



Australian Government

Defence

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation

VETERAN TRANSITION STRATEGY



Veteran Transition Strategy

June 2023

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Requests and inquiries should be addressed to:

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¹ <<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C1968A00063>>



Minister's Foreword

Transitioning from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to a predominately civilian life is a significant life event. It is not a single point in time but rather an event that spans before, during and after a veteran leaves the ADF. This journey involves a broad range of service providers that are vital to ensuring we support transitioning veterans and their families as successfully as possible.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of improving the transition experience and is committed to ensuring that veterans and their families are prepared and supported through their transition journey.

We know that an improved transition experience is more likely to be achieved if everyone is working together to achieve the best transition outcomes for veterans and their families. This is why I am pleased to introduce the Veteran Transition Strategy (the Strategy).

The Strategy builds on the significant work already underway across the transition ecosystem. It outlines a shared vision for the transition experience and sets priorities for the next three years.

Through extensive consultations and engagement, current and former serving ADF members (veterans) and their families have shared their experiences and generously given their time to ensure the Strategy is robust, representative and fit for purpose.

Additionally, in 2021, experts from academia, industry, ex-service organisations (ESOs) and Government agencies came together to inform the priorities for inclusion in the Strategy.

This Strategy demonstrates our commitment to preparing and providing better support to those who have given so much in the service of our nation.

I want to thank each and every person who has contributed to the Strategy, particularly veterans and their families.

I look forward to working together on the priorities set out in this Strategy, and contributing to our vision of a more connected transition ecosystem that prepares and supports veterans and their families to lead successful and fulfilling civilian lives.

The Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

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The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, the Hon. Matt Keogh, MP visiting the Veterans and Families Hub in Wodonga.

SECTION 1



Director General Explosive Ordnance, Air Commodore Wade Evans (left) and Director General JSF Acquisition and Sustainment, Air Commodore Terry Saunderson speak with No 3 Security Forces Squadron personnel aboard a Protected Mobility Vehicle as part of the Senior Leadership Team visit to RAAF Base Edinburgh.

Purpose of the Veteran Transition Strategy

A shared vision is required for the transition ecosystem² to be able to best prepare and support veterans and families³ so they transition well and go on to live fulfilling lives. The purpose of this Veteran Transition Strategy is to align the transition ecosystem to this vision and also provide guidance on how the transition experiences and outcomes of veterans and families can be improved.

A range of factors can underpin how well an individual transitions into a predominately civilian life and in recognition that every transition journey is unique, this Strategy considers the individual circumstances of transitioning veterans and their families to support how services are developed and delivered. This is supported through a wellbeing approach.

Importantly, the Strategy outlines six priorities for the transition ecosystem to work towards, with a view to improving both the transition experience and the transition outcomes of veterans and their families. These priorities are listed below and are discussed further throughout the strategy:

- veterans and their families plan and prepare early for transition
- veterans and their families are aware of and able to access support appropriate to their needs
- families are engaged through transition
- veterans and their families have access to employment, education and skills opportunities
- financial wellbeing for veterans and their families
- veterans and their families feel supported and recognised.

The Strategy will be responsive to external influences to ensure currency and ecosystem alignment. External influences that may impact on transition include but are not limited to:

- advancements in the health, medical and wellbeing fields
- the rapidly changing nature of warfare
- the employment and workforce landscape which is directly impacted by advances in technology and by global events
- the findings and recommendations of future reviews, inquiries and research.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

The Royal Commission's final report is due to the Government in June 2024. The first interim report⁴ indicated that the Royal Commission will continue to focus on the contemporary veterans' experiences of leaving the ADF and ensuring systems are in place to support a smooth transition. It is anticipated that the Royal Commissioners will recommend further reforms to the transition ecosystem in a second interim report and the final report. The outcomes of the Royal Commission will be incorporated in the Strategy Action Plan to reflect any future recommendations.

2 Transition Ecosystem in the context of this Strategy includes veterans and their families, Defence including the Joint Transition Authority, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, ex-service organisations, veteran support and community groups including Veterans' and Families' Hubs, research and academic bodies, state, territory and other government agencies, and industry and employers.

3 Veteran in the context of this Strategy is a person who is serving or has served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Family refers to the people who have supported a veteran's ADF service, regardless of the time their association with the veteran commenced, and on whom the veteran relies to support them in their transition.

