

Psychiatric Consultation and Assistance Facts

Based on the concerns expressed via this means of individuals not being able to seek the appropriate psychiatry consultations we sought the appropriate advice from DVA who have been quick to respond with the some helpful details as per the information for all to consider below. **Of particular interest please read para 6 below which is of real benefit if you are having difficulties in getting psychiatric help**

1. *"In Australia, health care providers in private practice, including psychiatrists, are free to choose how to run their business. This means they can choose who they see as patients, the operating hours of the practice and how much they will charge. This includes whether or not to provide treatment under DVA arrangements.*
2. *DVA is aware of individual instances of health care providers not accepting DVA arrangements. This does not suggest this is a wide-spread issue impacting on veterans' and war widows' ability to access clinically necessary treatment.*
3. *Over the last five years there has been a steady increase in both the number of clients accessing psychiatry services for the first time and in the number of psychiatrists providing services to DVA clients.*
4. *The number of psychiatry consultations for those clients who have started psychiatric treatment for the first time has increased from just over 1,600 in 2012-13 to nearly 2,900 in 2016-17.*
5. *The number of providers of psychiatric services to DVA clients has increased from just over 1,300 in 2012-13 to nearly 1,700 in 2016-17.*
6. ***In the event that a health care provider does not accept DVA fees or there are no providers locally available, DVA can provide assistance to identify another provider, provide transport assistance, or consider a request from the practitioner to fund services at a cost above the DVA fee. A request to pay above the DVA fee would be determined on the basis of clinical need, and give consideration to the patient's ability to reasonably access another provider. If a DVA client is experiencing difficulty in locating a health care provider who will accept DVA health cards they should contact the Department on Freecall [1800 555 254](tel:1800555254).***
7. *If there is any concern, immediate assistance can be provided by the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS), which provides a free and confidential 24 hour counselling service for eligible veterans and their families on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046)."*

We all know that nothing in life is perfect but in this case DVA have responded quickly to accommodate any individual who may be seeking help. Early intervention is vital and if you're experiencing a constant or even isolated mental health issue put your hand up and go and get some help. All of us have done it from time to time and as an Alpha type it does not diminish, tarnish, stigmatize of whom, what you really are. Unless we know who is having a problem we can't help and that is unfair on the individual and his/her family and peer group. Help in this area is free via DVA so there can be no excuse in not addressing an issue discretely and confidentially through your preferred provider.

Michael von Berg MC OAM
Chair and National President