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Every Family has a story Welcome to ours



DEFENCE SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT GROUP INC.



Australian Government
Department of Defence



aspenmedical





General Angus J Campbell, AO, DSC



**A MESSAGE FROM THE
CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE**

As we all reflect on an eventful 2019, it is very apparent to me that our people and their families are the basis of all our success. Australian Defence Force operations, exercises, and other activities present unique challenges for, and demands on, our families and friends. I appreciate how much harder providing support can be for those families with special needs.

The Defence Special Needs Support Group – supporting well over 1100 Defence families – exists to support our loved ones with special needs while we serve Australia. This support, in the form of information, advocacy and assistance programs, is invaluable. The upcoming festive season can bring with it the challenges of relocation, travel, or coping with loved ones deployed. The assistance that the Defence Special Needs Support Group provides to our Defence families, particularly during times of change, stress and upheaval is even more deeply appreciated.

The Australian Defence Force relies on support from the Defence Special Needs Support Group, and the family and friends of those with special needs, to help us achieve our mission. For that, I and the Australian Defence Force's senior leaders are deeply thankful. Whatever your circumstances this festive season, my wife Stephanie and I wish you all a safe and merry Christmas, and a happy New Year.



Word from Chief Executive Officer Kim Collins

It has come to the end of year, and I am unsure where the time has gone.

Like most, I am posting this year. I will be on leave from the 6th Dec to 30th Dec whilst we move our family from Brisbane to Canberra. The joys of posting!

As you all may be aware, Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc were busy working on the Defence Report for 2019. (This is now available on our website). Initial reactions from Defence, our supporting partners and our members has been positive.

DSNSG Executive team meets regularly with Defence Policy Personnel: DGDCO, HPC Major General Natasha Fox, DGPERS A, DGPERS AF, DGPERS N, The office of National Co-Patron Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel the Hon Darren Chester MP, DSDPG.

We were very pleased with how well the 2018 report was received and actions taken in response. Good examples being:

- Cooperation from DHA in not requesting further paperwork from families with Special Needs once the AC832 was recognised through DCO.
- Commitment from Defence People Group (DPG) to collaborate with DSNSG for our input in a forthcoming review of PACMAN requirements as they move to a 'principles based' approach.
- Advice from our co-patron, CDF, that our feedback is valuable in keeping the issues of Special Needs Families in the forefront of Defence leadership thinking.

2019 Report includes: but not limited to:

Defence Approval Forms: Frequent and constant feedback from our membership relates to the complexity of Defence approval paperwork in relation to Special Needs

Financial: Loss of income to the household makes it increasingly hard to afford the required specialist appointments for the family. In some location's spouses are at a disadvantage due to potential employers asking if they are Defence with the implied concern of short-term employment and preference for 'local' hires only. In many cases some spouses are unable to work in their desired profession.

National Committee

National Coordinator/Secretary

Claire Macfarlane-Rowles
national.coordinator@dsnsg.org.au
 0415 737 116

Assistant National Coordinator

Cherie Davis:
cherie.davis@dsnsg.org.au

0417 182 233

Assistant National Coordinator

Diana Simpson
diana.simpson@dsnsg.org.au

0421 799 663

National Treasurer

Melissa Snell:
melissa.snell@dsnsg.org.au

0448 608 611

National Memberships and Communications Officer

Nicole Gourley:
Nicole.gourley@dsnsg.org.au

0401 516 799

CEO

Kim Collins:
CEO@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674
 0447 851 861

Family Support: Being new to a community, the ADF member and family may not be aware of all the support services available for a family with Special Needs

Welfare Issues: Not surprisingly, welfare issues are at the forefront of our minds. Key feedback we have received relates to:

- There is a consistent network of medical support for a serving member when being posted around the country, whether it is in the form of Open Arms, DVA or medical facilities.
- The Special Needs requirements within the family seem to be forgotten during posting time. Specialist teams are disrupted, and the family member with Special Needs almost always experiences a setback in one form or another.
- In some complex cases, some states medical teams do not meet the requirements to treat the Special Needs of the family. This could be from a lack of equipment, lack of qualified specialists or a lack of time to treat the family's needs, resulting in families needing to post unaccompanied.

Housing: Housing support is critical to most of our serving members and their families

Winding Up:

Military lifestyle brings a range of opportunities and experiences, but it can also create specific issues for families when they are experiencing continual mobility, separation due to deployments and training, and isolations can have a much greater impact. Special Needs Families live a unique transit lifestyle. The stresses placed on Special Needs Families when being posted is undeniably underestimated.

Whilst it is a very busy time of year, I do wish you all the Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc families, a very Merry Christmas and Happy and Safe New Year.

