



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Defence**

# Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2017–22

Respectful, trusted and proven to deliver



2012

2017

Defending Australia and its National Interests  
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# How our culture has evolved

In 2012 Defence embarked on a major program of cultural change called Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture. Pathway to Change embraced all aspects of how Defence works and how it acts, at the individual level and as a whole.

The purpose of Pathway to Change was for Defence to renew its commitment to its core values and to build trust with the Government, the Australian community and, importantly, Defence people. The central focus of Pathway to Change was on values, attitudes and behaviours. Initiatives under Pathway to Change focused on strengthening the capacity of the Australian Defence Force members and the Australian Public Servants, along with Defence Industry personnel, to work together to deliver Defence capability for Australia.

The program had an initial implementation period of five years with 175 cultural reform key actions and recommendations.

All 175 actions and recommendations are now completed. Key actions have included:

- Establishment of the Sexual Misconduct and Prevention Response Office, including the introduction of a range of education programs, and the roll-out of bystander awareness training. Between 2015 and 2017 the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office has briefed over 46,000 Defence personnel;
- Establishment of the Restorative Engagement Program, which for some has provided positive outcomes in acknowledging historical incidents of abuse;
- Addressing the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force through strategies to ensure women's safety, promoting gender equality, and increasing the participation and advancement of women in Defence through targeted mentoring, education, training and career development. The 'Women in Defence' report is prepared annually and provides the Government, and the Australian public with a measure of our progress;

- Removing gender restrictions from combat role employment categories;
- Development and implementation of the ADF Alcohol Management Strategy;
- Implementation of a more contemporary employment model, to enable the generation and sustainment of Australian Defence Force capability through greater workplace flexibility. Six of the seven service categories in the 'Total Workforce Model', have been implemented. The wider range of employment options for the ADF workforce also has the benefit of meeting a range of individual needs;
- Improvements to Workplace Health and Safety, including the implementation of the ADF Mental Health Strategy and the introduction of the Sentinel system to better capture and monitor work, health and safety incidents;
- The introduction of a Commanders and Managers Guide to Responding to Family and Domestic Violence which provides information on: responding to victims and perpetrators; identify warning signs of violence, and Defence policies, entitlements and internal and external support services; and
- The integration of agreed values and behaviours as core foundations of Defence education and training programs.

A critical underpinning of our cultural reform efforts has been to further capability through attracting and retaining a more diverse workforce. Strategies and programs have been implemented to increase the opportunities for women, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They have been aimed at removing barriers so that Defence can benefit from the contribution of all people, regardless of gender, background or sexual orientation. Since 2012, clear gains have been made, including:

- The increased representation of women in the Australian Defence Force and Australian Public Service. This has included greater numbers of women applying

and being recruited to the Australian Defence Force as well as more development opportunities and improved employment pathways for women to reach senior leadership roles. The number of women in the senior executive service in Defence has increased by 33 per cent.

- Increased pre-employment programs and more tailored recruitment and employment pathways have contributed to a greater number of Indigenous Australians joining the Australian Defence Force and Australian Public Service; and
- Defence has become a more inclusive employer for people with a disability, rated in the top five employers in Australia on the Disability Access and Inclusion Index. Programs in place that are furthering Defence capability include the Defence Administrative Assistance Program, now in operation at eight establishments across Australia, and the Dandelion@Defence Program delivering a dedicated cyber-security capability through the unique skills and attributes of those with autism.

Despite such progress, however, there is more work to be done. There has been important learning as to where cultural change has been difficult and where further focus is required. This is most evident in regard to reducing the incidence of unacceptable behaviour and in implementing further improvements to how complaints of unacceptable behaviour are managed.

While there has been a decrease in the number of complaints, work-related unacceptable behaviours, particularly bullying and discrimination, continue to be the most common types experienced in the workplace and satisfaction and confidence with the complaint process remains an area of concern. Women continue to experience unacceptable behaviour at higher rates than male counterparts and females are twice as likely to experience sexual-related unacceptable behaviour.

Where Defence has invested most effort in communicating expected standards of behaviour, demonstrable change has been seen. This is particularly evidenced in Defence's training establishments where initiatives have resulted in a reduction in

incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The four-year collaboration with the Australian Human Rights Commission, has been important in monitoring these cultural change efforts, and making recommendations on how to further improve and overcome impediments to reform.

Since 2015, through implementation of the First Principles Review of Defence, leaders are being held more accountable for their actions and for the workplace behaviours of their teams. This has been an important step forward, in moving from the implementation of actions and recommendations of Pathway to Change 2012–2017, to more deeply embedding positive workplace norms which support all of our people and help us to attract the best people in the future.

