



YOUNGDIGGERS

Advice for Serving and Ex-Serving
Military Personnel and their Families



AUGUST 2017



Advice for Serving and Ex-Serving Military Personnel and their Families

WWW.YOUNGDIGGERS.COM.AU



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From the President

APRIL 2017

Hi All,

Well a lot has happened since our last magazine. New branches of Young Diggers are now operating in Tamworth NSW, and Melton in Victoria. The Melton branch is our head office for Victoria and Carole Doyle is heading up the administration of that office. Members meet at the Willows in Melton every Tuesday.

Dog Squad

Keith is in charge of all dog squad applications and can be contacted at applications@youngdiggers.com.au

More Media continue to do a great job of producing the magazine and I thank Justin and Luke for their great efforts.

Board of directors

John Jarret- Director and president.

Peter Walters- Director and vice president

Andrew Macarthur- Director and vice president

Bush Camps resume June this year and will be held in the Eastern States. Western Australia will start later in the year.

Equine Therapy and dog training is starting in Richmond, NSW, very soon so any interest can be addressed to john@youngdiggers.com.au

A number of dogs and handlers have completed the PAT since the last magazine and have passed with flying colours. Thanks Aaron and congratulations guys and girls.

ANZAC day is coming up again so soon, so take care and you know where we are if you need help or just have a chat.

Regards,

John Jarret

Raymond Black- Ex Army WO. Projects officer

Dianne Springolo- Secretary

Dog Sponsorship

AUGUST 2017



Is your group or business interested in sponsoring a Dog?

The Young Diggers Dog Squad is training rescued dogs to become Assistance Dogs to support the rehabilitation of our serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members who are dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This program is helping more than just the individuals. The Dog Squad helps Defence families to better cope with the effects of PTSD and saves the lives of abandoned dogs.

The Dog Squad is run entirely by the volunteers at Young Diggers and groups and businesses to sponsor dogs to continue running the program. It costs \$2,500 to Sponsor a Dog through the Dog Squad program. Your sponsorship will rescue an abandoned dog and cover its expenses whilst it is training to become an Assistance Dog. Your business or group can help by sponsoring a dog today.

Application Forms for sponsorship can be found at www.youngdiggers.com.au/dogsponsorship

News

BUSH CAMPS



Young Diggers Bush Camps will recommence in September 2017.

We have access to camps in different locations such as Brisbane QLD, Melbourne VIC and Glen Innes NSW.

This is a five day camp for serving and ex-serving Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel

who are in need of a little chilling out and military style companionship.

One of the highlights of the camps are the discussions while sitting around the campfire at night.

Events from swimming, fishing, bush walking and relaxing.

IT'S FREE. All you need is sleeping gear, small tent, towel and toiletries etc.

Food will be supplied, but if you have a special diet, then bring your food with you.

For more information please visit our website www.youngdiggers.com.au

PROPOSED DAY TRIPS AWAY FOR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Following a recent meeting of the Board, as Project Manager I have been tasked to look into some suitable day trips away for our members and their families. These trips will be arranged for either a Saturday or Sunday.

The first trip I am looking at arranging is a casual lunch at the Woodford Tavern. The Woodford Tavern is a family and dog friendly venue with good meals at reasonable prices.

We are looking at this first day trip to happen in September and would appreciate your expressions of interest to get what we hope will be many more day trips underway.

Please email your name, preferred day, contact details and numbers to book as soon as possible to: secretary@youngdiggers.com.au

You can also fill out the Expression of Interest form at The Bunker. Once we have the numbers interested in attending, further details will then be provided. Looking forward to meeting you all and enjoying the day.

Ray Black

Project Manager

News from the North

PROPOSED DAY TRIPS AWAY FOR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Ray Black

Project Manager





TAMWORTH AND DISTRICTS

In December 2016, it was decided to establish a branch of Young Diggers Limited at Tamworth NSW. It was decided call the branch Tamworth & Districts, which encompasses the surrounding areas from Glen Innes NSW to Singleton NSW, with a 'Bunker' facility in Tamworth.

Currently, the branch has a dozen members and we have sourced our 'Bunker' facility. We are a fairly close group, who generally chat to each other on a daily basis, providing support and mateship.

We have a promotional vehicle which can be seen driving around Tamworth and the local area, which is a 1973 Ford Ambulance which is now sign written for the Tamworth area.

The Young Digger Dog Squad in our area is going well. We conduct training every Sunday morning and utilise a local Dog Training Club, which fine tunes our assistance

dogs with obedience and agility training. There are four different class levels, which suits the requirements of each dog, from beginner to advanced.

We also have access to a veteran's retreat camp at Glen Innes, where we hold bush camps for our members. You do not need a dog to attend and its great fun. These are generally held on a quarterly basis with members coming from the Brisbane branch as well.

Our 'Bunker' is located at 25 Swan Street, Tamworth, and the dog training is also conducted at that location. If you are in the Tamworth & Districts area and would like to know more about what we have available please contact the branch manager at tamworth@youngdiggers.com.au



News from the South

VICTORIAN BRANCH

Our Victorian Branch started in March this year at the Willows Historical Park in Melton. We have dog training every Tuesday morning from 10am with tea and coffee provided along with a chat after training. We are a friendly and happy group and our dogs are progressing well. The Willows grounds provides lovely surroundings conducive to a stress-free environment.

Our local supermarkets and cafes are very welcoming to help with the socialisation of our dogs in training.

