher veteran populations.



Map by Australia_Victoria_location_map.svg; NordNordWestderivative work: Cassowary (talk) - Australia_Victoria_location_map.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14530096>.



Chapter 2

The White Paper Vision



Key Points

- ✿ **Work to ensure veterans are not left homeless by offering a range of emergency housing, transition supports and long-term accommodation.**
 - ✿ Assist chronically homeless veterans through active, face-to-face case management and ongoing wraparound support services.
 - ✿ Adopt evidence-based 'Housing First' model.
- ✿ **Recognise that retirement age and older veteran needs continue to grow, and services and accommodation must adjust accordingly.**
 - ✿ Choices to be increased in aged care accommodation, including living at home with support from Vasey RSL Care's Home Care program, and comfortable ex-service units for independent living with affordable rent.
 - ✿ Residential aged care needs to meet specific health requirements of the ex-service community, including memory support care with a focus on PTSD impacts, and palliative care.
- ✿ **Improve access to specialist veteran accommodation in areas of high ex-service populations that are not currently served, in parts of Melbourne and regional Victoria.**
- ✿ **Offer extra accommodation lifestyle choices such as high standard retirement living and affordable, fit-for-purpose ex-service units.**
- ✿ **Better support younger veterans with their transition to civilian life.**

Our country owes it to those who have served our nation and helped create the community we now take for granted, to care for their needs. To do this, we must respond to the changing demographics and needs of veterans and their dependants, ensuring services adapt to cater to the specific needs of the ex-service community.

Vasey RSL Care has a long and proud tradition of supporting veterans and war widows, in its current format since 2004, and with its predecessors serving the community since the end of WWI as RSL Victoria's Sailors and Soldiers Widows and Widowed Mother's Trust, and as the War Widows' Guild's Vasey Housing which formed at the end of WWII.

However, even an organisation with more than 100 years' experience in understanding the unique needs of veterans must continue to evolve as each new generation leaves the ADF and faces its own challenges in civilian life.

This white paper outlines Vasey RSL Care's strategic vision to support Victoria's ex-service community in the 2020s and beyond which is based on four key objectives:

1. To work towards ending veteran homelessness;
2. To adapt aged care services to better support the needs of older veterans and widows;
3. To offer long term affordable accommodation; and
4. To build support services around the needs of younger ex-service people.

2.1 Work Towards Ending Veteran Homelessness

Over the next decade, Vasey RSL Care will strive to break the cycle of homelessness among veterans in Victoria by increasing its supply of affordable fit-for-purpose accommodation for the ex-service community in the right areas, with the right support. Importantly, this objective comes regardless of the age and financial situation of the ex-service community member.

Vasey RSL Care's newly developed, evidence-based model for emergency housing (using the 'Housing First' approach) will create an entry and exit point so individuals can move in at a time of crisis and transition out to suitable housing; this may be to Vasey RSL Care's long-term accommodation or through our partnerships with other organisations, to other accommodation of

their choice. Wraparound services will support people during this time.

What does success look like?

- ✿ Fewer ex-service people in Victoria become homeless, with the number as close to zero as reasonably possible.

2.2 Adapt Aged Care Services to Better Support the Needs of Older Veterans and War Widows

Demand for aged care services, particularly among the retired Vietnam War-era, early Peacekeeping and National Service communities, will gather strength throughout the 2020s, placing a requirement on the sector to grow in Victoria to meet demand.

This cohort of veterans will have high healthcare needs. Similar to the general population, the most common long-term health conditions include arthritis, hypertensive disease, hearing loss, heart disease, diabetes and vision problems. This is echoed in the top 20 treatment claims for Vietnam veterans, which include hearing damage, various mental health issues, various forms of osteo-arthritis and disease of ageing such as ischaemic heart disease, chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and hypertension. Consequently, lifestyle management (diet, fitness, managing Type II diabetes and so on) becomes a bigger issue for this group.¹¹

Aged care services must adapt to support these health and lifestyle needs in order to provide superior care for older veterans.

What does success look like?

- ✿ Services and accommodation grow to meet the needs of retirement age veterans in the areas they need it most.

2.3 Offer Long-Term Affordable Accommodation

The third generation of veterans and their families have comparatively higher wealth and expectations of aged care and retirement living than preceding generations. Independent housing options are preferred with most preferring to stay in their home for as long as possible, while those entering retirement living are looking for options that feel less like a hospital.