# Defence Culture 2017 and Beyond

Defence has and is changing. Against an urgent need to improve how we behave and manage unacceptable personal and professional behaviour, we have moved towards an environment where leaders at all levels are being held accountable for creating a positive culture. We have worked hard to strengthen the best in our culture, to hold to account those that do not meet our standards, and to behave as One Defence.

The experience of implementing Pathway to Change has also shown us that focusing on culture change and building professionalism and accountability strengthens our capacity to deliver for the Government, the Australian community, and for our people. Our conclusion is that Pathway to Change remains as relevant to Defence and its future now as it did in 2012. The work of culture change must continue so we can continue to build an organisation capable of meeting Government objectives, sustaining the trust and commitment of the Australian community, and of those people who work in Defence. We must build on the work of recent years in practical ways that strengthen our professionalism, our accountability and our leadership at all levels.

The Defence White Paper 2016 establishes our strategic direction. The First Principles Review establishes the type of organisation, One Defence, that is best suited to implementing that direction. The One Defence approach is built on the foundation of an inclusive and diverse culture. This is a culture that is capable of attracting and keeping the best talent Australia has to offer and which capitalises on the contribution of a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives to further team performance and combat effectiveness. It is about a culture that recognises and rewards high performance as well as the behaviours that define us as respectful, trusted and proven to deliver.

To build on what we have learnt and to ensure that Pathway to Change continues to drive culture change in Defence, we must have a shared understanding and commitment as to what needs to be done. In 2016 we had Defence wide conversations which provided valuable feedback. This guided the development of a refreshed statement of cultural intent and the priority areas of focus for 2017–2022.

# Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2017–2022

## Respectful, Trusted and Proven to Deliver

To deliver on our Mission, to defend Australia and its national interests, we must continue to evolve our culture. Building on the five year implementation period for Pathway to Change (2012–2017), Defence has refreshed its cultural intent statement and identified cultural reform priorities for 2017–2022.

To maximise our capability, sustain the trust of Government, the Australian community and each other we must take the best in our culture forward, and hold to account those who do not meet our standards. This means building on our recent progress in creating a more inclusive culture to drive high performance. It means strengthening our professionalism, our accountability, and leadership at all levels.



# Our Cultural Intent

- We act with the highest standards of professionalism, underpinned by Defence values and our ethical standards.
- We are guided by the core value of respect. Respect for each other, for those we work with in Government and in industry, both here and overseas, and for the many communities in which we live and work.
- We work together to harness the diverse backgrounds and experiences of those in our teams to deliver a capable and agile joint fighting force.
- We are building a diverse workforce with an inclusive culture, so every person is able to make their best contribution to deliver on our mission and so the community seeks us out as a workplace of choice.
- We are accountable for our actions, and hold others to account for theirs.
- We reflect on how to improve our performance in all areas, from the quality of our policy advice to Government to the conduct of operations in serving our nation.
- We are all leaders and as leaders we role model a One Defence approach. We will be more accountable for organisational performance and ensure our decisions are in the best interest of Defence as a whole.
- We provide regular feedback, do more to recognise and reward strong performance and address areas of poor performance.
- We reinforce the importance, and find new ways, to support and build the strength, health and resilience of our people and the organisation.

# Our Priorities

## Leadership accountability

Our leadership will determine what sort of organisation Defence will be. We want leadership that empowers people and teams to do their best work in planning, providing quality advice and delivering capability in all its dimensions. Through the One Defence leadership behaviours, we will embed an organisational culture where leadership, professionalism and corporate behaviour in support of One Defence are valued and rewarded. Our leaders will be judged both for their results and how those results have been achieved.

We will strengthen leadership capability so that our leaders are confident in their ability to empower their people, are able to seek out and use alternative ways of thinking, and are more skilled and active in managing the behaviour and performance of their teams. We will strengthen individual and organisational accountability through effective performance management by—and of—our leadership. We will expect our leaders to be more conscious of their own areas for personal and professional growth, of the need to learn from their own performance and that of their teams, and of the importance of giving and receiving feedback.

## Capability through inclusion

Inclusion strengthens Defence capability. A just and inclusive workplace instils confidence and trust among our people and the Australian community of which we are a part. Attracting and retaining people that represent the Australian population in its diversity ensures that we are getting the best talent that Australia can provide. Building a workforce comprised of teams that are diverse in background and experience will help to ensure broader thinking in the development of policy, capability options and in our conduct of operations.

To achieve a more inclusive and capable organisation, we will foster work practices which enable men and women, people of different cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation, and those with a disability to contribute to their best potential. We will provide greater education on how respect for individual differences and more inclusive approaches improve Defence and team performance. We will further the representation of women, Indigenous Australians and people from culturally diverse backgrounds, and increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We will measure our success by setting recruitment targets, and through examining the effect of our retention and career progression measures and our more inclusive workplace practices. We will expect our leaders to role model the behaviour that reflects an inclusive workplace.

