



# ROAD TO RECOVERY

## State funding pledge the first step in journey to help PTSD battlers

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GERRY Garard always knew he had to do something to help war veterans battling with PTSD, but it wasn't until three

years ago that he worked out how.

The Vietnam veteran has first-hand understanding of the horrors of war, but following a long career dominated by roles in corporate management, decided to dedicate his later life to assisting others.

Alongside wife, former gold medal winning Hockeyroo and

tax expert Renita, Mr Garard assembled a team of experts in everything from mental health to civil engineering to form 4 Aussie Heroes Foundation.

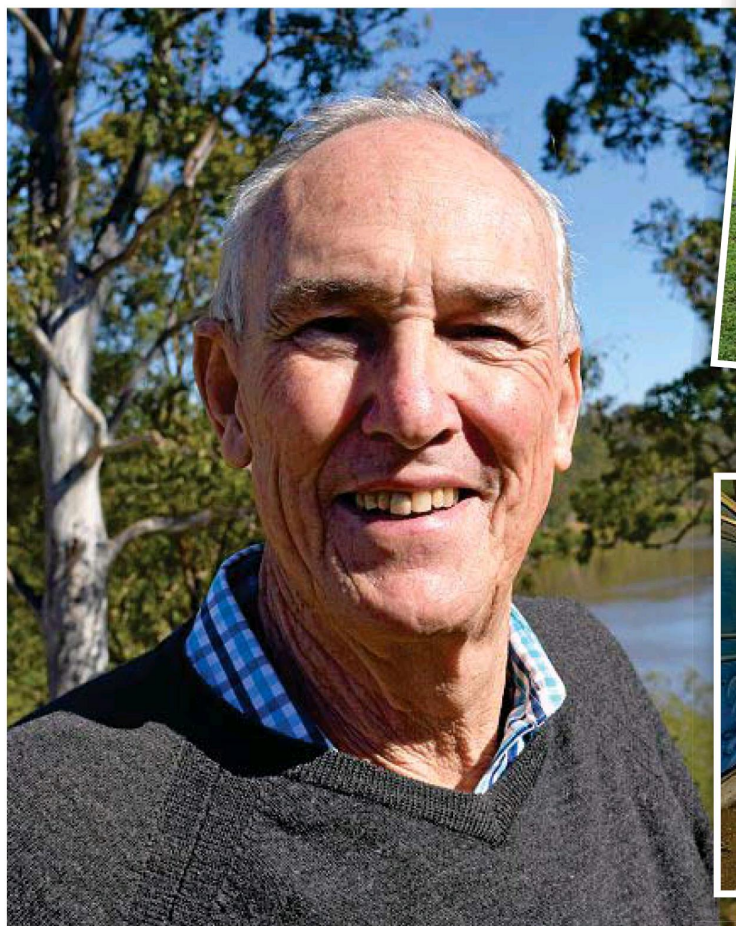
The group staged its first 12-day equine therapy program in the Scenic Rim region in March but Mr Garard has bigger plans on his mind.

"PTSD and related mental

health issues as a result of the trauma being experienced by our first responders in serving us, are on the increase," Mr Garard said.

"Suicide, substance abuse and domestic violence is escalating. The families are also paying a horrendous price."

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**HELPING VETERANS:** 4 Aussie Heroes Foundation chairman Gerry Garard wants to create a retreat for former military and emergency services personnel suffering from PTSD. **INSET TOP:** Physical exercise forms a big part of the rehabilitation program. **INSET ABOVE:** Equine therapy is included. Photo: Andrew Korner

# Win for Aussie fighters

## Foundation's equine therapy vision gets government fund boost

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At the centre of Mr Garard's vision is planning for a dedicated retreat, to be known as Camp Courage. It will be constructed at Limestone Ridges, about 25km south of Ipswich.

It is from this home base that Mr Garard hopes to accommodate groups of a dozen former defence and emergency services personnel at a time.

The centre would be open to guests from anywhere in Australia who are suffering from

post traumatic stress disorder and associated problems as a result of their service.

Mr Garard said the centre would employ world best practice rehabilitation programs, including Equine Assisted Therapy, making the most of the rural setting

"It is a 12-day program that focusses on everything from equine therapy, to canine therapy and support, exercise and diet," he said.

"That is where we are different and unique. There is nothing

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else like this in Australia."

The group received a recent boost in its quest to fund the es-



**The land at Limestone Ridges where the foundation plans to build.**

timated \$4.5 million Camp Courage project, winning an \$84,000 grant from the

Queensland Gambling Community Benefit Fund to cover the construction of the horse arena.

The centre will also include seven cabins for its guests and two for staff, a caravan park with five van sites, a group meeting and therapy building and gym.

Further funding will be sought from Federal and State governments. The foundation aims to contribute one third of the cost, or roughly \$1.5 million.