

The Department of Veterans' Affairs Men's Health Peer Education project

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Men's Health Peer Education project was funded in response to the Vietnam Veterans Health Study (1998) outcomes. The project was based on a pilot initiated and run in Tasmania in partnership with the Vietnam Veterans' Association Australia. The National Project started in 2000 with consultation meetings Australia wide with the veteran community.

The objective is to "encourage members of the veteran community to share the responsibility for managing their own health and well-being", by facilitating health education presentations either to groups or individuals. Facilitators are encouraged to invite guest speakers from peak health organisations such as the Heart Foundation, Diabetes Association and Anti Cancer Councils.

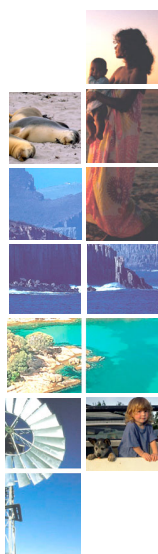
Outcomes sought are to:

- raise the veteran community's interest in men's health
- set up a National Men's Health Peer Education Facilitator Network
- encourage ex-service organisations to promote men's health
- provide a forum for debate about the status of men's health from the veteran community's perspective.

The peer education concept works particularly well with the veteran community. Constant feedback to DVA is that the majority of veterans would prefer to listen to another veteran, before seeking advice from a health professional.

There are over 200 hundred volunteers nationally with further training programs scheduled for this financial year.

The Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators have a responsibility to perform their role as per the Code of Conduct and a duty of care to undertake the role in a responsible way ensuring privacy and confidentiality are maintained.



CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct has been developed in consultation with the DVA national and state offices and the veteran community.

- Facilitators give information NOT advice.
- Facilitators remain objective – they do not push their own views and values whilst giving a peer education presentation.
- Facilitators only present information that is in the Men's Health Peer Education Facilitator Resource Manual.

INSURANCE COVER

As DVA volunteers, the Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators are covered under DVA's Comcover Insurance for:

- general liability
- professional indemnity
- personal accident.

Facilitators are advised to keep a diary of their peer education activities for reference in case of an incident.

MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION FACILITATOR AGREEMENT

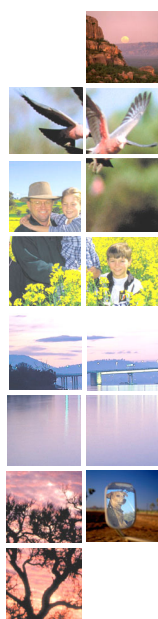
All volunteers nominating for training as a Men's Health Peer Education Facilitator are asked to sign an "agreement" that they will:

- abide by the Code of Conduct
- adhere to the reporting requirements under Comcover
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of persons attending Men's Health Peer Education presentations as per the *Privacy Act 1998* (Attachment A).

TRAINING

The training is generally held over 2.5 to 3 days and includes:

- the role of peer education facilitator
- privacy and confidentiality
- communication skills
- presentation skills.



IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

- National Selection Criteria
- National Marketing
- State and Regional Focus

The project is co-ordinated nationally with the help of DVA State Contact Officers.

DVA found that the majority of nominations have come from veteran community members who are not members or active members of ex-service organisations. This has shown that there are people willing to volunteer for this type of project, which is contrary to the advice that DVA received from both its state offices and ex-service organisations.

MARKETING

A poster and pamphlet have been developed in consultation with the veteran community. The message is simple.

Back then you stayed healthy – your life depended on it
Today it still does ...

The message appears on a poster with a colour photo of veterans enjoying companionship fly-fishing today, with a smaller black and white archival photo inset with young soldiers undertaking their basic military training.

MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION DATA BASE

A national database of volunteers has been set up to:

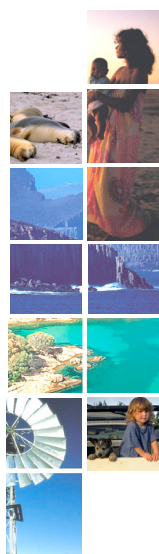
- facilitate networking
- continue educating facilitators.

EVALUATION

The evaluation has been designed as a monitoring tool and a process for documenting the presentation activities of the volunteers.

- three-monthly volunteer activity feedback form
- audience feedback form
- inviting organisation feedback form.

