

FINAL REPORT

14 June 2018

Supporting younger military veterans to succeed in Australian higher education

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Supporting younger military veterans to succeed in Australian higher education

Supporting younger military veterans to succeed in Australian higher education is published by the Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research, La Trobe University

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June 2018

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To cite this report:

Harvey, A., Andrewartha, L., Sharp, M. & Wyatt-Smith, M. (2018). *Supporting younger military veterans to succeed in Australian higher education*. Report for the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs. Melbourne: Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research, La Trobe University.

The Commonwealth has not participated in the research, production or exercised editorial control over the Activity or its contents. The views expressed and conclusions reached herein do not necessarily represent those of the Commonwealth, which expressly disclaims any responsibility for the content or accuracy of the Activity.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the funding of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs through the Supporting Younger Veterans grants program.

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We are grateful for the assistance provided by Hannah Beattie, Administration Officer, Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research, La Trobe University.

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Executive summary

Military veterans are largely invisible within Australian higher education. There remains little national evidence to confirm how many veterans are accessing and succeeding in higher education, who they are, and what universities could do to improve their access, success, and outcomes. This evidence gap is particularly problematic since international research suggests that veterans are likely to bring unique strengths to the classroom, but also to face specific challenges and barriers in accessing university. Moreover, postsecondary outcomes for Australian military veterans are relatively poor, with high unemployment rates and mental health risks. Higher education provides an important pathway for veterans to transition successfully to civilian life, and to harness the skills gained through serving the Australian Defence Force.

In this research project we sought the voices of younger military veterans who had enrolled in Australian higher education after completing full separation from the Australian Defence Force. We asked them to outline their university aspirations and any perceived barriers to university access, the strengths they brought to their studies, their experiences on campus, and the ways in which universities might improve processes to enrol and graduate student veterans. We developed a national survey, informed by members of the Australian Student Veterans Association (ASVA), which was complemented by broader evidence and international research. Findings reveal challenges and opportunities for both the higher education and defence sectors.

For many military veterans, accessing university can be difficult and even demoralising. Few institutions explicitly recognise military service during the admissions process, many universities do not recognise qualifications gained during military service, and most state-based tertiary admissions centres do not account for military service in their application processes. A notable exception is Queensland, where the tertiary admissions centre provides a framework for equating service to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), which is accepted by all Queensland universities. We outline how universities and admissions centres could better recognise the experience of veterans in both admissions and credit policies.

Once enrolled, the student veterans we surveyed drew on specific strengths to succeed, including discipline, leadership, and time management. Most respondents were highly motivated and positive about their potential to explore successful career paths following their studies. Nevertheless, many student veterans did not feel a sense of belonging on campus. Some respondents felt isolated, many felt that university culture was not respectful or appreciative of military service, and only one third of respondents disclosed their military status to their institution. Universities will need to develop more inclusive campus climates, in which the strengths of veterans can be both acknowledged and harnessed. Creating peer community groups would also be helpful, such as chapters of the ASVA.

Finally, our study highlighted the central role of student support services. A relatively high number of student veterans reported a disability, and many also noted financial difficulties. Identifying veterans at application or enrolment would enable better understanding and targeting of resources, the provision of which is often critical to student success.

Further research is required to explore graduate success rates and outcomes of veterans, to interrogate identified issues within campus climate and university pedagogy, and to provide better quantitative evidence on the geo-demographic and course profiles of student veterans. Despite their importance to national security and prosperity, military veterans remain clearly marginalised within Australian higher education. New strategies and investment are required to recognise and reward service, and to support student diversity within the university.

Recommendations

Higher education institutions

- Recognise military service within admissions processes, and work with tertiary admissions centres to equate service to ATAR levels, as already undertaken by the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC);
- Consider preferential access to university timetables and flexible study arrangements to increase attendance and engagement for student veterans;
- Encourage student veterans to disclose their veteran status at the time of application or enrolment and provide these students with information about the academic, career, financial, disability, and counselling support available at university;
- Collect and track information on student veterans, including geo-demographics, retention, and completion;
- Promote institutional awareness and recognition of the unique strengths and challenges of student veterans through internal communications strategies and professional development activities;
- Introduce and publicise a range of targeted financial support measures for student veterans, including tuition fee waivers and cost-of-living scholarships;
- Identify student veterans who have made the transition to higher education successfully and use these students as mentors where possible;
- Support the establishment of chapters of the Australian Student Veterans Association on campus to promote the wellbeing and success of student veterans.

Department of Veterans' Affairs

- Allow access to higher education for veterans who are on rehabilitation plans, without impacting incapacity payments, to ease the transition to civilian life and improve the prospect of meaningful and financially rewarding employment;
- Advocate expansion of the Career Transition Assistance Scheme to units of university degrees;
- Work with the higher education sector to investigate issues around credit for prior learning for qualifications obtained in the Australian Defence Force;
- Work with higher education institutions to develop a resource guide for prospective student veterans, potentially including a website and online clearinghouse;
- Commission further research that captures the voices of student veterans nationally to inform higher education policy. This work could actively involve student veterans in the design and conduct of the research.

List of abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASVA	Australian Student Veterans Association
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CTAS	Career Transition Assistance Scheme
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
HECS-HELP	Higher Education Contribution Scheme – Higher Education Loan Program
MBA	Master of Business Administration
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
QTAC	Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre
SATAC	South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TISC	Tertiary Institutions Service Centre
UAC	Universities Admissions Centre
VEA	<i>Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986</i>
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

Definition of key term:

For the purposes of this report, a student veteran is defined as any person who has served in the military who is in higher education (ASVA, 2018).

Project background and report structure

Project background

This research project was led by La Trobe University's Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research. Funding was provided by the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs through the Supporting Younger Veterans grants program. The project was undertaken in collaboration with the Australian Student Veterans Association.

The purpose of the project was to develop national research into younger veterans in higher education. The researchers sought to answer three research questions:

1. What barriers do younger veterans face in accessing higher education?
2. What are the experiences of younger veterans enrolled in higher education, including their strengths and challenges?
3. How can universities better support younger veterans to access, and succeed in, higher education?

Data were collected via a national survey of ex-service personnel who had accessed higher education after serving in the Australian Defence Force.

Report structure

Our report begins with the context of the Australian veteran landscape, focussing on the relative paucity of recognition and support for student veterans in higher education in Australia. We focus specifically on existing policies to support university access and support, which typically exist only at the level of individual institutions. We then examine an international comparative context, focussed on the United States of America. While several countries have developed support for military veterans in higher education, the United States (US) provides a particularly valuable comparator given the origins and prevalence of the GI Bill, the relatively large size of the military and its close connection with research and higher education, and the ongoing existence of legislation, government support, empirical data collection, targeted research, and institutional programs and policies.

We subsequently outline our survey findings in relation to:

- the geo-demographic characteristics of the student veterans who participated in our survey;
- issues around access and transition to higher education for military veterans;
- the experiences, strengths, and challenges of student veterans in higher education;
- the extent of support currently available to student veterans in higher education.