Kim Collins

Chief Executive Officer

Local Coordinators

New South Wales

Williamtown: Rose Savasta Erba
williamtown@dsnsg.org.au
 0459 967 258

Richmond: Vacant
richmond@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Sydney South: Vacant
sydney.south@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Sydney North: Vacant
sydney.north@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Liverpool: Vacant
liverpool@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Tamworth: Vacant
tamworth@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Wagga Wagga: Vacant
Waggawagga@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Nowra: Nicole Gourley
nowra@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674

Albury/Wodonga: Vacant
Albury.wodonga@dsnsg.org.au
 1800 037 674



National Executive Committee Appointments

Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc held their AGM on the 24th of November 2019. DSNSG Inc are excited to announce the appointment of the following positions for 2020.

National Coordinator: Claire Macfarlane-Rowles

Assistant National Coordinator: Cherie Davis

Assistant National Coordinator: Diana Simpson

Memberships and Communication Officer: Nicole Gourley

National Treasurer: Melissa Snell

DSNSG Inc would also like to welcome new Coordinators:

Darwin Coordinator: Marina Talbot

Williamstown Coordinator: Rose Savasta Erba

Perth North Coordinator: Lauren Coombes

Cairns Coordinator: Karrie Blance

Local Coordinators

Northern Territory

Darwin: Marina Talbot

darwin@dsnsg.org.au

041 636 541

Tindal: Colin Pickstone

katherine@dsnsg.org.au

0427 220 820

Queensland

Amberley: vacant

amberley@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Brisbane: Delia Kennedy

brisbane@dsnsg.org.au

0406 123 113

Darling Downs: Vacant

darlingdowns@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Townsville: Cherie Davis

townsville@dsnsg.org.au

0417 182 233

Cairns: Karrie Blanch

cairns@dsnsg.org.au

0415 275 745

South Australia

Adelaide and Woodside:

Kristina Rawlinson

adelaide@dsnsg.org.au

woodside@dsnsg.org.au

0407 409 956



Improving Understanding of the DSN SG Inc Community

We are looking for members to share their experiences with a view to improving understanding of the DSN SG Inc Community and hopefully helping others in their journey.

If you are interested in sharing your stories with us, please email CEO Kim Collins CEO@dsnsg.org.au

Your stories will be published in our National E-Newsletters, Website and Facebook Page.

Articles submitted may be edited for readability and length of course, final product cleared by authors.



THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING: By Delia Kennedy

I have been the volunteer DSN SG coordinator for Brisbane for the past 11 months. Being a parent of children with additional needs as well as a Defence Spouse, my own career aspirations have been a low priority. I have had limitations on the hours I can work, the location, the flexibility, any travel required and in giving guarantees that I will be staying in location. I continue working part time, but volunteering has given me an opportunity to expand my skill set in areas that I previously have had nil such as organising an event. It has also been great to be a role model to my teenage children and get them involved. My teens are at the age to get part time work but just not yet confident enough. Volunteering is a gentle introduction to the working world, and it involves no therapy fees.

Why volunteer?

- To connect with others and build relationships
- It is good for your body and has been found to reduce depression and anxiety
- It can help advance your career and develop important workplace skills
- Volunteering brings fun and fulfilment in your life

I hope I have convinced you to be brave and think of volunteering.

Delia Kennedy
Brisbane DSN SG Volunteer Coordinator

Local Coordinators

Victoria

Cerberus/Mornington: Vacant
mornington@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Melbourne North: Vacant
melbourne.north@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Melbourne West: Vacant
melbourne.west@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Puckapunyal: Christine Henderson
puckapunyal@dsnsg.org.au

0408 214 961

Sale: Vacant
sale@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

ACT

Canberra: Claire Macfarlane-Rowles
canberra@dsnsg.org.au
0415 737 116

Western Australia

Perth South: Vacant
perth.south@dsnsg.org.au

1800 037 674

Perth North: Lauren Coombes
perth.north@dsnsg.org.au
0400 838 114

Tasmania

Tasmania: Vacant
tasmania@dsnsg.org.au
1800 037 674



ADELAIDE SKATE PARTY

The members of Adelaide DSNSG had a wonderful school holiday family friendly event that they attended. Children as well as adults strapped on a pair of old school roller skates and got to spin around the rink to some tunes.

The staff at Gawler skate rink were wonderful, kept music down low, limited stobe lighting and ensured everyone was having fun and were safe. We even got to play some games such as Red Rover, Limbo and corners.

DSNSG covered the cost of the venue as well as put on a very yummy spread of refreshments as everyone was pretty hungry after skating around for 2 hours.

