



Timor Awakening 14 Program Report

Monday 07 to Monday 14 September 2020

Prepared by Veterans Care Association, 13 October 2020



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





Timor Awakening 14 - Program Report

Section 1: Timor Awakening 14 – Summary of Activity

Prepared by: Project Director, Michael Stone

Timor Awakening (TA) is an immersive, evidence based, peer to peer wellbeing program for veterans; composing holistic health education, group therapy, mentoring, physical activity, historical commemoration and community development. The program is typically centered around an 11-day immersion in Timor-Leste, creating a disruption from participant's routine to take pause, learn about themselves and seize responsibility for a positive direction forward in life. TA is available to Australian Veterans (and spouse or carer), from any state, with or without operational service. The aim of Timor Awakening is to prevent veteran suicide and improve the wellbeing of veterans and their families. TA has a comprehensive medical support team from all streams of the mental health community. Every TA participant conducts a range of data collection based on internationally accepted metrics for mental health contributing to detailed quantitative and qualitative reporting on each program. This report presents an overview of the TA14 program, quantitative analysis and reflections of participants.

Timor Awakening 14 (TA14) was conducted from 7th to 14th September 2020. This was the second time the program has been done domestically, taking place at St Georges Defence Holiday Suites in Runaway Bay, on the Gold Coast. This change was as a result of travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This 8-day holistic health program was aimed to emulate as much of the features of a Timor based program as possible, whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity for renewal, ongoing training and group therapy to contribute to growth, health and reduce the instance of veteran suicide, domestic violence and detrimental effects of bad health on families. All seven nights were accommodated at the St Georges Hotel, with activities taking place both at the hotel itself and around the greater Gold Coast area.

TA14 provided a multitude of education and healing interactions and experiences at the individual, small group and large group levels, including professional education and guidance, peer2peer support, physical exercise, mindfulness, meditation, exposure therapy and unique interaction with local communities and veterans. The program has been designed to provide a safe, nurturing and inspiring environment where veterans and their spouses have the opportunity to reevaluate their lives, envisage and plan where they want to go, and provide a range of tools to help them achieve a healthy and purposeful life. The wide range of components, activities and discussion topics covered on the program are listed on p9. Results and reflections of participants on TA14 are profound, reflected in part 2 of this report, p11-28.

Special elements of the TA14 program included:

- Daily morning group exercise and afternoon volleyball competition.
- Yoga, breathwork and meditation sessions.
- Organic farm tour and education.
- Daily group peer to peer therapy, mindfulness and grounding practices.
- Nature walks.
- Daily themed discussions and activities on self-mastery, self-awareness, mindset, body, nutrition, relationships, communication, understanding stress and anxiety, post traumatic growth, taking ownership, forgiveness, forming habits. The complete list of topics and activities can be seen on p9.
- Goal Setting and development of Personal Wellbeing plans
- Confidence and team building activities.
- Recording of panel discussions and Podcast episodes.



Welcome to St Georges Hotel. The VCA team and participants all arrived at St Georges Defence Suites with earnest, with an initial meet and greet and group dinner. A program overview was delivered by Michael Stone along with an initial session on expectations and a circle-time sharing session getting to know each other. Group sessions are always conducted in a circle to obtain full participation and make sure everybody feels like an equal. VCA is appreciative of the opportunity to utilise St Georges Defence Retreat, an incredible purpose-built facility established to support returned service men and women. The dining and kitchen facilities enabled nutritious and healthy meals to be prepared and consumed in house, which enabled great fraternity and sharing. The recreation areas were ideal for group interactions, education and a range of activities throughout the program.



Holistic Health Sessions. Holistic Health sessions included prepared sessions, discussions and activities on the following topics: mental health, exercise, nutrition, mindfulness, goal setting, forgiveness and reconciliation, resources for veterans in Australia, communication, growth mindset, PTSD, anxiety, addiction, relapse prevention, suicide, sleep management and families. A number of videos were utilised including a documentary called That Sugar Film, created by Damon Gameau, Vulnerability TED talk by Brene Brown, 5 hindrances to self-mastery TED talk by Master Shi Heng Yi. The Timor Awakening focus of holistic health is that healing is possible, there are many resources to achieve this, that we should live in the present with a growth mindset and plan for the future. A detailed list of program components, activities and discussion topics can be seen below.





Yoga sessions and mindfulness. Some of the fundamental tenants of the holistic health program are grounding, mindfulness and relaxation. TA14 participants were fortunate enough to have two sessions facilitated by a highly experienced professional yoga instructor, Hugh Jack. This practice encourages veterans to slow down, become mindful of their thoughts and bring calm to everyday life, as well as improving the mind-body connection. The benefits of this practice carry over to all areas of life. The breathwork and techniques utilised in these sessions were utilised in additional yoga sessions conducted at St Georges.



Organic Farm Tour – Freeman’s Farm

In the Currumbin valley is situated an organic farm, deeply seeded in family history. David Freeman, a veteran Army officer himself with an extensive military career, has created an organic farming practice. Throughout a nutrition workshop David teaches the benefit of healthy living, nutrition, sustainable practices and clean organic farming techniques that we can all use at home. David’s 95 y/o father, a fighter pilot in WWII, is still sharing his words of wisdom with visitors. 100% organic lunch and coffee was enjoyed by all. Several participants of TA14 have since returned to the farm to volunteer and be a part of this highly rewarding project. Development of a Veterans Health Garden at Freemans Farm has begun with an organising committee being formed by participants of TA14. The Veterans Health Garden Retreat will become the practical place for learning for Timor Awakening programs and an avenue for purpose, identity and growth for veterans to contribute outside of the programs. The garden is to have basic accommodation, ablutions, food prep areas and common spaces for community and learning. Accommodation will be available for short term only to enable flow of veterans supporting the garden.

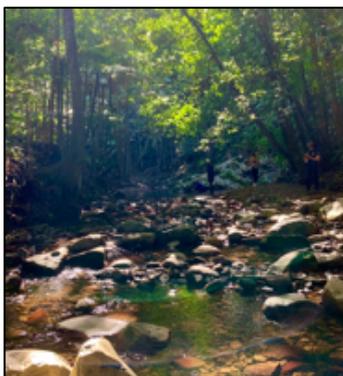




Morning Physical Fitness. Physical fitness is a fundamental element of the program. Fitness sessions are planned for the early morning on a daily basis, include walks/runs, stretching, breathwork, mindfulness, yoga, mountain hikes and gym. The daily program is active with walking and activities that involve movement, social interaction and stimulation. Establishing a routine of physical fitness at the start of each day establishes the importance and impact of physical fitness for healing, health and well-being. Sometimes this can be something as simple as a walk down the beach or a quick swim before the day's activities commence. We were fortunate enough to have Bodysmart health from Paddington, plan an Exercise Physiology Session on the beach, coordinated by Majella Nolan and her [Bodysmart Health](#) crew of exercise physiologists.



Nature walks. Spending some valuable time in nature is always made a priority on TA programs, both in Timor and domestically. Participants of TA14 conducted many beach walks and had a special visit to Cougal Cascades in the Currumbin Valley where they had an opportunity to reconnect with nature, practice mindfulness and just be. Some people find this the most rewarding and effective form of mindfulness or grounding. A nutritious organic breakfast at the Om café offered an opportunity for an awakening swim in the nearby Currumbin Pools waterhole.





Fun Healthy Team Building Activities. Some of the other stand out activities of the program were beach Volleyball and Axe throwing. We started with a wonderful group BBQ, then made our way down to the beach volleyball courts at Coolangatta Beach. The entire group came together to play and support each other, there were laughs and face plants into the sand all round.



The entire group boarded a bus for Lumber Punks, an axe throwing organization based in Miami, on the Gold Coast. One of the Peer Mentors Scott McAndrew, who is also the Operations and Training Manager for the company, ran TA14 through the basics of throwing metal, culminating in a competition. Fun and engaging activities like these give veterans an opportunity to get out of the classroom environment, get interactive, enjoy themselves and get involved in some healthy competition. Both activities were much enjoyed by all involved.



