Find out how we’re fighting for our firefighters on page 2
Fighting for our Firefighters

Every day our first responders experience terrifying situations on the front line. In recent times, this has escalated with so many of our local firefighters, including volunteers, putting themselves on the line to protect lives and homes during the devastating fires across Australia.

Thanks to your support of The Road Home as part of The Hospital Research Foundation Group, we have provided a $200,000 grant to the Country Fire Service (CFS) Foundation. This funding will support our selfless CFS volunteers and their families who have been impacted by the fires.

CFS Foundation Chief Executive Officer Gloria Berni says the funding will have a great impact on the volunteer firefighters and their loved ones.

“To date, over 40 CFS volunteers on Kangaroo Island alone have lost homes, businesses or property, and there were a number that suffered injury and loss in the Cudlee Creek fires in the Adelaide Hills,” Ms Berni said.

“The generous donation from The Road Home will go towards the financial aid we are giving these volunteers. Support such as this is vital in these difficult times.”

Our thoughts are with those who lost their lives and their loved ones, as well as people who have lost their homes and livelihood and the communities affected as a result of these terrible fires.

We hope that our contribution can make a positive difference in people’s lives.
Exciting updates for The Road Home

The Road Home is thrilled to appoint a Director of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Post-Traumatic Stress, Dr Miranda Van Hooff (BA (Hons), PhD).

The former Director of Research at the Centre for Traumatic Stress Studies at the University of Adelaide, Dr Van Hooff has extensive expertise, conducting largescale studies of trauma-exposed populations.

This appointment, which will make our research capacity stronger and impact so many more lives, is only possible thanks to your generous support.

“This appointment is a wonderful opportunity to continue my work and increase the focus on supporting innovative research into Post-Traumatic Stress,” Dr Van Hooff said.

“I’ve always admired the work of The Road Home, and I feel excited about overseeing research that can have a direct impact on the health of our nation’s heroes.”

The Road Home has also signed a formal collaboration with the University of South Australia (UniSA) to transfer the reins of its highly successful Invictus Pathways Program (IPP) – an individually tailored training and fitness program for veterans and first responders.

Now located at UniSA, the IPP transfer further strengthens The Road Home’s commitment to providing the very best of research-backed programs for those who have served and continue to serve our Nation, with The Road Home signing on as major sponsor of the program for the next three years.

Chief Executive Paul Flynn explains: “With the IPP in very safe hands at UniSA, The Road Home can now continue to focus its attention on innovative research and life-changing and lifesaving programs.”

“We will also increase our focus on funding innovative research into Post-Traumatic Stress and plan to cement this commitment with the appointment of Dr Miranda Van Hooff (BA (Hons), PhD).”

We look forward to updating you on the impact this will have on our veterans, first responders and their families.

STAIR Program Climbs New Heights

Since 2018, over 130 veterans and emergency service personnel have completed the highly successful STAIR* Program, helping our service men and women who are at risk of service-related stress or have Post-Traumatic Stress.

Led by renowned Australian Army Reservist Psychiatrist and researcher Dr Jon Lane, the 12-week program has been refined and evolved into the GEARS (Group Emotional and Relationship Skills) Program, to better suit Australian veterans and first responders.

The GEARS Program will delve into the issues they face including identity in transition, with the end result being to get a person to a functional state, teaching them how to adapt back to civilian life and also how to manage their personal relationships.

“Although STAIR was really successful, I’ve been able to improve the program by identifying what worked and what needed further development. This development would not have been possible without the support from The Road Home and its generous donors,” Dr Lane said.

*Skills Training in Affective Interpersonal Regulation.

To find out more information on the GEARS program, email contactus@theroadhome.com.au or call (08) 7002 0880.
Success at the Global Alliance Conference on Post-Traumatic Stress

More than 45 of the world’s leading experts on Post-Traumatic Stress gathered at Adelaide Oval for the inaugural Global Alliance Conference on Post-Traumatic Stress, supported by The Road Home and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Post-Traumatic Stress (ACEPTS).

Held from 6 – 8 November 2019, participants heard from a range of experts including trauma therapists and a number of global thought leaders on research, treatment and multidisciplinary models of care for veterans, emergency service personnel and their families.

Speakers and participants had the opportunity to attend masterclasses, panel discussions and hear from keynote speakers with the goal of improving outcomes and care.

One of the key highlights was the address by world-renowned researcher Professor Nicola Fear, Director of the King’s Centre of Military Health Research, London.

“The Conference was a fantastic opportunity to share ideas and learn from others working in the field of Post-Traumatic Stress,” Prof Fear said.

