

## Research to Help Guide our Nation's Heroes on their Road Home



The Repat Foundation – The Road Home is proud to announce the successful recipients of the 2017 Research Grant Round for projects into the health and wellbeing of veterans, emergency service personnel and their families. This exciting announcement has only been possible thanks to the support of our generous community – thank you!

### 2017 Research Grant Round Recipients:

- Professor Sharon Lawn from Flinders University is the successful recipient of Prabha Seshadri Grant for \$60,000 for her project titled: *Living vicariously with PTSD: how partners experience and can better support those who are exposed to traumatic events in the course of their work*
- Dr Amy Baker from the University of South Australia is one of the successful recipients of a 2017 Grant of \$50,000 for her one year project titled: *Help-seeking for mental health concerns by emergency service first responders*
- Dr Leanne Glenny from the University of South Australia is the second successful recipient of a 2017 Grant of \$50,000 for the one year project titled: *Achieving positive health outcomes for trauma affected veterans and first responders.*

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"We would like to congratulate the three grant recipients for their successful applications and look forward to working with them to improve the health and wellbeing of our nation's heroes – the men and women who put themselves in harm's way to protect us," said Executive General Manager Karen May.

"The research we have been able to fund thanks to the support of our community is a vital part of understanding the incidence, the causes and the best treatment models for our wounded veterans and servicemen and women to ensure we start to tackle suicide rates and improve health outcomes for those who serve our community."

We are also delighted to announce the Invictus Pathways Program in collaboration with the University of South Australia, which includes a new three year PhD Scholarship for a student to investigate the effect of participating in the Invictus Games program on current Australian defence force as well as returned service personnel.



"We are so proud of this new collaboration and very excited to see the outcomes of this innovative PhD research project. This research will provide a better understanding to inform more health and wellbeing models and programs to ensure injured veterans and their families that support them, get the care they need to attain wellbeing," Karen said.

# Providing Support to “Invisible Carers”



Image © Commonwealth of Australia 2015

***“I come from a family of first responders so I know and have seen Post-Traumatic Stress and the impact it has on people and their loved ones.”***

Professor Sharon Lawn is passionate about research focusing on the impact Post-Traumatic Stress has on partners of contemporary veterans and emergency service personnel. She also wants to ensure improved systems are put into place to help partners better support their loved ones when experiencing a traumatic event in the course of their work.

As a recent recipient in our 2017 grant round, Prof Lawn is now further investigating this difficult and heartbreaking issue.

Determined to develop programs and resources for those she describes as ‘invisible carers’ Prof Lawn and her team will interview a minimum of 20 partners of contemporary veterans and 20 partners of emergency service personnel as part of this research.

***“Partners of veterans and first responders who have Post-Traumatic Stress are largely invisible, especially as far as research goes. Although they haven’t had the direct traumatic experiences, there are still second-hand impacts for them personally,” Prof Lawn said.***

*“This particular project is about trying to help people understand the impact Post-Traumatic Stress has on partners and to recognise that they are in fact carers. Most people in that position do not link themselves with that term.”*

The face-to-face interviews with partners will be conducted using a qualitative design with in-depth semi-structured interviews. This is a combination of pre-determined questions with an opportunity for those being interviewed to talk about any unique experiences in their

lives as partners of loved ones suffering from this silent injury.

*“From analysing the data into themes, our goal is to capture the essence of the key areas of greatest importance and relevance to partners and also the most pertinent issues that most people experience when their loved one is battling Post-Traumatic Stress,” Prof Lawn explained.*

This grant has given Prof Lawn and her team the opportunity to explore possible types of support that will better understand what helps and also hinders a partner’s ability to provide support to their loved one experiencing this debilitating injury of service.

*“There is a lot of work being done for people suffering in silence and it’s time we broaden that spectrum and start developing resources and programs specifically designed to help partners through this difficult time. In order to do that, we first need to go to partners and ask them what is most important to them and what their day-to-day experience is when Post-Traumatic Stress becomes part of their lives,” Prof Lawn said.*



(L-R) Grant recipient Prof Lawn with Dr Anthony Venning and Ms Paula Redpath who are members of her research team for this project.

***“By developing resources and programs we will have the ability to share these findings and ideas to health professionals and give them an enhanced understanding of this heartbreaking problem and how they can deliver better help.”***

*“Thanks to this grant, I believe we can achieve great benefits and I am grateful to be given the opportunity from The Road Home to achieve this.”*

If you are a partner of someone living with Post-Traumatic Stress and are interested in being involved in this project please contact The Road Home on **(08) 7002 0880** or email **contactus@theroadhome.com.au**.