Active Listening Interview Scenario. One of the best ways to explain active listening and positive communication techniques is to conduct demonstrations for the group. Padre Gary Stone and group mentor Scott McAndrew conducted a scenario-based two-part interview, part one presented with a veteran reaching out for help having a number of serious personal challenges and was met with the interviewer not listening and having negative communication techniques. Part two of the interview is where the Veteran reaching out was met with an interviewer who had good active listening skills and positive communication techniques. Whilst fictitious scenario, the issues being raised and dealt with were ones that are not uncommon with veterans who attend the programs, or veterans in the wider community. The emphasis of the playlets were to demonstrate the power of being present, listening actively and reassuring the veteran that they will be supported with creating an action plan and connected with the right specialists to deal with the issues being raised. The demonstrations were followed by practical exercises of all participants playing the role of an active listener and sharer.





Goal Setting and Creating Personal Wellbeing Plans. The cornerstone of the program is what participants do when they return to their day-to-day lives at the conclusion of the program. Participants partake in sessions on ‘stories’, goal setting and the TA wellbeing plan. Peer mentors support each participant to complete an individual wellbeing plan. The wellbeing plan includes various areas of life, health, relationships, diet and exercise, mindset. A full wellbeing plan is at the end of this report. Participants also commit to who they will reach out to for accountability and support, and which ESOs they will associate with to continue their wellbeing and personal growth.



Panel Discussions and Podcast Interviews. Having a unique, diverse and highly experienced group of veterans on the program at the same time presents another opportunity to share personal lessons, history and ideas that can help with veteran growth and wellbeing. A number of panel discussions and podcast interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the program, to capture important insights which can then be shared with the wider veteran community. The podcast interviews can be played at: <https://open.spotify.com/show/4MfhJj0B2m7vp7GS8kaf49?si=ZlwvnWtJTwhwNj-uavVVw>

Veterans have noted in group sessions and program feedback that initiatives covered in this program have inspired them to get more involved in their communities, given them an appreciation for the support we have in Australia and a realisation of the importance of purpose and identity in life. A great opportunity exists for Australian veterans to mobilise in both domestic and regional communities and contribute as volunteers, restoring a sense of purpose and serving the community in practical ways.





Conclusion. The feedback from participants of TA14 was positive and appreciative for the opportunity to experience profound growth and healing, as highlighted in participant reflections, p22-28. Through professional mentoring and guidance, together with the extensive peer to peer therapy, Timor Awakening offered an experience uniquely different to other programs available for veterans. The multitude of activities created a bonded group that will remain connected through each other's journey of healing and growth. The overarching theme of hope and purpose was a feature throughout dozens of activities. Even with the realities of a troubled and traumatic past, the Timorese experience is testament to veterans that there is hope, and with purpose and support a positive future is possible.

By attending the program veterans have elected to participate in their own rescue, taking responsibility for the life they want. The program is intensive and obliges participants to be active in a peer group, whilst facilitating reflection time and individual mentoring. A range of stimulating activities and environments provide fertile ground for healing, growth and development. Our veteran facilitators, who are active participants on each program, demonstrate the value of becoming a healer of others and are examples that post traumatic growth is possible. The end state of Timor Awakening is to have inspired and informed veterans empowered with tools for positive change and linked to the array of veteran resources available in Australia. The program continues to develop with higher efficacy which is passed through participants into the wider veteran community to create an impact on a larger scale.

Timor Awakening has been possible due to financial support of Bolton Clarke and RSL QLD and significant volunteer contributions of experienced veterans. Corporate partners are required for the program to continue and share the program with the wider veteran community for both domestic and international programs. VCAI has a clear strategic aim to utilise the data and successful interventions of Timor Awakening as a model for Department of Veterans Affairs to commit to funding wellness intervention to prevent veteran suicide, broken families and injured veterans. Wellness intervention will result in considerable government budget savings compared to funds spent on 'sickness' treatment, pensions and medication. As well as increase health and wellbeing of veterans and their families, save lives, and meaningfully re-engage some of the nation's most energetic and capable members of society. In the soul of the veteran is a need to serve, to be of value, to contribute and to belong.

Media

RSL QLD 3 Minute Video overview (2020) -

<https://www.facebook.com/RSLQueensland/videos/594230674463467/>

Timor Awakening 7 Program Video - provides a snapshot of the program (6 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5Xdjp5bcus>

Riak Veterans Retreat and Language School - short videos about our enduring project for all veterans:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N78XE6tpnRs&t=36s> . <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQIU9rI6OvM>

<https://www.facebook.com/timorawakening/videos/2441330942583644/>

ABC News story on the Riak Retreat project 19 Sep 19:

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-09-19/war-veterans-heal-in-east-timor-tour/11525170>

<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/am/war-veterans-healing-through-community-work-in-east-timor/11526898>



Timor Awakening 14 program components (content structure)

Detailed preparation - involving individual admin/medical/mental prep, personal and group engagement.
Orientation - team bonding, individual mentor 1 on 1, briefing.
Self-Awareness. Improving capacity to relate to yourself and others.
Grounding (beliefs, techniques, mindfulness).
Taking ownership and responsibility of personal circumstances.
Nurturing your mind, body and soul.
Destigmatizing trauma and mental health.
Anxiety, depression and stress - understanding the causes, biology, recognising the signs and mitigating symptoms.
Tools to help relax, ground and manage feelings and physical symptoms of stress and anxiety.
Communication and positive living in communities.
Restoring a sense of Identity and Purpose.
Forgiveness.
Goal Setting.
Forging a new Identity (participants form identity as alumni of program, as Australian veterans, as Australians)
Strategies to help you go back to activities or places you may have avoided since the trauma.
Transitioning back to connection with communities, support and positive pathways.

Timor Awakening 14 Activities

Group discussions.
Self-awareness exercises.
Physical activation (group walks, stretching, breath work, personal exercise, volunteer work).
Volunteer work on organic farm
Breathing and breath work.
Mindfulness and grounding.
Yoga
Goal setting.
Communication skills.
Body Language – impact of posture, effects on communication.
Introduction to Neuro Linguistic Programming.
Fun team activities – Volleyball, Axe Throwing

Group discussion topics on Timor Awakening 14

Living with purpose and identity (and helping others).
Growth mindset / Living above the line.
Addiction and relapse prevention.
Taking ownership and responsibility (of our past, present and future).
Nurturing the body – Nutrition, exercise, sleep.
Mental health – Anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress (awareness, mitigation).
Safety plans – Addiction relapse, Triggered Anxiety/Stress/Depression, Suicidal Ideation.
Suicide – helping others, getting help, safety plans, processing and managing bereavement.
Communication and relationships.
Relationships.
Forgiveness / Letting Go.
Resources for veterans and families at home.



Personal Health and Wellbeing Plan

I _____ have boundless potential, I am special, I have many talents and strengths. I am committed to improving my health & wellbeing to be the best version of myself for myself and my family.

The 5 most important things to me in life are:

My strengths and unique characteristics are:

I am the most passionate when I...:

My driving purpose to making change:

Body:

Mind:

Relationships:

A future vision of the best version of myself is:

My health and nutritional goals are:

My exercise and outdoor activity goals are:

Note: Goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely).



My financial and material goals are:

I intend to improve my mental fitness by:

I'm going to build better relationships through:

Areas I intend to develop spiritual growth include:

I plan to reach out to the following organisations in order to further my personal growth:

Establishing the following boundaries will help me achieve my goals:

In support of my goals I will implement the following activities into my routine:

These mentors are going to help me in times of doubt and support me to hold myself accountable:

I affirm that I am committed to improving my health and wellbeing. I am responsible and accountable for my health, personal growth and behaviour. I am committed to putting in the hard work to be the best version of myself. I will support others where I can in their journey with love, empathy and compassion.

