



27 January 2022.

**The Hon Michael Sukkar MP**

Assistant Treasurer  
Minister for Housing  
Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister and Assistant Treasurer,

**PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION      NATIONAL VETERAN VOLUNTEER SERVICE**

*'... a joint Australian Government and Disaster Relief  
Australia strategic initiative to improve the health  
and wellbeing of Australia's military veterans'*



Australian Government



Disaster Relief Australia (**DRA**) is seeking the Commonwealth of Australia's consideration for Partnership and Program Funding Assistance of \$15 million dollars per year for four years - to support the increased engagement of Australia's military veterans in disaster resilience, recovery and relief operations, and community service projects throughout Australia – and, in doing so, improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

The **National Veteran Volunteer Service** – a veteran-led service is designed to reduce the loss of life and property due to the impact of natural disasters on the community and, in doing so, provide a continuum of service, fellowship and veteran support network.

The National Veteran Volunteer Service is program-based and enables the realisation of four key outcomes – of direct and tangible benefit to the Government, the Australian community and, importantly, veterans and their families:

- a. Improved veteran health and wellbeing.
- b. Veterans to be recognised as a national asset in the conduct of disaster resilience, recovery, and relief operations.
- c. A changed narrative – veterans are not 'broken'.
- d. A veteran peer support network and fellowship.

The National Veterans Volunteer Service is a unique strategic initiative, based on service to the community in their time of need, that presents an innovative and cost-effective option to the current clinical rehabilitation-based approach to improving the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

DRA's 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission is attached at Enclosure 1.

**About Disaster Relief Australia**

DRA's mission is to unite the skills and experiences of our military veterans, with emergency first responders, and to rapidly deploy disaster relief and recovery teams - to areas and communities acutely affected by natural disasters and other extreme events across Australia.

Our volunteers, consisting of military veterans and highly qualified emergency first responders, have the capability to provide incident management, damage and impact assessment, disaster mapping and work-order management, debris management, hazard mitigation, and medical response.

In addition to providing our veterans with purpose, direction and a renewed sense self-worth, DRA invests heavily in the re-training of veterans as a pathway back into civilian life and employment. In doing so, we strengthen government and community awareness around the challenges many veterans and their families face when they leave the military.



DRA is a not-for-profit registered charity, funded through grants, partnerships, and philanthropic gifts.

DRA's Disaster Response Teams, trained, deployed and tasked under the direction of our National Command Centre based in Adelaide, will directly contribute to the Government's capacity and capability to support disaster resilience, recovery and relief operations, including affected communities, throughout Australia and, through that medium and experience in community service, improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

With the Government's assistance, a dual benefit is achieved; veterans gain a renewed sense of purpose and self-worth, and disaster affected communities can easily access assistance in their time of need.

*'... Australia's military veterans are a national asset'*

Minister,

I will contact your office next week and, pending your availability, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss DRA's continued engagement and support to the Government during natural disasters, the benefits of the National Veterans Volunteer Service to our veterans, Government and the community, and our request for partnership and funding assistance.

In the interim should you have any questions in relation to DRA or the Pre-Budget Submission, please do not hesitate to contact Geoff Evans DRA Chief Executive Officer.

I have no doubt that the National Veteran Volunteer Service '... a unique and highly capable strategic initiative' will stand-up as positive inclusion in the upcoming Federal Election. .

On behalf of our veterans and their families - thank you for your consideration.

Mike Carmody

for

Geoff Evans  
Chief Executive Officer

Annex:           A.           Disaster Relief Australia 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission

Copy:

Minister the Hon Peter Dutton MP  
Minister for Defence

Minister the Hon Andrew Gee MP  
Minister for Defence Personnel  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

John Kunkel  
Chief of Staff the Hon Scott Morrison MP Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia  
Office of the Prime Minister

Contact Details:

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Sydney NSW 2000



Enclosure 1

Disaster Relief Australia and Commonwealth of Australia OFFICIAL

DISASTER RELIEF AUSTRALIA

**PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION**



**PARTNERSHIP  
AND  
PROGRAM FUNDING ASSISTANCE  
PROPOSAL  
TO THE  
COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT**

Prepared by

Geoff Evans

Chief Executive Officer

27 January 2022



**Pre-Budget Submission – Partnership and Program Funding Assistance**  
**Proposal to the Australian Government**



**THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL VETERAN VOLUNTEER SERVICE**  
**FOR AUSTRALIA**

*'... our strike teams are holding the line as we tackle the final push into our recovery tasks. Often knee-deep in mud and debris our strike team veterans work with the local community cleaning houses, fixing roofs, moving furniture and damage assessment. The support we receive from residents, many of whom have lost everything, gives us the inspiration to push forward. As veterans, we never take a step backwards...'*

