

Queensland Ballet

Dance for Veterans

Participant Information Pack Block 2 2026

About the Program

Dance for Veterans is being conducted to enhance the Quality of Life (QoL) for veteran populations experiencing PTSD or other trauma related psychological injury. First piloted in 2023 by Dr Rick Maher, the program is proudly funded by RSL Queensland and delivered by Queensland Ballet.

Program Facilitators

The eight-week dance program is facilitated by Queensland Ballet Teaching Artists, who are professionally trained ex-dancers with experience facilitating inclusive dance programs for enhanced participant wellbeing. The Teaching Artists for this program have completed a working with veterans' cultural awareness program through DVA and have undergone a military awareness program at the Land Warfare Centre, Canungra.

Dr Rick Maher, the Dance for Veterans Program Founder, will personally interact with the participants throughout the program. Dr Maher is a currently serving military officer, an office bearer with the RSL, and an amateur dancer.

Inclusion Criteria

The criteria to participate in this program includes:

- You are a current or ex-serving Defence member.
- You are 18 years of age or older at the commencement of the program.
- You can commit to the program time requirements of 8 weeks duration and check against any competing or future planned commitments (such as planned relocation to another city or state during the program timeframe).
- You have not recently experienced the types of cognitive difficulties and/or severe mental illness that could have led to you being recently hospitalized or assessed as experiencing episodes of uncontrolled violence.
- You are not currently engaging in regular alcohol and/or other drug-based misuse.
- Please note: To support access for new participants, priority will be given to veterans who have not previously taken part in the Dance for Veterans program.

Participant Involvement

The Dance for Veterans program is conducted at the Thomas Dixon Centre, home of Queensland Ballet, located at 406 Montague Road, West End.

The second program of 2026 commences on **Tuesday 6 October**, concluding on **Friday 27 November**. Class will run from 8:30am – 9:30am each week, followed by a catered morning tea. The program involves twelve sessions delivered across eight weeks, broken down into the below:

Tuesdays	Fridays
Tuesday 6 October	
Tuesday 13 October	
Tuesday 20 October	
Tuesday 27 October	
Tuesday 3 November	Friday 6 November
Tuesday 10 November	Friday 13 November
Tuesday 17 November	Friday 20 November
Tuesday 24 November	Friday 27 November

The program will guide you through dance practice consisting of full body warmup, the learning of movement, position, and balance techniques, creative centre practice, and full body cooldown.

The program will progress with scaled physical complexity based on a process that you would have previously experienced through your exposure to military drill instruction (i.e. instruction through individual movement, combined movement, and collective movement mastery). Physical participation will incorporate aspects of balance, strength, and flexibility within an overall context of mindfulness and body awareness practice.

At the conclusion of each class there will also be a scheduled 40-minute period of group social interaction at the onsite café, Tom's Kitchen.

Three surveys will be conducted during the program (one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end of the program) and one survey approx. 4-6 weeks after the completion of the program. The data collected through the Quality of Life (QoL) and Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) surveys that relate to your experience of the dance classes constitute the total data collection method for this program. This data will be used to report the program results (anonymously) to RSL Queensland, to support their funding of the program. The anonymised data may also be used as part of further research into veteran wellbeing and support programs by Dr Rick Maher, in post-doctoral research projects.

Other Considerations

Parking: There is paid on-site parking at the Thomas Dixon Centre, accessible via Raven Street, and on-street parking can be found within the general West End vicinity of the studios.

Clothing: You will not require any special clothing or equipment. Comfortable PT type attire should be worn with socks as footwear.

Water: You are encouraged to bring a water bottle with you to remain hydrated during the sessions. Filtered drinking water is available onsite to refill your bottle.

Changing Facilities: Changing facilities are available at the Thomas Dixon Centre.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your answers and participation will be completely confidential and any personal details, which may identify you in any way, will not be passed on to the Department of Defence or the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Your answers and participation will not in any way affect any pension, benefits or health services entitlements from Defence or DVA. Whilst all information gathered during your participation will be kept confidential, it will only be released under the following specific exceptions:

- With your consent.
- Where there is a legal obligation to do so (i.e. admission of war crimes, breaches of Australia's national security framework).
- If there is an immediate and specified risk of harm to an identifiable person that can be averted only by disclosing information.
- If information about your immediate well-being needs to be passed on to your medical or clinical practitioner.

Any disclosure or admission of participation in war crimes or revelation of confidential military matters will be referred to a relevant law enforcement or security authority. You are advised not to discuss such matters during the program, but instead if you have anything you feel you wish to talk about, you can approach Dr Maher and say in broad terms that you need to talk with someone about sensitive matters. You will then be referred to an appropriate agency, medical practitioner, or chaplain.

What about if I have to withdraw from the project?

Participation in this program is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the program without comment or penalty and can withdraw anytime. You may withdraw from the project by informing Queensland Ballet or Dr Rick Maher. If you choose to withdraw, you will be offered the opportunity of an exit interview. The exit interview is not mandatory and is to ascertain the reasons for exiting and whether your feedback could lead to improvements in the program in future.

How do I give my consent to participate?

If you agree to participate, we ask you to read the Participant Terms and Conditions and complete the online registration form. Completing the online registration form means that you give your consent to participate.