11 Gripfast Consulting, VRSLC Beyond 2018, Feb 2017 p 10

They have higher expectations of services and place higher value on their ability to choose and control their care. Vasey RSL Care prides itself on seeing residents as 'active citizens' and recognises their strong desire to stay involved and connected with their families and community.

Vasey RSL Care's ex-service housing units have undergone a process of consolidation and refurbishment to meet the needs and choices of the ex-service community for long-term accommodation.

However, future developments will be required to meet this growing need with plans to expand to parts of regional Victoria and northern and western Melbourne where veteran population numbers are greatest, and where there is easy access to transport, jobs and study.

What does success look like?

- Those veterans and their dependants in need of long-term accommodation do not need to wait, regardless of finance or care needs.
- Accommodation expands to geographic areas where veteran needs are greatest.

2.4 Build Support Services Around the Needs of Younger Ex-Service People

Already one in three veterans are under 60 years of age, and with up to 6000 service men and women leaving the Australian Defence Force every year, this will only increase.

Vasey RSL Care has provided an important avenue of support for many younger veterans requiring independent housing options. The planned expansion of the service will see a greater focus on emergency housing, with increased support services to provide a wraparound service to support the increasing requirement throughout the 2020s.

What does success look like?

- Services evolve to better meet the unique needs of younger veterans transitioning to civilian life, including supportive accommodation, access to employment and a range of health supports.

Younger Veteran Finds his Feet



Keith Walsh knows better than most that it only takes a few things to go wrong to be on the cusp of homelessness.

A few years ago, Keith settled into his Cheltenham ex-service unit after a period of living in his car or couch-surfing.

Keith served in the RAAF from 1982 to 1988, and tracks his family military pedigree back to two great great uncles who served in WWI. His father, both grandfathers, his sister and his son have also served in the ADF.

Keith struggled through two broken marriages and a number of civilian jobs before landing with nothing after his business venture failed. He readily admits he battles PTSD and has 'trust issues'.

Keith was thrown a lifeline when he was put in contact with Phuong Nguyen, the State Manager of Soldier On.

"You know who your friends are when you're down as far as I was," he said. "And I'm glad to have the opportunity to thank everyone who's helped me, especially Phuong at Soldier On and Vasey RSL Care."

Keith has found himself part of a cohort of younger veterans whose needs for secure, affordable accommodation are being met by Vasey RSL Care.



Chapter 3

Vasey RSL Care's Solution



Key Points

- ❁ **Develop new facilities in areas of high veteran demographic concentration, incorporating aged care and a broader range of accommodation options, including:**
 - ❁ In the western Melbourne metropolitan area:
 - ❁ Build new aged care facility (100 rooms);
 - ❁ Build retirement living housing (for up to 30 people); and
 - ❁ Build affordable accommodation (approx. 20 people).
 - ❁ In the northern Melbourne metropolitan area:
 - ❁ Build affordable accommodation or apartments (for approx. 30 people).
 - ❁ In regional Victoria:
 - ❁ In conjunction with other providers, develop suitable accommodation options in line with demographic demand (eg Gippsland and Bendigo).
- ❁ **Create an emergency and short-term accommodation facility, strategically located in proximity to appropriate metropolitan support services.**
 - ❁ Provide accommodation and support for veterans requiring access to 'wraparound services' experiencing complex issues relating to mental health or other problems, targeting young veterans during the critical transitioning period from the ADF.
 - ❁ Support about 30 people at any given time, with length of stay lasting 3-6 months.
- ❁ **Develop Vasey RSL Care's Home Care support program in western Melbourne and in regional Victoria.**
- ❁ **Develop partnerships with other aged care providers and ex-service organisations to expand the service coverage available to the ex-service community throughout Victoria.**

As well as being a highly-regarded aged care provider prioritising the ex-service community, Vasey RSL Care's most significant service is accommodation for veterans and war widows. 'Accept all in need' was the maxim of RSL Victoria and this principle has guided its support of the ex-service community ever since.

3.1 Long-Term Accommodation: Ex-Service Units

Currently, Vasey RSL Care has 275 ex-service housing units providing accommodation for 293 ex-service people. These units are predominantly long-term accommodation, but in response to need, there are three units set up as transitional accommodation for people who are either waiting for a longer placement or who require short-term accommodation (up to three months).

