

## MEDIA RELEASE

27 July 2021

The Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) today announced an exciting new partnership with the Mates 4 Mates program to deliver free legal advice sessions for Veterans and their families.

Mates 4 Mates was established in 2013 and is one of Australia's leading charities actively changing the lives of current and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members and their families impacted by service.

DCLS has been working with Mates 4 Mates to bring a new pilot program to Darwin after seeing a need for specialised legal assistance which will be called the Veterans Legal Service (VLS).

Rachael Bowker, Executive Director of DCLS, said she is very excited about the new collaboration of services and what it can offer local veterans in the Northern Territory community.

"There is a significant gap in the provision of free legal services for veterans and their families"

"We are pleased to be able to partner with Mates 4 Mates to close this gap and that we have the expertise within DCLS to be able to offer this service" Bowker said.

This program will benefit Territorians due to the large amount of service personnel and ex-service personnel who currently fall through the gaps when it comes to pro-bono legal services. Since its inception in 1991, DCLS has expanded its geographical coverage and the range of matters for which it provides assistance and is proud in their 30<sup>th</sup> year of operation to be expanding their scope of services to further support the community.

This program will be offered by members of the DCLS legal team who have a defence force background and a heightened understanding of the complexities that veterans and their families can face.

The Veterans Legal Service will initially operate on a walk-in basis out of the recently opened Mates 4 Mates office in Palmerston which is located at Unit 1A/11 Palmerston Circuit beginning Thursday 29 July 2021 from 10:00am.

Anyone wanting more information can freecall 1800 812 953 or email [info@dcls.org.au](mailto:info@dcls.org.au)