



**Special Needs Assistance**

## **Welcome to Special Needs Booklet**

Since mid-2017 the Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc has seen a need for an information booklet which outlines the assistance available for Special Needs Families in the Defence Force.

The information booklet covers who Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc(DSNSG) are, what DSNSG does, and the programs we provide.

The information booklet also covers the Support and Assistance provided by:

- Defence Community Organisation (DCO)
- Defence Housing Australia (DHA)
- TOLL Transitions

DSNSG has been actively and successfully raising awareness at the Federal level of the difficulties that DSNSG families face during postings.

The result of all this is that whilst it is still sometimes difficult to move around Australia, many organisations and services providers are aware of the additional problems faced by families with special needs in the Defence force. Indeed, several provisions have subsequently been put into place after the discussions with DSNSG.

With this, we have all come together to provide this booklet which we hope will help families understand the processes and what is available for assistance when posting, and what support is out there for our special needs families.

# Defence Special Needs Support Group – Overview of Assistance Available



## Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc.

The Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc. (DSNSG) is a well-respected national organisation with many local support groups, supports well over three thousand families located both around Australia and overseas. We provide support, information, assistance and advocacy for all ADF families currently serving and ex serving who have a dependant (child, spouse or other dependant) with special needs.

DSNSG co-patrons are:

- Minister for Defence Personnel and Chief of the Defence Force.

DSNSG Ambassador is Air Commodore Henrik Ehlers, AM

DSNSG supports ADF families with special needs dependants by:

- providing a National Network of ongoing peer support to all families regardless of the disability/special needs involved
- link families together with similar needs
- liaise with Defence and other Federal and State departments concerning the issues that affect families with special needs, particularly those being mobile
- raise public awareness regarding the difficulties that Defence families with special needs can face
- provide a coordinated approach through the local and national network in obtaining disability information
- provide assistance in accessing disability services / equipment and information
- disseminate information relating to disabilities / special needs as well as any Defence-related issues
- provide an advocacy service for families.

## Other Assistance Available from DSNSG

### Access to grants

APS provide Grants for DSNSG Members and members of APS.

DSNSG Grants can be used towards diagnosing, equipment, specialist appointments, anything relating to the dependant with special needs.

DSNSG and APSBG will consider applications from families with special needs to assist with the purchase of equipment and other requirements relating to the applicant's needs. These funds are a grant and do not have to be paid back.

APS Benefits Group (APSBG) commenced operations in 1905 and is a member-owned cooperative whose members include employees from ALL public service sectors and their families.

APS provide support to APS/ Government families through a wide range of services from Grants, to loans, to funeral funds and much more.

Please note that at least one member of the family must be a current paid member of the APS Benefits Group (for at least 12 months) to be eligible for consideration.

These approved funds are grants and do not need to be repaid.

Applications must be submitted on the APS Benefits Group's forms, which are available from the DSNSG National Coordinator.

To find out more about this grant facility, new membership forms and application forms please email your Local Coordinator or [CEO@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:CEO@dsnsg.org.au).

## Computer 4 Kids

Computer 4 Kids is a program where we can assist with the purchase of an iPad for families to use to support their child or children with special needs, with their education and everyday living skills. An iPad is the best form of assistance as it is portable, lightweight, can be taken everywhere and takes up minimal space.

Families can download great applications suitable for the individual needs of their child. There are many applications to assist with behaviour, motor skills, learning and literacy, and can be essential for communication.

Note: There is a contribution fee payable to DSNSG from the families that access this program.

To find out more, please email [computer4kids@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:computer4kids@dsnsg.org.au) or call 1800 037 674

## For Your Information

FYI is a DSNSG Program which assists families with special needs dependants to network and develop support structures. The program provides financial support for families to attend the workshop.

