



Notification and bereavement support

Defence Community Organisation

Supporting Defence families in times of bereavement

In the event of the death, serious injury, missing or captured ADF member, Defence provides practical and emotional support to the family.

Notification

When Defence members die, become seriously ill/injured or very seriously ill/injured, are missing or captured, Defence ensures all relevant people are notified. A notification team will formally advise relevant people of the condition of the affected Defence member.

Relevant people include the primary emergency or alternate emergency contact and next of kin as nominated on PMKeyS. The Defence member's Command will task a notification team. The notification team consists of a suitably trained Defence member and Service Chaplain to communicate casualty information.

Continuing support

In the event of a serious or very serious injury or illness Defence Community Organisation (DCO) may provide a Case Management Team consisting of a Military Support Officer (MSO) and Social Worker. Family assistance can include practical administrative and social work support.

In the event of the death of an ADF member while in service, Defence can offer assistance from a Bereavement Support Team to support the family. This support is given to all bereaved Defence families, regardless of the cause of the member's death.

Your support team

The Bereavement Support Team contacts the family within 24 hours, and provides them with tailored practical and emotional support.

A Bereavement Support Team is made up of a Defence Social Worker and MSO.

As every family and every grieving process is different, the social worker assesses your family's needs and coordinates the support accordingly. They can provide counselling, advice or referrals as necessary and will be your main point of contact.

The MSO advises your family on the military administration involved and makes practical arrangements, while remaining in close communication with the member's unit.

The support team can link your family into useful agencies such as ComSuper, Legacy and the Department of Veterans' Affairs as well as community resources that may meet your needs.

Families may choose the level of military involvement and all of the support team's actions will reflect and respect your family's wishes. The team can also provide information if there is media interest or any required Commission of Inquiry.

Support provided for an injury or illness will be for a set period of time. Your family usually continues to receive support after bereavement for up to 6-12 months depending on your needs and the social worker's assessment.





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Practical assistance

When a loved one dies there are many decisions and arrangements that may require your consideration. Your DCO support team can guide you through these practical concerns including directing you to entitlements and provisions available to you.

Funerals

The team discusses funeral options with your family, and the MSO normally coordinates the funeral and burial arrangements on your behalf. In most cases, Defence covers the reasonable costs of a military or private funeral service.

Financial assistance

Dependants who were financially reliant upon the ADF member may be entitled to a series of Bereavement payments. The purpose of these payments is to provide immediate relief for the loss of the deceased member's financial support. This assistance consists of four payments of the member's fortnightly salary and is tax free. Bereavement payments are not the same as compensation, and are separate from the member's Personal Estate.

DCO can also provide financial assistance for a member's dependants to travel to the funeral location. This includes return travel expenses, two nights' accommodation and meals, within reasonable limits.

Additional payments, such as leave entitlements, cash-in-effect, and balance of salary or compensation depend on individual circumstances.

Wills and personal effects

If the member's Will has been stored at DCO Headquarters, the MSO forwards the original

copy to the proper representative and assists with executing the member's wishes.

DCO also coordinates the storage, removal, disposal or release of the member's personal effects in consultation with the family.

Make sure your family is supported

It is very important for ADF members to register their primary emergency contact, alternative emergency contact and next of kin on PMKeyS, and keep their details up to date.

We also strongly encourage serving members to have a current Will and power of attorney, and to send their will to Headquarters DCO for storage.

These steps are essential for Defence to properly carry out the wishes of the ADF member and provide their family with support in the event of their death.

For more information on this factsheet and other Defence Community Organisation support services visit www.defence.gov.au/dco or call the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

The Defence Community Organisation offers a wide range of support services for the families of ADF members.

The best way to access these services is to call 1800 624 608. The all-hours Defence Family Helpline is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