Signature:

Date:



Section 2: Timor Awakening 14 - Review of Participant Data

Prepared by Mrs. Candice Carroll, Client Support Officer and Mrs. Christina Hully, Psychologist.

Data was collected from 13 participants and on TA14 at two time points: commencement of the program (07th September 2020) and the conclusion of the program (14th September 2020). Noting there were 24 participants on the program, 8 being veteran Peer Mentors and support staff. TA14 was the 13th evaluated program which demonstrates the positive efficacy of the program. A high percentage of the participants showed significant improvements in their health and wellbeing in the areas of Mental Well-Being, Post-traumatic Stress, Depression, Stress and Anxiety, Moral Injury. We would like to note that we have participants who were on this program and past programs who were not ex-serving but are partners or family members of participants who were veterans. These participants did not show a level of disability or post-traumatic stress at the commencement of the program, nevertheless demonstrating improvement in other health and wellbeing markers. As part of this program there is a particular focus in monitoring changes in the Moral Injury symptoms of the veterans as a result of the Timor Awakening experience. This is an area that participants have not known about or addressed in earlier treatment programs in which they have been involved. Moral Injury was assessed with a pre and post program assessments which gave us a significant positive difference.

The anecdotal comments at the end of report reflect a fascinating diversity of positive outcomes, the program is seen to show a positive impact on the participants.

Demographics

Of the 16 participants on the program data was collected from 13 Veterans. This report includes all the data from the TA14 participants.

Demographic data collected on the 16 participants revealed the following. 11 participants identified as male and 5 as female. The average age of participants was 51 years ($M = 51.87$ years, $SD = 13.46$ years), indicating that the average age of participants on this program was higher than the participants of TA14 by 4 years and the age span has increased by 13 years (TA14: 32-75yrs; TA12: 35-62yrs; TA10: 38-76yrs; TA9: 38-74yrs; TA8: 30-66yrs; TA7: 23-94yrs; TA6: 37-73yrs; TA5: 31-78yrs) 13 participants had a history of serving with the military services. Ten (10) participants had served in the Army, two (2) had served in the Navy and one had served in the RAAF, and three (3) were Civilian Spouses, those who served 69.23% reported that they had been medically discharged. At the start of the program seven (43.7%) participants reported that they were retired, three (18.7%) reported that they were employed, six (37.5%) participant identified as unemployed.



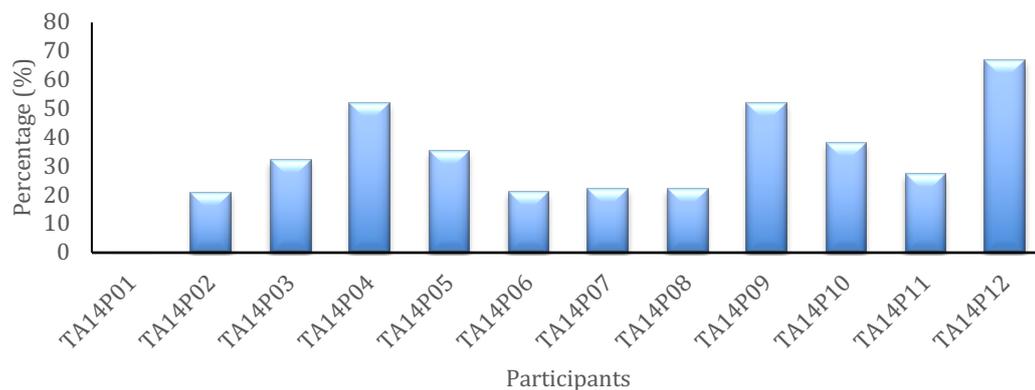
Family Characteristics

Ten (62.5%) participants identified that they were in a long-term relationship (de facto or married), five (31.3%) reported being single, and one (6.25%) reported being Divorced. 16 participants provided family demographic information which indicated that twelve (75%) have children. Of the twelve participants who have children, seven (58%) currently have dependent offspring.

Health Status

Physical Health: TA14 participants were administered the World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule 2.0 (WHODAS 2.0) 12-item version to screen overall functioning and disability due to health conditions. The WHODAS 2.0 provides an overall summary score expressed as percentage of disability experienced in daily life over the past 30 days, with 85% representing full disability due to health condition. All participants completed the questionnaire and disability scores are graphed below.

WHODAS 2.0 Overall Disability Score TA14 (%)



As the graph above demonstrates, there was variability in the overall functioning level of participants who engaged in TA14.

The average summary score was 32% disability. Comparison with population data available from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that our participants' average score ranks below the level of functioning to be considered a disability when compared to the general population. This result suggests that overall this group of Timor Awakening participant's daily function was comparably greater than what has been reported for participants on the previous program (TA4 = 30.17; TA5 = 32.15; TA6 = 40.5; TA7=40.5; TA8=8.04; TA9=26, TA10=23; TA12=18; TA14=32.43) where the level of disability had been as high as 90-95% when compared with the general population. Further analysis may be required to identify if the higher average disability score is impacted by age range or health conditions reported by the participants in each individual program.

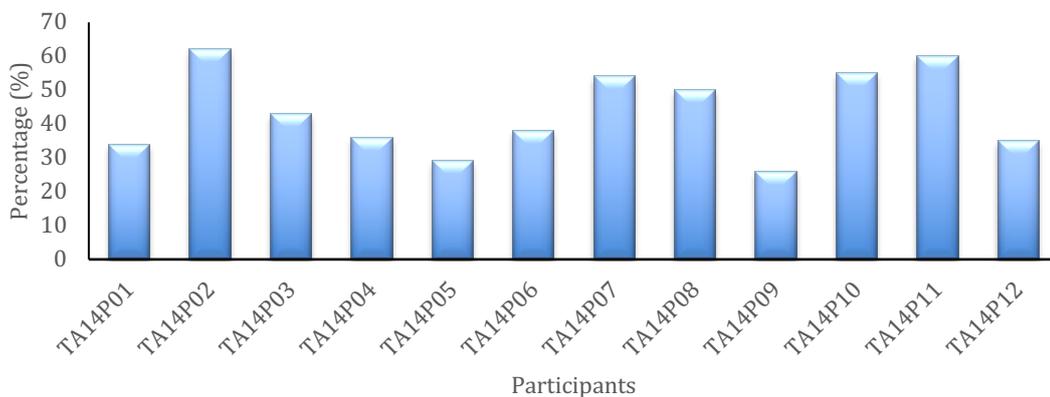


Mental Health

All TA14 participants provided information about their current and previous treatment for mental health conditions. At program, 13 (81.3%) participants were taking medication for a psychiatric condition and all these participants were under the care of a psychiatrist. Of these 11 (84.6%) were also receiving psychological treatment. one participant was receiving psychiatry and psychological treatment without medications. The psychiatric condition most reported by participants was again Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Secondary to this demographic information, 13 participants completed the Quality of Life and Enjoyment Scale, Short Form (QLES) to provide information on their pre-program levels of life satisfaction. The QLES provides a summary score expressed as percentage of life enjoyment over the past 14 days, with 100% representing full life satisfaction. All participants completed the pre-program screening measure, the following analysis is based on the responses of 13 participants. Participants overall life enjoyment scores are graphed below.

Life Satisfaction Score (%)



As the graph above demonstrates, there was some variability in the overall life enjoyment of participants who engaged in TA14. The average summary score was marginally above 53% life enjoyment, with the lowest score at 21% life enjoyment and the highest at 86% life enjoyment. In comparison to other Timor Awakenings, this was below the range of positive life experiences at the time of program (TA5 Average= 61%; Range= 40- 93%, TA6 Average= 40.24%; Range= 27-78%, TA7 Average= 55.42%; Range = 36-68%, TA8 Average= 65.93%; Range= 26%-100%, TA9 Average = 68.30%; Range=33.93%-100%, TA10 Average = 72%; Range = 36%-100%, TA12 Average = 71%; Range = 41%-100%, TA14 Average = 53%; Range = 21%-86%), indicating that the presentation of participants varies from group to group.