Every 3rd Tuesday weather permitting we have a BBQ where family is also invited. June was soup and homemade bread which we all enjoyed due to the cold Melbourne weather.

Brigitte is our head dog trainer along with trainers Prue and Cathie. Brigitte has owned and operated her own dog school for many years here in Melton. Our branch is managed entirely by volunteers who are passionate at what they do.

We also have dog trainers in country areas of Victoria and closer to the city.

Victoria is such a large area it is hard to have trainers in every district but we are trying to involve more. We can always do with more volunteers.

We are contacting all the Victorian Young Diggers Dog Squad members to make sure that they are aware of this branch also to help with any enquiries they may have regarding training and up to date paperwork.

Please enjoy the photos and little stories we have provided for you from Victoria and feel free to send me any interesting tit bits that you feel other Dog Squad Members would like to see. I need your approval to use them in the magazine.

You can contact me via Email: carole.youngdiggers@bigond.com

Regards

Carole Doyle.

Victorian Coordinator.



Macs Cottage

The house known as Macs Cottage in The Willows Historical Park, Melton, has significance as a moderately intact example of a Late Victorian style. Although relocated, the general form, construction and rudimentary detailing is reflective of late nineteenth and very early twentieth century architectural development.



From left to right are our 3 trainers Prue, Cathie, Brigitte, Carole, her dog Finnigan, Ron and his assistance dog Yogi



WALMSEY FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE PRESENTATION

Walmsey Friendship Village and Aged Care in Kilsyth Victoria invited Ron, Yogi and I to receive a cheque on behalf of Young Diggers. Kareen has made it her ambition to raise money for Young Diggers and was very emotional on meeting Yogi and hearing how he has changed Ron's life for the better. Ron was very open about his life and journey living with PTSD.

Yogi showed us all how he turns on the light before waking Ron from a night terror which Ron says he can now go straight back to sleep. Something that has never happened before he got Yogi. Other things we all take for granted shopping, going out in public, going to

a restaurant, someone walking behind you. All of which Ron doesn't even worry about now.

Thank you to Walmsey Village and especially Kareen for all her hard work and dedication in fundraising for us at Young Diggers which helps us achieve our goal in helping our Younger Troops get back some normality into their lives.

Carole Doyle

Victorian Coordinator

Information for Diggers Travelling on Public Transport in Victoria

BE AWARE OF THE RULES

It has been brought to our attention that Young Diggers travelling with their assistance dogs on Public Transport in Victoria. Must apply for an Assistance Animal Pass. Young Diggers Assistance Dogs have been put onto the Approved Trainers list for Assistance Dogs that are trained to a high standard.

Unfortunately, this has been put into progress because some members of the public are claiming they have an assistance dog which is not the case as they have not done the approved training that is required to travel as an assistance dog on public transport here in Victoria.

Application forms can be downloaded or you can phone: 90274930 and have a form sent out to you. This pass will allow you to go on all Public Transport in Victoria.

If for any reason you have any difficulties please email me at:

Carole.youngdiggers@bigpond.com.

For more information on Public Transport Victoria visit

www.ptv.gov.au/assistance



Donations to Diggers

The South East Queensland Professional Housekeepers Association recently raised \$5000.00 for the Young Diggers Dog Squad

They hold a day at the Gold Coast races each year and donate the proceeds to a nominated charity, this year they choose Young Diggers!

A special thanks to Sandy & Ian Sneddon, these people are just amazing. They collect clothing for homeless men in the Gold Coast. They set up tables where the food is distributed to the homeless and offer clothing towels and blankets to anyone who needs them.

Even with all this, they still find time and resources help other charities. Read more about the The South East Queensland Professional Housekeepers Association below.

The Association was founded in 1998 after an overwhelming response from Housekeepers and Supervisors wanting to network, exchange information and to provide opportunities for social interaction with their peers. We are a non profitable organization.

Our goals and objectives are to provide seminars, education and social events at members' hotels to assist housekeepers and supervisors stay abreast of current trends and technology, specifically for the hospitality industry, and to enjoy networking at social events. Our social events are also fundraisers for Cancer Organizations and Save the Koalas. . To achieve those objectives and goals we require the support and input of an enthusiastic

and diverse membership. The membership year is January to December .

Housekeeper Membership:
\$50.00 ANNUALLY & \$25.00 each addition member

Supplier Membership:
\$75.00 & \$25.00 each additional member



Andrew and Scruffy

Scruffy came into Andrew's life about a year ago, he was given to Andrew as an assistance dog by another organisation and has been Andrew's constant companion ever since. Andrew's favourite things about Scruffy are that Scruffy allows him to go outside and socialise. Andrew especially loves it when Scruffy gets pats and cuddles from two special children who go to his son's school....These beautiful children have many serious medical issues and the joy Scruffy brings to these children is so heartwarming!. Scruffy's favourite thing are that he loves food especially whatever Dad is eating or those tasty schmackos. Scruffy also loves to play with any sticks lying around and an adored black and yellow ball. " He's always there for me and gives me a paw whenever I need it ".

Djidi

Hello my name is Joseph Bowden, after receiving my former therapy dog "DJIDI " from Young Diggers, my life has been profoundly changed. This young sweet Blue Heeler, has shown me so much, now I am ready to tackle life's challenges again !



