

The Hon Stephen Jones MP
Assistant Treasurer
Minister for Financial Services
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister and Assistant Treasurer,

2023-24 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

THE V CENTRE

‘... a joint Australian Government and Vasey RSL Care strategic initiative to reduce homelessness and improve the health and wellbeing of Australia’s military veterans’



In partnership with the Australian Government, the Submission seeks to secure funding of \$12.7 million dollars over three years to manage and operate (personnel costs, operating capital and complete the fit out) **The V Centre** – an industry-first purpose-designed facility that will provide individualised housing and support services for veterans at a point of crisis and homelessness.

The funding initiative is the first step in a broader national engagement.

In consultation with the Ex-Service Organisation sector and select health and community service providers, Vasey RSL Care identified the need to support veterans at a point of crisis where homelessness, limited access to specialist services and support, and dislocation from their communities, puts them and their families and loved ones at risk of harm.

The strategic (Year 3 end-state) financial breakdown is outlined as follows:

- a. The joint funding initiative will be implemented in two phases:

Acquire the property, build and commence the fit out.

The provision of infrastructure, grounds improvement and assets.

Funded by Vasey RSL Care - \$11.040 million dollars.

- b. Manage and operate the facility and complete the fit out.

The development and application of *The V Centre* Empowerment Program (**VCEP**).

Funded by Government, and supported by Vasey RSL Care, select Ex-Service Organisations and community agencies.

\$12.7 million dollars over three years.

The benefits to government are forecast at \$16.1 million dollars over three years.

The V Centre is a unique strategic initiative, based on service to the veteran community in their time of need, that presents an innovative and cost-effective solution to homelessness by providing stability and care – leading to improvement in the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

Vasey RSL Care's 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission is attached at Enclosure 1.

About Vasey RSL Care

Vasey RSL Care is Victoria's leading provider of ex-service housing, care and support – providing a range of veteran specific services to around 950 veterans of all ages and employing over 500 clinical, care support and veteran services staff.

Our purpose '*... serving those who served ... understanding and responding to the changing needs of veterans*'

Our vision '*... that veterans, war widows and the ex-service community live with independence, control and dignity, feeling safe, valued and respected*'.

Continuing our mission: Vasey RSL Care seeks to achieve four objectives for the veteran community:

1. Reduce homelessness.
2. Provide aged care services.
3. Offer long-term affordable accommodation.
4. Build and provide support services to meet the needs of the younger generation.

Vasey RSL Care is a not-for-profit registered charity, funded through Government funding, grants, partnerships, and philanthropic gifts.

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 Vasey RSL Care's continued engagement and support to the Government in the care, health and wellbeing of our veterans and their families, and our request for partnership and funding assistance.

In the interim, should you have any questions in relation to Vasey RSL Care, *The V Centre* or the Pre-Budget Submission, please do not hesitate to contact me: Janna Voloshin CEO Vasey RSL Care.

I have no doubt that *The V Centre*, a unique and highly capable strategic initiative, will stand up as a positive inclusion in the Government budgetary considerations and, importantly, alleviate the despair and homelessness many of our veterans are experiencing.

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

Janna Voloshin
Chief Executive Officer

Annex: A. Vasey RSL Care 2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission

Copy:

Minister the Hon Richard Marles MP
Minister for Defence

Minister the Hon Matthew Keogh MP
Minister for Defence Personnel
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Minister the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Social Services

Minister the Hon Julie Collins MP
Minister for Housing
Minister for Homelessness

Tim Gartrell
Chief of Staff the Hon Anthony Albanese MP Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia
Office of the Prime Minister

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Vasey RSL Care and Commonwealth of Australia OFFICIAL

VASEY RSL CARE

2023-24 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION



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

Prepared by

Janna Voloshin

Chief Executive Officer

24 January 2023

2023-24 Pre-Budget Submission – Partnership and Program Funding Assistance
Proposal to the Australian Government



THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF THE V CENTRE

‘... a joint Australian Government and Vasey RSL Care strategic initiative to reduce homelessness and improve the health and wellbeing of Australia’s military veterans’

‘... a veteran centre would be incredible ... focused on supporting veterans to begin their recovery would literally be a lifeline and enable veterans to discover hope’

James Mepham - Veteran

1. Executive Summary

In partnership with the Australian Government, the Submission seeks to secure funding of \$12.7 million dollars over three years to manage and operate (personnel costs, operating capital and complete the fit out) **The V Centre** – an industry-first purpose-designed facility that will provide individualised housing and support services for veterans at a point of crisis and homelessness.