Section 3: TA14 Program Efficacy

Outcomes

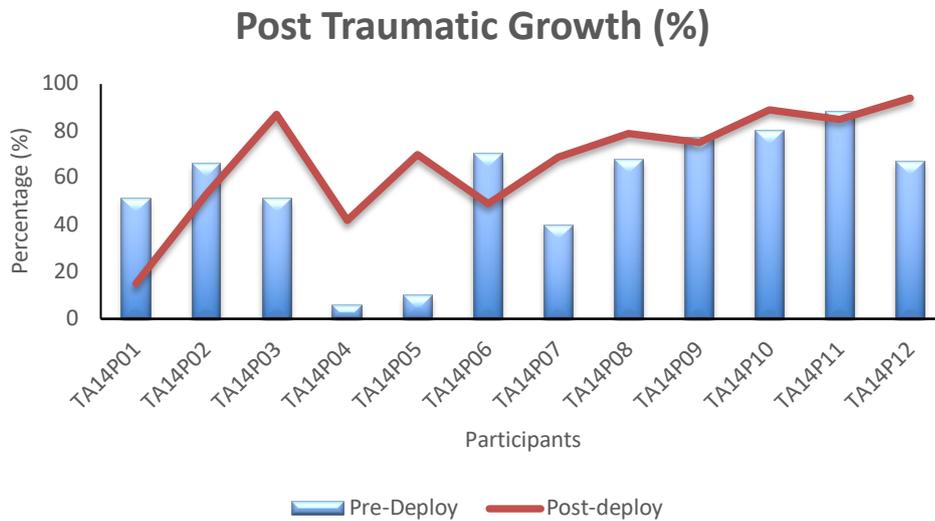
Participants completed standardized self-report assessments at Pre- and Post-program to aid an understanding of the symptoms of psychological distress and general health and wellbeing of the participants undertaking the program to Timor on TA14. These included the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21-Item Version (DASS21), the Post-Traumatic Checklist – Civilian Version (PCL-C), the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and Moral Injury Military Scale. De-identified Pre- and Post-program results on each assessment area are demonstrated below.

The final assessment of participants perceptions of personal change as a result of the TA14 experience is the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) which is a measure of positive change as it is the primary aim of the Timor Awakening experience is that participants are given opportunities to make some positive changes to their mental health and wellbeing despite the impact of their time within military service in countries and situations that have had enormously negative impacts on their functioning, physically, mentally, emotionally and interpersonally. This is the first time that the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory was administered to participants both at the end of the TA experience and immediately prior to program. In previous assessments the PTGI assessment was only administered at the completion of the program as it was deemed that this did not give accurate information about the impact of the TA experience. It is the results of this final assessment which will be an initial focus of this report prior to reporting in detail any changes in mental health functioning of the participants.

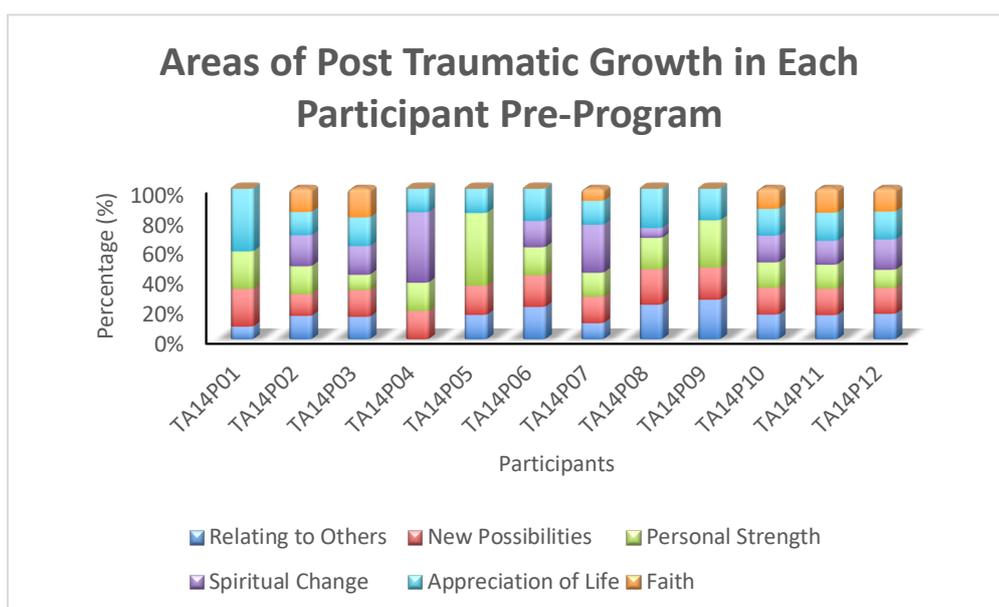
Post Traumatic Growth

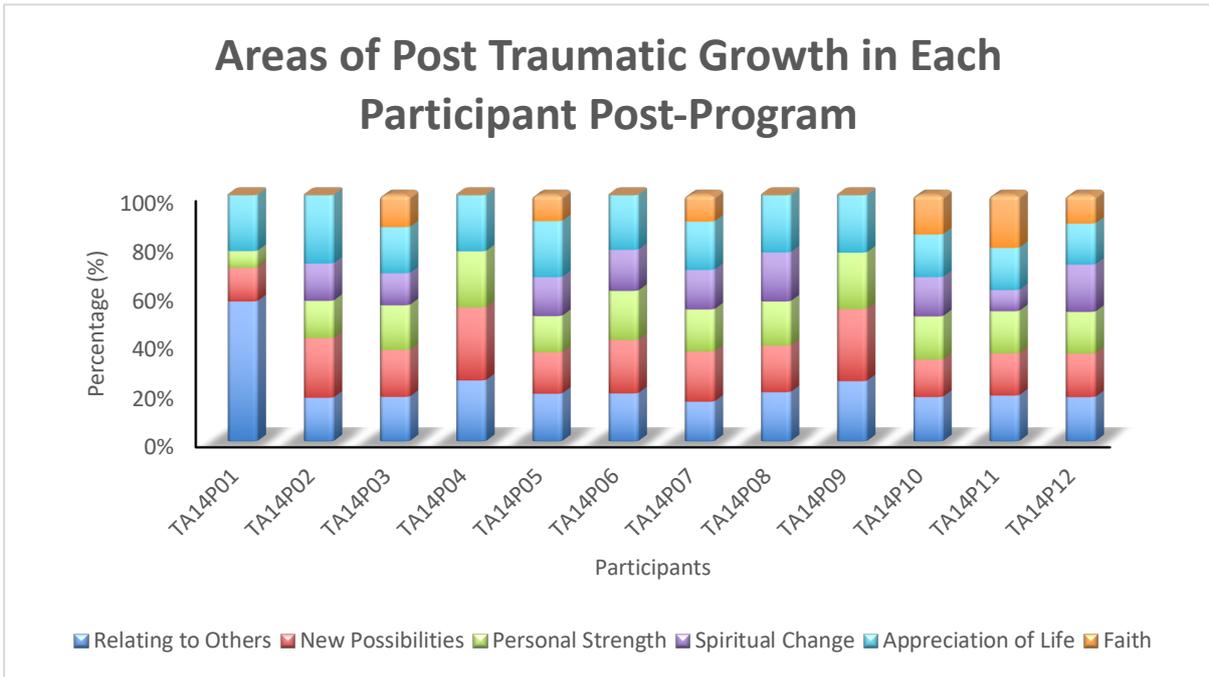
Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity and other challenges in order to rise to a higher level of functioning. Post traumatic growth occurs when individuals report a personal benefit from circumstances that represent significant challenges to the adaptive resources of the individual and pose significant challenges to their way of understanding the world and their place in it. Posttraumatic growth is not about returning to the same life as it was previously experienced before a period of traumatic suffering, but it is about undergoing significant 'life-changing' psychological shifts in thinking and relating to the world, that contribute to a personal process of change, that is deeply meaningful.