John and Dobie

Dobie came into John's life 3.5 years ago. John's previous pointer had passed away and John needed another companion. His love for pointers lead him to Dobie who was found through a breeder. Dobie started life as a pet then quickly rose to become John's assistance dog. John's favourite things about Dobie are that Dobie gives him the confidence to face the world, to socialise and to make connections with other people. John just loves Dobie being Dobie !!!! Dobie's favourite

things are that he simply loves to cuddle Dad and Mum (well actually anyone who's available really). Dobie also LOVES food especially craft single cheese slices rolled into a ball or coming a close second is a great big juicy marrow bone!

"Dobie's given me endless love and attention and filled a large hole in my life "



Marty and Snow

Snow came into Marty's life about 3 months ago. Marty saw a post on a facebook page called 'Overwatch' in which a friend had mentioned an assistance dog program and wondered if Marty would be interested. Snow was sent to Marty from an organisation called Ruff Love within two days after first contact. Marty's favourite things about Snow are that she is such an expressive talker and opinions and views about everything around her.

Marty especially loves Snow's excitement to see him every single morning! Snow's favourite things to do are playing, chasing a ball and biting only brand new socks he finds in his Dad's drawers.

"Life is so much better with Snow she's the most adorable, expressive distraction from my other stresses" .



Frank and Boof

Boof came into Frank's life 2 years ago. Frank and his wife were 'sticky beaking' around the local pound and Frank's wife fell in love with Boof. Boof began life as a family pet and moved up to being Frank's assistance dog. Frank's favourite things about Boof are his general enthusiasm for life and his never ending affection and friendliness.

Boof's favourite things are that he loves to chase his big red ball for hours and Boof loves sitting in his camp in the strangest of positions without falling out !

"Boof has allowed me to be more social he calms me down whenever I get stressed or anxious"



Mel and Azazel

Azazel came into Mel's life about 3 years ago.* Azazel was rescued from people in Sydney who didn't want him and Mel's previous husky sadly had to be put down so she was looking for another dog. Azazel came home as a pet but over time became Mel's assistance dog. Mel's favourite things about Azazel are that he always sleeps curled up next to me with his head on my shoulder. When Mel sleeps a little too long he gently kisses her nose to make sure she's alright.

Azazel's favourite things are that the adores his toys especially a little squeaky stuffed cow and anything to do with jumping in the car with Mel.

"He's made me feel like I'm okay to be at home on my own Azazel is always there for me and he's made me feel loved and comfortable He's my rock and we are two peas in a pod Azazel makes me smile through the hardest of times and kisses my stress away "



Real People. Real Stories.

Billions of people are facing serious health conditions — including many of us at The Mighty. It's so easy to feel like we are facing these challenges alone. The truth is, we are all facing disability, disease and mental illness together.

But when we look online for help, all we often find is medical information. We want a community, too. That's what The Mighty is building.

We publish real stories by real people facing real challenges. We are building a brand and a community around them. Having a disability or disease doesn't have to be isolating. That's why The Mighty exists.

We're creating a safe platform for our community to tell their stories, connect with others and raise support for the causes they believe in. We are stronger when we face adversity together, and we know it. We've also partnered with over 200 nonprofit allies to deliver their excellent resources to our community.