*Bjorn Margon - Commander DRA Strike Team Alpha*

**1. Executive Summary**

Disaster Relief Australia (**DRA**) is seeking the Commonwealth of Australia (the Government) consideration for Partnership and Program Funding Assistance of \$15 million dollars per year for four years - to support the increased engagement of Australia's military veterans in disaster resilience, recovery and relief operations and community service projects throughout Australia and - in doing so, improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

DRA will improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families through enabling their volunteer participation in a National Veteran Volunteer Service (**NVVS**) – a veteran-led service designed to reduce the loss of life and property due to the impact of natural disasters on communities - and, in doing so, provide a continuum of service, fellowship and veteran support networks.

**2. Statement of need**

There are two interrelated components of the Statement of Need addressed by DRA's 2022-23 Pre-Budget Submission:

- a. The critical need to address the current and declining health and wellbeing of Australia's military veterans and their families.
- b. The immediate need to build and sustain Australia's capability and capacity to address the increasing impact and consequences of climate change and natural disasters on the community and the nation's infrastructure.

*'... Australia's military veterans are a national asset'*

**3. Context**

**a. The health and wellbeing of veterans and their families**

The Australian Government allocated \$11.7 billion to the Department of Veteran Affairs (**DVA**) in the 2020–21 Budget to deliver a range of services and support for Australia's 220,000 veterans and 100,000 dependents<sup>1</sup>. The Budget focuses on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their families, including \$101.7 million to boost mental health support services.

It is well established, however, that treatment, though often a necessary first step, will not by itself support the successful transition for veterans who have experienced a strong sense of purpose, identity and camaraderie during their service.

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<sup>1</sup> Conservative estimate.



Providing the opportunity for veterans to serve the Australian community is an innovative, proven and highly effective approach to enabling veteran wellness and ability, instead of entitlement and disability. Based on the simple premise that the best way to help a veteran is to ask them to help someone else, community service will drive better physical and mental health outcomes for both veterans and their families, which will in turn decrease healthcare and related dependency costs.

*'... Service itself can be a protective factor, with employment in the ADF providing mateship, a sense of 'family', a sense of identity and belonging, and career satisfaction'*

*Dr Bernadette Boss, CSC. Interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, 2021.*

DRA will improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families through enabling their volunteer participation in a NVVS.

The NVVS will capture the ambition and attributes that drive people to join the ADF, creating both an opportunity and expectation that veterans can and should capitalise on the training and experience provided by the ADF to continue to serve the nation. The NVVS should not be viewed as an end, but rather as a model to engage, develop and inspire veterans to grow beyond their military service.

The NVVS builds on the principles of the **Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant** delivered by the Australian Government 2019, which encourages recognition of the unique nature of military service and helps veterans and their families connect with the broader Australian community.

*'... thousands of veterans stand ready to again answer the call to serve the nation'*

*'... on stepping forward, a veteran will never take a step backwards'*

## **b. Building and sustaining capability and capacity to address natural disasters.**

In October 2021, Deloitte Access Economics released the special report: Update to the economic costs of natural disasters in Australia, commissioned by the Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities (the Roundtable).

This latest report updates and builds on the Roundtable's previous estimates of the costs of natural disasters with new, more comprehensive data and extends the analysis to estimate costs under different climate change scenarios.

### **Key findings from the report**

The report shows that today, natural disasters cost the Australian economy \$38 billion per year on average. Even under a low emissions scenario, this cost is estimated to increase to \$73 billion per year by 2060. This is significantly higher than the \$39 billion by 2050 per year reported in 2017.

In 2020 annual average costs of natural disasters are only 0.02% larger than the low emissions scenario. But under a high emissions scenario – where emissions reach 3<sup>o</sup> Celsius above pre-industrial levels just after 2060 – the estimated costs per year are \$94 billion. That represents a 29% increase relative to the low emissions scenario.

Even if a low emission scenario is achieved, the cost of natural disasters is forecast to be \$1.2 trillion in cumulative costs over the next forty years.

The report also shows some parts of Australia will be more impacted than others. Two thirds of the costs from natural disasters will be incurred in QLD and NSW over the next forty years as they become more exposed to tropical cyclones and floods, as warming oceans enable tropical cyclones to move further south.

Costs in Melbourne and Brisbane will also increase significantly, as major rivers in these cities alongside growing populations will lead to greater costs associated with flooding for Melbourne and tropical cyclones and floods for Brisbane.

Australia has an increasing capability 'gap' between the demands of disaster resilience, recovery and relief and the need for highly skilled deployable manpower.