The Post Traumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) enables quick assessment of an individual's perceived change in personal strength, world view and appreciation of life. Each participant's de-identified results on the PTGI that was completed Pre-Program and Post-Program of the TA14 experience is demonstrated below. This indicated that out of the 12 participants, 8 (66%) participants experienced some personal growth from the Timor Awakening experience and four participants (33%) did not experience a positive change from the Timor Awakening program.



Following is a pre and post deploy graphical representation of the areas of change each participant experienced. The change indicates the percentage of the within participant change and not a comparison of change between participants. However, to further understand the overall improvement of Post Traumatic Growth of the group as a whole statistical analysis was conducted to examine the differences between the group’s Pre and Post-program scores. Analysis was based on the 12 participants who provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant increase in the group’s overall scores on the Post Traumatic Growth Inventory from Time 1 ($M = 56.17, SD = 26.15$) to Time 2 ($M = 67.25, SD = 23.37$), $t = -1.388, p = 0.192$.



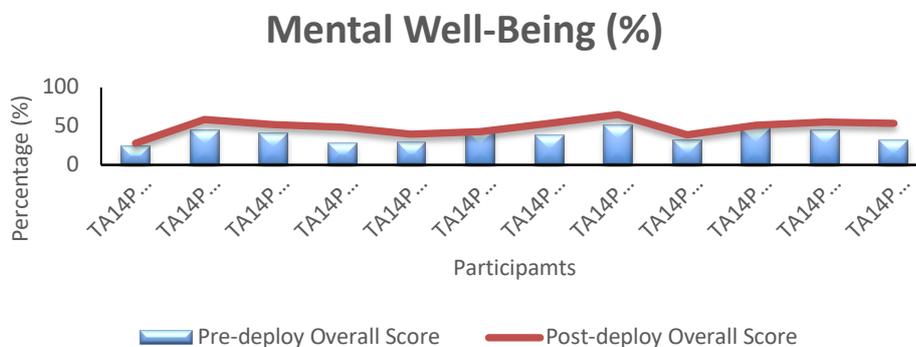


The comparison between pre and post program for each participant, demonstrates improvement throughout each area for the entire group.

Mental Wellbeing

To support the changes reported by participants in their perceived change in personal strength, world view and appreciation of life the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was completed at Pre and Post-program. The WEMWBS enables quick assessment of an individual’s mental wellbeing across areas including but not limited to relaxation, energy levels, self-esteem, optimism and social connection.

Each participant’s de-identified results on the WEMBWS at Time 1 and Time 2 is shown in the following graph:



A change in score of 3 points is considered to be meaningful.



In reviewing the responses on the wellbeing scale a change of 3 points or more in this scale is considered to be meaningful. 92% (11) of the participants involved in TA14 reported an improvement in the total score at the end of the program, 8% (1) of the participants involved in TA14 reported no improvement in the total score at the end of the program. Although at this time it cannot be considered a true indication of clinical significance for each respondent, as further statistical analysis of the assessment instrument is required. Therefore, a statistical comparison of the Pre- and Post-program scores for the entire group was conducted to determine if the difference between the mean scores of both Pre- and Post-program scores were of clinical significance.

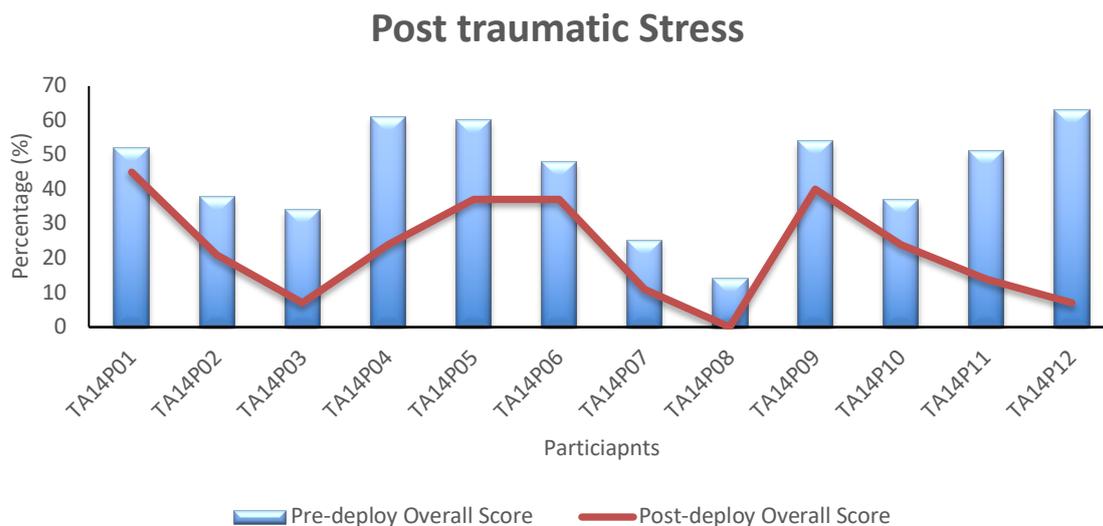
This analysis reviewed the responses of all 12 participants. A one tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant improvement in group’s overall score on the WEBWBS from Time 1 ($M=37.91, SD=8.72$) to Time 2 ($M=49.08, SD=10.06$), $t=-5.442, p=.000$.

Mental Distress Assessment

Post-Traumatic Stress

Participants completed the Post-Traumatic Checklist – Civilian Version (PCL-C) at Pre- and Post-program. The PCL-C is a questionnaire that is designed to assess clinical symptoms associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM5). The DSM-5 categorizes PTSD symptoms into several different criteria related to behaviours of re-experiencing, avoidance and hypervigilance and these are assessed in the PCL-C.

Each participant’s de-identified results at Time 1 and Time 2 are demonstrated in the following graph:



Score >38 likely to be experiencing PTSD

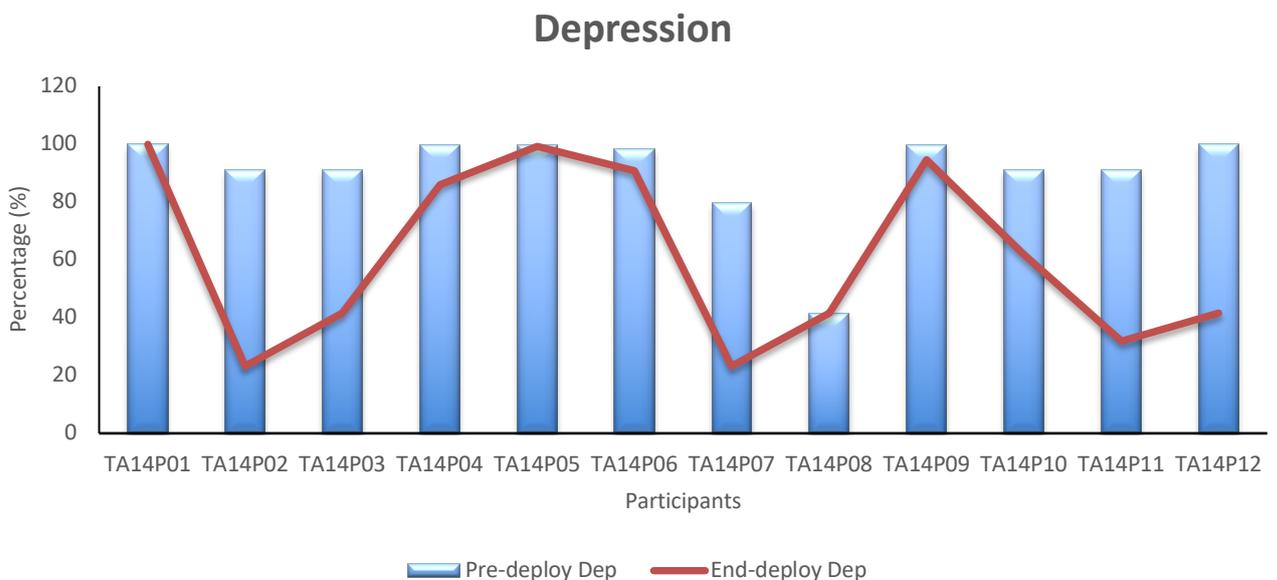


Graphic representation of participants' scores on the PCL-C shows that 67% of participants were reporting clinically significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress at the start of the program. At the end of the program the number of participants continuing to experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress had decreased to 16%.