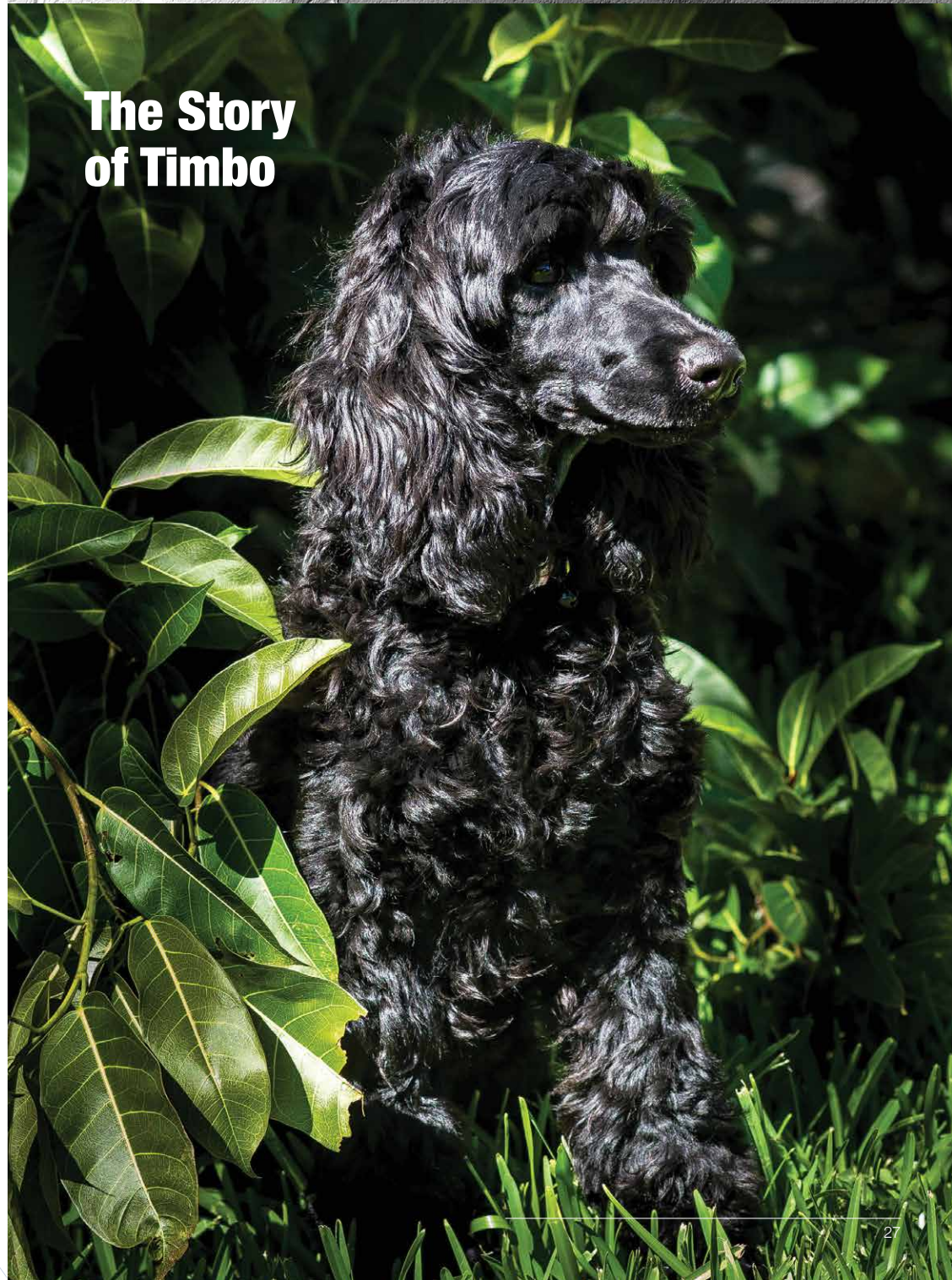
Visit the

www.themighty.com

to join the conversation



The Story of Timbo



For those of you who follow Young Diggers on Facebook will recognize Timbo from back in February when I posted that she was leaving our house and travelling to Tamworth for training

Timbo is destined to be an assistant/comfort companion for the Vets in Hospital in ward 17 Victoria from my understanding she will live at the Hospital.

Timbo arrived back from Tamworth few months ago, after some training. She is a poodle cocker spaniel and we have two standard poodles but it is no trouble for her to put them in there place!

She is still having training and I am not sure how long this will continue to get to the standard required for what she eventually will need to do at the Hospital Timbo is a joy to be around she is attentive loving and obedient (most of the time)

I wish all my extended house guests behaved this well. Timbo has a fulfilling life ahead of him, so we'll keep you updated through all his adventures.



Remembrance Day Address

GIVEN BY THE HON JEFF KENNETT AC

Australian War Memorial Canberra, Friday 11 November 2016

For those in whose memory we gather here today...

For those who returned home, many with broken limbs, minds and spirits...

For the families who have lost loved ones in whole or in part...

For those who continue to serve...

From we who remain, who live, and on behalf of those who will follow...

We salute you.

We are now and forever in your debt.

It is incumbent upon us to use your service and your sacrifice to build a better, safer Australia. An Australia where our democracy is secure, where people are meaningfully occupied and where, as a result of our economic strength, we can – with compassion – provide comfort and dignity to those in genuine need. As we gather here today at this great Memorial... As Australians around the country come together in numbers large and small – in cities and country towns – to pause and remember those who put their lives on the line so that we could enjoy the opportunities we have today... I ask myself why this grateful nation lets down so many servicemen and women, who on surviving the threats and brutality of conflicts and war, take their own lives on returning home.

Why is it that we as a nation have not been able to provide sufficient help – the services – that might have prevented all or some of the suicides of our armed forces personnel.

Just this year alone, more military personnel and veterans have died by their own hand – on Australian soil – than lost their lives during 13 years of Australia's involvement in the Afghanistan conflict.

Surely, our obligations to those who return, should be, must be, that they are safer here, on home soil, than when away.

We know that many who return don't leave those battlefields behind. They bring the battles home with them, but they carry them inside. Too often these internal battles against depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and suicide are fought and lost alone. Mental Health issues and alcohol abuse are on the rise, particularly among younger veterans. Their private battles must become our cause.

People in positions of authority – governing and leading from the safety of Australian turf – have made and will continue to make decisions in all our interests to send younger men and women to war. Our service personnel volunteer for careers that place them at the pinnacle of the country's First Responders. They knowingly put themselves at great risk, willingly entering theaters of conflict from which they may never return.



But most do return. Some come home heroes. Some with a renewed commitment to family, friends and country, keen to forge new careers in civilian society. But some, unfortunately, return damaged physically and mentally as a direct result of the job we ask them to do. Many who return home are unable to adjust to family life or put aside the grief of losing friends in battle. They carry with them excess baggage of fear, stress, anger and nightmares which if not addressed can lead to anxiety, depression and even suicide. That's no surprise. In fact, it is a common, natural human reaction. We have known about post-traumatic symptoms for more than 3000 years. It was first reported in the epic poem, The Tale of Gilgamesh, when confrontations with death in battle changed the lead character's personality. Gilgamesh was the first reported case of chronic mental health symptoms caused by war. It has been called many things such as "soldier's heart", "hysteria", even "nostalgia". It was "shell-shock" in World War I and "combat fatigue" in World War II and Korea.

So why – after all this time – are we still so ill-prepared for the damaged home-coming veteran? No-one will ever know the number of suicides of those who returned home from service in Vietnam, except it was tragically large, and has subsequently included many of their family members.

Records are much more precise today, but that so many servicemen and women and ex-service personnel have felt they have no alternative but to end their lives should be a national sorrow and is unacceptable.