“I was privileged to share my research with attendees on the experience of having a family member with Post-Traumatic Stress. This highlighted the importance of looking at the family unit and not just the individual.”

Karen May, Associate Director of ACEPTS said the Conference was a great opportunity to open up timely and important discussions regarding the mental health of veterans and first responders.

“Attendees gained firsthand knowledge from global leaders in the veteran and first responder mental health space. This is something that’s never happened in Australia before,” Karen said.

Melissa Walker, Program Director at the National Intrepid Centre of Excellence in the USA shared her insights on Art Therapy in her masterclass, which created important conversations amongst fellow South Australian Art Therapists.

“I left the Global Alliance Conference on Post-Traumatic Stress inspired and motivated by the research that has been completed by colleagues from many different nations. Specifically, I am motivated to further extend integrative treatment offerings such as the creative arts therapies to military families, first responders and communities suffering from natural disaster,” Melissa said.

The Road Home would like to thank all delegates for attending the Conference and we would also like to acknowledge our MC, Graeme Goodings, who was outstanding in leading the Conference and provided undivided attention to all speakers, offering a personal reflection after each presentation.

It was truly incredible to see global leaders together sharing and collaborating their ideas to improve the health and wellbeing of our veterans, emergency service personnel and their families.

If you would like to read more about the Conference and the areas of research covered, visit www.theroadhome.com.au.
That’s a Wrap

In 2019, The Road Home supported a drama program called Theatre for Change, a joint initiative with the State Theatre Company of South Australia and the Office for Ageing Well for South Australian veterans and emergency service personnel.

Theatre for Change gave participants the opportunity to explore a range of theatrical pathways in a safe and supported environment. Developed and delivered by two professional theatre artists, Jo Stone and Paulo Castro, they delivered an outstanding program, supporting participants and making incredible progress in the 10 weeks.

A personal reflection from veteran Sharon, who participated in the classes.

I have attended the Theatre For Change program since its inception, and have found it to be truly empowering and transformative. I’ve learnt much about mental health these last two years since I returned from Iraq and have been particularly influenced by Bessel Van Der Kolk’s work regarding trauma and its impact in the body. The fact that trauma can be hard to locate, express and externalise makes perfect sense to me. Jo and Paulo have not only facilitated and created a safe place where veterans can explore their trauma, they have empowered members to express themselves in ways that are healing and powerful.

The sense of relief I feel every week after attending the program is hard to put into words: what I can say is that working with Jo and Paulo has enabled me to find words for experiences that I have locked away for months and in some cases years. Indeed, I have recently transcribed my diaries from deployment to Iraq with a view to developing a screenplay.

I had been unable to read those diaries until now, but Jo and Paulo have given me the space, permission and opportunity to revisit my experiences in a meaningful and safe way. I have seen similar transformations in other members attending the group.

We have produced several short films and significant amounts of writing, that has taken us all by surprise in terms of its insight and potential for further dramatic exploration. I, for one, would love to continue this program for the longer term and have a number of friends (also veterans) who are also keen to join the group.

I am enormously grateful to The Road Home, The Office for Ageing Well and the wonderful State Theatre Company for providing an avenue for healing, self-empowerment and improved mental health through this program. It is changing lives.
Supporting our Carers

Who cares for the Carer? Researcher Dr Dannielle Post and her research team from the University of South Australia and the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre at SAHMRI* were determined to find out.

Dr Post received a project grant from The Road Home, made possible thanks to your support, to investigate the relationship between health behaviours and physical and psychological wellbeing in Carers for our current serving men and women and veterans.

“The aim of this research was to understand how health behaviours, specifically physical activity and sleep, of Carers of veterans relate to Carers’ physical and psychological wellbeing and to determine their health and wellbeing needs,” Dr Post said.

A total of 28 Carers completed the surveys and/or interviews. The findings of the pilot study suggest that while resilience is higher than average in this population, Carers also show high psychological distress and lower than average mental wellbeing.

Dr Post and her team identified the following findings through their research with Carers:

• There were significant relationships between resilience and fitness; those who were fitter had higher scores for resilience and did more moderate-to-vigorous physical activity
• Carers with evidence of psychological distress slept more than Carers without psychological distress
• Carers felt their role was not acknowledged or valued by different organisations
• Lack of support for Carers, some don’t know who to turn to for assistance
• More information on Post-Traumatic Stress needs to be more readily available for Carers.

“These findings suggest a clear need for accessible support services for Carers of current serving men and women and veterans specifically tailored for Carers’ physical and psychological wellbeing,” Dr Post said.

“Programs that are designed to increase physical activity, build resilience, and reduce psychological distress may be beneficial for Carers, and should be developed, implemented and evaluated.”