However, to further understand the overall improvement of post-trauma symptoms of the group as a whole statistical analysis was conducted to examine the differences between the group's Pre- and Post-program scores. Analysis was based on the 12 participants who provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant reduction in the group's overall scores on the PCL-C from Time 1 ($M = 44.75, SD = 15.30$) to Time 2 ($M = 22.25, SD = 14.86$), $t = 5.42, p = .000$. In comparison to other Timor Awakenings, TA14 shows a positive decrease in the clinically significant symptoms of Post-traumatic stress from pre- and post-program scores (TA14 Pre deploy = 67%, post deploy = 16%; TA12 Pre deploy = 41%, post deploy = 5%; TA10 Pre-deploy = 41%, post-deploy = 18%; TA9 Pre-deploy = 80% , Post-deploy = 55%; TA8 Pre-deploy = 64%, post-deploy = 36%; TA7 Pre-deploy = 53%, post-deploy = 26%; TA6 Pre-deploy = 75%, post-deploy = 26%). indicating that the presentation and impact of participants varies from group to group.

Depression, Anxiety and Stress

Participants completed the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale 21-Item Version (DASS-21) at Pre- and Post-program - herein referred to as Time 1 and Time 2, respectively. The DASS-21 is used to screen for mental health symptoms associated with depression, anxiety and stress. It is used widely in clinical settings to guide mental health professionals and to evaluate interventions.



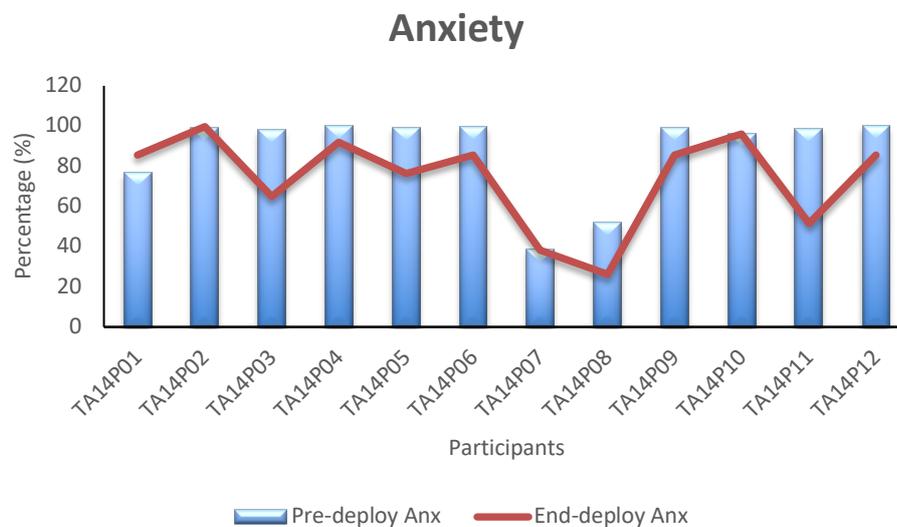
* Elevated Range > 78; Clinical Range > 95



Graphic representation shows that several the participants experienced elevated symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress at pre-program. It is also evident that the majority of participants reported a decrease in some or all of these symptoms at the conclusion of the tour, bringing most within the normal to mild range when compares with the general population.

Each participant’s de-identified results on subscales at Time 1 and Time 2 are shown in the following graphs. On departure 50% of the 12 participants were experiencing symptoms of depression what are considered to be of clinical concern. Post-program results indicated that 16% of participants remained in this range, one participant experienced higher levels of Depression on the completion of TA14 than they were experiencing prior to departure.

Further statistical analysis of the scores on the Depression subscale of the DASS-21 was conducted to examine if the difference between Pre and Post-program scores for the group were of clinical significance. Analysis was based on the 12 participants who provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant reduction in the group’s overall scores on the Depression subscale of the DASS-21 from Time 1 ($M = 70.15, SD = 25.96$) to Time 2 ($M = 46.58, SD = 27.23$), $t = 2.19, p = .000$. Indicating that on this occasion there was a clinically significant improvement (reduction) in the symptoms of depression within the group.

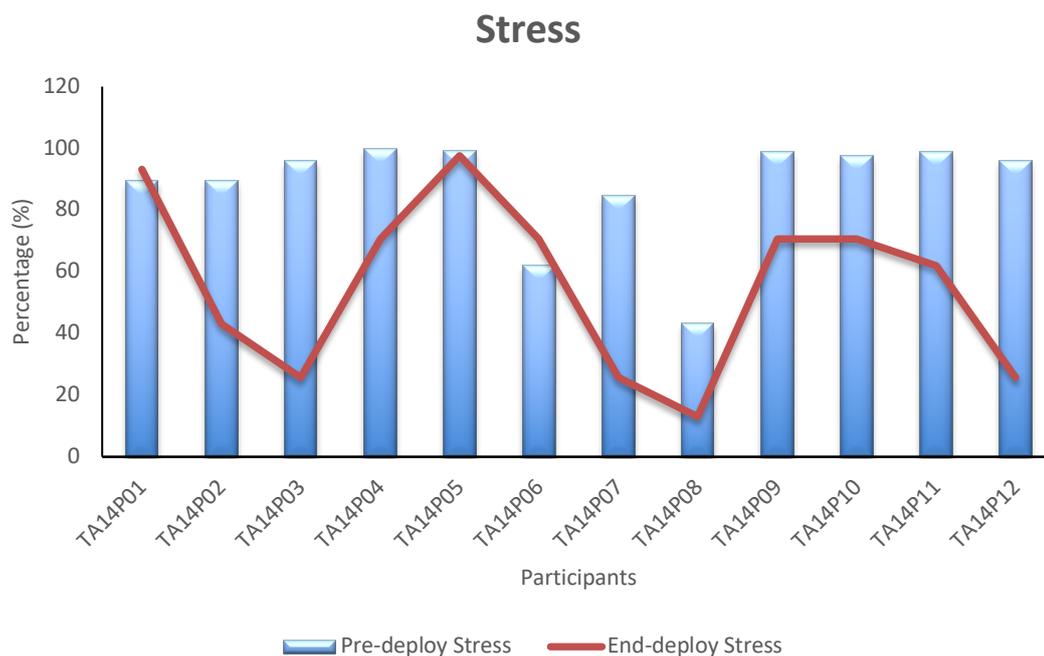


* Elevated Range > 78; Clinical Range > 95

On departure 75% of participants were experiencing symptoms of anxiety that are considered to be within the clinical range. Post-program results indicated that 16% of participants remained in this range. One participant experienced higher levels of anxiety on the completion of TA14 than they were experiencing prior to departure. There is no available qualitative data to begin to consider the source of this increase in the level of anxiety during TA14.



Further statistical analysis of the scores on the Anxiety subscale of the DASS-21 was conducted to examine if the difference between Pre- and Post-program scores were of clinical significance. Analysis was based on the 12 participants who provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was not a statistically significant reduction in participants' overall scores on the Anxiety subscale of the DASS21 from Time 1 ($M = 88, SD = 21.33$) to Time 2 ($M = 73.9, SD = 23.63$), $t = 3.03, p = .011$, indicating that on this occasion there was a clinically significant improvement (reduction) in the symptoms of anxiety within the group.