## More investment in mitigation needed

At a time when Australia is facing more frequent, more severe weather events, and the country is looking more deeply than ever at resilience following the devastating Black Summer bushfires, this latest research strengthens the case for resilience. The Roundtable members, believe action to limit climate change must be coupled with interventions to better prepare communities and this continues to require a collective effort from all levels of government, businesses and the community.

The Government's emergency management arrangements exist to enable different parties to work effectively together to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies. Noting that all people and organisations who play a role in emergency management must work together to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster.

Over the past four years DRA has deployed Disaster Response Teams to 23 natural disasters in Australia, including bushfire recovery in Tathra NSW, drought relief operations in Dubbo and Central Western NSW, flood recovery and community support operations in Townsville QLD and the 'Black Summer' bushfires on the NSW South Coast and North-West Victoria, and most recently state-wide COVID-19 support operations.

In doing so, DRA has unconditionally provided a volunteer specialist labour workforce to the value of \$4,200,000 to directly support disaster recovery and community support operations including, most recently, a range of community resilience projects in conjunction with Minderoo Foundation.



### c. Immediate conclusions

The objectives of the National Disaster Emergency Plan, include '*... the requirement for the Government to emphasise community engagement in the development and exercise of plans, as well as in their operational employment, and to ensure that the capability and resourcing requirements of these responsibilities are understood ...*'.

The Government relies heavily on volunteer organisations to support disaster and community recovery operations and, in turn, relieve increasing pressure on the Federal Budget.

The term 'veteran' in Australia often conjures images of either old men with medals or broken young people with PTSD in need of charity and sympathy. Media coverage of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and the fallout from the Brereton Report are likely to perpetuate this image over the next few years. The NVVS will actively challenge this narrative by continuing to demonstrate the exceptional skills and experience ADF service provides. When combined with the direct impact veterans have on disaster affected communities, the NVVS will not only change the way veterans are viewed by the public, but in many cases, it will change the way veterans look at themselves.

DRA's members when trained, deployed and tasked under the direction of the DRA National Operations Centre directly contribute to government and community capacity and ability to support disaster resilience and recovery operations throughout Australia.

As such, and with the Government's assistance, significant benefits are realised; the Government continues to utilise the skills and experience our veterans developed during their time of military service and disaster affected communities can easily access assistance in their time of need.

Through this Submission and request for Program Funding Assistance, DRA is seeking to increase and sustain the capability and capacity to meet the forecast demand for disaster resilience, recovery and relief - and support to the Government and the Australian community.

## 4. Goals and objectives

DRA requests the Government's consideration for Program Funding Assistance of \$15 million dollars per year for four years - to support the increased engagement of Australia's military veterans in the conduct of disaster resilience, relief and community support operations and - in doing so, improve the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

The NVVS is based on the progressive expansion of DRA's capability and capacity to conduct disaster resilience, recovery and relief operations and related community service projects - over four years.



The NVVS is program-based and is designed to deliver four strategic outcomes:

- a. Improved veteran health and wellbeing.
- b. Veterans to be recognised as a national asset in the conduct of disaster resilience and relief operations.
- c. A changed narrative – veterans are not 'broken'.
- d. A veteran peer support network and fellowship.

The NVVS will be implemented in two phases:

- a. Phase 1                    Implement the DRA National Advocacy Campaign.
- b. Phase 2                    Implement the Government - DRA National Advocacy Campaign – veterans and community  
Initiate the build of DRA capability and capacity.

### 5. Enabling objectives (KPI)

To support the increased engagement of the ADF and veteran community in disaster resilience and recovery operations, the DRA NVVS will address:

- a. The expansion and sustainability of Disaster Relief Team (**DRT**) capability and capacity to 6500 veteran volunteers to deliver more than 17,000 volunteer days per annum – through the development, expansion and deployment of DRT assets, infrastructure and personnel.
- b. Within the context of increasing the number of volunteer veterans, the recruitment, induction, training and professionalisation of the NVVS. Recognising the continued development of veterans as experts in disaster resilience and recovery including upskilling and deployments in critical support roles to meet the priority areas and tasking outlined in the Government's National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.
- c. The establishment of veteran liaison officers to enable serving members of the ADF, veterans and their families to build positive links into communities prior to, during and after transition.
- d. A joint Government – DRA National Advocacy Campaign designed to promote the positive aspects of the NVVS to the veteran and broader Australian community.

The NVVS will build on the principles of the Australian Defence Veterans' Covenant delivered by the Australian Government 2019, which encourages recognition of the unique nature of military service and helps veterans and their families connect with the broader Australian community.