In 2013 around 150,000 veterans with service-related disabilities were being supported by the Department of Veterans Affairs and, of these, up to 46,000 had 'an accepted mental health disorder'. Common conditions included anxiety disorder, depression, stress disorder and alcohol dependence.

Put simply and tragically, many veterans struggle to adjust to civilian life and without the proper support they can spiral into deep depression and take their own lives.

If Australia cannot find the resources to provide the care necessary to help our servicemen and women re-adjust to life at home then perhaps we should not put them at risk in the first place. We do not have the right to ask these people to risk their lives for us only to abandon them when they need us most.

It is not just an obligation, it is our duty, to care for our servicemen and women and to extend that support to their families. It was encouraging to see the Federal Government announce in August a trial suicide prevention initiative in Townsville to help Australian Defence Force personnel there.

At the launch the Prime Minister said we have to go beyond the memorials and the monuments and focus on the men and women, the real challenges they face. I whole-heartedly concur. But this must be just the first of many initiatives deployed without delay.

These are complex issues requiring a multifaceted response, not least of which is action to change the culture of the defence forces so that seeking support for mental health is seen as strength rather than a weakness.

We have to fight the stigma – some of it self-imposed, some imagined and some very real – that discourages people from acting early to protect and improve their mental health.

It should be seen as a public health first line of defence.

At beyondblue we know that early intervention and peer-to-peer support works and that it is possible to recover from many mental health conditions. We can all play a part, especially those former defence force personnel who have first-hand experience. So I call on those veterans to mobilise again to assist in destigmatizing mental ill-health in your community. We need you to step up once more; speak out about your journey and help others.

Talking about suicide does not make it happen and could well save a life. More must be done, urgently, to address this trend. We may not

prevent all such deaths, but we should be able to prevent most. Australia must declare war on veteran suicide. This has to be a zero tolerance campaign.

This wonderful War Memorial, is more than just a historical record of past deeds. It is correctly and increasingly a place that does and should explain our current military involvements overseas. It is a living place as well as a place of history and remembrance.

As a National Serviceman of the '60s, I value my service, and what that period taught me. I respect those men and women who have in the past and today proudly worn the Australian uniform. But I am so saddened that our nation leadership, in a bi-partisan way, cannot make the welfare of those who returned from service a top priority.

At services such as this we repeat the words Lest We Forget. We should never Forget. We will never Forget. But let us also remember our obligations to those who served. To those who return from conflicts with broken bodies and minds we must commit ourselves as a nation to work with them to ensure their return to Australia is a happy, worthwhile and lasting experience.

Lest We Forget. But let us Remember.

Lest We Forget. But let us Remember.

Lest We Forget. But let us Remember and meet our Obligations.

How to Join the Dog Squad

FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE STEPS

The Young Diggers Dog Squad trains dogs to become Assistance Dogs to support our serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members who are dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This program helps more than just the individuals.

The Dog Squad helps Defence families to better cope with the effects of PTSD and saves the lives of many rescued dogs.

Throughout this program, Young Diggers provides members with help and practical support to enhance the quality of life for both the dog and the individual.

You can apply to receive a dog or have your dog assessed. Further information including suitable dogs can be found on the website.

Before you apply, we fully expect that you have already covered your bases with regard to therapy, medication, and reading up on your illness.

**ALL DOG SQUAD MEMBERS
PLEASE REMEMBER
WHEN YOU ARE TRAINING
YOUR DOG ANYWHERE
PLEASE PUT ON THEIR JACKET.
THIS LETS THEM KNOW
THEY ARE WORKING.**

WHAT IS THE PROCESS TO JOIN THE DOG SQUAD.

Step 1: Apply to become a member online at www.youngdiggers.com.au.

To qualify as a Service Mbr, you need to be:

- ✓ A serving or ex-serving member of the Australian or New Zealand Army, Navy or Air Force, and Australian Federal Police who have served on peacekeeping missions, post-1975.
- ✓ If ex-serving, have an honourable discharge certificate.

To qualify as a Family Mbr, you need to be:

- ✓ An immediate family member of a serving or ex-serving man or woman who would qualify for membership as a 'Service Member'.

To qualify as an Associate Mbr, you need to be:

- ✓ An ex-serving member of the ADF or NZDF or their immediate family pre-1975. Serving and ex-serving military personnel and their immediate family from other Allied countries. Or be an individual or organisation who is interested in and supports Young Diggers and wants to be kept informed.



Step 2: Complete a dog squad application form.

Complete the one of the three Dog Squad Applications and submit it. All requirements are outlined in the Applications.

The three forms are:

1. If you would like to adopt a Young Diggers Dog Squad dog.
2. If you own a dog and you would like it assessed for the Dog Squad.
3. I would like to apply to become a Dog Foster Carer or Emergency Dog Carer.

Once your Application is received, it will be reviewed by the team at Young Diggers. One of our Dog Squad team members will then contact you as soon as possible.

Please note: The Dog Squad program is run entirely by volunteers and we are currently receiving a large number of applications and requests, so your patience is appreciated.

Some General Conditions

If for any reason you mistreat your dog (whether it was your own or supplied by Young Diggers), or if you fail to train it in this program, we will remove the dog from your care and report you to the RSPCA. The dog remains the property of Young Diggers until it completes its full PAT testing. The Young Diggers Jacket always remains the property of Young Diggers.

