Technology Use and Wellbeing Key Findings

Demographic characteristics of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF

- More than half of Transitioned ADF members remained in the ADF as Reservists (55.8%). Of Transitioned ADF, 25.7% were Active Reservists.

- Just over one fifth of the Transitioned ADF were estimated to have been medically discharged.

- The most commonly reported reasons for transition were 'impact of service life on family' (10.2%), 'better employment prospects in civilian life' (7.2%), 'mental health problems' (6.5%) and 'physical health problems' (4.3%).

- Approximately 84% of the Transitioned ADF were either working or engaged in some purposeful activity, with 62.8% being employed. Just over 5.5% of the Transitioned ADF had retired.

- More than 43% of Transitioned ADF members reported accessing DVA-funded treatment through either a DVA White Card (39.4%) or DVA Gold Card (4.2%).

- Just over 40% of the Transitioned ADF and 36% of the 2015 Regular ADF reported having a diploma or university qualification.

- There were no significant differences in housing stability between the Transitioned ADF and the 2015 Regular ADF, with more than 93% estimated to have been in stable housing in the previous two months.

- Twice as many members of the Transitioned ADF were classified as medically unfit compared to the 2015 Regular ADF.

Internet use and attitudes to using the internet in Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF

Frequency, duration and timing of internet use

- Internet use among Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF was high, with over 95% using the internet at least every day.

- Approximately half of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF reported using the internet 1–2 hours daily, while approximately a quarter used it 3–4 hours daily.

- Use of the internet after 11 pm was common in one third of the Transitioned ADF and one quarter of the 2015 Regular ADF.

Attitudes to using the internet

- One in four Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF reported that they talked about different things with people online than face to face, and that they went online when going through a difficult time.

- One in five Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF reported that going online when going through a difficult time made them feel better.

Probable 30-day disorder and duration and timing of internet use

- Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF with a probable disorder spent more hours on the internet than those without a probable disorder.

- Among the Transitioned ADF, those with a probable disorder were significantly more likely to report using the internet after 11 pm compared to those without a probable disorder (45.1% vs 28.4%).

Probable 30-day disorder and attitudes to using the internet

- For the Transitioned ADF and Regular ADF, those with a probable disorder were significantly more likely than those without a probable disorder to report that it was easier to be themselves online, and they talked about private things when online.

- Transitioned ADF with a probable disorder were significantly more likely than those without a probable disorder to report that they talked about different things with people online, they went online more often when going through a difficult time, and when they are going through a difficult time and they went online it made them feel better.

Use of new and emerging technology in Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF

Use of apps and wearable devices

- Half of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF reported using new and emerging technologies. Of these, over 80% used apps, while almost a third used wearable devices.

- Of those who did not use new and emerging technologies, about three quarters did not use them because they had 'no need or interest', it was 'too expensive' or it was a 'privacy issue'.

- Of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used apps and wearable devices, just under half reported using them to improve their health and wellbeing.

- A quarter of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used apps and wearable devices for health and wellbeing used them to 'improve sleep'.

Probable 30-day disorder and use of new and emerging technology

Among those who reported using new or emerging technologies <u>for the purpose of improving health and wellbeing:</u>

- 20.9% of Transitioned ADF and 7.8% of 2015 Regular ADF met the criteria for a probable disorder.

- Transitioned ADF with a probable disorder were significantly more likely to use new or emerging technologies to improve their mood and less likely to use them to improve their fitness than those without a probable disorder.

Among those who reported using new or emerging technologies <u>for reasons other than to improve health and wellbeing</u>:

- 25.2% of the Transitioned ADF and 14.1% of the 2015 Regular ADF met the criteria for a probable disorder.

- Transitioned ADF with a probable disorder were significantly less likely to use them for fun and recreation compared to Transitioned ADF with no probable disorder.

Use of the internet to seek mental health information or help (for self or other)

Use of the internet to seek help or information for, or to manage, mental health issues

- One in four Transitioned ADF and one in six 2015 Regular ADF used the internet to seek help or information for, or to manage, mental health issues.

- A higher proportion of Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF with a probable disorder reported using the internet to seek help or information or to manage mental health issues than those without a probable disorder.

- Among those with a probable 30-day disorder, Transitioned ADF were more likely than 2015 Regular ADF to report using the internet to seek information on mental health issues.

Suitability, usefulness and level of satisfaction with using the internet to seek help or information, or to manage mental health

- The majority of Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used the internet to seek information about mental health reported that they received the kind of information they required.

- The majority of Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used the internet to seek help or information or to manage mental health reported the internet helped them either a little or a lot.

- Almost 18% of Transitioned ADF and 13.2% of 2015 Regular ADF reported being dissatisfied with the information they received.

Use of the internet for one's own mental health

Frequency and timing of seeking help or information about their *own* mental health

- Among those who reported using the internet to seek help or information or manage mental health issues, almost 30% of the Transitioned ADF (29.1%) and 19.8% of the 2015 Regular ADF used the internet to seek help or access information about their own mental health at least once per month.

- While frequent use (at least once a month) was more common among Transitioned ADF with a probable disorder than those without (42.5% and 18.4%), the majority of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF used the internet infrequently (less than once per month) for their own mental health (52.3% and 68.8%), if at all (3.7% and 2.1%).

Talking online to peers, family or friends about one's *own* mental health

- Almost one in three Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used the internet to seek help or information or manage mental health issues reported talking online to a peer, family member or friend about their *own* mental health (33.4% and 30.6% respectively), with the majority finding this helpful (63.3% and 75.2% respectively).

- Approximately one third of the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF with a probable disorder who used the internet to manage their mental health reported talking online with a peer, family member or friend about their mental health (37.2% and 37.0% respectively).

