

forging ahead

A SOLUTIONS FOCUSED SUBMISSION

2023/2024 Federal Government Pre-Budget Submission

We are committed to working collaboratively with government to help veterans and defence personnel to forge ahead after service.

PROUDLY SUBMITTED BY
GO2 Health Pty Ltd

JANUARY 2023



REFORGE
V E T E R A N C A R E



BUILDING COMMUNITY
Queensland State Winner 2022



27 January 2023

The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Treasurer,

Re: Australian defence and veteran suicide crisis

Thank you to the Federal Government for the opportunity to provide information and recommendations for the 2023-2024 Federal Government Budget.

As Australia's largest veteran medical and allied health clinic, we are uniquely placed to provide insight, evidence and recommendations to the Government. It is now critical to act and deal with the veteran and defence suicide crisis, alongside the Royal Commission.

We recognise this current Government is a government of action and we commend the Federal Government's action upon the Royal Commission's interim report findings. Critically, the 2022-2023 federal budget commitment to investing \$233.9 million over 4 years to recruit 500 additional staff to speed up compensation claims processing.

Further we commend the Government's commitment to practical support to improve the welfare of veterans through an additional \$46.7 million of funding for 10 x Veterans' and Families' Hubs across Australia.

Our recommendations provide insight into how these planned hubs can be positioned for sustainability, success and primed for optimal outcomes through the prioritisation of community-minded medicine. This must include specialised medical environments working collaboratively with other service providers, evidence says prioritising the medicine leads to sustainable outcomes

With these recommendations, we urge the Federal Government to strongly consider this submission as a solution to address the veteran and defence suicide risk. Taking action now will result in an empowered generation of current and transitioning ex service people as they become assets to Australia.

It is our intention to provide a balanced view and solutions focussed submission to support the Federal Government and the Australian economy and the entire defence ecosystem.

We strongly urge the Government to consider these recommendations for the 2023-2024 federal budget.

In good health -

Dr Kieran McCarthy
Co-owner + Medical Director
General Practitioner + Ex-Military

Roderick Martin
Co-owner + Managing Director
Acupuncturist + 6th Dan Karate Master

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“Our recommendations provide a proven and positive way forward for veterans and their families.”

Dr Kieran McCarthy
CMO GO2 Health

summary of recommendations

We acknowledge the complex challenges faced by the Federal Government, DVA and ESOs in working together to solve the defence and veteran suicide crisis. Working collaboratively to build a consortium, our solution is forward facing to address the problem. We recommend three initiatives that will rapidly address the Government and Department of Veteran’s Affairs challenges, in a cost-avoidant, proactive and impactful way.

01

Fund practitioners FOR VETERAN ACCESS

DVA is WorkCover for veterans

Review and uplift of DVA schedule to ensure alignment of healthcare provision in line with WorkCover rates.

In accordance with the adoption of QLD National Health Law, QLD WorkCover rates should be adopted Australia wide as a standard.

02

Fund specialised medical clinics TREATING VETERANS

Medical support is critical for veterans

Fund specialised medical environments supporting veterans appropriately for service delivery through a Practice Management Payment.

This recommendation needs to be sustained by 3 critical acknowledgements & initiatives, explored further in this report.

03

Fund independent research for VETERAN OUTCOMES

Research is vital for veteran outcomes

Targeted access to funding for qualified third-party research partners to research benchmarks and outcomes of specialised medical environments. This supports the government initiative of evidence-based programs and optimisation of veteran medical support services.

DVA is WorkCover for veterans

Practitioners must be remunerated at the equivalent of WorkCover Queensland rates.

01 RECOMMENDATION

Fund practitioners FOR VETERAN ACCESS

Action

Review and uplift of DVA schedule to ensure alignment of healthcare provision in line with WorkCover rates. In accordance with the adoption of QLD National Health Law, QLD WorkCover rates should be adopted Australia-wide as a standard.

Context

DVA compensation and support services available to veterans suffering mental, physical, and moral injury post-service are designed to act as 'WorkCover' for veterans, yet the DVA schedule of healthcare is significantly lower than compared WorkCover rates. This, effectively, creates discrimination.

Our research (and billing) demonstrates an average loss of 35% by practitioners in general practice, physiotherapy, exercise physiology and psychology services under the DVA schedule.

This disparity creates a number of complex challenges for veterans including access to quality health. It also compromises practitioners, clinics and healthcare providers, as result which is only magnified against the inefficiencies of the Medicare system currently under review by the Australian Federal Government.

