



PROGRAM REPORT

TIMOR AWAKENING 24

16 - 21 JUNE 2023



Participant comments

“VCA TA24 has helped with my journey to wellness, it is a unique program that should be available into the future for all veterans, and I would like to contribute in any way that I can.”

“I really enjoyed Circle time, the ability to get together as a group and plan the future structure of VCA, breathing, methods to relax, reset, tested in cold ice baths, the team activities from walks, volleyball, to cooking and eating, conversations and laughing.”

“Welcoming families was a wonderful inclusion. Veteran’s kids are rarely included, and this gives them greater insight into parent’s participation and an excellent opportunity for family connection”

“I want to be able to get healthy, get other participants healthy and transform the veteran program to wellness for us all.”

“Thank you for welcoming me and my family. Words are hard to find to express the benefit I personally get by being surrounded by this group.”

“I’m inspired by the amazing team that have all focused on improving the physical and mental well-being of veterans.”

Veterans Care Association Inc

Holistic Care of Body Mind & Soul for Veterans, Families & Carers
Reg. Charity No: CH2629 | ABN: 97 213 464 172



“Families are primary to achieving our mission. They are affected as much as veterans by association with military experience and need to be included.”

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW

Over the period Jan to Nov 2023, five Timor Awakening programs are to be delivered. Timor Awakening has the objective of “raising the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families”, involving a wide range of educational inputs, reflective experiences, individual peer mentoring and culminate in the development of a wellbeing plan.

Many challenges continue to face those working in the veteran space, as we await results of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. Compassion fatigue and burnout is evident throughout those frontline carers in this space. We at VCA and other service organizations continue to deliver programs to the extent of our capacity and continue to be fully subscribed with needy applicants.

TA24 was a program focused on care for the carer, providing after-care, team building, group therapy and a range of activities for a large group of veterans supporting other veterans as facilitators, peer supporters, administrators of Timor Awakening programs. Veterans were invited to bring partners and families. Activities on TA24 included governance presentations by Mr Bob Aley, Timor Awakening overview by Program Director Michael Stone, daily group physical fitness activities, mindfulness and meditation, journaling, yoga, breathwork, cold water immersion, workshop review of Timor Awakening processes, SWOT analysis, development of priority task lists, daily group therapy, volunteer gardening, and a family bowling activity.

The group were provided with education regarding development of the charity the team was split into groups to conduct a detailed review of all processes from organisational level down to the practical processes and mechanisms of Timor Awakening and wider functions of Veterans Care Association.

This program was delivered at St Georges Defence Suites Rainbow Bay, with a focus on peer supporters’ development, program development and team building, as well as completing health and wellbeing education and experiences and sharing of inspirations.

Three facilitators and 23 participants completed the full program along with seven partners, one carer and 14 children, who participated in parts of the program. 3 visitors also participated.

We acknowledge the frontline Team of Program Director Mick Stone, Program Manager Mick Lay and Padre Gary Stone, who put this program together, along with many others who assisted in various ways.

The words of participants validate that we are on target in achieving our mission.

TA Remaining Programs planned for 2023:

TA25, INTERFET Anniversary Program, 16th - 27th September 2023, Timor-Leste.

VCA Retreat, 15th – 21st November 2023, St Georges Defence Holiday Suites, Gold Coast.



Section Two - TA24 Participant Evaluation

1. What are the aspects of the program that were the most impactful?

- Bobs brief
- I thought Dan's monologue was fantastic.
- Analysing the way forward: breathwork and ice baths
- I thought that Bob's brief was on point; I really liked Dan's monologue.
- Bob's brief was very informative; family fun day.
- Yoga, breathwork, gardening, and circle time were the most impactful.
- Being together as a group to discuss and improve the program.
- The demo of cold/ice water was fantastic. Well done Scott and Darryl. Great prep for ice baths good safety brief.
- The ability to relax and take in the program instead of cleaning up and preparing morning tea and lunch/dinner was lovely.
- Coming together for circle time, brainstorming, gardening and Dan's monologue.
- The yoga, the working groups, and Bob's presentation.
- Being part of such a great group of people was very impactful.
- The small groups that were committed to brainstorming certain topics and then presenting about the key aspects were well put together.
- Being able to come together with the tribe and witnessing the power of the incredible minds and energy of the group.
- Engaging in circle time
- Being together to assist in reviewing VCA's organisation structure, programs and opportunities was timely and important. I learned a lot from the different perspectives and expertise of the groups. Bobs presentation on committee board structures was very interesting.
- Camaraderie and group cycle time
- Group planning exercises to review VCA programs and circle time.
- The team collaboration to improve the way VCA operates.
- Bonding with fellow members and listening to various inputs. I am grateful that the group could demonstrate veteran support at Freemans Veteran farm.