Our conclusion covers the implications of our findings and the overall picture emerging from our research.

Context

Australian context

In Australia, there is no universal definition of ‘veteran’. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) is the federal agency primarily responsible for administering support services for former Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. The mission of DVA is to ‘support those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation and commemorate their service and sacrifice’ (DVA, 2014, p. 2). DVA administers services to clients under the Veterans Entitlement Act (VEA) (1986), the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-Related Claims) Act (SRCA) (1988), and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act (MRCA) (2004). Services provided under these Acts include pensions and compensation, healthcare, rehabilitation, and treatment (DVA, 2017a).

The VEA (1986) specifically defines a veteran as ‘a person who is taken to have rendered eligible war service’ (DVA, 2017c). VEA covers wartime service, certain operational deployments, and certain peacetime service. Lacking ‘eligible war service’ does not exclude a client from receiving support under the VEA legislation. The subsequent Acts, SRCA and MRCA, do not include an explicit definition of veteran. These Acts cover individuals with eligible service, including warlike-service, non-warlike service, peacetime service, and defence service (Australian Government, 2004; 2017). In broader society, the definition of a veteran is accepted to mean all former members of the ADF, whether or not they were deployed or undertook warlike service (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016).

DVA considers young veterans to be a unique group, defined as ‘those who have seen operational service within the Australian Defence Force from 1999 onwards’ (DVA, 2013a, p.10). The year 1999 marks a time when military operations started to change and intensify, with deployments to East Timor, followed by other major deployments, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. There are an estimated 316,900 living Australian veterans, including 58,300 who served in post-1999 conflicts in East Timor, Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, and Iraq (DVA, 2017b). The post-1999 cohort grew substantially from 2010 to 2017, while the overall veteran population decreased. Veterans from post-1999 conflicts now comprise approximately 18 per cent of all living veterans, compared to only 12 per cent in 2010.

Approximately 5,500 members discharge from the ADF and return to civilian life each year (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017). The majority of these separations are voluntary, although about 1,000 members separate for medical reasons each year. Other reasons for separation include not completing initial training, redundancy, reaching compulsory retirement age, and disciplinary actions.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs had 291,285 clients as at June 2017. Clients include any person who is in receipt of a pension/allowance from DVA or who is eligible for treatment paid for by DVA, including veterans, partners, and dependants (DVA, 2017b). The vast majority of DVA clients (84 per cent) are aged 50 years and over, and approximately three quarters of DVA clients (76 per cent) come from New South Wales, Queensland, or Victoria (see Table 1).

Table 1: DVA clients by age group and location at 30 June 2017

	Number of clients	Proportion of clients
Age range (n = 291,285)		
20-29 years	8,935	3%
30-39 years	14,335	5%
40-49 years	22,076	8%
50 years and over	245,836	84%
Residential state/territory (n= 291,285)		
Australian Capital Territory	7,562	3%
New South Wales	83,508	29%
Northern Territory	2,804	1%
Queensland	80,533	28%
South Australia	22,974	8%
Tasmania	8,706	3%
Victoria	54,134	19%
Western Australia	29,039	10%

Adapted from: DVA, 2017b.

Note: DVA clients include any person who is in receipt of a pension/allowance from DVA or who is eligible for treatment or pharmaceuticals paid for by DVA (including veterans, partners, and dependants).

For some veterans, the transition to civilian life can be difficult. Veterans are at a higher risk of unemployment, underemployment, and mental health issues compared to the general Australian population. The WithYouWithMe Veteran Employment Report (2017) noted that the veteran unemployment rate was approximately 30 per cent, which was five times higher than the national average of 6 per cent. Furthermore, 19 per cent of veterans were underemployed, doing work that did not make full use of their skills, compared to the national average of approximately 9 per cent. Veterans are at increased risk of mental health issues, the most common being depression, anxiety, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, and somatic problems (DVA, 2017e). Men who have left the ADF and are aged between 18 and 24 years have twice the risk of suicide as other Australian men of the same age (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2017).

Higher education is an established pathway to assist transition to civilian life and rewarding employment. The Department of Veterans' Affairs recognises the benefits of higher education in improving future employment prospects, as well as broader benefits such as building social connections and confidence (DVA, 2017d). The term 'student veteran' is often used in higher education and is inclusive of any person who has served in the military (ASVA, 2018).

Support for veterans in higher education

Some veterans, for example those with long-term illnesses or permanent injuries accepted by DVA, might receive a range of support in the form of pensions, financial support, compensation, healthcare, rehabilitation, and counselling. There is limited support, however, directed at assisting student veterans in higher education. The ADF's Career Transition Assistance Scheme (CTAS) provides financial support and training for personnel leaving the ADF, which can be used in the last 12 months of service, or up to 12 months after termination. Given the timeframe, CTAS is typically invoked for short-term vocational education and training (Department of Defence, 2018). The

Department of Veterans' Affairs contributes financially to higher education for some clients through rehabilitation plans, when it is deemed the best possible option to enable them to attain secure and sustainable employment within their local labour market, and where retraining is required to overcome service-caused limitations (DVA, 2017d).

Within the Australian higher education sector, little direct support is provided for student veterans, and they do not comprise one of the six identified equity groups (Harvey, Burnheim, & Brett, 2016). The six equity groups include students from low socio-economic status, regional and non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as Indigenous students, those with a disability, and women in non-traditional areas. A small number of individual institutional scholarships and bursaries exist. The Gowrie Scholarship Trust Fund, for example, is a postgraduate research scholarship that is open to all Australian citizens but gives preference to past and present members of the Australian Defence Force. There are typically two Gowrie Scholarships awarded per year, each valued at \$5,000 per year for a duration of two years. Gowrie Scholarships are managed by Australian National University and tenable at universities in Australia and overseas (Australian National University, 2017). Similarly, the University of New South Wales (UNSW) offers an Australian Graduate School of Management Military Scholarship for its Master of Business Administration (MBA) program. The Scholarship provides a full tuition fee waiver to one recipient per year who is a current or ex-serving member of the ADF. Eligibility criteria include a minimum of five years in the ADF and outstanding academic achievement in previous studies (UNSW Business School, 2017). These scholarships are notable but remain exceptions, and are inaccessible to the vast majority of student veterans.

Historically, there has also been little peer support for student veterans in Australian higher education. The Australian Student Veterans Association (ASVA) was established in 2016 to provide and promote such support. The ASVA has official chapters at eight universities, and an informal presence at a further 27 universities, providing veterans with resources and a peer network to promote a sense of camaraderie at university. The ASVA has a strong online presence which connects student veterans studying at the same university and across Australia. The Association promotes a range of opportunities for student veterans including professional experience and employment (ASVA, 2018).