The Program will be evaluated later this year and will include a questionnaire to document the spin off health benefits to the volunteers. For example DVA receives



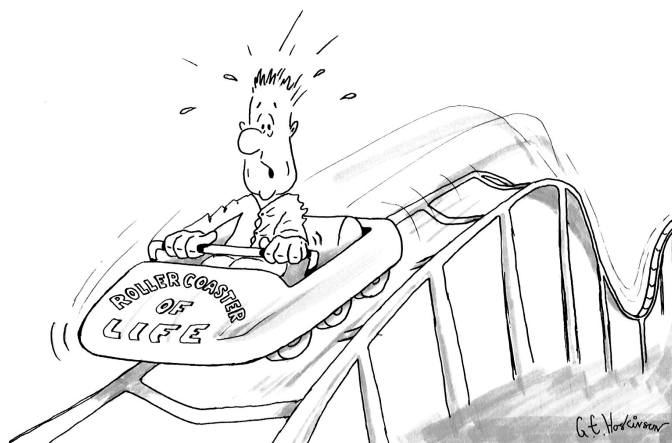
regular feedback from volunteers on the changes they have personally made to improve their health and well-being.

RESOURCE MANUAL

The Men's Health Peer Education Facilitator Resource Manual was developed by DVA with generous copyright permission from peak health education organisations. Material used is already in the public arena and therefore lowers the risk of a professional indemnity incident. Facilitators are required to use these resources to "provide information not advice". Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators should not take a quasi-health professional role. They are encouraged to invite speakers from health organisations, GPs, community pharmacists etc.

Colloquial language is used appropriately, throughout the manual for example Section 4 on Mental Health has the following module title.

"lives full of ups and downs"



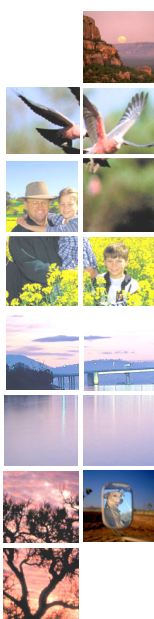
DVA MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION WEBSITE

The Website has been developed with the material from the Facilitator manual and has links to peak health organisations.

MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

A quarterly newsletter has been developed for the volunteer Facilitators, the veteran and ex-serving community. Facilitators are encouraged to submit articles from their regions. These articles in particular are very popular. It is also a way of providing up to date information on DVA entitlements and programs. The newsletter is available in hard copy (limited numbers) and for download from the DVA Men's Health Peer Education Website www.dva.gov.au/health/menshealth/newsletter.

The newsletter is proving very popular with demand for hard copies increasing as resources for ex-service organisations and individual veterans that are not volunteer



Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators. A number of the volunteer Facilitators request additional copies for the GP offices.

MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The National Men's Health Peer Education Committee has ten nominated members. Queensland and New South Wales have two members because of the geographic size of those States and the relatively high numbers of Men's Health Peer Education volunteers. Membership is as follows:

Tasmania	1
Victoria	1
South Australia	1
Western Australia	1
Northern Territory	1
Australian Capital Territory	1
New South Wales	2
Queensland	2

The aim of the Committee is to give the "grass roots" veteran community a forum to raise and discuss health education needs that the veteran community considers important.

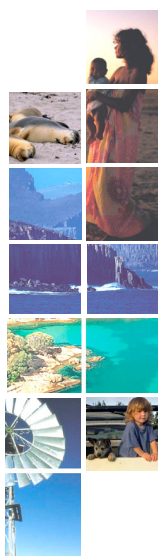
The Role of the National Men's Health Peer Education Committee is to:

- encourage and lead networking between facilitators
- act as first point of contact (after the State/Territory Men's Health Peer Education Co-ordinator) for consultation on other DVA National projects. Such as the DVA Alcohol Project, *The Right Mix*
- co-ordinate State/regional input into the Men's Health Peer Education Newsletter so ideally each State and Territory has input into each newsletter.

NATIONAL MEN'S HEALTH PEER EDUCATION CONFERENCE 6-8 NOVEMBER 2002

The Conference was very productive with the following outcomes agreed

- the Men's Health Peer Education Program will continue with DVA sponsorship, with improved promotion to ex-service organisations at the National and State level to progress the support of volunteers
- a new look national identity card will be developed for all volunteer Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators with a fixed term of tenure clearly visible
- representation will be sought on the Younger Veterans Forums to voice the health education needs of the "grass roots" veteran community



- Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators will work closely with DVA in promoting the DVA Alcohol Health Promotion Strategy and will encourage all volunteers to incorporate the "quality of life/social rehabilitation" theme in all presentations.

A media release (attached) has been developed for Men's Health Peer Education Facilitators to use with their local media and ex-service organisation newsletters and websites.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Facilitators are encouraged to access local men's health groups. Some peer education Facilitators have set-up partnerships with their local community health networks to deliver the program.