There is a mix of two-bedroom, one-bedroom and studio units at eight village-style locations across metropolitan Melbourne and Geelong. Rentals are well below equivalent commercial rates, averaging 50-55 per cent comparable accommodation in the surrounding area.

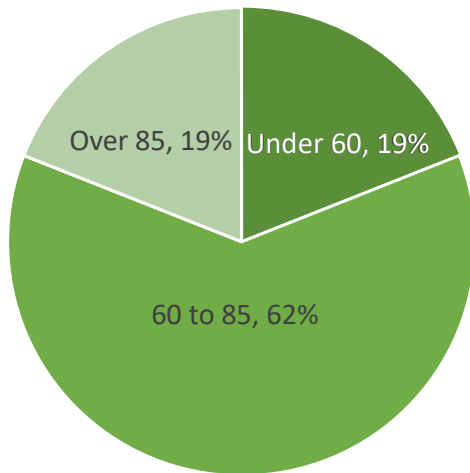
These accommodation units are not retirement villages: all tenants are under Residential Tenancy Agreements and units are suitable for veterans and war widows of all ages. Occupants are eligible for rental assistance from Centrelink or DVA as per normal rental arrangements.

Ex-service unit locations owned by Vasey RSL Care vary in size from the smallest at 12 units to the largest at 85 units. Vasey RSL Care is responsible for the upkeep of the grounds and general maintenance as required, as well as ongoing renovation and refurbishment works, at no cost to residents.

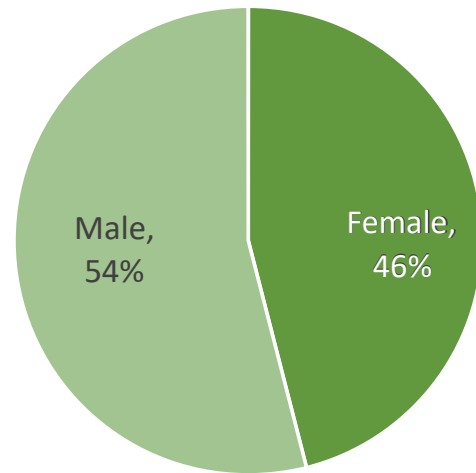
This model has worked successfully for 16 years and traditionally focused on supporting older ex-service people, aged 60 and over. However, over the last five years Vasey RSL Care has provided accommodation to younger members of the ex-service community.

In 2020, around 19 per cent of Vasey RSL Care's ex-service unit tenants were under 60, and in the last financial year, 33 per cent of new placements have been veterans or widows under 60. Currently, the average tenant age is 73.8 years, though ages range from 35 to 96 years.

Ex-Service Unit Tenant Age Breakdown, August 2020



Ex-Service Unit Tenant Gender Breakdown, August 2020



3.2 Residential Aged Care Accommodation: Permanent and Respite Options

In 2020, Vasey RSL Care operated 428 residential aged care places. Two important considerations guide the organisation's planning for the future of residential aged care facilities: first, the demand for aged care places will exceed the number of places available; and second, the likely result of this is that most aged care providers will give priority to the more financially suitable admissions.

Vasey RSL Care has and will continue to prioritise veterans over any other admissions, regardless of financial circumstances.

A number of variables influence planning for future long-term accommodation, including:

- Changing geographic requirements for veteran housing;
- Development of accommodation suitable for different ages and stages of life;
- Contemporary standards and expectations; and
- Fit-for-purpose requirements.

The proposed locations of Vasey RSL Care's new residential aged care facilities are based on demographic evidence that shows a higher density of veterans and widows aged 65-85 in the western metro area, and regional areas such as Gippsland and the Bendigo district.¹²

¹² Gripfast Consulting, VRSLC Beyond 2018, Feb 2017

Forging a Legacy of Female Service

Peg Utting is a trailblazer who was one of the first group of 26 women to join the armed forces as part of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF).

Formed in March 1941, the WAAAF was established following the strong lobbying of women keen to serve and by the Chief of Air Staff who was keen to release male personnel serving in Australia for service overseas.¹³

In 2018, a reunion lunch was held at her Vasey RSL Care Brighton East home with two of the remaining three of the 26 earliest members of the WAAAF, 77 years after they signed up together. They were joined by family members and two currently serving female RAAF members from HMAS Cerberus who continue her legacy.