## Ethics and workplace behaviours

Our personal and professional ethics define us as individuals and govern the way we behave. Ethics underpin our identity as members of Defence and are not dependent upon changing situations. They determine our reputation with Government and the Australian community as well as underpin the community's confidence in us as a trusted employer.

We will foster a workplace environment where all members can thrive and reach their potential, where poor behaviour is called out, and where people are respected as individuals and are valued as important contributors individually and through their team. Respect, responsibility and accountability are the foundations of such a workplace. Our supervisors will actively manage relationships in the workplace and across their teams in ways that strengthen respect and accountability, including holding people to account for poor behaviour and recognising people for their achievements.

## Health, wellness and safety

Our service members carry risks that are not comparable to other organisations. Our world-class training equips our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women to manage these risks. Beyond these expected and expertly managed risks in training and on operations,

every member of our organisation has a fundamental right to be safe in the workplace. This includes physical and psychological safety. Our ability to create a workplace characterised by respect for each individual and with a focus on safety, is one of the foundations of establishing trust in both the workforce and the broader community, and in building capability that is sustainable.

A strong, healthy and resilient workforce is the best means by which we can deliver what Government and the Australian community expects of us. Our focus is on creating a positive psychosocial environment to ensure the health, safety and well-being of our people. This encompasses:

- people understanding how their work contributes to Defence outcomes;
- rewarding and recognising our people for their whole contribution, including how they support and mentor others;
- work-life flexibility being available and respected;
- a zero tolerance for bullying, harassment and discrimination;
- ensuring the safety and well-being of our young people in employment programs and operations;
- an environment which supports people coming forward with mental health questions and concerns;
- being supportive and responsive on issues pertaining to family and domestic violence; and
- educating about and managing the negative impacts of alcohol and substance use and abuse.

## Workplace agility and flexibility

To meet the changes in our strategic environment we will build organisational agility. We will continually build the skills of our people and provide greater options for how people work and deploy these skills. We will create an organisation where our structures, processes and behaviours support more flexible career pathways and work practices. These are strategic business issues so the breadth of skills and capabilities can be optimised and so we can enable a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Our leaders will draw on the range of employment options to most effectively deliver capability through their people and build a culture where people feel empowered to have a conversation about flexibility. Flexible work is founded on mutual obligations so it will be dynamic and responsive to the changing needs of individuals, as well as the role and operational nature of Defence. There is no one size fits all model of how work must be done or what workplaces must look like. It is a capability imperative that we focus on understanding and removing cultural barriers to optimising all elements of Defence's workforce. This is a mindset shift and requires us to move beyond the view that flexible work is temporary or a gender issue. Flexible and agile employment will increasingly be the community norm, not the exception.

## Leading and developing integrated teams

The Defence workforce is large, complex and dynamic. The internal workforce comprises around 100,000 military and Australian Public Service personnel whose skills are categorised into hundreds of occupational groupings. This workforce is supported by contractors, service providers as well as Defence industry, who are recognised as fundamental inputs to capability. The mix of the workforce is continually adjusted in response to preparedness requirements, force design reviews and emerging capability requirements identified in the Defence White Paper. The challenge is optimising this mix so that each part of the Defence workforce is best equipped to deliver what is required.

The integrated nature of our workforce is a key enabler for delivering Defence's mission. We must develop our thinking, relationships, workforce management and design skills to fully harness the benefits that our integrated teams offer. This includes greater appreciation of the skills and thinking that people will bring from more varied employment experiences, how they can best contribute, and how to bring out the best from cultural differences when they arise.

We must also fully engage across government and private sectors to address some workforce challenges. In particular, the shortage of people with high level science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills is a national challenge that requires Defence to contribute to a whole of government response. As an organisation we must also improve our engagement with other government departments, industry and academia to enhance the development and sharing of critical skills that are in short supply.

## Implementation and Progress

Defence People Group will continue as the policy lead for organisational level cultural reform initiatives, as well as facilitating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of cultural reform in Defence. Groups and Services are expected to leverage enterprise level initiatives as appropriate, and where gaps exist in their local environment, to scope, develop and implement initiatives tailored to their context.

Cultural reform progress will be evaluated as part of Defence's regular enterprise performance reviews, with strategic oversight undertaken by the Enterprise Business Committee. Service and Group Business Plans, and the accompanying bi-annual Performance Reports which feed in to this cycle, will include the six cultural reform priorities for 2017–2022.



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