



FAMILIES
OF VETERANS GUILD

WHY SOCIAL CONNECTION IS IMPORTANT

Did you know that social isolation impacts negatively on your health and wellbeing? In fact, social isolation and loneliness have a greater impact on mortality than smoking, obesity, or alcohol consumption.

The positive effect of social connection for veteran families

There is a strong body of evidence demonstrating the positive effect of social connection on individuals, helping guard against depression and burnout, which are all too familiar challenges facing Defence and Veteran families. Engagement in meaningful group-based connections can help individuals build a sense of belonging and purpose which positively impacts mental health and wellbeing while effectively addressing loneliness.

Just as our Veterans need their peers, so too do their families, particularly where those family members are not Veterans themselves. The best form of support for Veterans' families their peers. Through both our **War Widow Program** and **Social Work and Wellbeing Program**, FOVG supports peer-led interactions. FOVG Programs have been supporting social connection and peer support for many years through **Social and Guild Clubs, The Friendship Line and The Birthday Line**.

Our commitment to helping families with social connection

The Wellbeing Program now provides social connection and peer support for Defence and Veteran families. We understand that Veterans' families carry the burden and cost of supporting Australia's Defence Force

personnel, yet they often do so alone and isolated from each other, putting their needs last to be of service to their Veteran loved one and Australia. They need each other now more than ever and we are here to provide that home to them.

We are expanding and diversifying our program of social connection to bring women and families together to develop strong bonds and support for each other, just as our older war widows have done for decades. We know there are many of you out there with nowhere to go, feeling incredibly isolated and lonely. Our message to you is, you now have a home. We might still be building some parts of it, but you are more than welcome to join us at any time. We are available to support you over the phone, via email and in person at events or at our newly renovated office in Chatswood NSW.

Recently, FOVG have undertaken an office renovation to create a Community Hub for Defence and Veteran families to engage with the organisation and each other in a purposefully designed space. Community hubs are a place-based and person-centric method of connecting with members that increases social connection and provides a sense of belonging. Defence and Veteran families can gather in the office for in-person health and wellbeing activities, small events or to meet with staff. Our aim is to remove barriers to engaging in volunteering, events, health and wellbeing activities or services by providing a welcoming space for members of all ages.