"To see my old friends again was just what I wished for but to have such a great party ... and the wonderful bonus of two lovely young women from the present day RAAF – it was all so perfect, like a dream," Peg said.



However, developing large regional facilities throughout Victoria is not required, as veteran populations are spread widely across the state. Therefore, Vasey RSL Care plans to address this by developing innovative solutions for those who require aged care services in less populated areas, for example through the delivery of Home Care packages that address different levels of support needed, whether in their own home or in a regional Vasey RSL Care ex-service unit. As an expert in aged care, Vasey RSL Care may also facilitate placements in other operators' existing aged care facilities where required.

¹³ Australian War Memorial, Understanding Military Structure, RAAF/WAAAF - online, accessed September 2020

3.3 Short-Term Accommodation

The short-term accommodation model Vasey RSL Care plans to adopt is well-known internationally and has already been successfully implemented in Australia.

3.3.1 The Housing First Model

This is an evidence-based program for homeless people. It is a strategic response to homelessness that prioritises permanent and stable housing for people experiencing homelessness.

This program began in the USA in the 1990s and was successfully transferred to Europe and Canada and more recently implemented in New Zealand.

However, in Australia, the development of Housing First has been constrained by the lack of appropriate affordable housing stock necessary to quickly accommodate those experiencing homelessness. Despite this, there are a number of trial projects here that have achieved successful outcomes for clients, including the 'Homes for Heroes' program in NSW run by RSL Lifecare.¹⁴

The Housing First model prescribes safe and permanent housing as the first priority for people experiencing homelessness. Once housing is secured, a multidisciplinary team can begin to work with the individual to understand their issues and begin to address them, bringing in appropriate services such as drug and alcohol counselling and mental health support as needed.

With this model, the individual's engagement with support services is not a prerequisite for them to maintain accommodation: each individual is assisted in sustaining their housing as they work towards recovery and reintegration with the community at their own pace.

The underlying principle of Housing First is that people are better able to begin to address complex issues in their lives once they have the security and safety that their own home provides. This is as true for people experiencing homelessness as it is for anyone. Housing is provided first, and then supports are provided, including physical and mental health, assistance with drugs and behaviours of dependence, community connection, family reconnection, education, financial management, employment readiness and ongoing support.

At Vasey RSL Care, it is envisaged that the individual will be able to access

14 Gripfast Consulting, VRSLC Beyond 2018, Feb 2017

stable accommodation in an environment that is specific to their background, among people who have a solid and extensive understanding of the unique needs of the ex-service community, and 'open the door' to realistic and effective resolution of long-term problems.

The ultimate goal is for the individual to become a functioning member of society, reintegrated with a support network of their own, and ultimately to transition to accommodation of their choice, in permanent Vasey RSL Care accommodation, with our wider network of accommodation providers, or in the general community.

3.3.2 The 'V' Centre

Vasey RSL Care has an exciting vision to create the 'V' Centre - emergency, short-term accommodation for the ex-service community, following the Housing First model.

The V Centre will accommodate 30 residents, offering individual rooms and bathrooms with common facilities, such as kitchens, lounges and other facilities. It will be located in close proximity to specialised mental health support providers,

We plan for this to be operational by 2023.

It is envisaged that a person who is homeless or marginally homeless will take between three and six months to have reached a state where they can successfully take up long-term/permanent housing.

Vasey RSL Care's vision for the 'V' Centre emergency housing portfolio in 2023:

- 30 rooms
- Average turnaround five months
- 70 people assisted per year

This model involves three kinds of support:

1. Housing Support

Vasey RSL Care's V Centre would provide short-term accommodation of typically three to six months after which the individual would transition to long-term ex-service accommodation, or other appropriate accommodation based on their choice of location and financial situation.

Homes for Heroes, NSW



RSL Lifecare in NSW has operated a short-term, emergency accommodation service for veterans called 'Homes for Heroes' since 2014, when a staff member came across a fellow veteran sleeping rough.

This led to refurbishment of 12 cabins with communal living areas for homeless veterans at Narrabeen Village. In 2016, a further 10 beds were added to RSL Lifecare's Penrith site, and now they have capacity for 38 residents per year across the program.

The service is specifically designed to help veterans with short-term housing and support their transition to more permanent, stable accommodation. The typical stay is about 18 months, with ongoing support to develop their life skills through the assistance of seven full-time staff and a housing officer.