### 6. Outline strategy

The outline strategy is presented at Table 1. – a progressive scaling over four years to achieve a NVVS capability of over 6000 veteran volunteers with the capacity to deploy 17,000 volunteer days combating natural disasters.

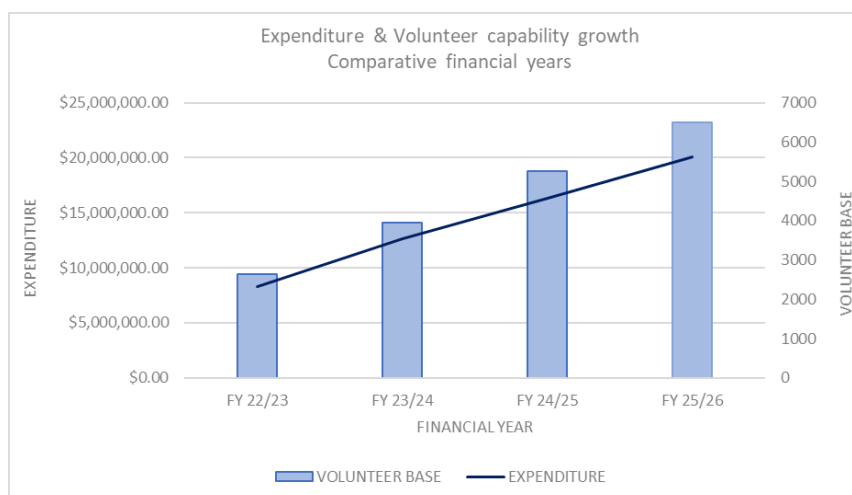


Table 1



## 7. Beneficiaries

The principal beneficiaries are:

- a. Australia's military veterans and their families – improved health and wellbeing.
- b. The Australian community – reduced loss of life and property due to natural disasters.
- c. The Australian Government – reduced financial outlay; veteran health and wellbeing and the impact of natural disasters.

## 8. Budget information

DRA will seek Program Funding Assistance from the Australian Government of \$15 million dollars per year for four years. The strategic (Year 4 end-state) financial breakdown is outlined as follows:

a. NVVS	Leadership and Project Management	\$400 K
b. National Advocacy Campaign	Supporting Marketing Plan	\$1.055 M
	Advocacy Plan	\$529 K – Gov. to co-contribute
c. CONOPS (Capability-Capacity)	Infrastructure	\$1.222 M
	Assets	\$2.026 M
	Personnel	\$54. 825 M
	<b>Sub. Total:</b>	<b>~\$58 M</b>
d. Research Report – NVVS	DRA Contribution	\$298 K
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>~\$15 M per year for four years</b>

Detailed Budget Information is presented at Annex A.

## 9. Exclusions

Program Funding Assistance provided under this Submission will be expended solely on the National Veteran Volunteer Service.

## 10. Sustainability

DRA is a rapidly growing organisation with sustainable national revenue streams. DRA is committed to funding National Veteran Volunteer Service beyond this Submission, and during any major disaster recovery or relief operation that occurs during or after the funding period - through the support of the current DRA grants program, and engagement and contribution of sponsors and donors.

The continued development and sustainability of each DRT is dependent on the funding provided under this Submission – for the next four years. Subject to development progress, DRA may seek continuation and/or extension of the funding in a separate Submission.

## 11. Plan of evaluation

The plan of evaluation includes both process and outcome evaluation, intended to:

- a. Ensure information is captured (360o) for the Project Evaluation Report.
- b. Document what Program and deployment-task objectives were achieved.
- c. Determine the effectiveness of the Program, including cost-benefit analysis.
- d. Enable the Program Manager to make changes that improve the Program's effectiveness and efficiency.

The Program Evaluation Report will be provided to the Government every six (6) months during the funding period.





## 12. About Disaster Relief Australia

DRA's mission is to unite the skills and experiences of our military veterans, with emergency first responders, and to rapidly deploy emergency response and recovery teams - to areas and communities acutely affected by natural disasters and other extreme events across Australia.

Our volunteers, consisting of military veterans and high qualified first responders, have the capability to provide incident management, damage and impact assessment, disaster mapping and work-order management, debris management, hazard mitigation, and medical response.

In addition to providing our veterans with purpose, direction and a renewed sense self-worth, DRA invests heavily in the re-training of veterans as a pathway back into civilian life and employment. In doing so, we strengthen government and community awareness around the challenges many veterans and their families face when they leave the military.

DRA is a not-for-profit registered charity, funded through grants, partnerships, and philanthropic gifts.



Annex: A. Budget Information – to be provided on request.