Was a great afternoon!!

Kristina Rawlinson (Adelaide Coordinator)



1 of 1

Christmas Program Closure

Please be advised all DSNSG Inc programs will close from Friday 15th November 2019 and recommence Monday 3rd February 2020.

The DSNSG Helpline will close from 3:30pm (AEDST) Friday 20th December & reopen on Monday 30th December 2019, 10am (AEDST).



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Relocating this year?

Complete your Application for Relocation (AFR) and your Inventory

Go to www.tollgroup.com/movemaestro/defence to access and complete your AFR and Inventory. Your Toll Case Manager or Toll's Customer Service Centre, available on **1800 819 167**, can help you with any queries you may have.

Toll's Defence Relocation Guide has all the information you need for you move

Available on Toll's Defence Website www.tollgroup.com/movemaestro/defence, the Relocation Guide will help you to understand your rights and responsibilities throughout your relocation. Please pay particular attention to Chapter 3 which provides you with the information you need to be appropriately prepared for your removal and Chapter 4 for full details of Toll's Warranty Scheme.

Warranty

Toll's Warranty Scheme allows for New replacement cover to be applied to items which fall within predefined categories and age limits. Like-for-like replacement or compensation cover apply to items which fall outside the specified age limits. 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. Warranty FAQs on Toll's Defence website provide further details.

Helpful Hints for those moving this year include:

- Download the Toll Move Plan App from the App stores for easy access to the details of your relocation itinerary.
- Please advise Toll if you have any change to your inventory or contact details.
- Your removal provider will contact you the day prior to pre-pack/uptift to confirm a start time.
- The contracted work hours are from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. Please contact Toll if you are concerned the uplift / delivery will not be completed within these hours.
- If you do not agree with the uplift or delivery condition as recorded by the removalist, note this on the Inventory Condition Report (eICR) then call Toll for assistance.
- Vehicles and towables being freighted are not covered by Toll's Warranty. Check with your insurer to see if they are covered while in transit, otherwise you are advised to arrange your own insurance cover.
- If you are delayed in transit or otherwise require a change to your temporary accommodation advise Toll immediately.
- Any request for long term storage, or overflow storage, must be approved by Toll.



Grants - APS Benefits (Supporting Partner)

The APS Grants Scheme is proud to offer financial assistance of up to \$4,000 to cover the expenses of equipment or other related costs for children with special needs. APS will only consider applications from families who have a child with special needs.

How do you apply?

- Provide us with quotes and receipts of the equipment / other items
- One family member must be a current member of APS (of at least 12 months) to be eligible for consideration

Please email CEO@dsnsg.org.au for further information on how to apply

Computer4Kids (DSNSG Program funded by Defence Health - Supporting Partner)

Computer4Kids is a program to assist families with the purchase of an iPad to support their child or children with special needs. iPads can be a useful tool to help with their education and everyday living skills. An iPad is a great form of assistance as it is portable, lightweight and can be taken everywhere as it takes up minimal space.

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

NOTE - There is a contribution fee that is payable to DSNSG from the families that access this program. You must also be a member of DSNSG for a minimum of 6 months.

To find out more about or to apply for this program please visit our website or please email computer4kids@dsnsg.org.au



Family Emergency Care Plans - FECP (DSNSG Program)

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 deployments.

The Family and Emergency Care Plan is primarily used for families who have the serving member deployed or absent on military duties (field, courses, exercises, on duty etc.) but is available to all our special needs families, **free of charge**.

For families where the member is absent on military duties, this means that the primary carer is left alone to care for the person with special needs. We have found through past experience that if the primary carer has suddenly taken ill then there is no readily available information in place to assist for when another person has to come in and provide immediate care to the special needs person i.e. what the normal daily routine is, what medication should be given, when and much more.

For families who use respite, Family Emergency Care Plan would solve the problem of constantly repeating 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 Emergency Care Plan is laid out in folder format. The forms contained within are specifically tailored to meet the requirements of our families.

In addition, the following emergency items are also included - carer ID wallet card (identifying that the person is a carer), sticker to put on a window of car to identify that someone in the car has special needs and may need additional assistance/support in the event of an accident.

The program coordinator will hold a copy of all forms that the families have filled out. **ALL FORMS WILL BE KEPT PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL, ONLY ACCESSIBLE TO THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR.**

To find out more about or to apply for this program please email

fecp@dsnsg.org.au



Posting Plan Program

Posting Plans are designed to assist a family with their posting in relation to the requirements of the person who has special needs.