# Overcoming the Barriers of Help-Seeking for our Emergency Service Personnel



“This research project is a very practical one. It addresses a real-world concern in our community right now.”

**New research aiming to break down the barriers emergency service personnel face when seeking help for mental health conditions is now underway thanks to your support of our recent grant recipient, Dr Amy Baker, a specialist researcher in the field of mental health.**

This project focuses on emergency service personnel who have been exposed to traumatic incidents and can identify health concerns related to their work as first responders. Unfortunately, there are barriers yet to be understood as to why emergency service personnel are not seeking help.

Dr Baker is supported by her passionate team, including Professor Nicholas Procter, Chair: Mental Health Nursing at the University of South Australia, leader of the Mental Health and Substance Use Research Group, Sansom Institute for Health Research.

“Through this grant we hope to better understand the barriers and enablers for help-seeking. If we can understand these then hopefully we will be able to develop strategies that are practical, meaningful and more sustainable in the long term to help,” Dr Baker said.

There will be two phases of this project. In the first phase, Dr Baker is hoping to speak with at least 15 emergency service personnel, to better understand barriers and enablers for help-seeking from their perspective.

“We will be conducting one-to-one interviews and using an approach called participatory action research. This research approach emphasises the participation of emergency service personnel – those whose lives are

most affected by the issue,” Dr Baker said.

“The second phase is to work closely with those affected to design and trial some strategies that will hopefully address barriers to help-seeking that were identified in the first phase.

“We recognise there is increased risk of mental health concerns for first responders but there needs to be a lot more research into what the barriers are to seeking help and the things that enable help-seeking.



It's thanks to your ongoing support that vital research is underway to help our emergency service personnel.

“This research project is a very practical one. It addresses a real-world concern in our community right now. I am grateful to be given this opportunity through this grant to help those who may be suffering in silence and hopefully this research will lead to strategies which assist people to seek help earlier and in doing so, avoid mental health distress and enjoy a better life.”

# Living with a Silent Enemy for Over 40 Years



Vietnam veteran David Lynch's world came crashing down when he was diagnosed with delayed-onset Post-Traumatic Stress. Thanks to The Road Home's art therapy activities part of our new wellbeing program, he has found hope and a second chance at life. With your continuous support, we can continue to give people like David the same hope that they can overcome this silent injury.

Having spent two years in the Australian Defence Force, one year training and the second in Vietnam, David explained there was no debrief or communication on how to manage or deal with the effects of the trauma he would experience and live through each day.

Upon his return from war, like many others, David refused to discuss anything related to his time in Vietnam. He tried to block it from his memory like it never happened – until he found himself facing the greatest challenge of his life. David suffered a major and debilitating mental breakdown in early 2016 where he was then admitted to Ward 17 at the Repatriation General Hospital.

"The world as I knew it collapsed around me. It deeply impacted my wife and family and I was unable to face going to work. I had spent years battling with this silent injury, knowing that something was wrong but I spent my life hiding behind a false façade of 'I'm okay,'" David said.

**"It had taken 46 years of suppressing this silent enemy living deep within before it finally erupted and the damage exposed."**

Thanks to the support of The Road Home, David has found hope through art therapy and is a strong believer the program helps veterans suffering with Post-Traumatic Stress. He is an advocate for art therapy and is grateful it has given him the opportunity to take control of his life again.

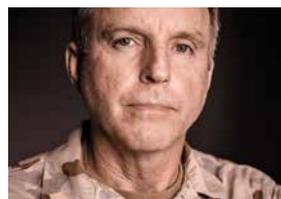
"I believe art therapy provides a strong platform for veterans suffering from this silent injury. To visualise and create by drawing your thoughts, feelings and emotions is an alternative and powerful way of expressing yourself," David explained.

"I find art therapy a time to reflect and demonstrate my true feelings and thoughts. I am very grateful that I have found a medium that allows myself to be open to self-discovery without fear of embarrassment or hiding my true thoughts and feelings, frightening as it may be. I have surprised myself with the final outcome; it has been a raw but honest and positive experience."

It is thanks to your support that veterans such as David can have a second chance at life. It is programs such as art therapy that can really impact not only veterans but emergency service personnel and give them hope they so desperately need.

**"I am now looking forward to living my life with my new skills. I have learnt to take control of my Post-Traumatic Stress, in place of it controlling me. It is not an easy road but with the help of The Repat Foundation – The Road Home I hope to live the remainder of my life as a better person."**

To find out more and support our art therapy program, now part of our new initiative, The Road Home Wellbeing Program, please contact Program Manager Fiona Dale, on **(08)7002 0880**.