In consultation with the Ex-Service Organisation (**ESO**) sector and select health and community service providers, Vasey RSL Care (**VRSLC**) identified the need to support veterans at a point of crisis where homelessness, limited access to specialist services and support, and dislocation from their communities, puts them and their families and loved ones at risk of harm.

The funding initiative, the first step in a broader national engagement, will be implemented in two phases:

- a. Acquire the property, build and commence the fit out.

Funded by VRSLC - \$11.040 million dollars.

- b. Manage and operate the facility and complete the fit out.

Funded by Government, and supported by VRSLC and select ESO and community agencies

\$12.7 million dollars over three years.

The V Centre is a unique strategic initiative, based on service to the veteran community in their time of need, that presents an innovative and cost-effective solution to homelessness by providing stability and support – leading to improvement in the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

2. Statement of need

During the period 2015 – 2019 the demand for homeless services in Victoria increased by 22%

Anecdotal evidence points to similar increases throughout Australia

2021 Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

5.3% or ~300 of the people who leave the Australian Defence Force each year experience homelessness vs. 1.9% of the general population

AHURI Report 2019

Although most veterans can find stability and support beyond their time in service, there is a group whose acute needs are not being met.

In the limited provision of veteran-specific homelessness services throughout Australia, and particularly in Victoria where no services currently exist, veterans are being supported by an overwhelmed mainstream approach, if they are being supported at all.

The 2019 Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) noted that the main reasons for veterans not seeking services were that they did not know the services were available or they do not trust mainstream services –but do trust veteran-specific homelessness services.

Further, veterans can be reluctant to ask for help. This means they are often 'discovered' by ESOs once they have entered homelessness, noting that they are three times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public.



The priority veteran in *The V Centre* is:

- a. Homeless or marginally homeless.
- b. Of any age or gender, with our most common cohort being 30-50.
- c. From diverse backgrounds, given the increasing multi-cultural veteran cohort.
- d. Ready to make changes and show they are committed.

3. Context and Philosophy

After serving their country and returning to Australia, no veteran should find themselves without a home.

The issues veterans face

Veterans face a range of issues and negative perceptions:

- The perception that all veterans are broken.
- PTSD and related mental health conditions, and physical disabilities.
- Few veteran-specific health and support services – including often complex and opaque navigation of multiple agencies.
- Challenges in connecting with civilians, the workplace, and possessing skills and experiences that are not recognised or valued.

VRSLC believes that our contemporary veterans deserve leading-edge evidence-based and tailored services to meet their unique needs. *The V Centre* model is based on our operational experience, the experience of the ESO community, what works well overseas and in other States, and what can effectively meet the needs of the contemporary veteran cohort.

The case for veteran-specific homelessness services

There is strong international and interstate precedent for a veteran-specific homelessness response and a range of models for VRSLC to consider adopting or adapting.

NSW has developed veteran-specific transitional accommodation for veterans experiencing homelessness, operated by an ESO and in partnership with mainstream social services organisations.

Most experts consulted agreed that the needs and experiences of veterans are distinct enough to warrant a veteran-specific response.

The V Centre model has been optimised to take advantage of these leading-edge developments.

ESO and veterans with lived experience strongly support *The V Centre* model

Across five focus groups incorporating veterans, leading ESOs and a number of key community agencies, veterans with lived experience of homelessness, and veterans and non-veterans working in ESOs, responded favourably to the concept of *The V Centre* and the proposed services.

Detailed feedback highlighted the importance of entry and exit triage, personal goal setting, flexibility in the length of stay, and strong connection with ESOs and clinical support to deliver the required wrap-around support services.



The V Centre does not provide permanent housing. Its transitional accommodation is a veteran-specific solution to homelessness that provides stability to a veteran's circumstances, encourages goal-setting and connects them to secure housing. It is a first step in avoiding the 'revolving door' of mainstream crisis accommodation.

To live sustainably, VRSLC understands the connection with secure housing, employment and overcoming health and social challenges. Once they complete *The V Centre* Empowerment Program (**VCEP**), veterans will be empowered to manage their lives with support from other veterans, family and friends, and mainstream services.