Access to higher education

Universities do not have a consistent approach for supporting or managing university applications from veterans, and methods differ by state and university. For veterans applying to university through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC), ADF experience is converted into a specific entry rank, which is accepted by all Queensland universities. For example, veterans who do not have formal academic qualifications but do have Australian armed services general training and two years post-training experience are assigned an entry rank of 82 (QTAC, 2017). Other state-based admissions centres do not have equivalent processes for converting ADF experience into an entry rank which is accepted by universities.

At the University of Canberra, ADF personnel and reservists comprise one of three university priority groups, along with Indigenous students and elite athletes (University of Canberra, 2017). Veterans applying to the University of Canberra can be eligible for bonus points to compensate for the manner in which ADF experience affected their previous studies. Veterans are required to provide evidence of their ADF experience and a statement outlining how their ADF commitments affected their study.

Several universities offer credit transfers on the basis of qualifications previously obtained from the ADF. Some arrangements fall under the Australian Defence Force Higher Education Advance Standing (ADFHEA) Scheme (e.g. Charles Darwin University, 2017; Murdoch University, 2017; University of Tasmania, 2017; The University of Adelaide, 2017). Central Queensland University also recognises prior learning in the area of logistics (Central Queensland University, 2017). These arrangements can expedite the completion of university programs for student veterans.

Experiences in higher education

Relatively little is known about the experiences of Australian student veterans in higher education. Internationally, however, there is a substantial and growing body of research that explores veteran experiences and challenges on campus and within the classroom. In particular, numerous studies have examined the experiences of veterans in higher education in the United States, and these findings are discussed in the following section.

Comparative context: the United States of America

Many nations provide support to military veterans in higher education, including the United Kingdom (e.g. Minister of Defence and Veterans UK, 2016; University of Wolverhampton, 2018) and Canada (e.g. Veterans Affairs Canada, 2018). The United States context is particularly notable, however, given the origins and extent of the GI Bill, the large relative and absolute size of the military, the close historic (and ongoing) relationship of the military to the higher education system, and the broad diffusion of support policies through national, state, and institutional initiatives.

Post-9/11 veterans

The US Government defines a veteran as ‘a person who served in active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from there under conditions other than dishonorable’ (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations, 2017). People who have been members of the US military since the terrorist attacks on 11 September, 2001, are considered a new generation of veterans (Marmar, 2009; Vacchi, 2012). These veterans are collectively known as the post-9/11 generation. The US has a large veteran population. Of the 18.5 million veterans in 2016, around 1.6 million were younger than 35 years old (US Census Bureau, 2017).

Support for veterans in higher education

In contrast to Australia, student veterans are widely monitored, supported, and researched in the United States. In 1944, the US Congress legislated the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the GI Bill, to support returning World War II veterans through the provision of educational and other benefits. In 2008, the GI Bill was updated to provide enhanced educational benefits to veterans who served in active duty since September 11, 2001 (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017a). The Post-9/11 GI Bill facilitates Government payment of in-state tuition rates and fees to the institution attended by the veteran, or dependant spouse or children, and provides a monthly stipend to pay for supplies and housing. In the first year of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, more than 500,000 current and former service members had applied for education benefits, including around 300,000 who had enrolled in higher education (Steele, Salcedo, Coley, 2010). In the 2016 fiscal year, approximately 790,000 veterans received education benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017b). The Forever GI Bill, which was signed into law in

2017, extends and expands education benefits for veterans and their families from 2018 (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018).

Research confirms that many postsecondary institutions also provide substantial support to student veterans. For example, Cook and Kim (2012) collected information on programs, services, and policies for military personnel and veterans from 690 postsecondary institutions via a large-scale survey. Sixty-two per cent of the institutions provided programs and services specifically designed for military personnel and veterans. This support included targeted marketing and outreach strategies to attract veterans and military personnel, academic support and student services, counselling services, academic credit for military training and experience, and financial assistance in the form of discounts and scholarships. Institutions with a dedicated office for veterans and military personnel, which was considered an indication of institutional commitment, were likely to tailor common services to these students, including financial aid assistance, employment assistance, academic advising, campus events, and careers services.

The Student Veterans of America association also provides programs, resources, and support to veterans in higher education. Established in 2008, the association now includes over 1,300 local chapters which provide peer-to-peer support (Student Veterans of America, 2017). In one innovative initiative, Student Veterans of America, in partnership with a company called Kognito, created an online tool to improve military cultural competency among academics, professional staff, and students. The online tool is now used in more than 185 institutions.

Access to higher education

By 2017, approximately 2.9 million veterans of the post-9/11 generation had entered higher education after service (Institution for Veterans and Military Families [IVMF], 2017). Military veterans comprise approximately four per cent of all undergraduates enrolled in American postsecondary education (American Council for Education, 2015). Many student veterans pursue bachelor degrees (44 per cent), as well as associate degrees and certificates (54 per cent). A relatively high proportion of student veterans pursue degrees in business, public service, health, science, and engineering (Cate, 2014).

Experiences in higher education

In contrast to Australia, numerous studies have examined the experiences of veterans in higher education in the United States. Many journal articles, special issues, books, chapters, and reports have specifically addressed this topic (e.g. American Council for Education, 2015; Barry, Whiteman, & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2014; Cate, 2014; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Eagan, McBain, & Jones, 2017; Hamrick & Rumann, 2012; IVMF, 2017; Lechuga & Woodruff, 2016; Lim, Interiano, Tkacik, & Hewitt, 2016; Money & Griffin, 2016; O'Herrin, 2011; Tilman & Eagan, 2016; Vacchi & Berger, 2013). It has been found that student veterans are generally older than other students, on average starting their postsecondary education at 25 years of age (American Council for Education, 2015). Relatedly, student veterans are often managing study alongside competing work and family responsibilities. Many student veterans are married (44 per cent), have dependants (52 per cent), and are working full time while studying (42 per cent). Nearly two thirds (61 per cent) take classes online, at night, and on weekends.

Much of the literature from the United States has focussed on the challenges faced by student veterans. In a meta-analysis, Barry, Whiteman, and MacDermid Wadsworth (2014) conducted a systematic review of thirteen empirical studies of current and former service members in higher

education. Compared with their civilian peers, veterans in higher education exhibited higher rates of health risk behaviours, psychological symptoms, and personal and educational adjustment difficulties. Veterans experienced some difficulties connecting to their civilian student peers, and cited other veterans as their preferred and prominent source of academic and social support. Educational adjustment difficulties included a lack of institutional support. Lechuga and Woodruff (2016) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on student veterans in higher education, which found that veterans often experienced identity dissonance during the transition from the role of soldier to the role of college student, and also experienced feelings of isolation and invisibility on campus. Veterans could also feel frustrated with younger students who were less mature and lacked appreciation of military experience, and many veterans had some distrust of non-veteran staff. Typically, veterans felt more comfortable with staff who were identified as either veterans or as 'friendly to veterans'.