* Elevated Range > 78; Clinical Range > 95

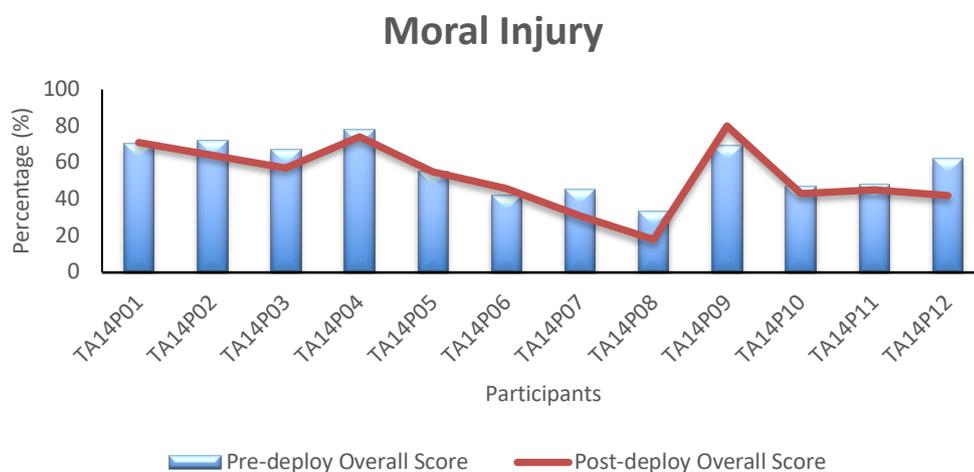
Graphic representation shows that 58% of the participants were experiencing elevated symptoms of stress at pre-program. Post-program results indicated that 8% of participants remained in this range.

Further statistical analysis of the scores on the Stress subscale of the DASS21 was conducted to examine if the difference between Pre and Post-program scores were of clinical significance. Analysis was based on the 12 participants who provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant reduction in participants' overall scores on the Stress subscale of the DASS21 from Time 1 ($M = 87.84, SD = 17.64$) to Time 2 ($M = 55.72, SD = 28.21$), $t = 4.19, p = .000$



Moral Injury

16 Participants who had previously served in the Defence force completed the Moral Injury symptom Scale – Military (MISS-M) version short form. The MISS-M is a 10-item measure of moral injury (MI) designed to use in Veterans and Active serving military participants, consists of 10 theoretically grounded subscales that assess the psychological and spiritual/religious symptoms of Moral Injury: guilt, shame, betrayal, moral concerns, loss of meaning/purpose, difficulty forgiving, loss of trust, self-condemnation, spiritual/religious struggles, and loss of religious faith/hope.



Considering the impact on Moral Injury on veterans is a developing area in the military psychology. According to Koenig (2017) there is opportunity for a negative psychological and spiritual impact on military personnel who in the course of work undertakes tasks that are a contravention of personal beliefs and values. In reviewing the pre-program and post-program responses of the participants of TA14 is noted that 3 participants (25%) are reported high levels (>70) of moral injury pre-deploy, and post-deploy responses of the participants indicate that all participants showed reduction in the moral injury. These results show that there is a clinical difference between pre and post after being on the Timor Awakening program. To date there is no definitive indicator of a score that demands clinical attention. Further guidance is being sought from the author of the scale, however, further follow up of the wellbeing of the individuals with high scores pre-program is recommended to help maintain low range.

However, to further understand the overall improvement of Moral Injury of the group as a whole statistical analysis was conducted to examine the differences between the group's Pre and Post-program scores. Analysis was based on 12 participants who are veterans and provided data at both time points. Two tailed *t*-test demonstrated that on average, there was a significant positive decrease in the group's overall scores on the Moral Injury from Time 1 ($M = 57.33, SD = 13.64$) to Time 2 ($M = 52.17, SD = 18.26$), $t = 2.04, p = .066$



Section 4: Post Program Recommendations

Post Program Participant Contact

At the time of preparing this report, all participants have had a follow up phone call with a detailed list of follow up and welfare questions, 2 weeks post Timor Awakening 14. This was on average the youngest and least disabled group that has been taken on Timor Awakening program, despite the positive changes in Moral Injury and Post Traumatic Growth the greatest improvement for this group was the reduction in the mental health symptoms – PTSD, Stress and mental Well-Being. Out of the 16 participants, 5 participants were reporting significantly high symptoms of mental health concerns following the return of TA14, they have been offered ongoing support and a further follow-up will be undertaken to ensure that any improvements are maintained.

Regardless of improvement throughout the program a follow-up call to all participants will be undertaken to ensure that the improvements are maintained, and each participant is encouraged to seek further professional help and support for any ongoing areas of concern.

A three month check in is conducted of all participants to check in on their welfare, reviewing the progress and goals of the participants wellness plan and if off track, mitigating ways to get back on track or referring to further support. Ongoing connection is made through the groups organic connection on a whatsapp group where inspiration and communication is regularly shared, as well as through Timor Awakening facebook page, groups and VCA gatherings.

Reference

Koenig, H. G, (2108) *Religions* 2018, 9 (3), 86-100; doi:10.3390/rel9030086. Downloaded from www.mdpi.com/journal/religions 15-4-2019.





Timor Awakening 14 – Reflections

Participant reflections are gathered from an evaluation at completion of the program. Relevant questions and answers are shared below.

How are you feeling today in comparison to how you were feeling before coming on this trip?

- The same, as this is my second TA I was aware of what was the program was about, although this program I am a lot more relaxed in the now. Better overall, prepared to return home.
- Enlightened, educated, energised all the E's, looking forward to action.
- Lighter and reinvigorated – less pain in body gut healthier.
- Dramatic increase in what I think I need to do for myself and how i.e. Food.
- I am feeling lighter in my mind and have seen glimpses of my old self especially when engages in activities (the non-talking ones e.g. Lumber punks and yoga etc.
- More confident which was what I was after in a course.
- More relaxed and confident. I have let go of several aspects of guilt and resentment and have a plan to keep them from returning.
- Feel better today.
- Relaxed, full of hope, happy to face the world when ill come back home, full of new resolutions especially when thinking about nutrition.
- I have enjoyed learning about new ways to manage mt mental and body well-being. I am feeling tired, social still, little hard love my own space.
- Much more relaxed, comfortable and content.
- I am very relaxed now, feeling revitalised and happier within myself.
- More content and optimistic than before and more clarity than before.

What discussion topic was the most interesting and impactful?

- The farm and organic foods, I did a lot of learning and about how life is connected.
- I took a small something from most areas, but surprisingly for me Dave's farm.
- Listening – active listening and the procedure.
- Shame.
- Everything was interesting and relevant but the most impactful was learning about organic foods and farming and actually getting hands on.
- Active listening – Scotty's honesty about suicide made me feel like I was not alone.
- Discussions after “ A Heroes Journey” video and the sessions on grounding and self-mastery.
- People get to change to have a new good life.
- Gut health and nutrition together with the visit to David Freemans farm.
- Organic food, improve myself through coord, I would consider a small organic garden.
- Freemans farm – the peacefulness of mother nature and freeman's activities.
- Talking about forgiveness and change, hearing each person's goal for change was very impactful, and going to the yoga and being inspired by Hughie.
- Forgiveness and yoga (focusing on the mind/body connect)
- What was the most effective part of the program, in terms of education or inspiring your intention to change, and why?
- The farm (organic food) came at the right time in my life to make positive change.



- Making me look inwards for a change; really honest assessments to make change habits.
- Forgiveness – letting go of the negative feelings and believing I need to fix everyone; more time would be valuable.
- Open, honest and genuine people talking their truth that you can relate too, learning from others and the program
- The connection around issues that affect us all. The mentors and peers who were genuinely interested in you, who actually listened and included you.
- Comradeship/ Mateship, knowing that others have done the journey and there is hope for a better quality of life.
- The sharing by participants (including Peer mentors) and Michael Stone as their experiences and willingness to share these was inspirational and showed what can be achieved in the face of ongoing impacts.
- I now know more in group nutrition.
- Visit to David Freeman's organic farm as it opened my eyes to the fact that the fruit and veggies we buy in shops have very little nutrition.
- Opportunity to be new things, to be outside of my comfort zone, to share skills to self-improvement.
- Daily grounding. Slowing one down to Be rather than Do.
- Hearing all the inspiring stories from participants, forgiveness, change and relationships, and having the outside activities helped everyone ground.
- Nutrition and gut health. Zoned in on an area I had not thought of for a while, forgiveness reminded me to let go.