The plan is put together by the CEO in consultation with the family and may cover:

1. Travel
2. Housing
3. Housing modifications
4. Early Intervention Programs
5. Schooling
6. Equipment
7. Support Groups
8. Respite
9. Post School Options
10. Employment
11. Medications
12. Medical and Hospital
13. Therapy
14. DCO SN Policy – Assessment of Assistance on Posting (or Recognition of Special Needs)



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 made more smoothly.

The CEO 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.

To find out more about or to apply for this program please email CEO@dsnsg.org.au





For Your Information – FYI (DSNSG Program)

The program provides financial support for families to attend workshops, Webinars and order resource books.

Workshops include behavior support, additional information for parents and carers about the special needs the dependent has, and other workshops/webinars that help meet the needs of the dependent. 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.

The National Executive Committee try to gather information in relation to various workshops/webinars that may be happening around Australia but sometimes it is hard to keep up to date. Information from families is appreciated regarding education sessions, seminars, and workshops that may be happening in your area. Please provide as much notice as possible to ensure that information can be sent to families with enough time to purchase tickets.

Details can be sent to FYI@dsnsg.org.au

Notification of these funded events are sent to families via E-mail, along with information.

Drive Safe - (DSNSG Program funded by Aspen Medical - Supporting Partner)

Our Drive Safe program assists and helps members of our DSNSG families with ASD and ADHD to gain confidence and self-esteem when learning to drive (16 years and above).

This program was developed as there was a need for teenaged and or older adults with disabilities needing specialised training and assistance to gain their driving licence.

Having a licence can offer a sense of responsibility and make job hunting more accessible to young men and women and in turn help to reduce the financial strain of having special needs.

To find out more or to apply for this program please email drivesafe@dsnsg.org.au

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aspenmedical



FAMILY EVENTS

Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc. **Family Events** After receiving much feedback from DSNSG members over the course of the last few years, many families have expressed that they would like more locally based community events that help to connect them with other DSNSG families in location.

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 Executive Committee approve the details and expressions of interests are sent out to families. If enough expressions of interest are received, families will be notified that the event will go ahead.

Some examples of Family Events are:

- Locally Based Special Needs Information Sessions
- Family Fun Days
- Movie Nights etc.

If you know of any events that would benefit your local DSNSG group, please make contact with your local area Coordinator at the relevant email address listed in this newsletter



Coordinator Month Award

The project is to recruit new coordinators and retain the coordinators and help them feel confident in being a local coordinator.

We are currently doing a recruitment drive from 16- 23 areas in need of a coordinator.

We are hoping to help retain the coordinators we currently have by offering further training, providing consistent support, and offering a buddy system, and aiding towards professional development.

We are aiming to increase the pool of volunteers to be available for board selection.

Coordinator monthly reward helps toward providing the incentive for our members that volunteer their time and skills back to an organisation that supports and advocates for them.

We would like to offer the following:

- Volunteer of the month
- Self-Care of Volunteers
- Professional Development

Without volunteers, the board and therefore the organisation will fold.

Celebrating Coordinator of the Month provides a time to celebrate the contributions of **volunteers** young and old, raise awareness of the personal and societal benefits of volunteering, increase public support for this vast and often invisible unpaid workforce, and educate potential **volunteers** about the opportunities.

DSNSG would like to announce the following Coordinators who have received Coordinator of the Month award:

- September: Delia Kennedy Brisbane Coordinator
- October: Christine Henderson Puckapunyal Coordinator
- November: Marina Talbot Mornington Coordinator
- December: Colin Pickstone Tindal Coordinator

Proudly Sponsored by





Defence Health has been providing support to military families and the Defence community for more than sixty years. The insurer is committed to helping members manage their health and wellbeing and to being a prudent manager of members' funds.

The Defence community has unique challenges – dealing with regular moves, long periods of separation due to courses and operations, and invariably, long distances away from extended family and friends.

In late 2017, Defence Health saw the opportunity to assist a very worthy community organisation, being the Defence Special Needs Support Group (DSNSG).

The DSNSG is a group of volunteers who support families with the additional challenge of caring for children with special needs. Defence Health has enormous respect for the group and has provided a grant of funds to ease the administrative burden imposed on the group's volunteers.

In addition to supporting DSNSG with funding, Defence Health has offered to research individual circumstances for some families who may be able to leverage further support from other federal or state agencies.

Defence Health is very proud to support this small group of very dedicated workers. They improve the lives and wellbeing of Defence families experiencing challenges well beyond those of most people in the Defence or civilian community.



Delivering practical solutions to meet your family's needs

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) can assist Defence families with special needs to find appropriate housing solutions to meet their specific requirements.

