



## A message from the Chief of Army

To our Army families

We are in uncertain times as we face the challenges COVID-19 is placing on our personal and professional lives. I hope that wherever you are, you are well and managing during this time.

I acknowledge that a lot has already been asked of Army families this year, with many people recalled from Christmas leave to support the nation during Operation Bushfire Assist. But more is now being asked of us all.

At the Australian Government's request, Defence is supporting the fight against this pandemic through Operation COVID19 Assist. Over 1200 of our people are already assigned to the Operation and I anticipate this number will increase and the nature of tasks will evolve.

Army can only help if we are healthy. We have taken active measures to protect our people and this is why social distancing and working remotely is necessary. This has obviously been quite disruptive, and I appreciate everyone's sustained commitment to this important effort to "flatten the curve".

I realise that the unusual demands of this situation may be causing uncertainty. There are still many unknowns, and we don't yet have all the answers as to what this may mean for your loved ones who are serving, but we are working to bring clarity as best we can. Most urgent is the work we are doing to examine the impacts of COVID-19 on the posting cycle for the end of 2020.

Staying connected and well informed is critical. Unlike other operations, serving members can talk about Operation COVID Assist, and I encourage open family discussions about the situation and its implications. Defence and Army are providing regular Operation COVID-19 Assist updates, and our people are encouraged to speak with their chain of command if they need more information. Families also have access to resources, some of which are listed below this letter.

I thank you for your support and patience during these uncertain times, and hope you remain proud of the incredible work of your loved ones and the effort of those throughout Army to keep our nation safe and protected.

We are in this together, as a nation and as communities, and especially as an Army community – and what I do know is that our Army community is strong and resilient. I sincerely thank you for the support you give your family and friends across Army and the ADF during these challenging times.

Stay healthy. Stay strong.

Sincerely

LTGEN Rick Burr

**Chief of Army**

Staying connected and well informed

#### ForceNet for Families

We have an online group for Army families, where we are posting updates and information that you may find helpful during this time. To find out more about how to join this group, go to [www.ForceNet.gov.au](http://www.ForceNet.gov.au), click on the 'Apply to Join' link and select 'A family member' as your join request. To note, close friends can also join this group – your application simply requires support from a current serving member.

#### Defence COVID19 website

There is also a website that is updated daily on all Defence COVID-19 related matters, which can be accessed here: <https://news.defence.gov.au/national/daily-update-defence-response-covid-19>.

#### Army Chaplains

Army Chaplains continue to operate in units and on bases, and are available to provide support to families across Australia. To contact a Chaplain either call your unit Chaplain or call the Defence national switchboard on 1300 333 362 and ask to speak to the on-call Chaplain in your area.

#### DCO's Defence Family Helpline

You can also contact DCO's Defence Family Helpline, if you would like to confidentially speak with concerns you may have. Their number is 1800 624 608 and they are available 24-7. The Helpline is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.