

MEDIA RELEASE

27 July 2022

RE: SUPPORT FOR NEW VETERAN-SUPPORT HUB IN DARWIN

Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) congratulates Mates4Mates on the expansion of their service from the Palmerston Interim Centre to a permanent address in Stuart Park.

DCLS applauds the effort to achieve this expansion of Mates4Mates to Stuart Park in Darwin, enabling a wider range of services to veterans.

DCLS also urges the federal government to forge ahead to enable the expansion of DCLS's existing free Veterans' Legal Service with Mates4Mates to increased operations at the new location, to benefit all in the NT.

DCLS' General Legal Service Solicitor and veteran, Matt Gardiner and DCLS CEO Rachael Bowker, have led the DCLS Veterans' Legal Service collaboration with Mates4Mates. This effort, now marking the first 12 months of operation, provides first point of contact legal assistance to serving members of the armed forces, veterans and their families. The service aims to be by veterans and for veterans and, subject to funding, will increase operations in the coming year.

Matt notes that, "The recent data released in the national Census show that both serving members and veterans make up a large portion of Territory residents. However, we also know that they have largely been forgotten when their service has ended. The current Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide is uncovering what has been happening. It tells us that there is still a lack of support services for those who have served their country. As a community lawyer and a veteran, I know what many of the consequences look like and that we can do so much better than this."

Ms Bowker further supports the need for community legal services to be part of the NT government funded central service hub for veterans. Rachael said: "As a former financial counsellor and as CEO of DCLS I know that veterans and their families are too often facing multiple sources of stress. I also know how much veterans are often there for other veterans. Our collaboration with Mates4Mates and veterans and their families in the NT, is to be useful and be available. We know that there is a lot of resourcefulness and resilience as well, and it's an honour to work with people who are not only helping themselves and their families but also helping other veterans and community members."

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DCLS contacts for media comment:

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Rachael Bowker – Executive Director

Matt Gardiner – Veterans’ Legal Service Solicitor

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Darwin Community Legal Service