



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

Factsheet MRC53 – Family Support Package for Widow(er)s

Purpose

This Factsheet explains the services that might be available to you if you are eligible for the Family Support Package under the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)*.

What is the Family Support Package?

The Family Support Package for widowed partners and spouses, has been developed to address recommendations from the Senate Inquiry into Suicide by Veterans and Ex-Service Personnel, *The Constant Battle: Suicide by Veterans*.

The package will provide:

- child care for the children of MRCA veterans;
- counselling support following the death of their partner; and
- home help assistance to provide additional support in and around their home.

Assistance is also available to MRCA veterans and their families under this package. Please see [Factsheet MRC52 Family Support Package for Veterans and their families](#) for more information.

How can I access the Family Support Package?

The Coordinated Client Support (CCS) team within DVA assist widowed partners and spouses to navigate what assistance can be accessed through DVA. Where a widow is not already being assisted by CCS, they can contact DVA general enquiries to seek a referral to the CCS program.

Child care

Who can access child care funding?

Eligible widowed partners and spouses can access childcare assistance under the Family Support Package. To be an eligible widowed partner or spouse, the following criteria must apply:

- the person was the partner of a veteran at the time of their death; and
- the veteran rendered warlike service on or after 1 July 2004; and
- the veteran's death was a suicide; or
- the veteran's death occurred on deployment in a conflict.

You will also need to ensure you have been assessed for eligibility of Commonwealth child care requirements and that your child/ren meet the immunisation requirements for Commonwealth child care entitlements.

An eligible child for the purpose of receiving child care, is a child of the veteran within the meaning of the *Family Law Act 1975*. That is, the child must either be a biological child of the veteran, a step child of the veteran or an adopted child of the veteran.

What about Commonwealth child care entitlements?

Child care funding under the Family Support Package is provided to complement, not replace or duplicate existing Commonwealth child care entitlements. Any child care funding provided by DVA is to cover the gap in fees after Commonwealth child care entitlements have been applied. In the event that the income of the widow(er) makes them ineligible for Commonwealth child care support, DVA will fund the fees owing. Coverage of this gap (partial or full fees) will be available up until the DVA child care funding has been exhausted.

Who can provide the child care?

Only Commonwealth approved child care providers can be used. Commonwealth approved providers can be found on Australia's online child care portal: www.mychild.gov.au.

Child care provided through informal arrangements, such as care provided by grandparents, relatives or friends cannot be funded through this initiative.

Counselling

Who can access counselling?

Eligible widowed partners and spouses can access counselling support under the Family Support Package.

To be an eligible widowed partner or spouse, the following criteria must apply:

- the person was the partner of a veteran at the time of their death; and
- the veteran rendered warlike service on or after 1 July 2004; and
- the veteran's death was a suicide; or
- the veteran's death occurred on deployment in a conflict.

What counselling services are available?

Counselling is available to widow(er)s that need assistance managing challenging life circumstances following the death of their partner.

The types of counselling could include:

- resilience training
- grief and loss counselling
- drug and alcohol counselling
- personal and relationship counselling
- parenting skills and support counselling
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- financial counselling
- counselling for gambling.

Who can provide the counselling?

The counselling services need to be provided by a professional with the appropriate qualifications, and where applicable, membership with a professional or industry body.

How many counselling services can the widow(er) have?

You can be provided with up to four counselling sessions each year for two years from the date of the veteran's death. Access to counselling will cease at the end of a two year period.

Immediate assistance

Immediate counselling assistance can also be provided by the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS), which provides a free and confidential 24 hour counselling service for eligible veterans and their families on 1800 011 046.

Home Help

Who can access home help?

Eligible widowed partners and spouses can access Home Help assistance under the Family Support Package.

To be an eligible widowed partner or spouse, the following criteria must apply:

- the person was the partner of a veteran at the time of their death; and
- the veteran rendered warlike service on or after 1 July 2004; and
- the veteran's death was a suicide; or
- the veteran's death occurred on deployment in a conflict.

What home help services are available?

The types of home help assistance can include, but is not necessarily limited to:

- Activities conducted within the home – for example meal preparation, cooking, cleaning, making beds and general tidying, laundry, and ironing.
- Activities conducted around the home – for example, lawn mowing, gardening, cleaning gutters, cleaning solar panels, cleaning other external surfaces of the home, wood chopping and stacking, pool cleaning, and removing waste from the home.
- Home maintenance activities – for example minor repairs around the home that require the use of a handy person.

However, the home help must be conducted within or around the widow(er)'s principal place of residence.

Who can provide the home help services?

Home help services must be provided by a professional with an Australian Business Number and public liability insurance. Family members cannot be paid to provide home help.

How many home help services are available?

Home help is capped at a maximum of \$482.50 per week. This weekly amount is not retrospective or cumulative, and therefore cannot roll over to subsequent weeks.

More Information

DVA General Enquiries

Phone: 1800 555 254 *

Email: GeneralEnquiries@dva.gov.au

DVA Website: www.dva.gov.au

Factsheet Website: www.dva.gov.au/factsheets

* Calls from mobile phones and pay phones may incur additional charges.

For specific questions about the Family Support Package

Email: family.support.package@dva.gov.au

Related Factsheets

- [MRC05 Rehabilitation](#)
- [MRC52 Family Support Package for Veterans and their families](#)
- [VCS01 Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service \(VVCS\)](#)