In a larger, quantitative study, Tilman and Eagan (2016) examined student veteran data collected as part of the Cooperative Institutional Research Program Diverse Learning Environments (CIRP DLE) Survey. Their sample comprised 714 student veterans from 46 four-year colleges in the United States. The researchers examined factors associated with academic achievement, habits of mind associated with lifelong learning, and multicultural competencies. Having an academic self-concept had the strongest positive association with Grade Point Average (GPA), and student veterans who reported greater confidence in their academic abilities tended to earn higher grades. Conversely, missing class for personal or family reasons had the strongest negative association with GPA. Notably, student veterans who regularly interacted with other students who had different backgrounds and beliefs were more likely to have healthy habits of mind for lifelong learning and higher levels of civic engagement.

Several smaller, qualitative studies have highlighted the many skills and strengths that veterans bring to higher education. Lechuga and Woodruff (2016) explored the manner in which many veterans learned to adapt to the college environment after leaving military life. Veterans often adapted by applying their previously acquired skills with discipline and persistence, being self-organised, spending time assessing the university environment, planning ahead, and creating networks of support with other veterans, friends, and family. Lim, Interiano, Tkacik, and Hewitt (2016) found that leaving the military can result in a loss of structure, collective identity, sense of purpose, and social responsibility. Many of the interviewed student veterans, however, had transferred skills from military service to academic study, such as punctuality, organisation, discipline, and leadership. The researchers found that it was common for veterans to want to study to enter a profession where they could regain a sense of accomplishment and make a tangible difference.

In the United States, empirical data are collected on the completion rates for student veterans. The Million Records Project is a partnership between Student Veterans of America (SVA), the National Student Clearinghouse, and the US Department of Veterans Affairs. The project explored the postsecondary academic outcomes of nearly 1 million student veterans and found a postsecondary completion rate of approximately 52 per cent (Cate, 2014). This completion rate was in line with other students, with approximately 54 per cent of non-veteran students earning a degree or certificate within six years. Of those who completed, approximately 90 per cent earned degrees at the associate level or higher. The financial rewards of higher education for veterans have also been documented in the United States. Veterans with bachelor degrees earn an average of \$17,000 USD more each year than their non-veteran counterparts, and veterans with advanced degrees earn nearly \$30,000 USD more each year (IVMF, 2017).

Survey analysis and findings

Section summary

This section covers results of our survey of 240 Australian military veterans who had accessed higher education after serving in the Australian Defence Force. Survey questions were designed to capture geo-demographic information and broad perspectives on university access, achievement, and support. We also sought perspectives on the university experience for student veterans, including perceptions of campus climate such as the nature of veterans' interactions with other students and staff.

We initially outline the geo-demographic characteristics of the survey participants. The majority of participants were men aged between 20 and 49 years, who had discharged from the ADF post-1999 and subsequently studied at an Australian public university. A large proportion of student veterans (approximately one third) reported having a disability, impairment, or long-term medical condition that might affect their studies.

Issues around access and transition to higher education for military veterans are then discussed. Most student veterans were motivated to attend university to improve their career prospects. Approximately half of the student veterans had earned civilian qualifications from ADF service, although most did not receive credit for prior learning towards university study. In most states and territories, student veterans were more likely to apply to university via direct application than via a Tertiary Admissions Centre (TAC). Notably though, more prospective student veterans in Queensland applied via QTAC than via direct application, likely because QTAC converts ADF qualifications into a specific entry rank which is accepted by all Queensland universities. Two thirds of student veterans had not disclosed their veteran status to their university, and many had not been asked about it or saw no benefit to disclosure. Student veterans were less likely than other students to experience a smooth transition to university, often struggling with the perceived contrast between military and university life.

Analysis of the experiences, strengths, and challenges of student veterans in higher education is revealing. Overall, student veterans were positive about their university experiences. Student veterans had developed a range of skills through military experience that were helpful at university, especially time management and discipline. There were high levels of financial distress, however, as well as mental health issues. Many student veterans felt isolated during university study, and felt they had different experiences and perspectives than other students. We discuss the similarities between our findings and research conducted in the United States.

Finally, we discuss the limited support that is currently available to student veterans in higher education. Taken together, findings suggest the need for more support for prospective and current Australian student veterans, including financial assistance specifically targeted to veterans in higher education, and social support delivered through organisations such as the Australian Student Veterans Association.

Participant details

Geo-demographics

A total of 240 student veterans responded to the survey. The majority of participants were men (80 per cent), which was broadly consistent with the gender composition of the Australian Defence Force (83 per cent men) (Department of Defence, 2017). A small proportion of the sample (4 per cent) were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, slightly above the representation in the ADF (2 per cent). Table 2 presents a summary of participant geo-demographics.

Table 2: Participant geo-demographics

	Number of participants	Proportion of participants
Gender (n = 239)		
Male	192	80%
Female	46	19%
Other	1	0%
Age range (n = 239)		
20-29 years	51	21%
30-39 years	83	35%
40-49 years	67	28%
50 years and over	38	16%
Residential state/territory (n= 238)		
Australian Capital Territory	13	5%
New South Wales	45	19%
Northern Territory	6	3%
Queensland	88	37%
South Australia	12	5%
Tasmania	8	3%
Victoria	42	18%
Western Australia	24	10%
Disability, impairment, or long-term medical condition that may affect studies (n = 237)		
Yes	85	36%
No	152	64%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (n = 237)		
Yes	9	4%
No	228	96%

A relatively large proportion of student veterans (36 per cent) reported having a disability, impairment, or long-term medical condition that might affect their studies. The vast majority of these conditions (92 per cent) had been caused by ADF service. In comparison, only six per cent of domestic higher education students are reported as having a disability (Department of Education and Training, 2017). The proportion of the general Australian population with a disability is approximately 18 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

The student veterans were younger than the general profile of DVA clients. Eighty-four per cent of student veterans were under 50 years old, compared to only 16 per cent of DVA clients (DVA, 2017b). The residential state/territory profile of the student veterans was generally consistent with the DVA client profile. A greater proportion of student veterans (37 per cent) than DVA clients (28 per cent) were from Queensland, however, and a smaller proportion of student veterans (19 per cent) than DVA clients (29 per cent) were from New South Wales.

Table 3 presents a summary of the educational history of the participants. Almost two thirds of the student veterans had attended a Government secondary school, and most had completed Year 12 before joining the ADF.

Table 3: Educational history

	Number of participants	Proportion of participants
Secondary school type (n = 240)		
Government (public) school	151	63%
Catholic school	52	22%
Independent school	37	15%
Highest education level before joining ADF (n = 240)		
Year 10 and below	34	14%
Year 11	22	9%
Year 12	144	60%
Certificate I – IV	24	10%
Diploma and above	16	7%

Australian Defence Force experience

Table 4 presents a summary of the ADF experience of the survey participants. A large proportion of our sample (68 per cent) had served in the Army. In comparison, approximately 23 per cent of permanent full-time ADF personnel serve in the Navy, 52 per cent in the Army, and 25 per cent in the Air Force (Department of Defence, 2017). The vast majority of student veterans (85 per cent) had discharged post-1999, classifying them as younger veterans according to the DVA definition.