If you wish to take your dog on to base:

1. Your dog must be at least Level 1 and issued with a jacket and ID card.
2. You must complete the correct forms required by ADF and hand these to your CO for approval.
3. You must carry your vet card with you at all times and your dog's health checks and injections must be up to date.

Young Diggers Updates

STAY IN TOUCH



Keep up to date by joining
The Young Diggers Facebook page.



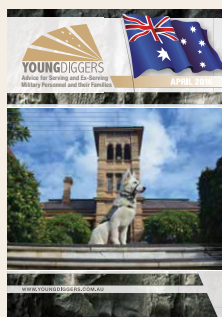
Scan here to join today →



For further information visit:
youngdiggers.com.au



Contact us on:
info@youngdiggers.com.au



WANTED. Qualified Dog Trainers

Young Diggers need qualified trainers all over Australia.

If you are an experienced Dog Trainer and would like to help our Diggers a couple of times each week, please send your resume (including your qualifications, experience and location).

Our volunteer application form can be found at:

www.youngdiggers.com.au/become-volunteer-application-form

Manspeak

THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING WITH MATES



With Christmas just around the corner, celebrations, holidays and catch ups can be a time to relax and enjoy our family and friends, but it can also be a time when loneliness, personal struggles, conflict and loss can raise its head and make us feel vulnerable. R U OK? have designed a series of videos aimed at encouraging men to get comfortable asking their mates if they're ok. By asking and listening we can show our mates they don't need to tackle their problems alone and reassure them that help is available. To get the conversation flowing R U OK? are sharing videos, tips and resources using the hashtag; #manspeak.

IT'S a fact that men are statistically less likely to seek help when they are struggling with life, feeling overwhelmed or suffering from mental health issues, than women.

It's also true that some men try to manage feelings of sadness, stress and emptiness by using alcohol or drugs, withdrawing socially or avoiding situations and past times that once gave them pleasure.

Why is that?

In an ideal world, men who are struggling or in crisis would feel confident and empowered enough to ask for help. But statistics reveal that two thirds of men don't.

Despite this, men are more likely to talk to mates before a health professional. R U OK? are keen to encourage more opportunities for men to talk comfortably with each other and normalize checking in with someone who appears to be struggling.

A beyondblue report found 50 per cent of men rarely talk about deeper personal issues with mates but almost a third wished they could open up more.

A lot of men want greater openness with their mates but don't always have the skills to start the conversation or know how to respond when a friend opens up.

To help navigate these conversations - R U OK? have created a video series called #Manspeak which can be viewed on youtube.com.

It's a pattern that doesn't need to end in tears.

THE latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) suicide figures for 2015 speak volumes about the need for Australian men to support and talk to each other more, before things get to crisis point.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for both men and women between the ages of 15 and 44, but men aged 85 and over accounted for the highest suicide rate in Australia in 2015 with 68 deaths, then men between the ages of 40 and 44, followed by men aged 45 to 54.

3027 people took their own lives in 2015, an increase from 2684 in 2014.

That's eight people per day in Australia. Six of those eight are men. Someone's dad, someone's mate, someone's work colleague, a man we love.

When should we check in with our mates?

The study also identified a combined set of behaviors that appeared to set men on a path to suicidal thought. Those were:

- Depressed or anxious mood
- Unhelpful or inflexible beliefs or values about themselves or their circumstances
- Avoidant coping strategies; turning away from problems because they felt unable to fix or deal with them
- Accumulated life stressors like divorce, debt, feeling trapped, loss of job, identity issues, infidelity, addiction, health, stuck in a rut, mental health problems.

Men don't need to fix everything and they don't need to have all the answers.

Alongside mental health professionals, the good news is that friends, family and community can disrupt the downward spiral. The following steps are key to starting and navigating a meaningful conversation.

It's as simple as A.L.E.C.

A- Ask. Asking if they're okay. Saying things like 'How you tracking?' 'What's happening, have you got five minutes to chat?' 'Mate, you don't seem yourself, what's up?' 'You've been out of sorts for a while, is everything okay?' 'Mate, my gut's telling me something's up with you, want to get a coffee and tell me what's going on?'

L- Listen. Once you have gained their trust and they've agreed they need to talk, find a quiet place to let them open up. Listen without judgment and remember you don't have to have the answers. Just letting someone get it

off their chest can be the first and sometimes most powerful step in their help seeking journey.

E- Encourage. Encourage them to seek help. Again, it's not your role to fix whatever's happening in their world. It could be suggesting they book in to see their GP, talk to their boss, another family member or a mental health professional.

C- Check in. It's important to check back in with them. Pick up the phone and follow up on your initial chat. Checking in lets them know you care about them and are committed to being there for them. It also reinforces that they matter.

Things not to say to someone who's struggling with life:

"Chin up mate!", "Harden up," "Suck it up and get on with it" "Cry me a river, mate," "You need to sort yourself out and face up to things."

Think before you speak. Ask yourself, is what I am about to say supportive? Will it help or will it harm? Unsupportive or dismissive statements in the Aussie manspeak landscape only serves to further alienate those who are vulnerable and at risk.

What if you ask someone if they're ok and they say no?

- Reassure them.
- Refer them to the R U OK? 'Find Help' page (www.ruok.org.au/findhelp) where a variety of services like Lifeline, beyondblue, Suicide Call Back Service and Griefline can be accessed.
- Suggest they contact their GP immediately.