How was your support on the program?

- Great no issues, administration was really great thank you Rowena.
- Excellent. While I am relatively self-sufficient, I knew that support was available should I need it.
- Excellent – always there if needed feeling of safety.
- 10/10
- Support from staff and mentors was excellent having the mentors made support easier to access and I think they did a wonderful job.
- Excellent. Mick Stone, Mick Lay, Scotty and John made me feel like part of the team.
- Quite good, I was confident that my peer mentor (John) was available and on my side. Other peer mentors and some participants were there with a supportive, friendly word without judgement at all times and of course Gary, Michael and Candice were always observant.
- Wonderful connection with my group.
- Candice was wonderful and very helpful and full of information. Gary and Michael always answered all questions I had.
- Good. Gave flexibility as catered to us when things were bad we were supported, someone to always talk to.
- Excellent.
- The support team were excellent and supported everyone through each challenge they faced.
- Good there when needed, responsive and thoughtful.



How does this program differ from other programs or treatment you have experienced?

- Compared to Trojans Trek which is more clinical this has more heart and adaptability.
- Positively. Veterans for Veterans, veterans want to be here and no psych/social workers.
- TA1 was too intense. This program has allowed the body to rest while the brain has been stimulated. The yoga sessions brought me great satisfaction. Healthy eating and people taking care of you. all from the same family and an understanding of your circumstances and experiences.
- Gold Standard
- The angle is multi-focused and there is a good mix of activities other than just “talking” type approaches. I find that the times when I felt most connected and upon was during activities or learning new skills.
- It is more about me as a human. Other courses are very clinical, this was perfect for my part of the journey.
- The range of activities – physical, mental and information (well-being education) which addressed my whole person from the perspective of wellness rather than of one-dimensional addressing of “Brokenness”.
- Only program I have been on
- Being faced with real life struggles that people who do not experience have difficulties understanding.
- Positive group, many different things taught, amazing location. Understanding felt of others.
- People are empowered to take control of pain rather than be controlled by MEDS
- This program focuses on the holistic approach to healing the body, mind and soul which I feel is most important, this program takes its learning and education inside the classroom and outside in nature which gives a wonderful different approach to many other programs out there.
- This program allows me to be myself, share and learn as a peer, think and re-evaluate that motivates me and realign that thinking to a more positive framework than does clinical workshops on psych wards.

What could be done to improve the Timor Awakening Program?

- Time allocation – time limits when group discussions are cut short to do less important things.
- For me, be in Timor! But TA14 was excellent
- Asking those that sponsor to engage in the program to see the benefit it brings to the veteran.
- Unsure
- I don’t see anything personally, but I do see how much improvement has occurred since my TA2 experience and think it’s definitely going in the right direction in addressing all angles of healing. I don’t know of any place you would go to learn all that information in one place and in a short space. BZ team you’re doing an amazing thing.
- Nil – very well-run course
- More of the same and attracting Veterans from previous eras (post-Vietnam – pre-Timor).
- I am happy with the program
- Perhaps organise programs for married couples’ partners and focus on relationship problems and how to deal with those.
- Rest time during day, being introverted I struggle being in a large group for longer time period, I wasn’t able to fully connect and that left me uncomfortable and that sucked.
- More “alone time” for reflection and processing Myers Briggs.
- Have a period of free time (30-45mins) each day to process the good impact experienced.
- More rests/free time throughout to help some participants to process what they have learnt and who find it hard to focus for longer than an hour or incorporate more mood enhancers.
- Perhaps add a small service project or visit a shelter, maybe a TA for married or paired up couples. The routine, food and venue were good.



What is the greatest challenge? In what area do you feel stuck?

- Communication and connection with people especially in person.
- Maintaining my routine. I get bored too easily.
- Getting going – knowing my body is no longer the 30-year-old and toning it down a little. Felt more comfortable when Col's Wife Vicky joined the group. Area that I am stuck in is holding others back – letting the team down.
- Forgive and like myself, forgive and like others.
- I struggle to see myself and what I need, want and the things I like clearly! What I really want not what society or others tell me I should want grief and challenge is that present medical team are not listening to me when I say that my treatment is not working and they're hesitation to try different treatment methods. I am disillusioned by conventional medicine practices.
- Relationships and trying to move forward with a new partner.
- Showing vulnerability and speaking my views openly to family and friends (i.e. Just relating at the surface and not going deep – inconsequently discussions).
- Yes great.
- Keep up with the physical activities as my injuries keep me back.
- Implement new skills long term. Eating healthier, practicing a healthy and positive mindset.
- Managing anxious thoughts, slowing down.
- Relationships with friends and letting someone in.
- Identifying and communicating to a vast major project – phase of life. Maybe assisting leadership development by writing the book that is being planned.

What is your advice for DVA and the ESO community to enhance results in reducing Veteran Suicide, domestic violence and helping veterans onto the earliest possible path of wellbeing?

- Sponsor more TA's and learn to work together.
- I feel that it is up to Veterans to seek/help themselves.
- Programs like Timor Awakening when all the family can participate together. DVA to support TA in funding the program DVA supporting wellness HUBs where Veterans can support each other. Not just treatment for the illness or injury.
- Open discussion is no judgements and effective strategies options.
- Activity based participation without pressure of something being based on mental health or physical fitness where you can naturally feel relaxed to speak or want to share (like outdoors where you can create or achieve something together).
- Courses like this run by Veteran s who have been through the journey. It is easier to trust somebody who has walked the path and not just read about PTSD in a book.
- Early identification and intervention, in some cases for unwilling persons by diversion from police and welfare services. Support holistic treatment regime's and peer support activities. (Timor Awakening).
- More veteran programs like Timor Awakening.
- More programs like this to help veterans to get out of the dark space and help families and friend to support the veteran people.
- Offering the program as early as possible.
- Require Veterans getting incapacity/ disability benefits to do a lifestyle/psych social course like TA
- Programs like Timor Awakening help veterans find purpose and make change more support towards this program and programs alike would be beneficial for DVA and the programs.
- Finance better training of police and emergency services pain veterans with other ways of connecting



How do you intent to engage ongoing support for your personal growth?

- A good routine, for self-care Tai0Chi and change my eating habits.
- Stay in touch with other vets/ connections and other organisations such as Nerang VSG
- Continue volunteering in the veteran space and advocating with my voice and words to Govt bodies. Continue with exercise, good food and mindfulness.
- Go back to the drawing board, consult new medical opinions to help me improve my mood and vitality eg. Naturopath get gastrointestinal health check.
- I intend to connect with Freemans farm and David. I would like to assist/manage the project for setting up the respite centre and health garden.
- Expand my personal circle of individual supporters engage with additional health practitioners and access DVA through another advocate to maximise support entitlements.
- Day by day learning new things.
- To participate in more courses that help me understand better the veteran's situations and help me to help these special people.
- Create a safety net and support, psych, family ,friends, doctors etc
- Dive into more courses and programs to help my personal growth
- I have mentors and a resilience counsellor ill continue on with their assistance but more regularly

Any additional comments or feedback

- Great group of people, both staff and participants I felt the love. Enjoyed the outings.
- Grateful for the experience thank you
- Thankyou even though it may not look like I am grateful or appreciative I am. It's difficult to show any emotion to its full extent.
- I would like to use my coaching skills and mentor for future courses, I would like to do a TA in Timor to close the journey.
- I needed longer sleep ins with meds, I needed more break during day and circle time was hard mentally and physically.
- We need to be mindful to less pressure the introverts into speaking when they want the capacity to.
- Just keep being awesome guys love the work.
- Thanks for the opportunity to attend. If I can help the mission in any way please ask, thank you David.



END REPORT