

ALLYSHIP - BEING AN ALLY

- 1 Listen and Believe**

Take women's experiences seriously. Whether it's about harassment, discrimination, being overlooked for promotion and courses, or other challenges, don't question or downplay their stories. Don't "what-about" when a woman shares something, e.g. avoid saying, "Well, men have it tough too..." It's not a competition nor about giving 'advice'. Some just want you to be 'in the mud' at the same time, to understand how they are feeling. That's empathy.
- 2 Challenge Sexism and Misogyny**

Call it out. When you hear sexist jokes, disrespectful comments, or witness inappropriate behaviour speak up. Silence = acceptance. Educate mates. Some might not even realise they're being dismissive or old-fashioned, and don't mean to cause harm or offence. This includes on chat groups and content that is shared. Approach individuals directly, and never 'publicly shame'.
- 3 Amplify Women's Voices**

In veteran spaces, networking groups, or events, make sure women's voices are heard. Instead of speaking for women, support them to speak themselves, and back their authority. If you notice someone interrupting or talking over a woman, bring attention to it and invite the woman to be heard. Share and support campaigns relating to female veterans.
- 4 Support Representation and Leadership**

Advocate for women to have leadership roles in veterans' organisations, charities, advisory boards, and remembrance events. Work harder to find them; they may not be as forthcoming as men, but that's not to say they don't want to get involved. It's just perhaps because they haven't been asked. Don't just invite women to "tick a box" - value their leadership and expertise authentically. Showcase and celebrate powerful women so others have a visible role model.
- 5 Understand the Different Challenges**

Recognise that female veterans may face unique challenges, like gender-specific health issues (including PTSD from sexually inappropriate behaviour from their armed forces career), or feeling invisible in veteran narratives. Women experience a different life journey in their biology too, which is often difficult to understand. Don't label their moods with derogatory statements like 'it must be your time of the month.' Educate yourself on these differences without expecting women to do all the explaining.
- 6 Mentor and Sponsor**

Offer support with job opportunities, networking, career moves, or adjusting to civilian life, but do it respectfully and without a saviour complex. Sometimes it's not about advice; it's about opening doors and saying, "You belong here."
- 7 Push for Inclusive Traditions**

Veteran culture can sometimes feel very "old boys' club." Support modernising traditions to make sure female veterans feel just as much a part of the community. Things like inclusive language, and normalising women's service in stories all matter. This also includes advice around dressing for events. E.g. 'The female equivalent used to be the advice for dressing at events...'. Be more inclusive such as 'smart casual, formal, or ball wear.' Remember also that women have earned medals, including for gallantry. Don't ask a woman if they are her 'husband's medals' and if you overhear this, support them by explaining how women serve on operations too.
- 8 Look After Each Other**

Mental health support should include recognising gendered experiences. Sometimes women face barriers in accessing veteran support (feeling like the odd one out in male-dominated spaces, for example). Being an ally includes helping create safe, welcoming environments, at gatherings, social clubs, ceremonies, everywhere.
- 9 Reflect on Your Own Actions**

Keep asking: "Am I making space? Am I helping, or am I taking over?" Allyship isn't a badge you earn once. It's an ongoing, practice and learning experience.
- 10 Support ALL Women**

Women will have had different experiences in the armed forces and sometimes encounter additional intersectional barriers on top of being female, for example being from an ethnic minority background, having a disability, or being part of the LGBTQ+ community.