'... following a 10-year Navy career and a decade in the Corrections and Employment Services sectors, I have witnessed the growing complex needs of the men and women who have served our country'

*'.. their entry back into civilian life presents its challenges and an initiative like *The V Centre* is well overdue'*

Peta Carmody - Veteran

4. Goals and objectives

The V Centre will empower veterans to find stable housing and employment, by providing safe accommodation and wrap-around support services, so they can live a sustainable life they value.

Empowerment will be evidenced by veterans finding meaningful employment, stable housing, family, social and community inclusion, and improved health and wellbeing.

5. Enabling objectives (KPI)

To enable the development and operation of *The V Centre*, VRSLC will:

- Acquire and refurbish the property, and build and fit-out the facility.
- Manage and operate the facility.
- Deliver the VCEP and achieve the following veteran specific service outcomes:

Reduce social dislocation and improve quality of life, promote active citizenship and engagement in the wider community.

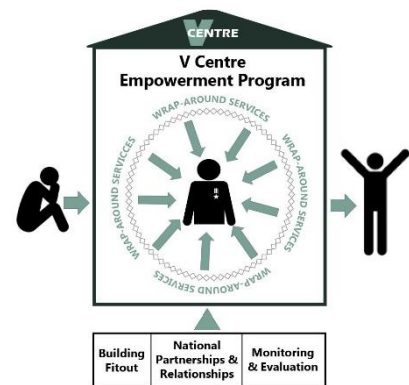
Leverage transferable skills or support retraining to find sustainable meaningful employment.

Respond to the multiple and complex needs of the veteran community – providing tailored and flexible services that respond to the needs of veterans with chaotic lifestyles including substance misuse and mental health needs.

Minimise homelessness through eviction due to debt, harassment and lack of financial support.

Tackle substance abuse through appropriate support services.

Reduce reoffending and promote community safety by meeting the housing-related support needs of ex-offenders.



‘... after returning from my last Middle East deployment in 2011, I left the Army to spend more time with family and carve out a civilian career managing a business in Sydney, but then the post-traumatic stress hit. In a span of about two weeks, I went downhill pretty quickly and I tried to take my life at one point due to the stresses and not knowing what was going on’

‘I was having trouble sleeping, had hyper-vigilance 24/7. Combine that with work and it just became too much. I was hospitalised seven times, my relationship broke down, and I lost the family business and an investment property’

‘... I couldn’t afford at that time to pay for a residence myself, so I had to sleep in the car’

Matt Vawdrey - Veteran

Value Proposition	<i>The V Centre</i> will empower veterans to live a sustainable life they value.	
	Empowerment will be evidenced by veterans finding meaningful employment, stable housing, family, social and community inclusion, and improved health and wellbeing.	
Value Created	Hard Value	Empowered veterans.
		Reduction in Government outlays – improving veteran health and wellbeing.
		Reduction in veteran suicide.
		Purpose-designed facility and assets – <i>The V Centre</i> .
		<i>V Centre</i> Empowerment Program.

Soft Value Increased recognition of VRSLC by government, industry, the community and the ESO sector - as a leading provider of innovative veteran care and support services – a national asset.

6. Outline strategy

In developing *The V Centre* strategy, VRSLC consulted:

- a. The *Housing First* model – the leading international model for supporting people who have experienced long-term and reoccurring homelessness and who face a range of complex challenges.

This model is the basis of the Government's H2H model funded by the Department of Housing, Families and Fairness.

- b. Journey to Social Inclusion Program – recognised by multiple Australian experts as the model that works best.

This model addresses the need for rapid housing supported by intensive wrap-around services.

- c. Veteran Aid UK – Research Report '*... a pathway out of homelessness*'.

- d. Ellis Jones Consulting – Research Report '*...defining best practice living solutions for the veteran community*'.

In addition, VRSLC conducted independent benchmarking analysis and focus group engagement on national and international best-practice homeless and veteran-specific housing models including on-site inspection in the UK.

The V Centre will offer three models of veteran care and support:

- a. A transitional home extending from six to nine months with the style of accommodation in keeping with contemporary layout and furnishing, access to quiet and public-shared spaces.
- b. Access to clinical support – the wrap-around services concept involving the engagement of medical, psychotherapy and psychological specialists, and select ESOs and community and service agencies.
- c. Access to complementary support, including case management, community connections and job-seeking and financial literacy support.

