



VET FRIENDLY CLUB PROGRAM

The Program helping sporting clubs and veterans to join forces.

Veterans receive the support, welcome and encouragement they deserve to assist with deepening relationships into their local community via their chosen sport.

Clubs receive new and valuable assets, be they players, coaches, administrators, ideas or members.

Both commit. Both benefit.

Developed by Rugby 1st Limited (not-for-profit) in support of Veteran Sport Australia (VSA), the Vet Friendly Club program engages, accredits and connects sporting clubs with a desire to support and encourage involvement in their club community, with current and former serving Veterans of the Australian Defence Force. The program has launched with Rugby Clubs in NSW to provide Rugby as a means of recreation and rehabilitation for Veterans and will be expanded to QLD, ACT and other States in 2020, with the intention for it to be national in 2021.

The VFC program introduces Veterans to participating Rugby Clubs who have been accepted into the program based on 5 criteria – Culture, Community, Compassion, Capability and Commitment. The Clubs are required to register their interest and complete the Club Profile confirming statistical and administration information and by appointing a VFC Liaison Officer, who will ensure that newly arrived Vets are introduced and integrated into Club life. There are already 10 Rugby Clubs supporting the VFC program and more being engaged all the time. The initial Club roster is mainly in the Sydney area, but the Club network will expand to where the Vets require support. The program is free for both Clubs and Vets to register and participate.

The Important Contribution of the RSL sub-Branches to the VFC program

It is vital that the RSL sub-Branches establish and maintain links with the local Rugby Clubs participating in the VFC program. Once a connection has been made, the concept provides that the Club-Veteran relationship remains largely one-to-one, but the sub-Branches are uniquely positioned to help in monitoring the process and ensuring its success.

Sub-branches can make a significant impact by assisting with the integration process where needed and offering guidance as the Vets and Clubs negotiate their relationship, ensuring that the Vets are being accepted into Club community. This could also involve determining that participating Vets are receiving all their eligible entitlements.

It is anticipated that many Vets will be fully fit and able to take part in both the physical and social aspects of Club life, but we need to be mindful of those Vets who may be referred to the program, or register of their own initiative, who are suffering mental or physical damage from their service. While we are grateful to the Rugby Clubs for their participation, we cannot treat them as rehabilitation clinics for the unfit. Rugby 1st and the VFC program need the participation and feedback of the sub-Branches to assist in monitoring such cases and applying appropriate solutions.

Rugby 1st is currently developing the dedicated VFC website where sub-Branches will have the opportunity to provide their contact information for both Clubs and Vets. Sub-Branches will also be provided with the contact information for Vets who register within their area and approve contact. We urge all sub-Branches to participate in this important initiative. We need to be here to help to support and assist in facilitating the journey of these relationships that welcome our Australian Veterans and the wealth of knowledge, commitment and courage inherent in their nature, back into our communities, to reinforce the bonds of loyalty, camaraderie and tribalism at play.

The VFC program aims to deliver measured results via a circular feedback process and foster enduring relationships.

Connection – Purpose – Family – Community – Relaxation – Enjoyment – Camaraderie – Commitment