

MEDIA RELEASE
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Solomon Islands Veteran Health Study Completed

A study into the health of Solomon Islands veterans has found no immediate ill effects from deployment, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, announced today.

"The Solomon Islands study is the first in a series looking at the health effects of deployment so that we can give our troops the best preparation and protection on operation, as well as providing evidence-based research to further improve the healthcare to members post-deployment," said Mr Snowdon.

"The study examined the physical, emotional and social effects of service in the Solomon Islands. In particular, it looked at mortality and cancer rates, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), general health and general lifestyle factors among Solomon Island veterans and non-veterans."

"Of course, it's early days yet. The follow-up time so far has been short and some health effects may not become evident for many years, so follow-up further into the future is vital."

"But the data showed no significant differences in health status between SI veterans and those servicemen and women who had not deployed."

Undertaken by the Centre for Military and Veterans' Health (CMVH) in Brisbane, the independent study involved a sample of 500 veterans who had deployed to the Solomon Islands as part of Operation ANODE between 24 July 2003 and 31 December 2005, and a matched comparison group of ADF members who had not deployed to Operation ANODE.

Data was collected through ADF health records, self-report questionnaires, the National Death Index and the National Cancer Statistics Clearing House.

This study is part of a larger deployment health program with health studies involving over 12,000 veterans of Timor-Leste and Bougainville nearing completion.

A study looking at the health effects of deployment to the Middle East Area of Operations is planned to begin in the next 12 months, and will follow troops prospectively as well as look at retrospective data.

"Australia's troops deserve the very best and I am dedicated to maintaining a fit and healthy Defence force before, during and after deployment," said Mr Snowdon.

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FOR BACKGROUND:

The CMVH is a consortium of The University of Queensland, University of Adelaide and Charles Darwin University, which is dedicated to innovatively seeking solutions to military and veterans' health issues through research, education, e-Health and public debate. The Centre has been commissioned by Defence to carry out the studies in the Deployment Health Study Program.

THE HON. WARREN SNOWDON MP
Minister for Defence Science and Personnel

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