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**Statement to support FOI Release 001/16/17**

On 11 April 2011, following the 'ADFA Skype' incident, the then Minister for Defence announced a series of reviews into aspects of the culture of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Department of Defence.

In response to these reviews and the work of the independently raised Defence Abuse Response Taskforce, Defence has undertaken an extensive range of measures to improve its culture, complaint reporting, investigation and complainant support mechanisms.

Defence released its cultural reform strategy, *Pathway to Change*, on 7 March 2012 which articulates Defence's cultural intent that '*we are trusted to defend, proven to deliver and respectful always*'. By the end of 2015, Defence had finalised 96 per cent of the *Pathway to Change* key actions and recommendations. Reinforcement of *Pathway to Change* strategies will continue into 2017 and beyond through continued policy implementation and revision.

Significant action to improve reporting and management of incidents has also occurred through the establishment of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO), which offers support to victims and advice to managers.

SeMPRO is also responsible for Sexual Ethics Education in Defence, and jointly with the Australian Defence Force Investigative Service (ADFIS) delivers victim support and management training to ADF Command courses. ADFIS employs qualified investigators who take a victim-centric approach to sexual investigations to ensure the preferences and wishes of the victim are always respected.

In addition to existing complaint and support mechanisms in Defence, the Defence Force Ombudsman's role will be broadened with effect from 1 December 2016 to provide an independent complaint and support mechanism for allegations of abuse in Defence.

The unique Restorative Engagement Program has provided complainants with positive personal outcomes in acknowledging historical incidents of abuse, some dating back to the 1940's. Some 350 senior Defence leaders have participated in this

program. Their involvement in face-to-face meetings with complainants has provided significant insight into the experiences of some ADF members and the need for cultural change.

Defence has established an evaluation process to measure performance on cultural change. This is being achieved through a range of surveys, activities undertaken by the Inspector-General ADF (IGADF) and in particular, collaboration with the independent Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) in conducting reviews of Defence's cultural reform progress.

Defence continues to learn, modify its procedures and train staff based on feedback from these agencies ensuring it meets the cultural and structural reform required to make it a fair, equitable and just workplace for all.