Creating positive momentum by talking with mates

The study showed that helping men achieve small wins, like tackling a debt for example, helped them move forward and provided relief from feeling overwhelmed by other life stressors.

Men reported benefiting from regular contact with someone they could open up to without judgment. Those checking in could also help by encouraging their mate or loved one to avoid substance abuse which aggravates mood and coping mechanisms.

Other benefits to talking with mates included:

- Improvements in outlook by breaking up routines and boredom; getting them out of the house and involved in something.
- Increased social contact with people who matter like children, family or good friends.
- Helping others with no personal benefit to the person struggling was shown to positively impact the wellbeing of men (and women) during tough times. Things like helping a mate on a house project, coaching a team or pitching in on a repair task increased feelings of worth.

RUOK? DAY™

A conversation could change a life.



R U OK? CONVERSATION CONVOY

Join the conversation at www.ruok.org.au



1. Ask



2. Listen



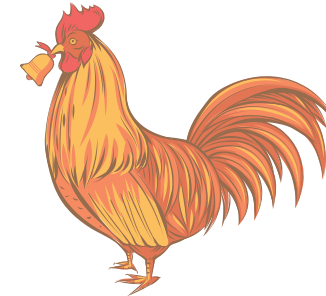
**3. Encourage
action**



4. Check in

Butch the Rooster

YOU CAN'T ALWAYS HEAR THE BELLS



Sarah was in the fertilized egg business. She had several hundred young pullets and ten roosters to fertilize the eggs.

She kept records and any rooster not performing went into the soup pot and was replaced.

This took a lot of time, so she bought some tiny bells and attached them to her roosters. Each bell had a different tone, so she could tell from a distance which rooster was performing. Now, she could sit on the porch and fill out an efficiency report by just listening to the bells.

Sarah's favourite rooster, old Butch, was a very fine specimen but, this morning she noticed old Butch's bell hadn't rung at all! When she went to investigate, she saw the other roosters were busy chasing pullets, bells-a-ringing, but the pullets hearing the roosters coming, would run for cover. To Sarah's amazement, old Butch had his bell in his beak, so it couldn't ring.

He'd sneak up on a pullet, do his job, and walk on to the next one.

Sarah was so proud of old Butch, she entered him in a Show and he became an overnight sensation among the judges.

The result was the judges not only awarded old Butch the "No Bell Peace Prize" they also awarded him the "Pulletsurprise" as well.

Clearly old Butch was a politician in the making. Who else but a politician could figure out how to win two of the most coveted awards on our planet by being the best at sneaking up on the unsuspecting populace and screwing them when they weren't paying attention?

Vote carefully in the next election.
You can't always hear the bells.

(If you don't send this on,
you're chicken.....no yolk!)

Ways to unwind and de-stress when you live with a mental illness

There's a proven relationship between stress and mental illness. It can worsen an episode, or even result in symptoms returning.

A balanced lifestyle and coping strategies can help with the management of stress. But how do you start?

The following suggestions can be implemented right now, or they can form part of an ongoing plan.

The best way to start is to try something you find enjoyable, or provides you with a sense of purpose every day.



Stay in touch

Being connected with others is an important part of positive mental health. But when we're affected by mental health issues we may not feel like mixing with others. This isolation can result in delayed support, longer treatment and tougher recovery.

Even though you may not always feel like it, try to:

- Surround yourself with positive people and influences
- Stay in touch with family and friends (face to face or by phone is best)
- Go out even if you don't feel like it, be as brief or low key as you like
- Try some friendly banter with shop assistants (or even just a smile)
- Tell someone how you are feeling, be it a friend, family member, medical professional, member of your spiritual group, teacher, or helpline counsellor.

Relaxation techniques

When our mind becomes tense, so does our body. Try relieving your physical tension with these techniques:

- Meditation or mindfulness – Watch a YouTube video or read our review of mindfulness apps
- Yoga or Tai Chi, or other complementary therapies
- Deep breathing – Lie in a comfortable position and breathe in deeply. Breathe out slowly, making your out-breath longer than your in-breath
- Progressive muscle relaxation.

Start a hobby

Hobbies are a great way to disconnect and unwind. Try exercises like cycling, swimming, or join a sporting club. Get into gardening. Join a choir. Or unleash your creative mind through photography, painting, or other arts and crafts.

Contact your neighborhood house, community centre, or citizen's advice bureau to find groups available in your area.

Learn to self-soothe

Self-soothing is the act of comforting, distracting, or being kind to yourself in times of distress. It is an important skill for emotional wellbeing, but does not come naturally to everyone.

Self-soothing strategies vary. Some people use physical activities to implement positive behaviour, while for others nonphysical activities including practicing acceptance and positive thinking works best.

Find something from our list, revisit something you have previously enjoyed, or discover something new that works for you. This could include:

Physical activities

- Visit a self-help website or join a discussion on the SANE Forums
- Play with a pet
- Wrap a blanket round you (try weighted blankets)
- Let yourself cry or sleep
- Massage your hands
- Have a warm bath or shower
- Do some gardening, DIY or household chores
- Use your senses: look at calming things, listen to your favourite music, smell your favourite perfumes, touch pleasing textures, savor each mouthful of your favourite food
- Read a book or a magazine, do a jigsaw, Sudoku or crossword
- Learn something new on the internet
- Look at photos
- Watch your favorite movies or TV shows
- Write positive things down - List the things in your life you value, no matter how small. These may include family, friends or pets, spiritual beliefs, everyday pleasures or favourite memories. Keep the list on you, and read it if you're feeling low.

