

Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide - Submission 2021

Submitted to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (May 2021).

Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) can offer support and assistance in understanding, preventing and treating mental illnesses and the associated chronic physical conditions - including in the case of veterans. Veterans are at a high risk of trauma, including PTSD, anxiety, depression, substance use and more - which also increases their risk of suicide.

These mental illnesses often go hand in hand with health conditions including eating disorders or disordered eating, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disease, diabetes and other chronic physical illnesses. These conditions can be managed or treated with the help of APDs, using effective, evidence-based dietary interventions.

Early dietary intervention and strategies introduced by APDs are critical for managing these mental and physical health conditions in a cost-effective, successful way.

Our recommendations:

- APDs play a critical role in mental health and need to be recognised as a vital part of multidisciplinary mental health care teams for veterans
- The poor availability, quality and effectiveness of health, wellbeing and support services for veterans must be addressed (this includes providing APD services)

- Diet and nutrition should be considered as crucial factors to address in veterans who have attempted or contemplated suicide. Dietary strategies can be effective tools in managing mental health conditions
- Better quality and availability of support services for families affected by suicide or mental illness, and veterans themselves, are essential
- Defence members and veterans should be entitled to support services, claims or entitlements, including entitlements to APD services to support mental health and wellbeing.

More needs to be done to protect the mental and physical wellbeing of veterans, and reduce the risk and rates of suicide in this at-risk group.

For more, download the [full submission](#).

Get in touch

If you have questions about this submission, contact us at policy@dietitiansaustralia.org.au