



A message from the Chief of Army

A message to all who served in Afghanistan

The unfolding events in Afghanistan in the past weeks have been sudden and distressing. As well as feeling deep personal concern for those we know, these events challenge us as individuals and as an Army.

Almost 21,000 Army members served in Afghanistan, and I know for many of our veterans this is a difficult time. I acknowledge your commitment as well as the cost of your service and my thoughts are with you, your families and those who support you. I especially acknowledge the families of the 41 Australian soldiers who lost their lives.

Many of you served alongside the Afghan National Security Forces in Afghanistan or here in Australia. You also worked amongst the people of Afghanistan and were committed to helping them. You did this openly and with genuine care. This is our way as an Army and you should be proud of your contribution. The Australian Government has an ongoing commitment to helping those who supported us. The Prime Minister has asked our ADF to help the remaining Australians and others in Afghanistan. This mission will also be to extract and expatriate locally employed civilians and those who worked closely with us. Army is contributing to this important task in cooperation with other parts of government and allied partners.

The current situation is deeply concerning but it does not detract from the ADF's mission over the past two decades. You did what you were asked to do and supported the mission to deny terrorist groups safe haven in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Your actions had a direct and tangible effect. You gave the security forces and government of Afghanistan time and capacity. They have used this time to deliver better services, improved health care, and better opportunities for women in education and government. The ADF's involvement was defined by its mission. You gave greatly to this mission and made a difference.

This will be a difficult time for many and current COVID restrictions can compound the challenges. Wherever you are, veteran, soldier or family member, please reach out and support each other, talk amongst your community and access support when it is needed.

Be proud of each other and our Army. I am proud of you.

Good soldiering.

LTGEN Rick Burr

Chief of Army

Where to find support

There are a number of support mechanisms available, including the:

- Defence All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families that is available by calling 1800 628 036.
- Defence Member and Family Helpline 1800 624 608. Staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers.
- ADF Chaplaincy Services provide a 24/7 in person on call service that is regionally based. Call 1300 DEFENCE (1300 467 425) and ask to speak to the on-call Chaplain in your area.
- Open Arms (1800 011 046).
- Employee Assistance Program (1800 687 327 (1300 OUR EAP)).