

Mental Health Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Mental Health Advisory Group (MHAG) is convened to provide confidential, strategic and practical advice to identify solutions that will improve the mental health and wellbeing of ADF personnel and their families. MHAG brings together a range of stakeholders, drawing on their knowledge and experience in mental health service development, clinical practice, research, personnel policy and the requirements of the military occupational environment of the ADF.

Membership

Membership is comprised of permanent members (by position), invited members, and guests:

a. Permanent Members

The following organisations will be asked to send representatives on a permanent basis:

Organisation	Position
Defence Community Organisation	Director General
Defence Families of Australia	National Convener
Department of Veterans' Affairs	Assistant Secretary, Mental and Social Health
Garrison Health Operations	Director General
Health Capability	Director General
Navy People	Director General
Personnel – Air Force	Director General
Personnel – Army	Director General
Strategic Health Coordination	Director General
Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service	National Manager

b. Invited Members

Up to seven individuals may be selected as Invited Members on the basis of their individual expertise on mental health and wellbeing (rather than as representatives of professional or constituency groups) and will be invited to join for a period of two years. Membership may be renewed after this period at the discretion of the Convenor.

Invited Members may resign from the Panel at any time upon giving notice in writing to the Convenor. It is preferred that the member allow as much notice as possible to allow for a replacement member to be appointed.

c. **Guests**

Guest experts may be invited at the discretion of the Convenor to meet an identified need or subject matter under discussion at a particular meeting.

Convenor & Chair

The Director General of the Mental Health, Psychology and Rehabilitation Branch (MHP&R) will be the MHAG Convenor and Chair.

The Convenor may nominate a representative to chair the meeting in their absence.

The Chair will guide the meetings according to the agenda and time available, and ensure all discussion items end with a decision, action or definite outcome.

The Minutes will be the only authoritative record of decisions taken at the meetings.

Secretariat

Secretariat duties will be the responsibility of the Director of Strategic and Operational Health, assisted by the Executive and Project Support team.

Meetings

Up to four meetings may be convened each year, at the discretion of the Convenor. Dates are to be set at least six weeks in advance. Meetings may be held over one or two days depending on the agenda.

Lunch and morning/afternoon tea will be provided where appropriate.

Accountability

The Group's role and functions are advisory in nature. It is not a decision making forum and will not consider issues or outcomes on specific cases or with operational matters. Accountability for the delivery of mental health care arrangements and decision making remains with Commander Joint Health Command.

Outcomes of the Group's discussions will be reported to the Vice Chief of the Defence Force.

Role and Functions

Members and Guests are to provide:

- a. independent and distinctive advice on ways in which the mental health and wellbeing needs of the ADF community can be addressed;
- b. guidance on issues and developments within the wider Australian community that may impact on the ADF mental health and wellbeing strategy;
- c. advice on the progress of the ADF Mental Health Reform Process and feedback on programs and service delivery arrangements; and
- d. suggestions on strategic partnerships that enable Defence to improve quality of care and contribute to an integrated approach to mental health care.

Travel and Accommodation

Travel and accommodation for non-Defence interstate members will be arranged and paid for by the Department of Defence, up to the equivalent of non-Senior Leadership Group (SLG) rates current at the time of the meeting.

Communication with the Media

Members and Guests who receive requests from the media or any other sources for information or interviews on issues discussed at MHAG meetings are to refer all such requests to the Convenor and take no other action unless approved in writing by the Convenor.

Disclosure of Personal Information

Members and Guests are asked to acknowledge that their names, official positions, relevant expertise and biographical details may be included on Defence documentation, including Defence websites.

Review

The Convenor will periodically consult with MHAG Members on the adequacy of the terms of reference and satisfaction with the conduct of MHAG and its impact.