Veterans represent a potentially vulnerable population. Acting quickly will result in these high performing assets becoming a significant benefit to the Australian economy, rather than a drain.

Challenges

ACCESS & DISCRIMINATION CRISIS

An unintended yet critical consequence of this disparity is the discrimination faced by veterans seeking medical, psychological, and physical support. Medical and Allied health practitioners are forced to close their books to DVA in favour of other private, WorkCover or NDIS funded patients who can be billed at current market rates and who do not require the level of compliance and reporting. Health practitioners, simply cannot work in this space and DVA refusal is at an all time high.

GO2 health recently contacted every psychiatry and psychology provider in South East Queensland, asking to confirm if they are currently accepting referrals for veterans. For privacy and ethical reasons, we are unable to disclose the details of these findings, but our results indicate that only 25% of practitioners available in SE Queensland are currently accepting veteran referrals with most of these having a wait list of months.

The access crisis is only heightened in regional, rural, and remote areas with the latest ABS data citing 45% of veterans living in regional, rural or remote areas, where access to services are further limited.

RETENTION OF TALENT

With the access crisis, the under payment of practitioner billing rates under the current DVA schedule creates issues around attracting and retaining qualified practitioners. With reduced availability to treat veterans, there is increased risk and unnecessary burden on already stretched and under resourced medical practices, clinics and specialised medical environments.

An organisation nominating to support veterans is underfunded and unnecessarily put at risk financially and from an outcome perspective.

Benefits

Every veteran deserves the same level of care and support as civilians who are injured or become ill as a result of their employment.

Veterans who have served their country and have been injured or become ill, as a result of their military service, should have access to the same level of medical care and support as civilians.

By uplifting the DVA schedule on par with a more realistic market rate such as WorkCover, Government would ensure that veterans have access to timely and high-quality care. Practitioners would be able to specialise the care, for better outcomes.

Further, lifting the fees to a market competitive rate (private or WorkCover) would ensure that veterans have access to the same range of services and support as civilians, including medical treatment and rehabilitation, mental health services, and support for veterans with disabilities.

Summary

Timely access to safe and quality healthcare is vital and the right of every Australian, those who fought for and defended our country deserve the same level of care, access and support as civilians.

DVA rates need to be equal to QLD WorkCover rates to immediately resolve the access crisis. This eliminates the unintended consequence of veteran discrimination; ensuring veterans have timely access to safe and quality healthcare whilst reducing the impact on veterans in regional, rural, and remote areas, who are at a higher risk.

01 RECOMMENDATION EXHIBITS

WORKCOVER DEFINITION

Workers' compensation (also known as WorkCover) is a system designed to provide financial and medical support to employees who are injured or ill as a result of their employment.

Employers are typically required by law to have workers' compensation insurance, which pays out benefits to employees who make a claim.

Benefits can include medical expenses, lost wages, and compensation for permanent disability or death.

The specific details of how WorkCover works can vary depending on the jurisdiction and the specific laws in place.

WORKCOVER RATES

We acknowledge WorkCover is the workers compensation and insurance guarantee available in Queensland, and that workers compensation governing bodies and rates will vary state by state.

As we are a Queensland based clinic, servicing over 5,000 contemporary veterans in Queensland, we have used WorkCover rates for the purpose of demonstrating the incongruence of rates for this submission. It is our recommendation that the disparity be adjusted to equal or higher rates of WorkCover Queensland.

billing matrix COMPARISON

GO2 HEALTH, MBS WORKCOVER QUEENSLAND, AND DVA RATES

	GENERAL PRACTICE Std. Consult	GENERAL PRACTICE Extend. Consult	PHYSIOTHERAPY Initial consult	PHYSIOTHERAPY Subsq. consult	PHYSIOTHERAPY Group exercise (pp)	EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY Initial Consult	EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY Subsq. Consult	PSYCHOLOGY CLINICAL Std. Consult	PSYCHOLOGY GENERAL Std. Consult
GO2 Health Rate	\$84.00	\$131.00	\$110.00	\$100.00	\$42.00	\$142.00	\$93.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Medicare Rebate	\$39.75	\$76.95	\$56.00	\$56.00	-	\$56.00	\$56.00	\$131.65	\$89.65
Gap	\$44.25	\$54.05	\$54.00	\$44.00	-	\$54.00	\$37.00	\$118.35	\$160.35