Table 4: Australian Defence Force experience

	Number of participants	Proportion of participants
Branch served (n = 240)		
Navy	50	21%
Army	162	68%
Air Force	28	12%
Year discharged from ADF (n = 232)		
Up to 1999	35	15%
Post-1999	197	85%
Medical discharge (n = 237)		
Yes	61	26%
No	176	74%

It can be seen from Table 4 that approximately one quarter of student veterans (26 per cent) had been medically discharged from the ADF. In general, about 17 per cent of veterans are discharged for medical reasons (approximately 900 – 1000 out of 5,500 discharges per year) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017).

University attendance post-service

The vast majority of participants (95 per cent) had attended one of Australia’s public universities after serving in the ADF, while the remainder had attended private universities or institutes. Very few veterans (5 per cent) had their university studies approved and funded as part of a DVA rehabilitation plan. Further details about the participants’ university attendance post-service are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: University attendance post-service

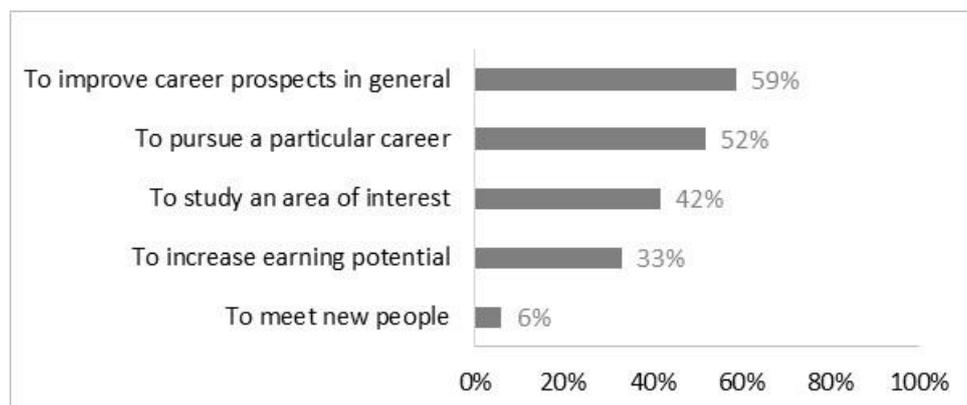
	Number of participants	Proportion of participants
University studies funded as part of a DVA rehabilitation plan (n = 225)		
Yes	11	5%
No	214	95%
Highest level of university study completed post service (n = 221)		
Enabling program / foundation course	7	3%
First year of undergraduate degree	38	17%
Second year of undergraduate degree	31	14%
Third year of undergraduate degree	44	20%
Fourth of undergraduate degree / Honours	26	12%
Masters degree	41	19%
Doctoral degree	5	2%
Other (e.g. Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma)	29	13%
Study mode (n = 222)		
Face-to-face	59	27%
Online	67	30%
Mixture of face-to-face and Online	96	43%
Current university status (n = 225)		
Full-time student	65	29%
Part-time student	58	26%
Not enrolled / Leave of Absence	28	12%
Graduate / Alum	74	33%

Access and transition to higher education

Motivations for attending university

Figure 1 shows that the student veterans were most commonly motivated to attend university to improve their career prospects in general and/or to pursue a particular career.

Figure 1: Motivations for attending university
(n = 224)



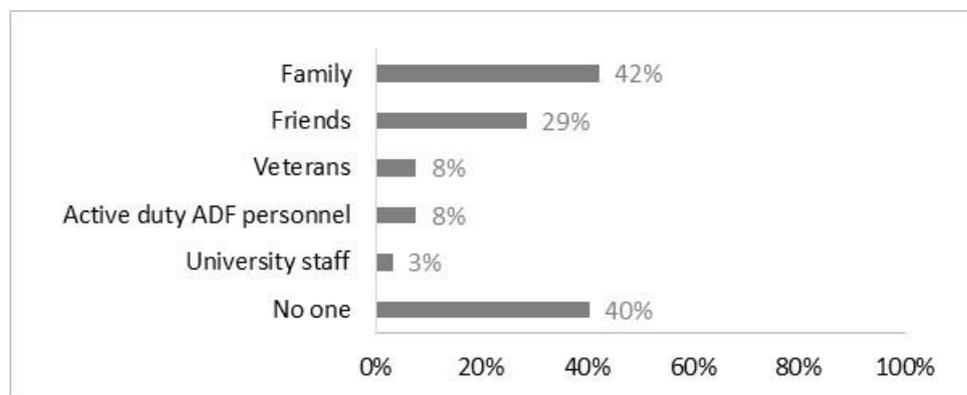
Participants who were motivated to attend university to pursue a particular career were asked to specify the career. A wide range of more than 50 different careers were specified by the 104 student veterans who responded to this question. Some of the more commonly specified careers included nursing (specified by 14 per cent of these participants), teaching/education (8 per cent), paramedicine (7 per cent), psychology/counselling (6 per cent), information technology (6 per cent), law/legal careers (6 per cent), and policing (6 per cent).

The motivation to improve career prospects was reflected in comments from student veterans, particularly among those who had not secured qualifications while in the ADF:

‘Without having a university degree, applying for jobs in my chosen area of Intelligence was difficult. Having almost a decade worth of military experience did not count for anything, especially when you receive no formal RTO [Registered Training Organisation] qualifications from Defence to back up your experience. When first attempting to secure a job post Defence I must have applied for ~50 different jobs with less than five progressing to an interview or even call back. It was extremely frustrating and was the main catalyst for applying to university to secure a professional qualification that would make me more employable.’

Figure 2 shows that family and friends were the most likely people to have encouraged student veterans to go to university. Notably, 40 per cent of student veterans had not been encouraged by anyone to go to university. This finding suggests high levels of self-motivation among this group, but could also reflect isolation, or the low expectations of family/friends.

Figure 2: People who encouraged veterans to attend university (n = 223)



University application methods

Prospective students can apply to university directly or via state-based tertiary admissions centres (TACs). Approximately half of the student veterans had applied to university via direct application and half via a TAC (see Table 6). In most states and territories, student veterans were more likely to apply via direct application than via a TAC. In Queensland, however, more student veterans applied via QTAC than via direct application. This trend is likely because QTAC converts ADF qualifications into specific entry ranks, which are accepted by all universities in Queensland (QTAC, 2017). In South Australia, student veterans were also more likely to apply via SATAC than via direct application, although this trend should be interpreted with caution as the sample from South Australia was small.

