Suicide is an increasing issue for the ADF and Defence communities.

Multiple deployments, the range of deployments and other factors can lead to increased stressors.

For many veterans, mental health symptoms do not exhibit for many years post deployments.
Operation Life provides a framework to prevent suicide and promote mental health and resilience across the veteran community.

**Background**

- ProgramASIST commenced in 2001

- In late 2006, the National Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Forum, who advises the Minister for Veterans’ Affairs on mental health, asked that a suicide prevention framework be developed that would incorporate ProgramASIST.

- September 2007 Operation Life launched
Objectives

- To enhance resilience and health of veterans and their families;
- Increase literacy of mental health problems; and
- Ensure timely access to appropriate and effective services.
Five Priority Areas

- Promote resilience, mental health and well being across the veteran community;
- Enhance protective factors;
- Deliver support through the VVCS and allied health professionals;
- Develop partnerships with the veteran and ex-service community; and
- Explore research opportunities
1. Promote Resilience
   - Education and training workshops
     - Suicide talk
     - Safe talk
     - ASIST
     - Tune up
   - Mental health literacy training for the veteran community and DVA staff

2. Enhance Protective Factors
   - Reducing risk factors for suicide and self-harm
     - publications
     - community nursing
     - risk assessments
     - day clubs
     - MHPE
     - VVCS
3. Deliver Support

- VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service
  - group and individual programs
  - correspondence programs
- Allied health professionals
- General practitioners
- Psychiatrists
- Hospital services

4. Develop Partnerships

- DVA, VVCS and ESO’s
- Men’s Health Peer Educators
- Van networks
- TIP trainers
- Australian Defence Force
- Department of Health and Ageing
5. Explore Research

- Evidence based research for suicide prevention and good practice through a variety of initiatives, eg;
  - Griffith University – preventing suicide: a psychological autopsy study of the last contact with a health professional
  - Suicide Study

Future directions:

- Increase awareness of:
  - suicide prevention workshops
  - risk factors for suicide and self harm
  - support services
  - partnership arrangements

across the veteran and DVA communities.
Future directions:

• Establish a demonstration project offering online counselling services for members of the ex-service community and their families who find it difficult to attend face-to-face counselling.
• Additionally, web based suicide awareness training packages will be developed and post-vention services will be explored.

Thank you