Program Registration

If you would like more information on the program or would like to speak on the phone with Dr Maher, please contact Queensland Ballet at community@queenslandballet.com.au.

To register for the program, please complete the online form on our [website](#).

What are the possible benefits for me if I take part?

You potentially could experience increased levels of fitness, Quality of Life and well-being as part of participation in this program.

The higher-level benefits of this program are that it may contribute to a body of evidence and applied knowledge about how dance might be utilised to enhance the Quality of Life of Australian veterans.

What are the possible risks for me if I take part?

The team has identified the following possible risks and mitigation strategies associated with participation in this program:

Risk	Risk Mitigation
Potential discomfort caused because of participating in surveys.	a. You will be a volunteer and will be briefed on the survey requirements prior to providing informed consent to participate in the survey taking. b. Surveys will be conducted with you prior to, during and after the program in a time and place of your choosing.
Inconvenience of time to you.	a. The program will be scheduled well in advance so that you will know your commitment ahead of time and have the opportunity to schedule other activities around program commitments b. The program facilitation team will ensure that program timelines are met. This includes scheduled start and finish timings.
Potentially revealing something sensitive about your personal life or medical condition in a group setting.	a. All participants will be briefed on the expectation that any personal matters discussed within the program are to remain in-confidence and are not to be discussed outside the context of the program. b. Survey data will be deidentified. Final data will be presented as an aggregate of the total of participant responses. c. The program team will ensure the confidential storage of data.
Potential risk of physical injury during the program.	a. Lesson design will be individually tailored to your specific physical capabilities. b. You will be monitored by no less than two dance facilitators during the

	program to ensure that you have the opportunity to participate to the extent of your capability but not in excess of it. The role of a second facilitator is to ensure your physical safety. All facilitators engaged with this program will be dance teaching artists who are experienced with identifying and monitoring physical capacity and practice. c. In the unlikely event of a physical injury, you will receive localised first aid on site. If the injury affects mobility, such as a sprain, you will be referred back to your medical provider. You will be offered assistance with mobility if required. If an injury is more serious (such as a suspected break or concussive injury), 000 will be called and you will be referred to hospital. There are a number of local emergency hospitals that are near to West End such as the Mater, the Royal Brisbane and St Andrews Hospitals. d. The program will comply with the provisions of AUSDANCE Safe Dance practice - https://ausdance.org.au/articles/details/safe-dance-practice as the internationally recognised protocol for protecting the physical and emotional well-being of dancers. Queensland Ballet spaces conform with Safe Dance Practice protocols, and the instructors follow safe dance practice for a safe dance environment.
Potential risk of psychological injury/episode during the program.	a. A safe or quiet space will be allocated and identified in case you temporarily experience a sense of being overwhelmed during the program. If you experience feelings or thoughts that are distressing during the program, you will be encouraged to take a break or use the safe space. b. In the event you experience a psychotic episode, a dissociative event, or an involuntary recurrent memory (flashback) during the program, you will be initially separated from the group (if safe to do so) and 000 called. The program founder in attendance is trained in psychological first aid and will support you until medical assistance arrives. c. If you experience a mental health episode where you potentially present as a danger to either yourself or to others, 000 will be called for assistance. d. Any mental health incidents requiring emergency transportation or hospitalisation will also be reported to your treating clinical provider for your well-being.
Potential of revealing something sensitive about previous operational or war experience that could include breaches of Official Secrets Act or knowledge of war crimes	a. You will be briefed on the expectation that operationally sensitive matters are not to be discussed within the program. b. If you are aware of perceived misdeeds, you can seek advice about appropriate types of personnel that you can discuss or report such matters to. c. You will be briefed that if matters pertaining to operational security are divulged during the program, this may result in your being excluded from the program and the matters reported back to the Defence Security Authority. d. You will also be briefed that any potential personal admissions of participating in war crime activities will be referred to an appropriate police authority.
Potential risk of economic harm to you during the program	a. If you are in other paid employment, you will be advised of the schedule and time commitment of the program during the consent phase so that you can agree to the conditions of the program and potentially schedule your work commitments around the program.

Potential risk of experiencing negative judgements during the program	You will be briefed on the behavioural expectations of the program that will include respect for other participants, respect for the facilitators, and facilitator respect for the participants. Behavioural expectations will be framed in accordance with ADF values of: • Service - Selflessness of character. • Courage - The strength of character to say and do the right thing, always, especially in the face of adversity. • Respect - The humanity of character to value others and treat them with dignity. • Integrity - The consistency of character to align thoughts, words, and actions to do what is right. • Excellence - The willingness of character to strive to do the best that you can. There will be a culture of the ADF's behaviours that include: • Act with purpose for each other. • Be adaptable, innovative and agile. • Collaborate and be team-focused. • Be accountable and trustworthy. • Reflect, learn and improve. • Be inclusive and value others Participants whose behaviours are not consistent with above values and behaviours or who deliberately demean, denigrate, disrupt or bully other participants will, in the first instance, be briefed by the program founder in relation to the expectations of their behaviour. If the behaviour persists, the participant could be excluded from continuing the program. Facilitators will have also completed the Working with Veterans Cultural Awareness package (DVA) designed to assist non-veteran practitioners work with and understand veteran populations.
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