Whether it's in preparation for a move to a new posting location or to update the specialist medical requirements of a family member, the most important starting point is to contact Defence Community Organisation (DCO). DCO will help your family through the process of completing your Assessment of Assistance on Posting (AD 355), which is the crucial first step in having your special needs status formally recognised by Defence. They will then forward the assessment to Defence Relocations and Housing (DRH), who is the delegate for Recognition of Dependents with Special Needs and Assistance on Posting.

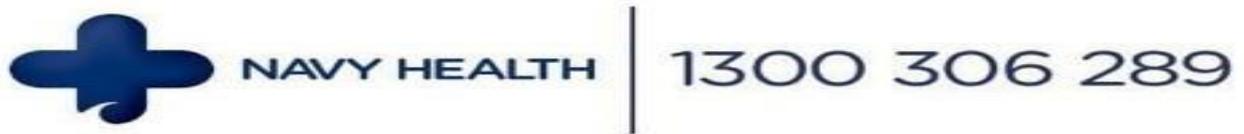
DCO will help your family through the process of completing your Assessment of Assistance on Posting (AD 355), which is the crucial first step in having your special needs status formally recognised by Defence.

Once this recognition is granted, DHA and the Defence Relocations and Housing (DRH) manager in your region will work together to offer ongoing assistance and practical solutions for your family.

DHA can give you access to one of our highly skilled Regional Housing Specialists to work as a case manager for your relocation, supporting your family and working with you and local providers to carefully consider how to best meet your needs. This may include help to find a suitable residence in close proximity to specialist education or medical services, facilitate modifications to housing in the new location and arrange appropriate accommodation while in transit.

It's important to note that DHA can only provide housing and modifications in accordance with what is listed in your approved Assessment of Assistance, so ensuring this is correctly submitted via DCO as soon as possible is vital. To apply, fill out the relevant form on the DCO website for the service you require and submit it along with all supporting documentation to the Defence Family Helpline.

For more information about how DHA can help assist families with special needs, visit our website at www.dha.gov.au/housing/families-with-special-needs.

**Who is Navy Health?**

Navy Health is a not-for-profit private health insurer that has been offering great value health cover for more than 60 years.

Eligibility

Navy Health is available for all serving and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Forces (Navy, Army & Air Force) and their families (siblings, parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren).

You (and your family) are also eligible if you've ever been a civilian employee of the Department of Defence or a contractor to the Australian Defence Forces. It's important to remember that if you've ever been eligible at any stage in your life, you're welcome to join at any time in the future.

Defence discounts

We offer a 10% discount to Serving Families, Active Reservist (SERCAT 3-5) and DVA Gold and White Card Holders (DVA Card Holders must be covered by the membership).

How do you switch?

Switching health funds is easy. If you have already served your waits with another provider, you won't have any waits on an equivalent level of cover with Navy Health.

To find out more go to: navyhealth.com.au or call 1300 306 289

Every *Family* has a story...

Welcome to ours.



Reflections from a Chaplain's Son.

After a severe bout of salmonella in grade 8, I developed a case of CFS (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome). Suddenly, menial tasks such as unstacking a dishwasher, or ever brushing my hair became difficult and exhausting for me. This sadly meant that for the first few years things were incredibly tough on everyone in our family. I have twin brothers who are aged sixteen.

There were times when we all became frustrated and angry at each other, finding something to blame or some label to put on this situation. It was around this time in 2016 that my dad decided to have a career change to join the Air Force. As he joined the Air Force, he needed to be away at Officer Training School (OTS) for the first eighteen weeks of his career.

There were times of confusion, frustration, anger and annoyance towards and from me; the transition to a Defence family was not easy on anyone at first. While my parents were trying to look after me, they were also trying to look after each other and my brothers to ensure that no one would feel alone, scared or stressed by this move.

After a few exhausting, and confusing years, we got an appointment with a specialist at the Royal Children's Hospital, and later entered a rehabilitation program for children with CFS. The program was a great success and taught me a lot about dealing and living with CFS.

After this program, DHA was able to provide us with the ability to move to another house because we were classed as a Special Needs family. The house we moved into (and are currently living in) has provided me with a lot more freedom, accessibility, closed off spaces to allow me to relax and recover, and also a location that has made it easy for my own transportation, catching up with friends and hopefully a job in the near future. The last few years haven't been easy, but I am glad for the ways Defence has looked after us and we have looked after each other



Ready for Purchase

The National Executive Committee are delighted to introduce our newest member to
the DSNSG Family, Henry S Bear.

Henry will be working endlessly to help make DSNSG a household name and provide our
families a sense of pride.

Mini Henry S Bears are now ready for purchase.

\$20 includes delivery.

For purchasing, please email
mascot@dsnsg.org.au