FYI is a program that provides the opportunity for families to attend workshops or guest speakers. Workshops include behaviour support, additional information for parents and carers about the special need the dependant has, and other workshops that help meet the needs of the dependant. A different way of thinking, learning and managing emotions. Content will include:

- Cognitive Abilities: A different way of thinking and learning
- Managing Challenging Behavior
- Managing Feelings: Cognitive Behavior Therapy and its role in providing greater strategies to manage emotions and behavior
- The Emotional Tool Box, what it is and how to use
- Strategies to Improve Social Understanding and Friendship Skills
- Special Interests: Origins and constructive strategies
- Girls with Asperger's Syndrome
- Sensory Sensitivity

Email [fyi@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:fyi@dsnsg.org.au) for details

## Drive Safe Program

Our Drive Safe Program is to assist and help members of our DSNSG families with ASD, ADHD, and Asperger's syndrome to gain confidence and self-esteem when learning to drive (16 years and above with a current learner licence). This program was developed as we saw a need for teenagers with disabilities needing specialised training and assistance to gain their driving licence. Having a licence makes job

hunting more accessible to these young men and women and, in turn, helps reduce the financial strain of having a special need. Email [drivesafe@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:drivesafe@dsnsg.org.au)

## Family Emergency Care Plan

The DSNSG Family and Emergency Care Plan is a tool that can be used by Defence families with special needs to help assist with the care of their loved one. It is based on existing type Care Plans and Health Care records, but differs in that the Family and Emergency Care Plan will be tailored to meet the specific requirements of Defence families, i.e. mobility and deployment.

The Family Emergency Care Plan is primarily designed for use by families who have the serving member deployed but is available to all our Special Needs families, free of charge.

For families where the member is absent on duty, the primary carer is left alone to care for the person with special needs. We have found through experience that, if that primary carer is hurt or suddenly takes ill, there is no readily available information in place to assist when another person must come in and provide immediate care to the person with special needs. For example, what the normal daily routine is, what medication should be given, when and more.

For families who use respite care, a Family Emergency Care Plan would solve the problem of constant repeating of information when a new support worker is put into the home or for emergency care. The information is then readily available for the new support worker to read.

The DSNSG Family and Emergency Care Plan is laid out in a folder format specifically tailored to meet the requirements of our Defence Force families. Also included are a Carer ID wallet card (identifying that the person is a carer) and a sticker to go on the window of a car to identify that someone in the car has special needs and may need additional assistance or support in the event of an accident.

The program coordinator will hold a copy of all forms that the families have filled out. This is so if an emergency service rings the 1800 037 674 number quoting the reference number, we can easily track down the correct forms and let them know the Emergency Care Plan for your family and help the person who will be caring for your family in the case of emergency.

To find out more or to apply for this program please email [fecp@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:fecp@dsnsg.org.au).

# Defence Special Needs Support Group – Overview of Assistance Available

## Posting Plan

The purpose of a Posting Plan is to identify and look at what is required in the new location for the person with special needs and how to access or implement what is required so that the transition from the old location to the new location is goes more smoothly. The National Coordinator manages the Posting Plan, helps the family identify and locate appropriate services and where necessary seeks additional advice and support on behalf of the family.

Email [CEO@dsnsg.org.au](mailto:CEO@dsnsg.org.au) or your local coordinator.

## Family events

Your local area coordinator has the responsibility of organising these events. Details will be forwarded onto you through local newsletters, emails and in the DSNSG Facebook group. Coordinators and local families can suggest an event and if the National Committee approve, then details and Expressions of Interests are sent out to families. If sufficient expressions of interest are received, then families will be notified that the event will go ahead.

Some examples of family events are:

- Locally based special needs information sessions
- Respite weekends away
- Family fun days
- Movie nights and more!

If you know of any events that would benefit your local DSNSG, please make contact with your local area coordinator.

## **Defence Community Organisation**

Defence Community Organisation provides practical assistance to Defence families that have dependants with special needs. This assistance focuses on reducing the impact of relocations and minimising any interruption to Government services the dependant needs.

To receive the assistance and support services available, you will first need to have your dependant with special needs formally recognised by Defence.

Defence's definition of special needs includes children and adults, and covers a wide spectrum of cases including physical, intellectual, sensory, learning or behavioural difficulties, or psychiatric illnesses or disorders. It also includes academically gifted or talented children.

To gain formal recognition, you will need to fill in form **AC832** specifying the nature of the special needs case and requirements. All special needs must be assessed or recognised by a specialised paramedical practitioner, or psychologist depending on the condition. You will then need to submit the application to the [DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au](mailto:DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au).

Once your dependant is recognised by Defence, you may be entitled to receive assistance in the event of a posting. The Defence Special Needs Support Group also provides extra peer support and programs to Defence families.