Since 2019, a partnership with Wesley Mission was developed to provide specialist support, as the program is not intended to be a drug and alcohol

service. This partnership provides the wraparound supports needed to bring about a transition to stable employment, housing and general civilian life.

The Homes for Heroes program was set up with the support of local RSL sub-branches, who got together to create a benevolent fund to ensure male and female veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness got the support they need to live fulfilling and independent lives in their community. It is largely funded by donations.

2. Clinical Supports

A range of supports is required to assist with issues such as physical and mental health and social care of the client. Housing First teams refer to a 'recovery-oriented approach' which is designed to enhance wellbeing, mitigate the effects of mental health and addiction challenges, improve quality of life and foster self-sufficiency.

Vasey RSL Care is proposing an approach to providing clinical support services which combines existing in-house skills, up-skilling of current staff and outsourcing specialised support services, working closely with co-located clinical specialists.

3. Complementary Support

In order to help individuals improve their quality of life and integrate into the community in order to work towards independence and self-sufficiency, other skills may require development.

This includes life skills, engagement in meaningful activities, income supports, financial literacy, career and employment assistance, training and education, and community engagement.

While further developing in-house capability, Vasey RSL Care will work in collaboration with other ex-service organisations such as RSL Victoria, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Total Permanent Incapacity, the Austin Repatriation Hospital (and Ward 17), RSL Sub-branches and other groups that support and care for veterans and war widows, to ensure delivery of a full wraparound support service.

3.4 Partnerships to Provide Wraparound Support

Providing wraparound support requires a range of services to effectively support people with complex needs.

Vasey RSL Care is an experienced specialist provider of accommodation to the ex-service community in Victoria and has expertise in case management, clinical care, emotional and social supports, daily living services and facilities management.

However, there are areas where additional expertise is required and providing all elements of a wraparound support service and meeting the needs of the

ex-service community, will be achieved through partnerships with expert organisations offering complementary services.

Vasey RSL Care will partner with aged care providers to offer ex-service community access to residential aged care in areas where it is not present and will build on established relationships with other ex-service organisations, including accommodation providers such as Carry On Victoria, in regional environments to enable suitable support.

Existing and new partnerships will be developed in mental health support and career transition, which are of particular importance to younger veterans re-entering civilian life.



Chapter 4

Vasey RSL Care's Unique Capability



Key Points

- ✿ **Vasey RSL Care is Victoria's most experienced provider of accommodation and support for the ex-service community and the only aged care provider prioritising the ex-service community. It is:**
 - ✿ Based on robust governance and compliance processes;
 - ✿ Financially strong and able to commit to program development without borrowing. A range of income sources ensures sustainability: these include investments, government aged care funding, resident contributions from aged care, rental income from ex-service units, government grants and donations.
 - ✿ An organisation with expertise in care, health and clinical care, financial management, property management, building and human resources, recruitment, staff retention and staff development.
- ✿ **Vasey RSL Care has strong quality standards whose systems have been recognised for excellence and innovation in aged care as the winner of no fewer than nine Commonwealth Better Practice Awards.**
- ✿ **Proven experience in successful new building development is a hallmark of the organisation, examples being the 128-room Vasey RSL Care Brighton East facility, opened in 2011 and 10 new ex-service units at Cheltenham, opened in 2016.**



4.1 Caring for Those Who Served: it's in our DNA

Why do veterans and war widows choose Vasey RSL Care?

Our company values are the same as those of the people we care for.

We make it our business to know and understand the ex-service background.

All new staff have their full-day orientation at the Shrine of Remembrance.

We give absolute priority to receiving veterans and war widows into our care, regardless of their financial situation.

We foster the camaraderie that comes from shared ex-service experience.

Our residents are warmly welcomed into a veteran home where there is honour and respect for their sacrifice.

We create a familiar and supportive environment, with memorabilia displays, artworks, poppies... We encourage residents to enhance their surroundings with their creativity.

Vasey has a strong ongoing relationship with the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, RSL Sub-Branched, the ADF, and other ex-service organisations like the Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia, Legacy and Carry On Victoria.

We provide access to services that are tailored to the needs of those who have been affected by their military experience — for example, case management.

We find out how we can bring fulfilment to our war widows and veterans, and through Hero's Wish and our lifestyle program, we fulfill their wishes.

Veterans honour each other when they pass away — they are covered with a dignity quilt and their comrades salute their passing.

Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day are two of the most important days of the year — these are not a day off for staff, but a day when we join our residents in honouring the fallen.

A Carer's Privilege



A Story of Learning from Veterans

"I have had the opportunity to listen to the stories of our veterans. Some were shared openly and others were shared indirectly through cognitive decline.

"I have reassured a war widower living with dementia that her children were safe, when she was trapped in a time and place when her husband had died, and she had to leave her children to earn a living. I have held a resident while he cried and grieved for his lost mate at the Canberra War Memorial, when we attended the centenary anniversary of the landing on Gallipoli. I have helped orientate and reassure a veteran who each night when he went to sleep, ran messages back and forth during his wartime service. I have listened as a veteran told me of his experiences in Korea, where he had to kill soldier after soldier while praying that they would just stop coming.

"We are privileged to be educated directly from their experiences.

"So, what makes our organisation different? Simply put, it's the experiences of our veterans and their widows. The sense of community, mateship, and support they feel, being surrounded by others who understand, respect and honour them and the others who have come before them. The sense of camaraderie which has been created by their shared history, and the ability to come together in one place, at a time of their lives where those experiences were critical to the lives they have lived. That's what makes Vasey RSL Care unique and different.

"Through the partnership of the RSL and Guild, an amazing organisation was created. One that supports veterans at the most vulnerable time of their lives. I have seen what it means for our residents to come together and live out the rest of their lives in a community that respects, honours and acknowledges their shared history."

Mandy Wakely, pictured with veteran, Kevin, has served as a Care Worker and Facility Quality Coordinator at Frankston South for over 11 years.

Honouring Our Heroes' Wishes

Vasey RSL Care's Hero's Wish Program honours veterans and war widows with experiences that add to their treasured memories.

In 2015, a number of veterans expressed a desire to honour their fallen comrades at the Centenary of ANZAC.

After much planning, and with financial support from Frankston RSL Sub-branch, six veterans, each with a support person, attended the Centenary of ANZAC Dawn Service in Canberra. Together with CEO, Janna Voloshin, they took part with over 100,000 people in the Dawn Service, a very moving event.

"Fulfilling this wish for some of those who had fought for our freedom was a small token of appreciation for their service," says Janna. "I wondered how we could continue to honour the wishes of our heroes, and the idea of Hero's Wish was born."

'Hero's Wish' is Vasey RSL Care's way of giving our veterans and war widows a chance to fulfill a dream, to do something they may not otherwise be able to achieve.

Ross Pulling is a 97-year-old World War II veteran who has lived at Vasey RSL Care's Bundoora aged care home for five years. In 2019, Ross fulfilled a life-long dream when he travelled to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

"Thank you ... for arranging our trip to Canberra to the beautiful Australian War Memorial. As I spend my last days on this planet, I will pass on with a restful peace having completed my life with you and Vasey. You have helped me to fulfill my wish and see this great memorial. And I thank you sincerely for that. I was most impressed and very emotional, but very proud," Ross wrote soon after in a letter to the Vasey RSL Care CEO.



Widow's Connection Spans Generations



Last year, Gwen Paxino, now 95, the widow of Andrew Paxino, moved into our Frankston South home – but it was not the first time she had lived there.

The first time she moved in, Gwen was 39, the mother of two boys and husband Andy had just been appointed as 'Deputy Superintendent' at our Frankston South home.

Andy had served as a bombardier in the 2/14 Regiment, enduring the Japanese bombing of Darwin, before seeing action at Kokoda in New Guinea in World War II.

While the war raged, Gwen worked as a secretary for the Australian importer of electrical goods and manufacturer of radios.

After the war, Andy settled into a job as a sales representative for a bakers' supplies company and maintained a close involvement with the RSL's welfare programs. Gwen says he was always interested in helping people and was a member of the RSL's State Council. His involvement with the RSL took a big step up in 1964 when he was appointed Deputy Superintendent at the RSL's War Veterans Homes Trust at Frankston South, now Vasey RSL Care Frankston South.

Last year, Gwen decided on the move back to Frankston South as a resident when she feel she needed more assistance. Gwen inspected six aged care homes before deciding that Vasey RSL Care Frankston South provided the best care and facilities.

She now lives in Park Lodge, the wing she knew as Cottage 1 and her husband Andy is remembered with the Paxino Wing.

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Continuing THE Mission

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