

Mateship lives on

A relatively new group, with the aim of offering support and mateship to younger veterans, was formed two years ago and meets regularly at the Shepparton RSL.

The Goulburn Valley Young Veterans is open to serving and non-serving defence personnel who served post-1975.

Karen Holmes heads the informal committee that operates the group, with the support of the Shepparton RSL sub-branch, and said membership was currently sitting at about 60.

“The age range of our group is from mid-20s to mid-50s,” Karen said.

A military veteran of 13 years, Karen, now 50, became involved in the group earlier this year to continue to help build a safe place for veterans to expand their support networks.

She said through her involvement with the Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans’ Association she was becoming more aware of the high rates of suicide among young veterans and the struggles they were enduring.

“There are too many stories of suicide and veterans locking themselves away from society,” Karen said.

“Some are not looking after their mental health and they end up slipping through the cracks and sometimes find themselves in custody.

“Some people have real problems when they leave defence; the civilian world is very different to the military and some find it very tough to adjust.

“It’s the mateship that people miss, something I’ve experienced on a personal level.”

Karen’s military service included a stint in Cambodia in 1993 for a peacekeeping mission and time spent based in Albury, Toowoomba and Townsville.

“When people first join the group I see that it’s a really positive experience for them, it’s similar to what they experienced in the defence,” she said.

“Our aim is to create a network to keep an eye on people, and direct them to welfare and advocacy if it’s needed.

“The group is open to anyone that has served, even if they’ve served for another country.”

Regular get-togethers are planned; some are for veterans only and others for veterans and their families.

For further information about Goulburn Valley Young Veterans, phone the Shepparton RSL on 5820 4100.



Karen Holmes supports young veterans by organising activities for the Goulburn Valley Young Veterans group. Picture: Rodney Braithwaite