Table 6: Method of application to university by state/territory

	ACT (n = 12)	NSW (n = 42)	NT (n = 5)	QLD (n = 87)	SA (n = 11)	Tas. (n = 7)	Vic. (n = 38)	WA (n = 22)	Total (n = 225)
Direct	58%	63%	80%	41%	27%	71%	63%	55%	52%
QTAC	8%	5%	0	51%	0	29%	11%	9%	24%
SATAC	0	0	0	1%	64%	0	3%	5%	4%
TISC	0	2%	0	0	0	0	0	18%	2%
UAC	25%	26%	20%	1%	0	0	0	5%	8%
VTAC	0	0	0	0	0	0	11%	0	2%
Other/Unsure	8%	5%	0%	6%	9%	0	13%	9%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Approximately half of the participants (51 per cent) had earned civilian qualifications from ADF service, including a variety of certificate and diploma-level awards. Only 20 per cent of these students, however, had received credit for prior learning towards their university degrees. It is not known whether or not the remaining students had applied for credit for prior learning.

Transition to university

Student veterans were less likely than other students to experience a smooth transition to university life. Specifically, student veterans were less likely than the general higher education student population to: feel prepared for study; receive support from their institutions to settle into study; and feel that induction/orientation activities were relevant and helpful. Table 7 compares the results of our survey with those of the broader higher education student cohort in the Student Experience Survey, using per cent positive ratings (i.e. the proportion of participants responding 'quite a bit' or 'very much' to each statement) (QILT, 2017).

Table 7: Transition to university for student veterans and the higher education student population – per cent positive ratings

At university, to what extent did you...?	Student veterans	Higher education students
Feel prepared for study	39%	67%
Receive support from your institution to settle into study	38%	60%
Experience efficient enrolment and admissions processes	68%	72%
Feel induction/orientation activities were relevant and helpful	35%	58%

These findings suggest the need for more veteran-specific support programs and initiatives to ease the transition to university. It should be noted that the Student Experience Survey comprises a relatively young sample, with 77 per cent of respondents aged under 25 years. Difficulties with transition might, in part, be related to student veterans being older than most of their peers, and having a longer period of time between school and university. In addition, however, the perceived differences between military life and university life left student veterans feeling underprepared for study:

'Transitioning [out of the military] is hard enough without the added pressure of attempting to fit into an institution that generally promotes an experiment completely opposed to the military (i.e. do it yourself, individual effort, no support, no teams, etc).'

'As ADF members we are taught to operate in a team environment, which can cause much anxiety when transitioning into self-directed learning.'

'The ADF has imposed discipline. University is self-discipline, nothing is prepared or organised for you.'

A few student veterans recommended bridging courses to prepare both academically and socially for university study:

'Do a bridging course first, it'll set you up for the basics and help ease you back into civi[lian] culture.'

Disclosure of veteran status to university

Approximately one third of student veterans (35 per cent) had disclosed their veteran status to the university, for example during application or enrolment processes. Common reasons for disclosing this information included supplying standard employment history, seeking credit for prior learning, and seeking access to support services. The remaining 65 per cent who had not disclosed their veteran status cited reasons such as never having been asked, not viewing it as relevant, seeing no benefit to disclosure, and having no reason to disclose this information. If universities were to collect data on veteran status more routinely, student veterans could be directed to potentially useful resources, such as financial assistance and counselling, and their success and outcomes could be monitored.

Experiences in higher education

The value of university study

Overall, student veterans were positive about their experiences at university. The vast majority of participants (94 per cent) indicated that they would recommend university to other veterans. Comments from student veterans showed that university study was seen to have a range of psycho-social benefits, including helping veterans develop a new self-identity and a sense of purpose after leaving the ADF:

‘[University is] very challenging and gives you a huge sense of achievement when you finish. Also helps you move forward and realise that your military service doesn’t necessarily define you.’

‘University study allowed me peace in a time where every other part of my life there was mess, instability and uncertainty.’

‘[University is] a great way to move on from trauma and build yourself a new identity and healthy focus in life.’

The value of university education in improving career prospects was also emphasised:

‘University is a fantastic opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. Developing and refining skills like critical thinking, evaluation of information, academic writing and oral arguments can unlock significant potential in veterans. It also assists in the transition from a very team focused environment and way of thinking, to a more individual approach. I have found this of significant value when entering the private sector... Not only will they benefit as an individual, it is a great way to build new networks and expand your career prospects.’

The vast majority of veterans who were currently enrolled at university (95 per cent) indicated that they were planning to complete their current university course. Only five per cent of veterans were not planning to complete their course, citing reasons relating to mental health issues, physical limitations, and/or a plan to change courses.

Student veterans also have the potential to improve the broader student experience. Our research confirms that veterans often enter university with a collection of experiences and perspectives that are likely to differ from those of other students. Such differences can have both social and academic value, if well understood and incorporated into university curricula and pedagogy. Research shows that a diverse student body can provide a more stimulating and creative intellectual environment (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Positive interactions can encourage other students to challenge their biases and expand their worldview.

Transferable skills and qualities

Student veterans were asked to identify the skills and qualities they had developed through military experience that had helped at university. Participants possessed a host of transferable skills, with time management and discipline being the most commonly mentioned (see Table 8).

Table 8: Skills and qualities developed through military experience that helped at university

	Number of participants	Proportion of participants
Useful skills and qualities (n = 210)		
Time management	68	32%
Discipline	61	29%
Leadership	29	14%
Organisation	21	10%
Teamwork	17	8%
Adaptability and flexibility	16	8%
Determination	14	7%
Communication	14	7%
Work ethic	12	6%
Confidence	12	6%
Perseverance and persistence	11	5%
Attention to detail	10	5%

Many student veterans described how skills developed through military experience helped them excel in higher education:

‘We receive the top grades because we use what we were taught in the military regarding time management and discipline.’

‘A lot of the skills in service life will serve you well in university life. Military members have self-discipline and other qualities that will help you excel.’

Several participants also noted how the presence of student veterans on campus could also be beneficial to the education of other students:

‘...the skills and attributes developed in the ADF will make you very competitive at an academic institution. The values and life experience you bring will also benefit all around you.’

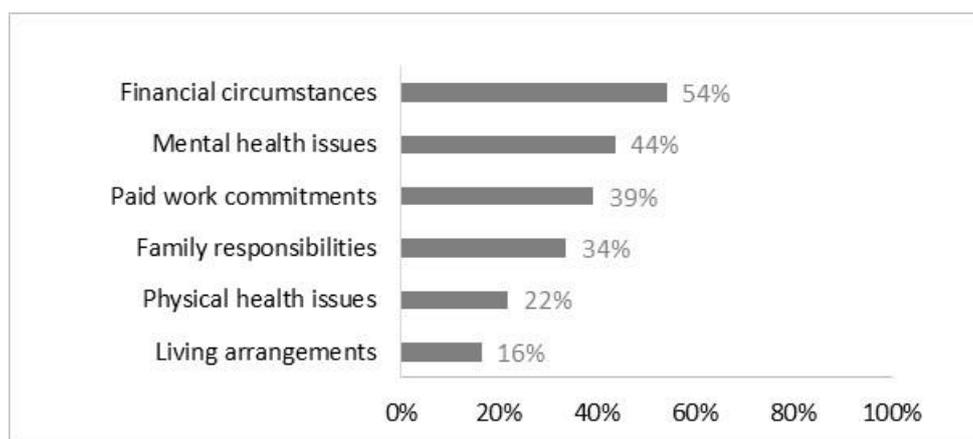
‘Enjoy the experience and utilise your military knowledge and skills to assist others.’