WorkCover	Item No.	23	36	100021	100006	100106	300186	300187	400088	400088
Workcover rate		\$86.00	\$158.00	\$117.00	\$88.00	\$50.00	\$197.00	\$98.50	\$208.00	\$208.00
GST status		GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	Not included in fee	Not included in fee	GST-free	GST-free

DVA	Item No.	23	36	PH10	PH20	PH50	EP10	EP11	US04	US14
DVA rate		\$45.75	\$88.50	\$67.95	\$67.95	\$30.35	\$67.95	\$67.95	\$217.30	\$148.00
VAP		\$7.75	\$7.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		\$53.50	\$96.25	\$67.95	\$67.95	\$30.35	\$67.95	\$67.95	\$217.30	\$148.00
GST status		GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	GST-free	Taxable	Taxable	GST-free	GST-free

Disparity	Disparity (\$) (Workcover v DVA)	\$40.25	\$69.50	\$49.05	\$20.05	\$19.65	\$129.05	\$30.55	+ \$9.30	\$60.00
	Disparity (%) (Workcover v DVA)	-47%	-44%	-42%	-23%	-39%	-66%	-31%	+4%	-29%

average disparity of

-35%

for medical treatment of veterans



Medical support is critical for veterans

Practices must be financially supported to deliver programs and effective care (PIP payment)

02 RECOMMENDATION

Fund specialised medical environments

TREATING VETERANS

Action

Fund specialised medical environments appropriately for service delivery through a practice management payment.

This recommendation needs to be sustained by 3 supportive initiatives:

1. Recognising the critical nature of prioritising medicine for effective veteran transition, with utilisation and optimisation of already government and publicly funded support services (ESOs and NGOs)

By prioritising medicine first, getting veterans physically and mentally well, we build access to all other services optimally as they were intended.

2. DVA to acknowledge the critical nature of medicine and allied health for veteran wellbeing, incorporating medical and allied health services under essential criteria for Veteran Wellbeing Hubs.

Currently medical and allied health falls under 'desirable' not 'essential' selection criteria for the governance of selection and funding for Veteran Wellbeing Hubs. The mental health crisis for veterans needs the support of experts and these people must be critical to function for good outcomes.

3. Federal Government to support the facilitation of these specialised medical environments adjacent and in proximity to Veteran Wellbeing Hubs with a Practice Management Payment.

As represented in the Forging ahead solution, an indexed fee in excess of \$2500 per veteran per year, paid to the service provider, builds a plan of action and supports evidence based outcomes.

Rehab provider payments – this is the approval process, payment is only available to those who can provide an end to end solution who can reengage them with community, work, education. This payment does not include medical work but rather relies on the transactional relationship of an underfunded industry.

Direct Government support must be extended to the medical process for Veterans including specialised medical and allied health centres. Payments to the centres would support the facilitation of programs and essential services whilst creating the ongoing accountability measures.

Similar to a practice incentive payment (PIP), specifically for DVA and veteran specialised environments, the payment would contribute to the practice directly to provide the ongoing support mechanisms and advocacy necessary, on an individualised basis. This leads to measurable outcomes and gives an evidence based approach to the overall wellness program. Centres must be supported to build the medical programs and outcomes necessary for veteran wellbeing and re engagement.

Context

SPECIALISED MEDICAL ENVIRONMENTS FOR VETERANS

The Forging Ahead solution presented to the Royal Commission in 2022 is a proactive initiative with inclusivity at its foundation. GO2 Health's specialised veteran centres provide medical management and seamlessly integrate with all ESOs and NGOs and partners in an inclusive process, systemising and creating measured outcomes.

By taking a strengths-based approach, private and public enterprise can come together collaboratively to assist veterans and their families without the requirement of additional funding.

The solution is about the reallocation of funds for targeted and specialised medical care and integrating services on an individual needs basis to reduce waste, minimise duplication of effort, and maximise outcomes.

Through prioritising medical management first, the veteran is healthy and better placed to access these ESO support services available to their full capacity, as they were intended, creating better outcomes for all.

VETERAN WELLBEING HUBS

In the previous Federal Budget, Government committed to practical support to improve the welfare of veterans through an additional \$46.7 million for 10 new Veterans' and Families' Hubs across Australia (in addition to the already funded 6 x veteran wellbeing centres).

