



Lessons learnt from navigators

Supporting older Veterans

Who this is for and why

This resource may be helpful for the care finder line manager and the care finder as an additional resource to their existing expertise and knowledge. It is based upon experiences and reflections of Aged Care System Navigators and COTA Australia as part of the Australian Government funded Aged Care System Navigator Trial measure (ACSN).

Official operation of the care finder program is governed by [Care Finder Policy Guidance](#)

Context

As part of a No Wrong Door approach to aged care, the ACSN Trials considered the needs and services of older Veterans across relevant Trial sites. Navigators assisted veterans who had difficulty identifying which aged care program or combination of programs best met their individual circumstances.

COTA Australia worked with RSL Victoria to provide information to navigators on:

- Services available to veterans (including Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and State-based supports)
- An understanding of the known gaps between DVA aged care support for veterans and mainstream aged care services
- How to link Veterans to support if requested.



Who is a Veteran?

Veterans are classed as a Special Needs group under the *Aged Care Act 2011*. A veteran is identified when they are in receipt of a DVA health care card or DVA pension. However, the definition of a Veteran under the *Aged Care Act 2011* is broader than only those with DVA entitlement and includes:

- Any former member of the Australian Defence Force – men and women, with or without qualifying service in war.
- Widows/widowers of veterans, including those whose death was not related to war service.
- Ex-service men and women of allied forces who may or may not qualify for support through DVA.

Lessons learnt

- In addition to any state government supports, two streams of Commonwealth services are available to older Veterans:
 - the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA); and
 - mainstream aged care services and supports offered through the Department of Health and Aged Care.

They are separately funded and managed systems, operating independently of each other.
- If customers require services from both My Aged Care and DVA they must go through each system's intake and assessment process. These systems are not connected and do not share client records (although My Aged Care will ask if the person receives services from another system such as DVA). Customers report that this can be frustrating and confusing.
- DVA clients can receive both DVA services and My Aged Care services at the same time if there is **no duplication** of services.
- DVA services are community-based and are usually entry-level services for lower care needs. They are not designed for more complex care needs. DVA does not provide residential aged care.
- When a Veteran requires more intensive aged care services, they are supported by the range of programs offered through the Department of Health and Aged Care via My Aged Care.

An overview of Veterans' cards, payments and services

Veteran Card

When assisting a Veteran to navigate the aged care space, it is important to understand the different entitlements of their Veteran Card. Formerly known as the Veteran Gold Card, White Card, and Orange Cards, these have been redesigned into the [Veteran Card](#), though the same colour distinctions still apply.

The benefits Veterans can get with a Veteran Card will depend on the colour of the card.

The **Gold Card** is a treatment card that provides clinically required treatment for all medical conditions. Veterans can also access a range of services and support.

The **White Card** is a treatment card that provides medical treatment for:

- accepted service-related injuries or conditions
- all mental health conditions (for veterans with continuous full-time service or certain reserve service)

Veterans eligible for the White Card can also receive medical treatment for:

- cancer (malignant neoplasm) covered under non-liability health care
- pulmonary tuberculosis covered under non-liability health care

Veterans can also access a range of services and support.

The **Orange Card** gives Veterans access to prescription medicines, wound care items and nutritional supplements at a concession rate. This card cannot be used for medical or other healthcare treatment.



Commonwealth Seniors Card

A [Commonwealth Seniors Card](#) is available to eligible Australians, including Commonwealth and allied veterans or mariners with qualifying defence service.

It provides concessions on medications and other living costs but has a more stringent eligibility criteria than other DVA cards, including an income test. This card can be applied for via the DVA or [Services Australia](#). The card has the same benefits whether it comes from DVA or from Services Australia.

To get discounts on medical treatment or prescriptions, veterans can show their card each time they visit their medical centre or pharmacy. To get a concession on eligible bills, veterans will need to apply to the organisation that provides the service. Veterans can apply for the concessions through the Government concessions in their state or territory page.

Note that the card was recently redesigned and carries the DVA logo. It is now printed in yellow and red instead of green and yellow and so is easily recognisable to concession provider staff.

New cards can be provided by contacting the **Veteran Access Network** on **1800 VETERAN** (1800 838 372) or contact Services Australia.