Research from the United States has also found that student veterans adapted to university by applying their previously acquired skills, including discipline, leadership, organisation, and persistence (Lechuga & Woodruff, 2016; Lim, Interiano, Tkacik, & Hewitt, 2016). Overall, a high level of self-confidence was evident, which is important given previous research has found confidence in academic abilities predicted higher grades in student veterans in the United States (Tilman & Eagan, 2016).

Challenges at university

Despite their strengths, student veterans experienced many barriers to university success. More than half of the student veterans (54 per cent) reported that their study was negatively affected by financial circumstances (see Figure 3). Mental health issues were also common, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. It was also clear that many student veterans had experienced difficulty juggling study with paid work commitments and/or family responsibilities.

Figure 3: Circumstances negatively affecting study (n = 220)



Financial difficulties were reflected in the advice participants offered to future student veterans:

‘Be prepared to struggle financially and to have a different outlook from other students.’

‘Plan it out thoroughly before hand, make sure you've picked the right degree because HECS [the Higher Education Contribution Scheme] is expensive and so is the time you put into studying.’

Similarly, student veterans advised about the difficulties around mental health issues and competing priorities:

‘Be prepared for how mentally draining it is, even when the course material is simple. It takes a heavy toll when you are doing it in conjunction with full-time work. Don't underestimate the workload or overcommit ...’

The high level of competing responsibilities placed on student veterans has the potential to affect academic achievement. Tilman and Eagan (2016) found, for example, that frequently missing class for personal or family reasons was associated with lower grades among student veterans in the United States (Tilman & Eagan, 2016).

Interactions with peers

Our survey provides evidence that student veterans can feel isolated within higher education. Only 30 per cent of veterans felt they belonged to their institution, either ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’, compared to 53 per cent of the higher education student population (QILT, 2017). Student veterans were also less likely than their peers to interact with other students both within and outside of study requirements.

Table 9 compares the results of our survey with those of the Student Experience Survey, using per cent positive ratings (i.e. the proportion of participants responding ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’ to each statement) (QILT, 2017).

Table 9: Student interactions for student veterans and the higher education student population – per cent positive ratings

	Student veterans	Higher education students
Thinking about your course, how frequently have you...?		
Worked with other students as part of your study	53%	67%
Interacted with students outside of study requirements	28%	46%

Not surprisingly, the level of interaction differed by mode of study. Approximately one third of student veterans were studying fully online (30 per cent), and just over two thirds of these students (69 per cent) never interacted with students outside of study requirements.

The fact that most student veterans were mature age students, and many had competing outside commitments, likely contributed to reduced interaction with their typically younger peers. In addition, differences in life experiences, attitudes, and political perspectives impacted interactions with other students:

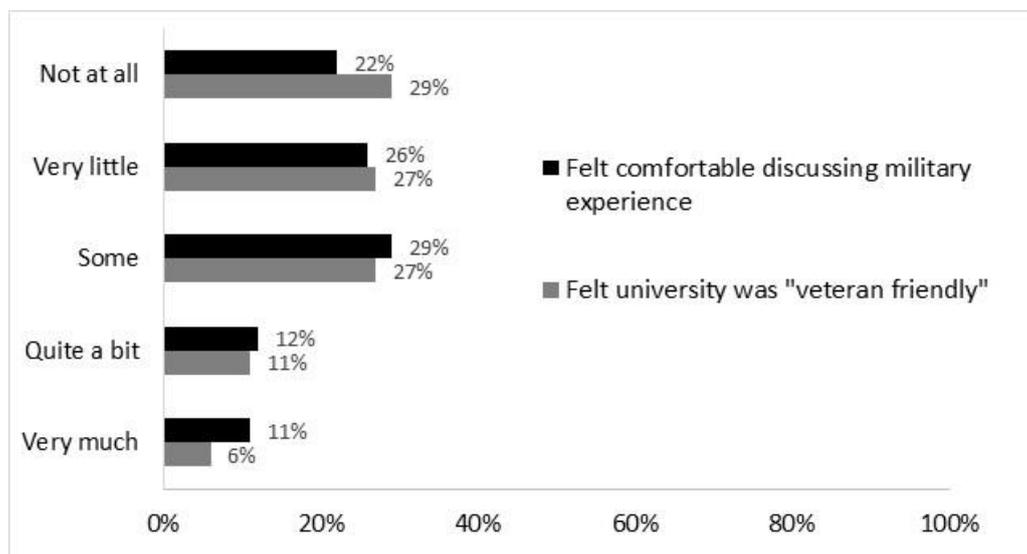
‘(Try) not to get involved with political conversations as many students who haven’t served, and haven’t seen the world, hold very immature view points and don’t understand how veterans think.’

‘Don’t expect other students to have the same work commitment or attitudes to study as you. Many have never worked with other people and will cause you frustration as they are not the same as military members.’

‘From what I have seen at [my university] they are very left wing and full of political correctness where students are spoon fed.’

Approximately one fifth of veterans (22 per cent) were not at all comfortable discussing their military experience at university and nearly one third (29 per cent) felt that their university was not at all “veteran friendly” (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Comfort discussing military experience and feeling that university was “veteran friendly” (n = 218)



It was evident that a number of student veterans had encountered students and lecturers with little understanding or appreciation of their military experiences. As a result, some student veterans felt it was best not to discuss military experience in the higher education context:

‘Negative preconceptions about the military and defence in general were quite pervasive within the student body and academia ...’.

‘Forget that you are a veteran because it means nothing to 90% of the other people there’.

Our findings relating to peer interactions are consistent with previous research from the United States. Previous research showed that student veterans: experienced some difficulties connecting to their civilian student peers (Barry, Whiteman, & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2014); could experience feelings of isolation and invisibility on campus (Lechuga & Woodruff, 2016); and could feel frustrated with younger students who were less mature and lacked appreciation of military experience (Lechuga & Woodruff, 2016).

Support for veterans in higher education

Some veterans, for example those with long-term illnesses or permanent injuries accepted by DVA, might receive a range of support in the form of pensions, financial support, compensation, healthcare, rehabilitation, and counselling. There is limited support, however, directed at assisting student veterans in higher education. As discussed above, student veterans possess many strengths that help them succeed at university, yet they also experience high rates of financial distress, disability, mental health issues, and feelings of isolation at university. These findings suggest the need for more support for this group, including financial assistance specifically targeted to veterans in higher education, and social support delivered through organisations such as the Australian Student Veterans Association.

Financial support

A very small proportion of student veterans in our survey (5 per cent) had their studies funded as part of a DVA rehabilitation plan. Nine of these 11 veterans (82 per cent) reported having a service-caused disability, impairment, or long-term medical condition which could affect their studies. Four student veterans had experienced difficulties around receiving incapacity payments from DVA while studying at university:

‘... University study is used against veterans on rehabilitation plans as an “ability to work”. All I did was enrol to university and DVA reduced my fortnightly incapacity payments...’