**Thank You for Helping Pave The Road Home for People like John.**

*"Research is the only way we can really understand what's going on in our minds. It's the only way we can get the data to convince people to invest in further treatment and better strategies, and improved long-term outcomes will come from that."* – **Major-General John Cantwell (Retd) AO DSC**

John has been brave enough to share his story to help reduce the stigma of mental injuries and is now a proud Ambassador for The Repat Foundation – The Road Home.

**You may have read John's story in a recent letter we sent you. Thank you** for supporting people like John, who thanks to research can rebuild their lives and recover from their invisible wounds of service.

# Passion to Help People through Art – Meet Volunteer Christine Schloithe



With her 24-year-old grandson recently having travelled to Kandahar Province Afghanistan with 1 RAR Infantry, and generations of her family before her having been involved in the army, Christine is very passionate about the importance of these art classes for those struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress and physical illnesses.

**“That’s the beauty of these classes - we can talk with patients while they are with us. We are providing an added therapy where the patients can open up to us if they choose to and they also have the opportunity to be creative, to learn new skills or ignite old skills.”**

**Having a strong family connection to the armed services, Art Therapist Christine Schloithe knows how Post-Traumatic Stress can affect veterans both young and old and the important role art can play in healing. It’s for this reason she began volunteering her time to support artist Kaz Pedersen with weekly art classes held for patients of Ward 17 at the Repatriation General Hospital.**

Every Monday afternoon Christine helps Kaz and turns the Ward 17 western lounge kitchen into an art workshop where inpatients can escape from whatever is troubling them and simply focus on making art.

“Some veterans who are living with Post-Traumatic Stress don’t have the ability to describe what they are feeling, but the beauty of these art classes is they don’t have to talk about their problems,” Christine said.

**“It’s amazing that for two hours they don’t have to feel their body because they’re focused on the art they are making.”**

Christine says the classes work wonders to help patients let go, for a short period of time, the issues plaguing them.

“We’ve worked with water colour paintings, altered books, created objects with white clay and made paper to name a few. My job is to sit with the patients, to facilitate and to help them through as they make their own creation,” Christine said.

“We had a bright, sparky man who came to our class one week but the next week when he came back he was looking quite drained. He had bantered with us throughout the session, and over time he had relaxed into the art work. By the end of his session with us, his face was a healthier colour.”

“I’ve wanted to volunteer with the Repatriation General Hospital for a long time. My grandson’s time in Afghanistan in a capacity of Close Security has given me an understanding of how the younger ones feel when they return home from armed service,” Christine explained.

Loving her volunteering role, Christine is looking forward to the opportunities these art classes will continue to offer patients now and in the future who are living with Post-Traumatic Stress. This program can continue to be made possible possible thanks to your ongoing support – thank you.

## Remembrance Business Breakfast



**Save the date! 10 November 2017**

**Adelaide Convention Centre**

To register your interest for this event, please phone (08) 7002 0880 or email [events@theroadhome.com.au](mailto:events@theroadhome.com.au). Invites to follow soon.

# A Program of Wellbeing for our Heroes



**The Repat Foundation – The Road Home is proud to announce the formal establishment of The Road Home Wellbeing Program, a framework for delivery of wellbeing services to our veterans and emergency service personnel in need, as well as their families.**

This has only been possible with your kind support and you can feel so proud knowing you're making a difference to the daily lives of our nation's heroes.

Our new program is now supporting servicemen and women and their families' transition from service and or injury to the next stage of life through a peer support community and wellbeing activities.

The peer support program provides pathways for training and meaningful volunteering options, referrals to appropriate health and care agencies for injuries, adjunct therapies, rehabilitation and recovery programs, community engagement and life skills to support wellbeing.

This includes:

- Community and peer engagement, volunteering and mentoring opportunities and pathways
- Group programs and adjunct therapies including physical and art based activities
- Personal, training and career development – support and referrals
- One on one support coordination, information and direct referral to appropriate services
- Learning and research – trialling new projects and evaluating their impact
- Advocacy and community development – collaborating to improve models of care and wellbeing.

"Thanks to our supportive community of donors,

community and industry we are thrilled to have recently launched our new Wellbeing Program, built on the world-leading independent research carried out by The Repat Foundation – The Road Home," said Executive General Manager Karen May.

"Our new national brand, The Road Home, launched in 2015, is now strengthening our position as a leading national veterans' health and wellbeing research organisation, which now also supports crucial services for these people in need.

**"The Wellbeing Program provides past and current service members and their families with access to support and strategies to help them be as well as they can be, with no limits. In some cases it will mean improvement or recovery and in others it will mean growth and accomplishment and for everyone it provides hope and pride."**

## **Elite Cyclists Help Pave the Road Home**

We are delighted to announce three new Ambassadors who have officially joined our cause to support our new Wellbeing Program. Stuart O'Grady, Stephanie Morton and Caitlin Ward will be bringing their cycling achievements and experience into the limelight to help promote the program and improve the lives of veterans and emergency service personnel who are suffering.