DVA Aged Care Services

DVA provides entry level aged care services to eligible veterans and war widows(ers) with low care needs to help them remain living in their homes and communities. These services include:

- [Veteran Home Care \(VHC\)](#)
- [Respite care](#)
- [Rehabilitation Appliances Program](#)
- [Community Nursing](#)
- [Convalescent Care](#)

Self-referrals

For VHC and respite care, veteran clients can self-refer by calling a VHC Assessment Agency directly on **1300 550 450** to have an assessment for services. The assessment is usually done over the phone. However, other programs need a referral from a health professional

- (Aged care) Navigators cannot support people into the DVA aged care programs but they can refer customers to DVA itself on 1800 838 372.
- Navigators can also support people to make the phone call to DVA together.

Home Care Packages (HCP)

Eligible veterans and war widows(ers) are eligible for the full range of aged care services provided under Department of Health and Ageing via MyAgedCare.

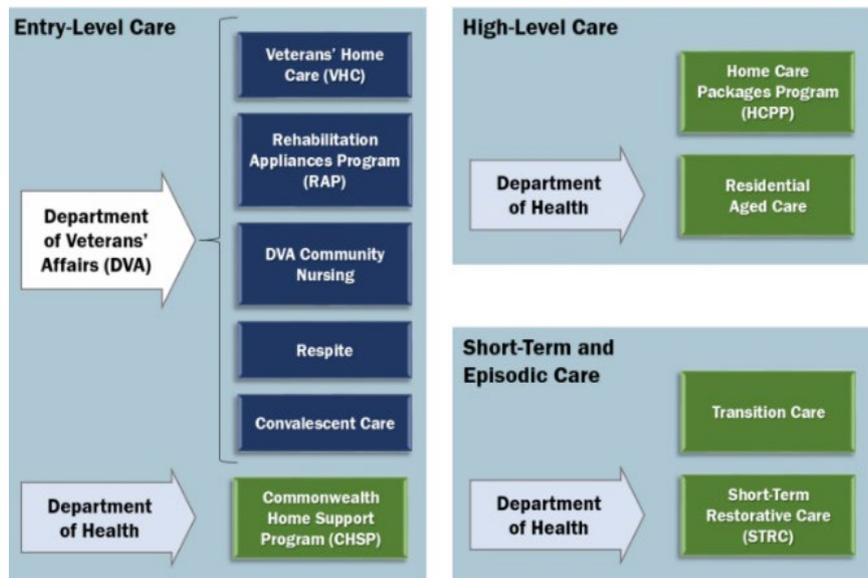
They may be able to access **DVA-funded services while receiving a HCP**, as long as there is no duplication of the specific services/help provided.

Residential aged care

Veterans are subject to the same assessment conditions and fee arrangements as all Australians when entering residential aged care. However, some eligible veterans may be entitled to receive DVA assistance in some circumstances. If the client has a Gold Card or a White Card then they may be eligible for additional services and supports in residential aged care, such as allied health services and rehabilitation appliances and equipment, as long as there is no duplication with the services and supports that the residential aged care facility is already funded to provide.

An overview of available aged care support and programs for Veterans from the DVA website

Note: The Australian Government Department of Health is now the Department of Health and Aged Care.



Engagement with Ex-Service Organisations

There is a high rate of veteran membership in Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs). Navigators found that developing links with these organisations was one way of identifying potential customers as many do not have staff to perform the role. Some of the many ESOs with large membership bases include:

- Returned Services League (RSL) Australia
- Legacy Australia
- Vietnam Veterans Association
- Australian War Widows
- Partners of Veterans Association

Resources

Department of Veterans' Affairs Aged Care Resources

Find resources to help you learn about aged care, community care and hearing services.

www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/care-home-or-aged-care/aged-care-resources

Department of Veterans' Affairs Care at Home or Aged Care

DVA website about aged care services that help people stay independent at home.

www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/care-home-or-aged-care

Aged Care Services for the Older Veterans Community

A joint resource developed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and Department of Veteran's Affairs.

[Fact Sheet on Veteran Aged Care Services.](#)

Webinars

[The Older Persons Advocacy Network \(OPAN\)](#), with the Department of Veterans Affairs, have developed a series of webinars dedicated to understanding aged care supports and assistance for Veterans. Topics include:

- Introduction to DVA Services
- Understanding and Accessing DVA Services
- Hearing Services
- Moving into an Aged Care Home
- Veterans' Home Care