The facilities available through this government commitment will provide for 16 veteran wellbeing hubs nationally for veterans and their families to access support services. However, under the current governance framework, medical and allied health services fall under a 'desirable' category and not an 'essential' one for inclusion.

Our recommendations provide insight into how these planned hubs can be supported for sustainable success and primed for optimal outcomes.

02 RECOMMENDATION CONTINUED

Challenges (cont.)

FORCE 1: DVA RATE SCHEDULE DISPARITY

As already highlighted in recommendation 1, the current DVA rate creates a sustainability issue and the unintended veteran access, and discrimination crisis.

FORCE 2: GAP PAYMENTS AND DVA PATIENTS

Under the current DVA legislation, General Practitioners, Practice Nurses and other primary healthcare providers are unable to charge veterans a gap fee[^]. With DVA rates an average 35% less than comparable private and WorkCover rates, centres are forced to limit access for veterans and limit the service offering.

Although DVA rates currently sit at 115% of the Medicare bulk billing rate, medical centres are moving away from bulk billing. Without bridging the gap between bulk billing and private rates, centres are unable to service DVA patients.

FORCE 3: MEDICARE REFORM

With the Medicare reform, currently under review by Federal Government, Health Minister Mark Butler announced "Too many Australians simply can't get the care that they need," stating that gap fees for GP appointments had "skyrocketed" in recent years and patients were now paying more out of pocket than what the Medicare rebate offered.

These three forces, together have created immense pressure on specialised veteran medical environments. The model of care is, simply, unsustainable and vulnerable Australians are at risk.

Medical centres who specialise in veteran care to provide the necessary, highly specialised community minded medicine, are at an even greater risk of being forced to close their services to veterans; unable to absorb the costs on behalf of Government.

Benefits

PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

Early intervention and preventative care is well documented as highly cost effective, especially when accessible, affordable, and delivered closer to home.

There is a critical need across Primary Care and Mental Health services, as highlighted in marginalised and vulnerable groups including Veterans, Aged Care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and those in Rural and Remote areas.

Preventative medicine delivered in a community based specialised medical environment will lead to better and sustainable outcomes immediately and longer term for veterans, their families, the communities they live and work in and the economy. It creates a proactive and sustainable, world leading solution.

Summary

Preventative medicine delivered in specialised medical environments for veterans can create sustainable short- and long-term outcomes for veterans, their families, our communities, and the economy.

In order for these specialised environments to exist they need to be supported by a significant practice management payment, no different to a rehab provider payment or a practice incentive payment (PIP) currently funded by Government.

Through prioritising medical management first, the veteran is better placed to access these ESO support services available to their full capacity, as they were intended, creating better outcomes for all.



This page is an amended excerpt from our 2022 Royal Commission submission. Some inclusions have been updated for currency of information available.

GO2 Health's solution creates valuable outcomes for all stakeholders. The key benefits include:



Lowering long-term cost on government, economy and society through early intervention practices. By front-loading treatment at time of transition, we can reduce spend and drain over-time;



Provide demonstrated health & lifestyle outcomes for veterans and their families;



Centralised and managed care to effectively create outcomes and monitor the experience of the veteran;



Cohesive integration of ESO and NGO organisations ensuring existing funding is accessed appropriately and correctly by veterans when they need it;



Creates jobs and meaningful opportunities for employment and community nationally;



Provides an end-to-end solution for ADF by creating appealing proposition in attracting and retaining talent of ADF members, knowing they have an effective model of care and support available to them beyond their Defence careers.

By forging ahead with inclusive veteran support that prioritises medical management *first*, we can REFORGE direction for the entire ADF and veteran community.



up to **sixteen**

specialised medical centres in every state and territory across Australia

- ACT
- NSW
- NT
- QLD
- SA
- TAS
- VIC
- WA

Locations would be adjacent and in proximity to Veteran Wellbeing Hubs for sustainability of centres and access for veterans.

integrated medical care for

24,000+ contemporary veterans and their families

18 month

transition journey for ADF members
6 months pre-transition + 12 months post



The six key needs for veteran community & stakeholders

our GO2 Health recommendation addresses

1. **Reducing** veteran suicide & risk
2. **Effective** medical model
3. **Trust** and family support
4. **Centralised care** ESO & NGO integration
5. **Benefits** to Defence ecosystem & ADF lifecycle
6. **Viable** triple p solution

\$3,000

cost per veteran + their families

OR

\$4,500

cost per transition

* Original figures cited in our "Forging Ahead" Royal Commission April 2022 submission have been adjusted to consider inflation.