Families wishing to find out more about the Federally Funded National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) should visit [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au). The Scheme is being rolled out in stages across Australia, so visit the website to find out if it's available in your area, or the area you are posting in to.

### **Assessment of assistance on posting AD355**

Before you move, you will need to apply for an assessment of assistance to determine what your dependant requires, and what support Defence may provide in the new location.

### **Pre-posting visit AC834**

Where it's necessary for the dependant to visit the new location before posting, DCO can cover accommodation and travel costs for the dependant and one family member. This is only

granted in instances where it is not possible to provide support from the old location, or there's a definite requirement for face to face contact with a department or institution in the new location.

### **Special assistance during removals AD355**

During the move to your new posting location, you may apply for special accommodation and travel arrangements or a valet unpacking service on arrival. Once you have been approved for this assistance, you can make arrangements through your Toll Transitions case manager before the move.

### **Accessing services and equipment AC835**

When families are posted they may have difficulties accessing the Government services they need immediately in the new location as waiting periods may apply. DCO provides short-term funding towards costs for interim services or equipment until the state or territory government agencies can deliver the service. DCO can assist with respite care, personal care, therapy services, special equipment hire, and early intervention programs (promoting the development of preschool aged children with special needs).

### **Education assistance AD301**

You may receive assistance with access to programs or services your dependant requires which are not available from the new school or other government agencies. This may include:

- funding for a therapy service or tuition not provided at the school but critical to educational progress.
- assessment of needs, toward development of an educational program.
- reimbursement of private schooling costs, where a necessary special program is only available at a private school.

Specialised staff, including Education Liaison Officers and in-school Aides and Mentors, can also assist you with education advice and support in each region.

To access any of this assistance or to find out more, contact the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608 or [DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au](mailto:DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au).



## Defence Housing Australia

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) understands that some Defence families have family members with special needs. When these needs affect your housing requirements, DHA takes them into consideration to assist you in finding your housing solution.

Defence Community Organisation will refer your Assessment of Assistance on Posting (AD 355) request to the Directorate of Relocations and Housing (DRH) for consideration of any special housing needs. DRH will assess your requirement against the Defence Pay and Conditions Manual (PACMAN) and supporting medical evidence. All special housing needs must be supported by medical evidence from a specialist, or they cannot be approved. You will receive email advice on DRH's decision. A copy of the email will be sent to DHA and the regional Defence Relocations and Housing Manager to assist you with your housing needs.

Please contact the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608 for Recognition of Dependents with Special Needs and to apply for Assistance on Posting.

Once DHA have received the email from DRH, the Regional Housing Specialist will be in contact with you to discuss housing options. Your housing entitlement will be determined by your assessment of assistance and may include:

- house hunting trips
- house accessibility i.e. ramps, lighting, size of or automatic door entry
- amenities or room sizes to accommodate large families
- houses in close proximity to education facilities (for special / advanced education needs)
- houses in close proximity to healthcare or respite facilities (for special healthcare needs)
- consideration of environmental factors (heating, cooling or lighting).

**DHA will negotiate with DRH to approve the modifications, and DHA will implement the required changes.**





## **Toll Transitions' relocation service**

Toll Transitions provides Defence members and their families, including those with a dependent who has special needs, with a comprehensive relocation service.

In addition to organising relocation requirements as outlined below, Toll Transitions notifies Defence Housing Australia (DHA) of a member's relocation, so they can assist with the housing solution.

### **Toll case managers**

A relocating Defence member is appointed a Toll Transitions Case Manager and an alternate Case Manager to help with their relocation. Case Managers assist Defence families with questions about their relocation and provide the appropriate contacts and resources to assist with their move.

Case Managers will:

- highlight the need for a pre-removal visit (PRV) where required
- arrange the pack/uptift/delivery/unpack of furniture and effects, and assess and organise any long-term or short-term storage requirements for furniture and effects
- book travel and temporary accommodation (losing and gaining locations) required during the relocation
- calculate and arrange payment of relocation allowances
- approve payment of relocation expense reimbursements.

### **Attendance at PRVs or carrier inspections**

Toll Transitions removals specialists known as Transitions Consultants (TCs) are highly trained in all aspects of both domestic and international removals, with many years' experience in the removals industry. TC's physically visit a significant proportion of Defence member's homes and conduct PRVs, and/or carrier inspections (CI).