- In general, younger Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used the internet to seek help or information or manage mental health issues were most likely to talk online to a peer, family member or friend, with nearly half of those aged 18–27 endorsing this.

Talking online to other people (e.g. online forums, chatrooms, blogs, MSN or Gmail messenger) about one's *own* mental health

- Just under 20% (17.4%) of the Transitioned ADF and just over 5% of the 2015 Regular ADF (6.2%) with a probable disorder and who used the internet to manage mental health, reported talking to others on the internet about their own mental health.

- Among the Transitioned ADF, a greater proportion of those with a probable disorder than those without reported talking to others on the internet about their own mental health (17.4% vs 8.4%).

- Among the 2015 Regular ADF, there was little difference in the proportion of those with a probable disorder compared to those without a probable disorder who reported talking to others on the internet about their own mental health (6.2% vs 8.1%).

Talking online to a psychologist or other mental health professional about one's *own* mental health

- Almost one in 10 Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who used the internet to manage mental health reported talking online to a psychologist or other mental health professional about their mental health (7.9% and 9.5%), with the majority finding this helpful (65.3% and 59.7%).

- Among those who used the internet to manage mental health who had a probable 30-day disorder, an estimated 7.2% of Transitioned ADF and an estimated 3.7% of 2015 Regular ADF reported using the internet to talk to a psychologist or other health professional about their own mental health.

- Transitioned ADF in the 18–27 age band (9.8%) and 2015 Regular ADF aged 28–37 (17.1%) were most likely to talk online to a psychologist or other mental health professional about their own mental health, followed by those aged 58+ (13.4%).

Barriers to talking online about one's own mental health in the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF

Barriers to talking online about one's own mental health

- Among the Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF who reported using the internet to seek help or information or manage mental health issues, but reported they did NOT talk to someone online about their own mental health, the main barriers were a preference for face-to-face contact (59.0% and 70.2% respectively), concerns about lack of privacy and confidentiality (50.4% and 63.3% respectively) and concerns about lack of website security (41.2% and 45.7%). Concerns about the validity of information online was also a factor (36.5% and 35.8%).

- Transitioned ADF were significantly less likely than 2015 Regular ADF to report concerns about a lack of privacy/confidentiality as a barrier to talking about their mental health issues online.

- Transitioned ADF were significantly more likely than 2015 Regular ADF to report unaffordable technology as a barrier preventing them from talking about their mental health issues online.

Mental health status and the use of mental health websites by Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF

Use of the internet to seek help or information for, or manage mental health issues

- Overall, about 40% of the Transitioned ADF and 20–40% of the 2015 Regular ADF with a 30-day probable disorder (including PTSD, anxiety/depression and alcohol use) and /or 12-month suicidal ideation and behaviour used the internet to seek help or information for or manage mental health issues.

- Of those with subsyndromal disorder, approximately 30% of the Transitioned ADF and 16–30% of the 2015 Regular ADF used the internet to seek help or information for or manage mental health issues.

- Internet use to seek help, information or manage mental health issues was generally higher in those with more mental health symptoms.

- There was no association between self-reported stigma and perceived barriers to care and use of the internet to seek help, information or to manage mental health issues among Transitioned ADF and 2015 Regular ADF members with probable PTSD, alcohol disorder or 12-month suicidal ideation and behaviour.

- Among those with probable anxiety/depression or depressive episodes, Transitioned ADF reporting at least one mental health stigma or at least one perceived barrier were more likely to use the internet to seek help or information or manage mental health issues than those with no stigma or barriers.

- Among those with probable anxiety/depression or probable generalised anxiety disorder and no barriers, Transitioned ADF members (30.5%) were more likely to use the internet to seek help or information for or manage mental health issues than the 2015 Regular ADF (8.6%).

Technology use and psychological distress in Transitioned ADF members aged 18–25: Comparison with young adults aged 18–25 in the Australian community

Frequency and duration of internet use

- A significantly greater proportion of Transitioned ADF young adults reported using the internet every day or almost every day (98.5%) compared to the Young and Well cohort (91.2%).

- Transitioned ADF young adults (27.2%) were significantly more likely to report that they used the internet for 5 to 9 hours on a week day compared to the Young and Well cohort (15.9%).

Internet use after 11 pm

- Transitioned ADF young adults (46.8%) were significantly less likely to use the internet after 11 pm compared to the Young and Well Cohort (66.0%).

Use of internet for mental health

- The Transitioned ADF young adults (27.4%) were significantly less likely to report using the internet to seek help for or manage mental health issues than the Young and Well Cohort (41.5%).

- Of those who indicated they had used the internet for mental health issues, the Transitioned ADF young adults were:

    – significantly less likely to find it helpful for getting the kind of information they needed in relation to mental health compared to the Young and Well cohort (very helpful: 7.7% vs 41.2%; not at all helpful: 15.4% vs 1.2%).

    – significantly less likely to report it helped them deal more effectively with mental health problems compared to the Young and Well cohort (helped a little 30.9% vs 53.9%; helped a lot: 6.4% vs 26.2%).

    – significantly more likely to endorse being 'somewhat dissatisfied' (20.5% vs 4.2%) and significantly less likely to endorse being 'very satisfied' (7.1% vs 20.7%) with the information they received on the internet in relation to mental health compared to the Young and Well cohort.

Psychological distress and internet use

- Levels of psychological distress were significantly higher in the Transitioned ADF young adults than in young adults in the Australian community (18.6% vs 5.4%).

- Of those with moderate/high levels of psychological distress:

    – the Transitioned ADF young adults reported using the internet for a longer duration (5–10+ hours) (38.7%) compared to the Young and Well cohort (20.1%).

    – the Transitioned ADF young adults (50.1%) were significantly less likely to use the internet after 11 pm compared to the Young and Well cohort (70.7%).