

News story: Defence Minister teams up with with international counterparts to improve support for veterans

Delegates from each nation came together under a shared commitment to their defence communities, and took part in discussions on mental health support, and the transition process undertaken by the military as they adjust to civilian life.

The Minister was hosted by The Honourable Darren Chester, Australian Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, and joined by General Walter Natynczyk, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs, Government of Canada; Ms Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, United States of America; The Hon Ron Mark MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, New Zealand; and Ms Bernadine Mackenzie, Head of Veterans' Affairs, New Zealand.

During the two-day conference, the Minister addressed the delegates on the progress made at the last meeting, which was hosted in London, at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The conference then heard from leading experts on the latest international research on suicide prevention, the importance of evidence-based research to inform new policy, and the promotion of employment and education for those preparing to leave service, and supporting veterans struggling with mental health.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said;

Following the success of last year's conference, it's an honour to be able to continue to discuss the ways in which each of our nations supports those who have served.

The UK has established several new initiatives since I met with my counterparts in London, including the new veterans ID card, and later this year we will introduce our new transition policy, which will provide additional support to those that need it.

By combining our knowledge and expertise, we can continue to improve and enhance the way we thank our service leavers for their dedication and sacrifice.

The Minister and his international counterparts then signed a statement of intent, which recognises the benefits of working together and exploring examples of best practice in support and care for the defence and veteran communities and their families.

Each of the delegates also travelled to the ANZAC War Memorial, the commemorative military monument in Sydney, where they laid wreaths to honour

Australians who lost their lives in the first and second World Wars.

The Minister is in Sydney to support Team UK at this year's Invictus Games, which were founded by HRH The Duke of Sussex to harness the power of sport to aid wounded, injured and sick serving and former personnel in their recovery. On October 20th, he attended the opening ceremony at Sydney Opera House, which hosted 500 competitors from 18 nations preparing to compete in 11 medal sports including powerlifting, sailing, sitting volleyball, and wheelchair rugby and basketball.