Research is vital for veteran outcomes

Programs delivered must be evidence-based and accountable. Funding must be available for private organisations to assess outcomes.

03 RECOMMENDATION

Fund independent research for

VETERAN OUTCOMES

Action

Targeted access to funding for qualified third-party research partners to research benchmarks and outcomes of specialised medical environments. This supports the government initiative of evidence-based programs and optimisation of veteran medical support services.

Context

As Australia's largest veteran care clinic, with a broad range of medical, specialist, allied and complementary medicine modalities under one roof, GO2 Health and REFORGE veteran care are well placed to develop innovative and cutting-edge medical care programs.

GO2 Health created Australia's original veteran-specific pain program; an intensive, multi-modality education and intervention program founded on an evidence-based, empathetic approach to pain program.

Our Reforge veteran care runs high performance programs (HPP), specifically for veterans to get back to optimal function, post military service. Ex-military personnel were once a high performing asset to our country, they should be once again in their civilian lives.

Our programs use an interdisciplinary, evidence-based, approach to education, optimal function and physical movement designed to get veterans performing back at their best.

The GO2 Health team comprises 70 staff and contractors including General Practice, specialists, physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, psychologists and a full team of allied and complementary medicine practitioners for optimum performance.

We are committed to working closely with DVA to redesign the current Coordinated Veteran Care (CVC) health paradigm to meet the current health needs of the contemporary veteran. In order to effectively redesign the CVC healthcare paradigm and scale programs for current and future demand, meaningful research funding is required.

Challenges

Organisations in private industry have a high level of accountability and efficiency around deliverables and outcomes and are held to a high standard. However, the current funding available within the DVA mechanism is focused on ESOs which leads to the exclusion of private organisations attaining funding for research purposes. In addition, with our high level workflow and output, the ongoing pressures facing private medical practices and primary care facilities drive a very lean business process, there is no capacity to self-fund research outcomes.

To maintain ethical standards, research conducted must be through an independent third-party qualified research partner. Partnership with organisations such as ACU and Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation will lead better outcomes. With a current, active, database of over 5,000 contemporary veterans, we can provide the environment to be researched, but we cannot conduct the research itself.

Benefits

Veteran based programs and medicine must be evidenced based. Australia has a responsibility to lead the field with research, evaluation and program delivery. Additionally, the inclusion of emerging therapies needs constant scrutiny. We have the opportunity to lead the world in evidenced-based outcomes for ex-service

personnel, the funding must be made accessible to test the outcomes of funded, specialised environments. DVA is already a market leader in the support of veterans, we now need to become the leader in measuring the outcomes of interventions.

GO2 Health, as a private organisation has a responsibility to constantly to test the efficacy of our programs. Both qualitative and quantitative studies must be conducted to demonstrate the outcomes are sustainable and provide solutions for the veteran cohort and the Government.

High level research leads to better programs and deliverable outcomes, good management builds these individuals to be effective members of the community. This relies on independent third-party research partners to demonstrate the efficacy of these services for accessibility and scale.

Summary

GO2 Health currently serves over 5,000 contemporary veterans. Research funding is critical to demonstrate efficacy and outcomes of our programs, to continue conversations around commitment with Government, and to continue to honour our commitment to our veterans.



About GO2 Health

GO2 Health is a private-billing medical and allied health practice in Everton Park, Queensland.

With over 50 practitioners and 12 different medical and allied health modalities, GO2 Health integrates your healthcare journey under one roof. It's your health, your way.

We are proudly one of the largest veteran care medical providers in the country and in 2022 were awarded a Telstra Business Award for Building Community in Queensland.

Our holistic approach to medical care relies on our expanding integrated modalities and community partners.



General practice



Nursing services



Medical specialists



Psychology



Physiotherapy



Acupuncture + Chinese medicine



Clinical reformer pilates



Hydrotherapy



Dietetics + nutrition



Exercise physiology



Remedial massage



Skin cancer clinic

a little bit
about
GO2 Health

50+
health practitioners

established in
2009



General practice



Medical specialists



Allied health

14,000+
patients treated

over 12
modalities
available in
clinic

one of Australia's largest
veteran care medical practices

5,000+
contemporary veteran patients



In comparison to the average Australian GP who treats 2 - 8 veterans. Source: Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA).