The PRV enables TCs to assess a Defence family's move requirements to determine the scope of the relocation, to assess the volume of goods and to ensure that any special service requirements are identified. TCs also conduct CIs at Defence families' departure or destination locations. They can attend whilst the removalists are onsite, enabling Toll Transitions to ensure that the removals are conducted according to Defence requirements and Toll's stringent quality procedures.

The attendance of TCs for a PRV and/or a departure or destination CI, provides Defence families with additional on the ground support, and the TCs can assist with any questions or concerns Defence families may have regarding their move on the day.

### **Full or partial unpack at delivery**

Once Toll Transitions has received the member's application for relocation (AFR) and inventory, Case Managers will explain the unpack options available so that Defence families can select the option (full unpack or partial unpack) which works best for them.

If a full unpack is elected the removalist will unpack all cartons, other than those containing clothing, onto a flat surface.

If a partial unpack is elected, the removalist will only unpack those cartons containing breakable items (as agreed with the Defence member at uplift). All other personal effects will be unpacked by the Defence family including clothing packed by Defence families and cartons that had been packed by the removalists (non-breakables) at the uplift location.

The Defence member/partner can change the election up to and including the time the removal is delivered. However please note that changing from a partial to a full unpack late in the process may mean that the removalist may have to return to complete the unpack on another day.

### **Warranty**

Toll's warranty extends to cover the contents of cartons unpacked by Defence members (excluding breakables and PBO items). PBO items are not covered by warranty, except in the case of loss or of obvious damage to the carton caused by the removalist. Members should ensure that any carton with obvious damage is unpacked by the removalist in the Defence member's presence and any damage noted on the inventory condition report (ICR).

Toll's Warranty Scheme allows for new replacement cover to be applied to items which fall within predefined categories and age limits (refer to the age-based item inclusions table in Toll's Your Defence Relocation Guide). In cases where more than minor damage to an item has occurred, members will be supplied with a new replacement item if Toll Transitions determines that repair of the old item is not economical, and the item is eligible for replacement in accordance with the table of age-based item inclusions.

Like-for-like replacement or compensation cover applies to items which fall outside the specified age limits.



## Defence Special Needs Support Group – Overview of Assistance Available

Not every item that sustains damage will be replaced with a new item or compensation paid at new value. In the first instance damaged items will be repaired where practicable and compensation paid for minor damage.

Read Toll's "Your Defence Relocation Guide" and FAQs available at [www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence](http://www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence) for full details of the Toll Warranty Scheme.

### **Move Plan App**

The Move Plan App gives Defence families easy access to the details of their relocation itinerary that they will need to know as they progress through their relocation.

The app provides members with up-to-date details about their relocation including removal dates, allowances, travel dates including airfare information (where applicable) and

accommodation details. The information in the app mirrors the information available in the member's current Move Plan Letter.

The app is available for both Android and Apple iOS mobile phones. It can be downloaded from the Google Play Store and Apple iTunes App store by searching for Toll Move Plan. Defence members can logon to the Toll Move Plan App using the same valid username and password that they use to access Toll Transitions' website [www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence](http://www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence)

### **Your Defence Relocation Guide**

Refer to Toll Transitions "Your Defence Relocation Guide" for full details of Toll Transitions comprehensive relocation service. The guide is available at [www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence](http://www.tolltransitions.com.au/defence).

If you require any assistance, please call Toll Transitions on Free call number 1800 819 167.

## Checklist

- Have you updated your circumstances with Defence Community Organisation? If you've had changes or updates in diagnoses in the past few years, it is best to keep these details up-to-date.
- Do you need more assistance with housing and modifications?
- Is your specialist letter more than two years old?
- Have you checked with your specialist that your medication script can be filled in your gaining location?
- Are you aware of the assistance that is provided to Defence families with special needs when posting? For further information call the Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.
- Do you have NDIS funding? If yes, have you started your process to transfer these funds to your gaining location?
- Have you linked into support groups in your gaining location? For further assistance email your local area Coordinator from DSNSG, these details can be found on our website [www.dsnsng.org](http://www.dsnsng.org).

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