



# Operation Grain Harvest Assist

A National program with volunteer State Coordinators:

- Initiated and run by Veteran volunteers
- which connects Grain Growers with other Veterans
- who can double their Defence Pension each year
- supporting the annual Grain Harvest and also assisting Grain Growers at other agreed times

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OPGHA are arranging specialist training for Veterans on harvesting machines and tractors.

First pilot program in last week of Sept this year at the respected **Longerenong Agricultural College, Horsham**, ably and strongly supported by **O'Connors, Australia's largest CASE IH distributor**, with operations in 15 branches across 3 States.

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We are also working towards assisting Veterans to find 2<sup>nd</sup> careers in the Grains Industry, as they Transition out of the ADF.

- both on farms, supporting Grain Growers, and
- off farm, supporting Grain Handling, a massive industry in its own right, with record breaking harvests, like we had in 2021 – of 54 million tonnes, much of which was destined for export!

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Grain Growers also need help with planting and at other times of the growing season

- so this opportunity for Veterans is not necessarily limited just to the last quarter harvest season each year.

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We **don't** support fruit harvesting or other parts of the agri industries - **just** Grain Growing.

It has complex and expensive machines, which require mechanical aptitude, coordination and driving/operating skills of a high order; ADF Veterans of many ages, backgrounds and trades, have adapted well to these machines.

Since we commenced in August 2021, we have enjoyed the strongest support and encouragement from the Grains Industry, in particular **Grain Producers Australia**.

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**For more information, for both Grain Growers and Veterans**, see: [www.opgha.org.au](http://www.opgha.org.au)

**Or contact: Garry Spencer, National Facilitator** [garry@aql.com.au](mailto:garry@aql.com.au) 0418 996 856

## Benefits for Grain Growers

1. Veterans bring resilience, strength and adaptability
2. Veterans are reliable and trustworthy; defence is a serious business – they take their work seriously!
3. Veterans are well trained, well organised, task focused, many have strong mechanical aptitude
4. There are lots of Veterans! Over 500,000 from last Census
5. Veterans are trained on and operate/service complex military machines; in so many ways, harvesters are just more of the same
6. Veterans have high levels of safety and machine awareness
7. Veterans work well in teams – that is how they are trained
8. Veterans get the job done, whatever it takes!
9. Veterans are Australians – so no Visa issues!
10. Veterans could come back every year if that is what both parties wish

## Benefits for Veterans

1. Ability to double their Defence Pension during the harvest/other times
2. Satisfaction of again serving the Nation's interests
3. Fun and enjoyment factor
4. Setting up a new interest/new network
5. Learning in-demand skills
6. Chance to do the same, this year/every year, same or different locations
7. First step to the Profession of International Grain Harvester – if desired
8. Working within a large, vital, diverse, National revenue earning industry
9. Satisfaction of seeing a job well done
10. With prior agreement, take caravan/wife/dog – or all 3!



## Feedback from Harvest 2021

- My son, ex-ADF, is assisting at Coonamble and loving it. **Helen**
- This<sup>OBJ</sup> has been a great adventure, thanks to Danny and the team and to our hosts who have been sensational. **Bob**
- I can only see this initiative getting better, well done. **Bob**
- We are a team who make stuff, fix stuff, break stuff and drive things I'd never imagined I'd drive. It's nearly time to bring it all together and harvest the gold standing in the paddocks, and I'm happy to be a part of an awesome team. Thanks for having me. **Sean**
- Just a suggestion even though a member of the group and ex Navy. I have been called up by word of mouth to drive tractors, milk cows, piggery work, drive chaser bins and help on orchards. There are so many farmers that need help. A better name might be Operation Grain Harvest and Farm Assist. Harvest will finish and then there will be cotton, rice harvest, sowing. So many just need a hand for a few weeks at different times of the year. The farmers I have worked with are humble and thankful of the service of the military family. Great job getting the message out I hope you can include all farm work. **Steve**
- No reason why this operation will not continue on in the same fashion this year and into next. If farmers are requesting help and there are people willing to provide that help from this initiative then so be it. There does not have to be a name change just get on with the job. **Danny**
- Almost 2 weeks after arriving at Alma Downs via North Star, I'm having a ball and thoroughly enjoying the time away from the rat race, and wondering if I want to return. My hosts are a wonderful family, who seem very appreciative of the assistance via Op Grain Harvest Assist. Comfy accommodation & evening meals are included. Each morning starts with dropping some hay bales to the cattle paddock prior to heading out to harvest. They've even provided a company car to get to & from work. The constantly changing view from the window of my mobile, air conditioned office is breathtaking and I confess that, after living & working in Sydney, the experience thus far is rather calming. **Dominic**
- I'm enjoying it too; working nights and just playing tunes while working. **Marc**
- Enjoying it immensely. Am impressed and somewhat amazed at the resourcefulness & 'can do' approach of all involved. So very different to the city. I'll be putting my name down for next year. I note another request for a driver (in Victoria) has appeared on the site.....if you'd like a change of scene for a few weeks. **Dominic McKinnon**

- Hi Simon, long time since I have heard anything of you. What are you up to? **Marl** Is this Alan Earle the RAN Tracker pilot that was in Darwin with HS 816 Det Darwin in the late 70's? **David**
- A perfect office - no phones ringing - no paper work, and the snakes are honest and unintended bites don't count. **John**
- It's great mate, glad to be part of this; all the training aids you could want! **Bob**
- Congratulations & a big well done to those who thought up, and activated this site. It's great to see so many willing workers being able to get in direct contact with those seeking assistance....without the need for a third party/agency. Hopefully, this may help streamline the process of securing harvest workers in the future. Well done those men. **Dominic**
- This is a great initiative Thank you very much for the administrators; I am looking to connect with people on the Eastern states for truck drivers and harvest workers as well if you have any leads for over east people let me know. **Justin**
- Honestly guys, as a former ADF member, I am having a ball helping with the harvest. For two weeks before harvest started, I helped renovate the workers quarters, drafted tagged and drove sheep along a dirt road to far off paddocks and did a heap of welding on an old Chaser bin. That work was hard but rewarding and now driving tractors towing field bins and driving the John Deere 9770 harvester is just fabulous. If you are retired but want something great to do, then give our farmers a hand; they really appreciate the help. **Roger**
- Please don't forget that there are NZDF pers doing our bit out here too and having a ball. Working alongside a 65 yr old RAN and 69 yr old RAAF. The ANZAC spirit is alive and well! I am based at Rowena. Having more fun than I could have believed. The best boss ever and he is only 25. Such an amazing and talented human being. Not sure he knows how to handle us yet! The poor man is used to back packers and we are just a bit different. **Brett**