One student veteran recalled being informed that the Career Transition Assistance Scheme (CTAS) was applicable to vocational education and training but not higher education:

‘Upon discharge, I was told that I was entitled to funding through CTAS to pursue a course. Upon successfully being accepted to university, I was told that the \$4000 (approx.) I was entitled to could not be used for university, but only for a TAFE [Technical and Further Education] course so they could see a result within 12 months... Perhaps veterans would be more likely to want to complete university if they had access to those funds to avoid out of pocket expenses (fees, textbooks, etc.)...’

Notably, one student contrasted the level of support she received in Australia with the extensive support available to her counterparts in the United States:

‘If I was a US citizen (I work for a global company) with the same service record, I would receive a significant amount of support for higher degree study. Here, I get absolutely nothing.’

Mainstream support services at university

Student veterans were asked to rate the helpfulness of the mainstream university support services they had utilised. The type of support most commonly used was academic support (used by 70 per cent of participants), followed by financial assistance (53 per cent), careers services (52 per cent), health services (47 per cent), student unions (46 per cent), counselling services (45 per cent), and disability services (38 per cent).

Academic support, as well as being commonly used, was also rated as the most helpful type of support service (see Table 10). More than half of the participants who used academic support rated these services as either somewhat helpful or very helpful. There were fewer positive ratings for the other mainstream services, however, suggesting that these services were not consistently meeting the needs of student veterans. In particular, relatively few student veterans found student unions to be a helpful resource.

Table 10: Helpfulness of mainstream support services

	Very unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Neutral	Somewhat helpful	Very helpful
Academic support services (n = 154)	8%	8%	25%	32%	27%
Career services (n = 113)	12%	9%	39%	28%	12%
Counselling services (n = 99)	9%	9%	46%	19%	16%
Financial assistance (n = 117)	11%	14%	42%	10%	23%
Health services (n = 102)	9%	9%	50%	20%	13%
Disability services (n = 84)	10%	5%	57%	8%	20%
Student union (n = 100)	19%	9%	51%	17%	4%

Veteran-specific support

Only five per cent of participants reported that there were veteran-specific support services, programs or organisations at their university. Most of these student veterans were specifically referring to chapters of the Australian Student Veterans Association (ASVA) at Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, Griffith University, and Southern Cross University.

Overall, about half of the student veterans (49 per cent) reported being aware of the ASVA. Those who were aware of the ASVA were asked to provide their thoughts about the Association. Nearly one third of these participants (27 per cent) stated that they did not know enough about the ASVA to provide meaningful feedback. This finding was not surprising given the ASVA was only established in 2016. The majority of the remaining comments (89 per cent) were positive, with many participants highlighting the importance and usefulness of the ASVA and the potential for the Association to expand its reach and impact through additional funding and collaboration. Several of the graduates commented that they wished the ASVA had been in existence while they were studying. The vast majority of participants (85 per cent) stated that they would be involved in the ASVA if there was a chapter at their university:

‘[The ASVA] have been a useful support service and sort of "brains trust" of people in similar situations who can advise on issues they have similarly faced.’

Engagement with the ASVA was also reflected in the advice participants offered to future student veterans:

‘Engage with ASVA to develop a military network/supportive network as university can be quite isolating compared to service life, lack of social engagement eats away at motivation and confidence.’

In contrast to our findings in Australia, there is a much higher level of support for student veterans in the United States. A survey of 690 postsecondary institutions in the US found that sixty-two per cent of the institutions provided programs and services specifically designed for military personnel and veterans (Cook & Kim, 2012). This support includes targeted outreach strategies, academic support and student services, counselling services, academic credit for military training and experience, financial assistance in the form of discounts and scholarships. Student Veterans of America also comprises 1300 local chapters which provide peer-to-peer support (Student Veterans of America, 2017).

Conclusion

Higher education can provide an important pathway for military veterans to transition successfully to civilian life. However, barriers to university aspiration and access remain considerable. Our analysis of policy revealed the nature and extent of many such barriers. ADF experience is not consistently recognised or rewarded in university admissions processes, and only a minority of student veterans obtain credit for prior learning on the basis of qualifications earned during service. Most student veterans do not disclose their veteran status to their university, and many have never been asked or see no benefit to disclosure. Scholarships and bursaries for student veterans are extremely limited. The dearth of Australian policy, legislative, and institutional support for student veterans can be clearly seen when compared with countries such as the United States.

Once enrolled, the student veterans we surveyed typically reported high levels of motivation to succeed at university, and many felt aided by a range of skills developed in the military, especially time management and discipline. Some student veterans struggled with the perceived differences between military and university life, however, and many did not feel a sense of belonging at university. The veterans surveyed frequently encountered students and staff who had a lack of understanding or appreciation of military service, and often did not feel comfortable discussing their military experience at university. A relatively high number of student veterans reported a disability, mental health issues, and financial difficulties. Existing university support services were not perceived to meet the needs of many student veterans, and very little veteran-specific support is available in higher education in Australia.

Our findings have implications for both the Department of Veterans' Affairs and higher education institutions. Further research is required to determine the geo-demographics, course profiles, and graduate outcomes of student veterans, and to explore identified issues within campus climate and university pedagogy. Universities could develop consistent means of identifying veterans at application or enrolment in order to direct these students to potentially relevant support services, such as financial assistance and counselling, and to monitor their progress. Increased veteran-specific support would also be helpful, such as the establishment of chapters of the ASVA, while further advocacy is required to expand bursaries, scholarships and funding support. Finally, universities could develop more inclusive campus climates, in which the strengths of veterans can be both acknowledged and harnessed. There are clear equity, diversity, and national service grounds to establish military veterans as a priority group within Australian higher education.

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Appendix A: Method

Ethics approval for this research project was granted by the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee (DDVA HREC) (007-17). La Trobe University subsequently endorsed the externally approved project.

The survey comprised 42 questions and was administered via the Qualtrics online survey tool. The survey covered the following topics: geo-demographics, ADF experiences, details of university study undertaken post-service, the transition to university, experiences at university, awareness and views of the Australian Student Veterans Association, and advice for veterans considering university. A number of questions included in our survey mirrored those in the Student Experience Survey which allowed some comparisons between our student veteran sample and the broader higher education student population. The survey questions were not mandatory, meaning that participants could skip questions they did not wish to answer. Every page of the survey also included a withdrawal button for participants who wished to withdraw from the survey and have their responses excluded from analyses.

The online survey was opened on 15 January 2018 and promoted widely online, including via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and via the ASVA website. Recruitment materials specifically targeted ex-service personnel who had accessed higher education after serving in the Australian Defence Force, and who were no longer serving in any capacity, including reserve service. The survey was closed on 26 March 2018, with a total of 240 survey responses.