- Write down your goals - You may have always wanted to travel to a particular place, read a specific book, own a pet, move to another place, start a hobby, volunteer, go back to school, or start a family.

Call a friend for a chat, visit someone, or organise a regular night out with your partner or family member (a weekly or monthly event).

Nonphysical activities

- Keep a positive outlook – This helps maintain hope through life's challenges, and reminds us recovery is possible, sustainable and worth the effort.
- Don't compare a situation to the past or worry about the future. Live in the present and think of the good occurring right now.

- Practice acceptance – Make space for events. Give yourself permission to be angry, upset, or disappointed by an experience, or people involved. Learn from it and be better prepared in the future.
- Do something good today — Pay for a stranger's coffee, tip a waiter, compliment someone, give up your seat on the train — add something great to the world.
- Maintain clear boundaries – This can differ depending on the situation. A helpful tip is that it's ok to say 'no', it's ok to take time for yourself and be firm around your needs.

Support
WHEN YOU NEED IT

1800 011 046

FREE & CONFIDENTIAL COUNSELLING

Veterans | Families | Eligible ADF

24/7 SERVICE

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is like 'worry'. It's an unpleasant emotion that most people feel when something might be risky, frightening or worrying. Everyone experiences mild anxiety when faced with stressful situations, like just before a sporting match or an exam. This kind of anxiety is normal and is our body's way of preparing us to act in difficult situations. Anxiety can actually help us perform better by revving us up and helping us feel alert.



Anxiety can become a problem when it is **very intense, happens a lot of the time, feels overwhelming or it interferes with your daily living.**

What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Physical feelings of anxiety include an increased heart rate, faster breathing, muscle tension, sweating, shaking and 'butterflies in the stomach'. People with anxiety disorders experience these physical symptoms a lot more often. They might also experience:

- Persistent worrying and excessive fears
- Being unable to relax
- Avoiding challenging situations
- Being socially isolated or withdrawn
- Trouble concentrating and paying attention
- Poor sleep
- Problems with work, social or family life.

What are panic attacks?

Panic attacks can occur as part of any anxiety disorder, but not everyone with anxiety problems will experience them.

Panic attacks are when you are suddenly overcome by strong fear and experience physical symptoms of anxiety, like a pounding heart, difficulty breathing, shaking, feeling dizzy or feeling sick. Panic attacks are short (about 10 minutes) and usually feel frightening and intense. Someone having a panic attack might feel like they're having a heart attack or an asthma attack, or they might fear they're losing control.



Depression

Normal feelings vs. depression

We all feel sad or 'down' from time to time – it's part of being human.

For young people, it's normal to have occasional mood swings, feel irritable sometimes, and to be sensitive to rejection and criticism.

This can make it harder to tell whether you're experiencing "normal" feelings or whether you are becoming depressed.



What is depression?

Depression is one of the most common health issues for young people in Australia¹.

Depression ("major depression") is a mental illness characterised by feelings of sadness that lasts longer than usual, affect most parts of your life and stop you enjoying the things that you used to.

Symptoms of depression

You may be experiencing depression if, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad, depressed or irritable most of the time, or you've lost interest or pleasure in your usual activities. Other symptoms may include:



Loss of interest in food or eating too much, leading to weight loss or gain



Having trouble sleeping (getting to sleep and/or staying asleep), or oversleeping and staying in bed most of the day



Feeling tired most of the time, or lacking energy and motivation



Difficulty concentrating and making decisions



Feeling worthless or guilty a lot of the time



Feeling everything has become 'too hard'



Having thoughts of death or suicide

People with depression might have other mental or physical health problems as well, such as anxiety, or using cigarettes, alcohol or illegal drugs excessively.





A VVCS summary for veteran support officers

Key messages:

- VVCS is available 24/7 by phoning 1800 011 046 (free calls from landlines and some mobile phones).
- VVCS is not just a crisis hotline, it offers ongoing counselling and support for war and service-related mental health and wellbeing conditions i.e. anxiety, depression, anger, sleep difficulties, PTSD, alcohol or substance misuse, relationship and family issues.
- VVCS services are free, offered nationwide to either individuals, couples and/or families.
- VVCS services are delivered by experienced mental health counsellors who understand military culture.
- VVCS conducts group treatment programs, and offers case management services if required.
- VVCS has a strong commitment to protecting the client's right to confidentiality and privacy. Clinical information is not released to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Department of Defence or other agencies without informed client consent.

Further information on confidentiality and privacy can be found at: www.vvcs.gov.au

VVCS is available to:

- Current and former serving Australian Defence Force veterans and peacekeepers;
- Current and former Australian Defence Force members who have: served in domestic or international disaster relief operations; served in border protection operations; served as a submariner; been medically discharged or have been involved in a training accident that resulted in serious injury to any person;
- Partners and dependent children (aged 5 to 26) of members listed above;
- Partners, dependent children and parents of members killed in service-related incidents;
- The ex-partners of Vietnam veterans within five years of separation;
- Sons and daughters (of any age) of Vietnam veterans;
- War Widows(er)s;
- Holders of a DVA Health Card – for All Conditions (Gold) or a DVA Health Card – for Specific Conditions (White) for specified mental health conditions; and
- Participants in the Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (F-111) scheme.

Complete list of eligible clients can be found at: www.vvcs.gov.au or call 1800 011 046.