The next step for Dr Post and her team is to share their research findings and advocate for change to the support and services provided for Carers.

*South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

Life-changing Research thanks to you

The Road Home is proud to share the recipients of its 2019 grant round, with the focus on the theme of families.

Congratulations to Associate Professor Andrew McCune from the University of Canberra and Professor Sharon Lawn from Flinders University.

These grants are only possible thanks to your support of The Road Home.

To find out more about these grants, visit theroadhome.com.au.
Q&A with Michael Morgan

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) Michael Morgan is also a member of The Road Home Board of Governors. Michael has kindly shared an insight on being part of The Road Home and what he hopes to achieve in 2020. He also opens up about his stellar career in the MFS.

What about The Road Home makes you most proud?
I am incredibly proud to be part of The Road Home (TRH) and the research and work being undertaken to assist and support our defence personnel and first responders. I am looking to challenge and help improve the current support mechanisms, as well as working to broaden the options available to those that need the assistance most.

What are some things you hope to achieve by being on the board of The Road Home in 2020 and beyond?
I look forward to continuing the great work and research TRH has been doing while striving to provide innovative programs. I will continue to bring a first responder view to TRH and promote the work of TRH at a national level within the emergency services sector.

As CEO of the MFS, how do you use your role in helping fellow firefighters who may be struggling with their mental health as a result from their service?
I want to assist those that work tirelessly to protect our communities in their time of greatest need. Our defence personnel and first responders provide a service to the community, often at their own personal cost. I want to ensure that personnel are both well prepared and supported for the challenging work they are exposed to.

Throughout your stellar career in the MFS, what have been some highlights for you?
I have been fortunate throughout my career to have spent 20 years on the frontline responding to a wide variety of incidents and the past 14 years working in the area of Mental Health and Wellbeing of our firefighters. A number of significant achievements include the whole of service study on the Health and Wellbeing of MFS Firefighters, and the subsequent development of the MFS Wellness and Safety Department.

Do you have a message to The Road Home’s donors and supporters?
I would personally like to thank and acknowledge all donors and supporters of TRH. Without their generosity, TRH would not be able to support the current programs provided and fund vital research and wellbeing activities for veterans and emergency service responders. Please continue to support those that sacrifice so much for their communities.

Save the date
Annual Remembrance Day Breakfast 2020

Please join us for a morning to honour our veterans, both past and present for The Road Home’s annual Remembrance Day Breakfast 2020.

This year’s commemorative morning will be held on Wednesday 11 November at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

To purchase an earlybird ticket, please visit www.remembrance-day-breakfast-2020.eventbrite.com.au or call (08) 7002 0880.
Remembrance Day Breakfast 2019

On Friday 8 November 2019, The Road Home held its annual Remembrance Day Breakfast at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

With over 300 guests in attendance, the morning provided attendees with the opportunity to reflect and acknowledge our veterans, both past and present who have sacrificed themselves for the freedom of our nation.

This year, The Road Home was extremely honoured to have Dr Brendan Nelson AO, Director of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra deliver the keynote address. Dr Nelson gave an incredibly moving and inspiring speech that paid homage to our brave men and women. His recitation of ‘A Creed’ by Edgar Albert Guest, was particularly poignant and provided a beautiful moment of reflection that was appreciated by all.

Dr Nelson’s speech was followed by a stellar panel of international and Australian experts leading the way in the provision of innovative approaches, new therapies and activities for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress. The panel included Melissa S. Walker, Healing Arts Program Coordinator at the National Intrepid Centre of Excellence (NICoE); Walter Reed, Bethesda, MD, US and Lead Art Therapist for NEA Creative Forces; David Wiseman, Head of Programmes Supporting Those Who Serve, The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge; and Dr Jon Lane, Australian Army Reservist Psychiatrist and researcher.

A special mention to our MC for the morning, Channel 7’s Mike Smithson as well as the Australian Army Band and Australian Military Wives Choir who put on wonderful performances. Thank you also to our generous sponsors for their support, including the University of South Australia, Flinders University, Leidos, Nova Systems and ASB Creative.

The Road Home would also like to acknowledge Rod James O’Brien who delivered a brilliant Welcome to Country, as well as Road Home Champions Chris and Lorin Jenner who recited ‘The Ode’ and Bob Walter who shared his poem ‘Ode to In Flanders Fields’.

Thank you to all our guests, veterans and emergency service personnel, their family and friends who attended our annual Remembrance Day Breakfast. Your support of our event is appreciated.

Tickets are now on sale for our Remembrance Day Breakfast 2020. To purchase an earlybird ticket, visit www.remembrance-day-breakfast-2020.eventbrite.com.au.