(L-R) Ambassadors Stuart O'Grady, Stephanie Morton and Caitlin Ward.

# “Every Brick Counts”



**Passionate advocate for our veteran and emergency service personnel suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress, Professor Sandy McFarlane, Director of The University of Adelaide’s Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies (CTSS), is doing all he can to help those suffering from this silent injury.**

Internationally regarded as an expert in the field, Prof McFarlane has been researching this silent injury since the 1990s and understands the impact Post-Traumatic Stress has on our servicemen and women who carry their invisible wounds and suffer in silence.

With this experience, Prof McFarlane says there is a critical need for further research into the health and wellbeing of those who are first at the scene of the many traumas on home soil, such as the police, ambulance officers and firefighters.

“The psychological cost of working in the emergency service field is not appreciated by the community at large,” Prof McFarlane said.

“There is much misinformation surrounding Post-Traumatic Stress and the long term impact it has on these people. The problem is that past research has focused on what happens in the short term, not the cumulative impact, and it is critical to characterise how this progressive burden emerges.

**“Rather than these people getting better in time, they get worse. It’s our job as a community to protect these people and stop this from happening right from the beginning.”**

Post-Traumatic Stress not only impacts on the quality of life of our men and women in service, it also affects their families who also bear the costs. Prof McFarlane wants to help bring this issue more in the limelight.

“How do we get families to support their loved ones suffering in silence? This is a critical for an entire family’s long term outcome,” Prof McFarlane explained.



**“It is imperative vital research is conducted to better understand these types of issues and learn more about all aspects of Post-Traumatic Stress. It’s like building a building, every brick counts.”**

“To do this, we need good information and resources to be able to use it effectively. We do have an immense amount of data that is extremely beneficial to us, but we need the funds to be able to support the use of this to benefit our research and better the lives of our men and women suffering in silence.”

Prof McFarlane’s passion lies in not only supporting research, but speaking out for those in need.

“Being in this field, I know about the costs of people giving to the community and I carry a responsibility to do something with my knowledge and suffering I hear about. It’s one of the reasons why it’s a privilege to work towards helping veterans and emergency service personnel,” Prof McFarlane said.

“I know that what I am doing is making a difference to a group of people who are really the essence of what a reasonable and good society is.”

**Your kind support has made the research projects announced in this newsletter a reality and you can feel proud knowing the difference this will make to the health and wellbeing of our heroes. We can’t stop there. As Prof McFarlane explains, every brick on the road home will make a difference. Your ongoing support will enable us to fund more research to inform better health models for the people who serve to protect us. One way you can help continue to pave the road home for people in need is by becoming a monthly giver and having your donation taken out automatically each month, reducing our administration costs. To sign up to become a monthly giver, please return the enclosed coupon in the reply paid envelope or call our office on (08) 7002 0880.**

# 2017 ANZAC Commemorative Cocktail Evening

The annual ANZAC Commemorative Cocktail Evening was held on Friday, 21 April 2017 with over 150 guests in attendance. It was a wonderful night to commemorate our national day of remembrance and recognise those who fought for our freedom and remembering the sacrifices made by veterans and their families in times of war. The event also importantly helps raise vital funds to support their health and wellbeing.

We would like to thank everyone for attending and making this special evening a huge success. A special thanks goes to our patron, His Excellency the Honourable Hien Van Le AO, Governor of South Australia for his attendance.

The Cocktail Evening was a night to unite together and recognise and reflect the sacrifices made by so many of our men and women. We were also delighted to announce our recent 2017 grant funding announcement and three of our newest Ambassadors, Stuart O'Grady, Stephanie Morton and Caitlin Ward.

Guests were entertained by one of Adelaide's talented bands Wasabi, providing music for the night as guests enjoyed outstanding food and wine. Thank you once again for your attendance remembering and recognising the sacrifices of our nation's heroes and we look forward to seeing you once again at future events!



## In Memory

The Repat Foundation – The Road Home gratefully acknowledges donations in memory of:

- Raymond Buttery
- Daphne Perkins
- Robert Scott
- Kate Rhodes

## Patrons

His Excellency Hieu Van Le AO, Governor of SA  
Graham Cornes OAM

## Ambassadors

Dr Gill Hicks, MBE  
Major John Cantwell (Retd) AO DSCM  
Stuart O'Grady OAM  
Stephanie Morton OAM  
Caitlin Ward

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