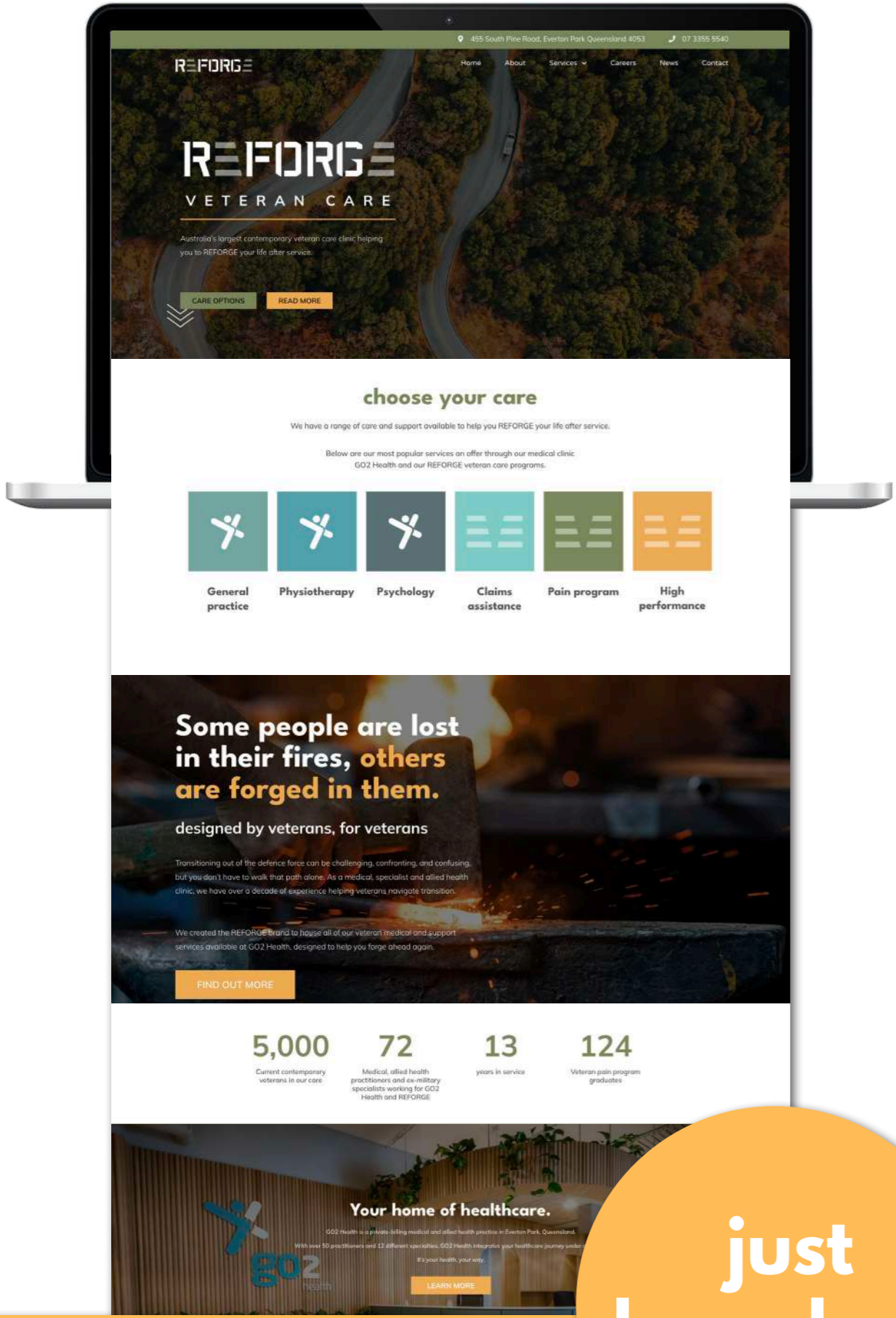
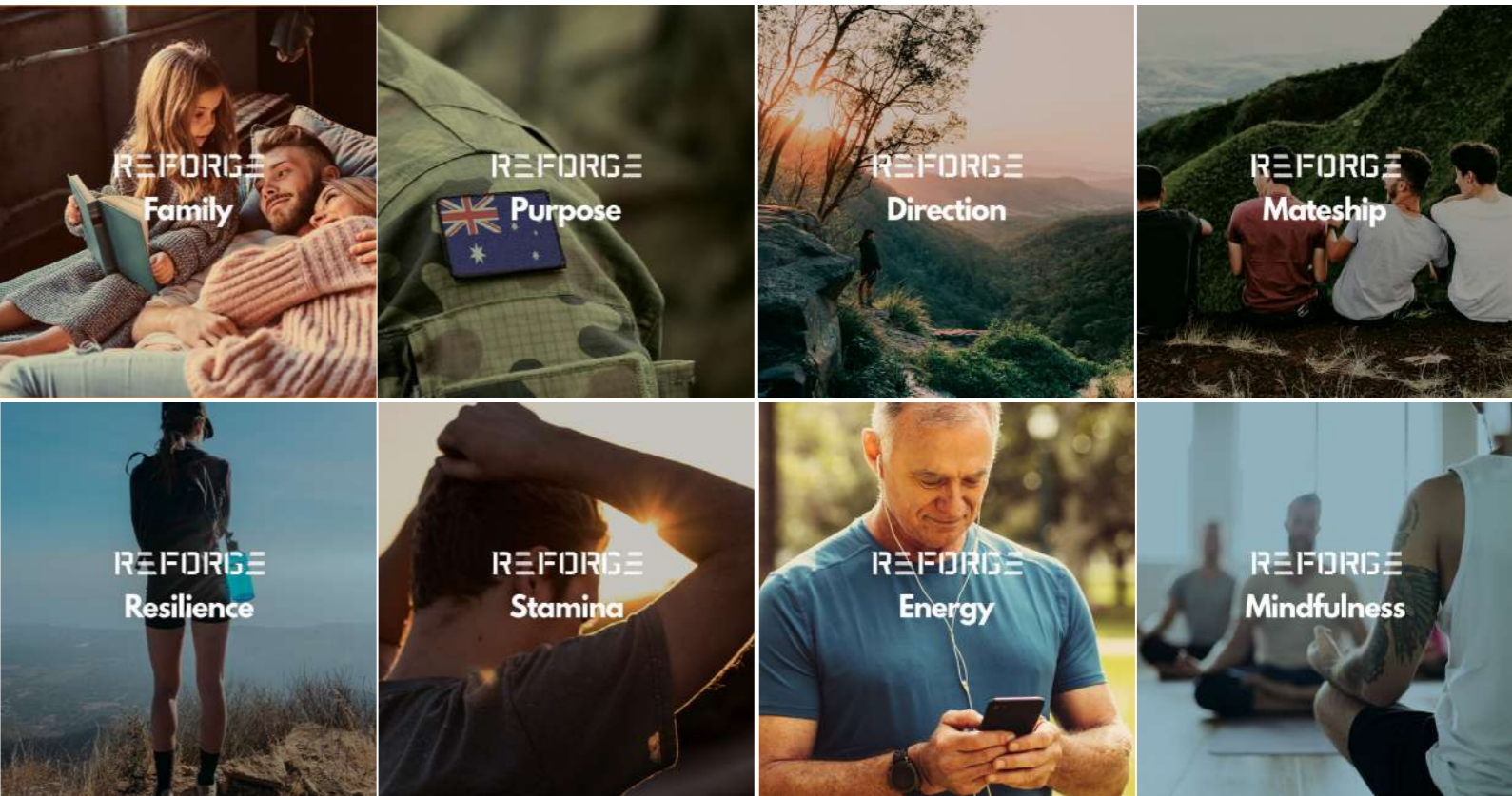
REFORGE

VETERAN CARE

REFORGE veteran care is an initiative of GO2 Health, Australia's largest veteran medical and allied health care clinic based in Brisbane, Queensland, just down the road from the Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera.

REFORGE was created to act as an umbrella encompassing all of the veteran care and support services available at GO2 Health. REFORGE is driven by the multidisciplinary commitment to improving outcomes for contemporary ex-military service men, women and families. It recognises and supports their unique physical, mental and emotional health needs as they transition back into civilian life.

REFORGE veteran care is on a mission to break down the 'broken veteran' stigma and improve the health outcomes and quality of life in practical ways. Veteran care under REFORGE is designed to create a movement of REFORGING veterans' identities, their place in the community, their relationships, work life, connections, and resilience, while reclaiming their freedom and personal power to live a full, active and empowered life.



just launched!

reforge.com.au

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We are committed to working collaboratively with government to help veterans and defence personnel to forge ahead after service.

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REFORGE
V E T E R A N C A R E