8. Principal beneficiaries

The principal beneficiaries are:

- a. Australia's military veterans and their families – improved health and wellbeing.
- b. The Australian Government – reduced financial outlay: veteran health and wellbeing and the impact of homelessness and social exclusion on the community.

The reduced financial appropriation, reflecting the forecast return on the Government's contribution, is outlined at Paragraph 9 – Budget information.

- c. The State Government – reduced financial outlay: homelessness program, hospitalisation and reduced pressure on frontline agencies, emergency departments and correction services.

9. Budget information

VRSLC will seek Program Funding Assistance from the Australian Government of \$12.7 million dollars over three years. The strategic (Year 3 end-state) financial breakdown is outlined below:

- a. The joint funding initiative will be implemented in two phases:

Phase 1

Acquire the land, build and commence the fit-out – the provision of infrastructure, grounds improvement and assets.

The facility will be collocated adjacent to Austin Health Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital and veteran-specific psychological trauma recovery services (Ward 17) and close to ex-service accommodation – in Victoria.

Funded by Vasey RSL Care - \$11.040 million dollars.

Phase 2

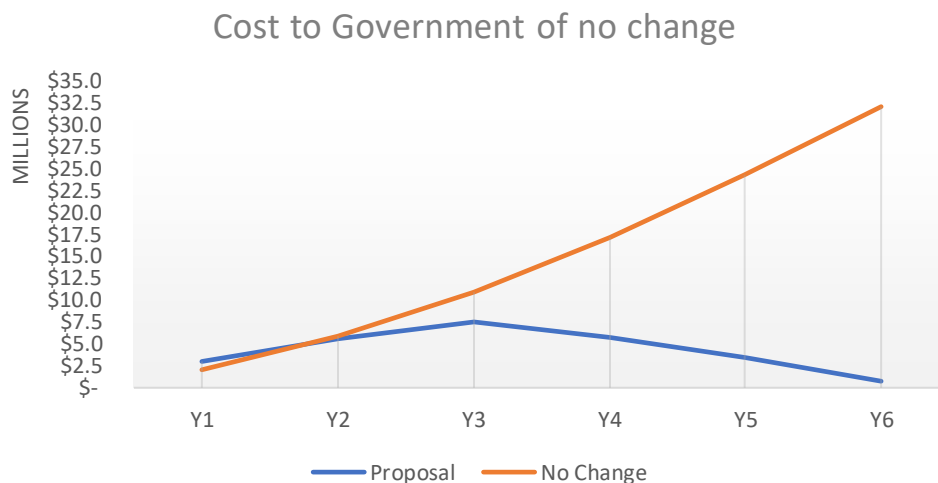
The development and application of *The V Centre* Empowerment Program (**VCEP**).

Facility Management
 Program Management
 Health and Wellbeing Services
 Building Life Skills
 Psycho-social Self-Development
 Clinical Healthcare

Program Manager
 Case Managers
 ESO and Community Health Services
 Allied Health and Employment Services
 Mental Health Specialists
 Medical Specialists

Funded jointly by Government, supported by VRSLC and select ESO and community agencies.

\$12.7 million dollars over three years.



Phase 3

National rollout of *The V Centre* concept.

Further consideration Years 4 to 6 – VRSLC will outline the ongoing benefits to our veterans, the Government and the community, and request for sustained operating capital.

VRSLC is in a sound financial position with a strong balance sheet. The 2021-22 Vasey RSL Care Finance Audit Report is available on request.

Detailed Budget Information is presented at Annex A.

10.Exclusions

PFA provided under this Submission will be expended solely on *The V Centre*.

11.Sustainability

Delivering high quality care and services to the ex-service community is at the core of VRSLC's mission. With the organisation's origins going back over 100 years, change and adaptation along with a mindset focussed on innovation and quality service to the changing generations of veterans needing the services – has characterised the evolution of the organisation and its people.

VRSLC is committed to and advancing the principles of sustainable development and the principle of enhancing the societal, environmental and economic systems within which VRSLC operates.



12.Plan of evaluation

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

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

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

13.About Vasey RSL Care

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Our vision *'... that veterans, war widows and the ex-service community live with independence, control and dignity, feeling safe, valued and respected'*.

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Vasey RSL care is a not-for-profit registered charity, funded through Government funding, grants, partnerships, and philanthropic gifts.

Janna Voloshin
Chief Executive Officer

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Hawthorn VIC 3122

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