2. Where we to run a similar program annually, what would be of most importance?

- Refreshing of laws and regulations.
- Any subject that promoted the way forward.
- Professional development and After Action Review AAR.
- Include SWOT analysis with key individuals only; delete additional non-essential people.
- To continue the group brainstorming.
- Keeping the structure to improve and align with the veteran community and how best to support our participants by constantly regulating and improving.
- Including those who have been missed out on the program this time, showcasing the inclusive approach that is a characteristic of our program.
- The shared experiences, group work, collaboration of ideas/thoughts/experiences.
- Being able to focus on task, brainstorming and care.
- Family inclusions, self-care, ice baths, PT, volleyball, breathwork.
- Family involvement and additional things like ASSIST will be good.
- What has been proposed during this TA has begun to be put into practice.
- Maybe more structured work time in subgroups to assist in developing and problem-solving areas that need work.
- Keeping it well organised to minimise stress and learning ways to recenter income down. The Veteran's garden was an amazing activity, and being part of something that will grow.
- Group discussions and opportunities to 'play' and socialise are some of the most important, along with camaraderie. It is what keeps us coming back. I enjoyed the opportunity to bring out some different strengths, especially in organisational and corporate areas where I felt I had more to offer than other areas.
- I enjoyed the entire program and could not single out any specific aspect.
- The mix of social time with wellness exercises and group discussions, bringing together veterans with diverse backgrounds and skills.
- Mentor development and group activities.
- Defining roles and responsibilities to set up an efficient VCA structure. Yoga with Hugh was a much-needed activity.



3. How did you feel about having family members present during the program?

- I thought it was really good as it allowed more staff to attend.
- I had no problem at all.
- Having family there, I felt it was key to the involvement of all parties.
- I loved seeing and interacting with all the families.
- It was really positive for this type of program, but not for the complete program.
- It was excellent and gave a great sense of community.
- It was excellent.
- I loved it. It was very important for myself and my family.
- The arrangements and tasks set for the program, along with the efforts of Saint George and VCA, were fantastic.
- It was extremely powerful to share the experience with the family.
- It was absolutely excellent. The family really appreciated the opportunity to be involved in a small way. Please sustain this.
- It was an excellent component.
- It was great. During circle time, we often refer to how important our families are, and it was nice to include them and meet other people's families. Having the families there for dinner and family bowling was lots of fun.
- Personally, I didn't have any family there, but I think it is a great idea.
- It is a beneficial and important part of the program to share the journey to wellness with my family, ensuring that we are on a journey together.
- It is great to involve partners and their families. It brings joy, and it is great for the veterans to involve their families.
- Excellent. Families are primary to achieving our mission. They are affected as much as veterans by association with military experience and need to be included.



4. What motivates you to support Veterans Care Association?

- The fact that we are giving ourselves to help other veterans know about the program.
- To witness the positive changes of all the participants.
- The result of changing lives through secondary assistance to teams or individuals.
- The many servicemen and women suffering in silence, along with my own personal experiences with friends, family, and suicide.
- The idea and the group of kind people.
- The mission to help the team of veterans and the fact that it works.
- Supporting veterans and the compassion of the leaders.
- Giving back not only improves struggling veterans but also fills my cup.
- It gives me a sense of purpose and the chance to give back to VCA while also having an impact on veterans' personal growth.
- The program works because we have good people doing great things.
- There is camaraderie every time we come together. I have fun and feel peaceful and better as a person.
- The work that they do and the positive results I have seen on veterans.
- A sense of belonging with mates who share common issues, enabling us to stick together and work through personal challenges.

5. In what area or way would you like to support in the future?

- I am already doing this, but I would love to expand into public speaking.
- Secretary, and food purchases, catering administration, and support are areas I would like to support in the future.
- Task alignment with staff members in the near future, with specified completion (work identified this weekend).
- To volunteer for planning, mentoring and information management.
- Community development in Timor and supporting any program as required.
- I would like to support in the areas of risk assessment, mentoring, and safety culture.
- The mentoring and development of roles and responsibilities.
- To support as mentor on Timor and Gold Coast TA's and assist with fund raising activities.
- I am happy to be on a subcommittee, and I'm interested in peer mentoring, although I understand it may not be the right fit for everyone.
- In any way that I can, or as needed by VCA.
- To hold a board position, contributing to writing policies, processes and governance, and engage in peer mentoring.



- I can provide medical support and expertise in any other way needed by VCA.
- I wish Gary all the best. He deserves a break. VCA has identified some very talented guides who will be able to continue the good work.
- Providing pastoral care for our team members.

6. Any additional comments?

- To improve the program, we should allocate more time towards starting tasks and taking action.
- Ensure lunches are sorted at Freeman's Farm next time.
- To be able to employ extra kitchen/food prep help.
- Well done, team. Thanks to Rick and Rob for handling much of the chores.
- Thank you for creating a vision of hope and transformation.
- Can we have more kombucha next time? I love the stuff.
- Timor Awakening is an outstanding program that provides incredible support to veterans.
- It has been great to gather together again.
- I am very grateful for being given the opportunity to contribute to VCA planning. We need to maintain and complete the tasks that have been set now. Saint George's is a great location for facilitate, and the staff were very friendly and helpful.
- I strongly believe in this program, and I want VCA to continue growing from strength to strength.
- This has been a valuable opportunity to assist VCA in forward planning, and hopefully, I have provided some help.

- It was a great program, and I hope we haven't created more work for the VCA team.
- I enjoyed Bob Alley's presentation and look forward to continuing guidance from him.



TA24 MEDIA GALLERY







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IN IMPROVING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF
VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES**



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