Western Sydney University will contribute to a major national project to increase access to and support of younger military student veterans in Australian higher education.

Funding for the project, *From the military to the academy: supporting younger military veterans in Australian higher education*, was announced by the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, the Hon. Darren Chester MP earlier this month through the Supporting Younger Veterans Grant Program.

According to Professor Michele Simons, Dean of Education at Western Sydney University’s School of Education and one of the Chief Investigators on the project, veterans are an often overlooked group on campus that require special attention and support.

“Adults bring a wide range of experiences to their degree and one of the challenges that we face is recognising and valuing this experience in authentic and meaningful ways to assist adults to achieve their learning aspirations.

“Part of achieving success is ensuring that we recognise and build on the prior experience of veteran students so they can bring their experience to their studies. The research is committed to making real and meaningful changes to both policy and practices in higher education institutions for student veteran officers,” says Professor Simons.

Through consultation with student veterans, the project team will develop higher education guidelines for current and prospective student veterans and for academic and professional university staff. These guidelines will contain practical and evidence-based information to help universities attract and support student veterans.
As chief investigator, Professor Simons will also work with a student veteran officer at Western Sydney University to develop processes and procedures for identifying, supporting and advocating for student veterans.

The project will be led by La Trobe University’s Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity (CHEEDR), in partnership with the Australian Student Veterans’ Association; Australian Catholic University; Charles Darwin University and Western Sydney University.

It builds on previous research spearheaded by Associate Professor Andrew Harvey at La Trobe University’s CHEEDR with the Australian Student Veterans’ Association that found that most student veterans were not identified within higher education institutions and many felt marginalised and unsupported.

ENDS

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