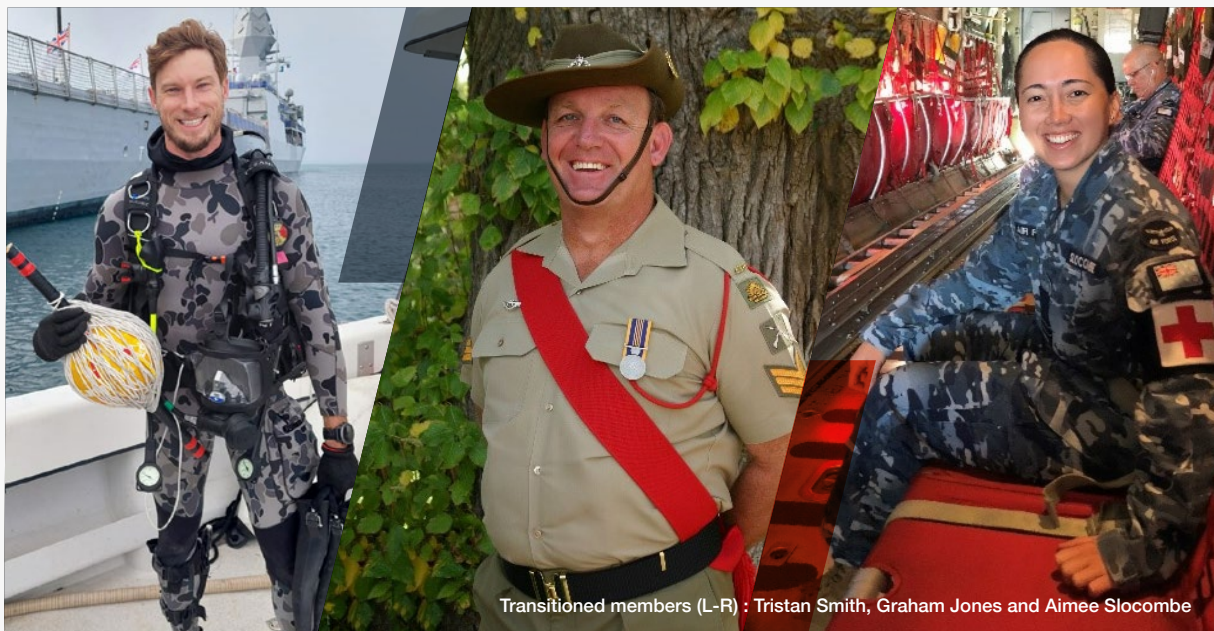
4 <<https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/interim-report>>

Approach to Developing the Veteran Transition Strategy

In developing the Strategy, a comprehensive information gathering exercise was undertaken that included research and consultation across the transition ecosystem. The research components included a review of existing studies, academic research, government reports and international benchmarking.⁵

In addition, in the second quarter of 2021, the Joint Transition Authority (JTA) within the Department of Defence undertook a series of consultation sessions to understand the experience of transitioning veterans and their families, and to identify potential improvements. Participants included current and former ADF members (veterans), families, ex-service organisations (ESOs), state and territory government agencies, academia and experts from across Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC).

The Strategy has also been informed by insights gained through a mapping process with over 90 service providers to understand transition experiences, as well as a roundtable of subject matter experts on transition led by the then Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel.



⁵ See Appendix B.



Plant Foreman Australian Army soldier Corporal Greg McKenzie from 6th Engineer Support Regiment during Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program 2022 at Gapuwiyak, in the Northern Territory.

SECTION 2

Understanding the Transition Ecosystem



(L-R) Flight Lieutenant Sophia Maling, Lieutenant Isabella Negus, Lieutenant Vicky Nguyen and Major Andy Carroll-Keays prior to embarking as part of Pacific Partnership 2022 on US Naval Hospital Ship, USNS Mercy, San Diego in California.

Transition and the Transition Ecosystem

The Strategy defines **transition as the journey of a veteran and their family from an ADF service-centered life to a predominately civilian life**. It goes beyond the point they transition from the ADF. Transition is not only about meeting a series of practical needs, it is a journey of identity, a series of emotional and cultural adjustments, and possible adjustment and evolution of familial and social relations. As transitioning veterans and their families all have their own diverse experiences and needs, the way an individual defines transition and the associated period will vary from person to person.

It is acknowledged that whilst an ADF member serves, their family also experiences rigors associated with service life, and therefore go through their own transition process and have their own individual needs.

It is further recognised that transition is not confined to when a veteran and their family permanently separate from the ADF, it can also be when a veteran moves from permanent service to being a Reservist under the ADF Total Workforce System.⁶

Veterans and families are able to access a range of services and support from Government and non-government bodies. These bodies make up the Transition Ecosystem and are listed below:

- Veterans and their families
- Defence, including the Joint Transition Authority
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation
- Ex-service organisations
- Veteran support and community groups including Veterans' and Families' Hubs
- Research and academic bodies
- State, territory and other government agencies
- Industry and employers.

Within the ecosystem various agencies and organisations take on different roles and veterans and families access their services depending on their levels of awareness and need before, during and post their separation from the ADF.

While there have been significant improvements within individual agencies and organisations, the ecosystem has not always been as well connected as it could be. In recent years there has been a concentrated effort to collectively harness the contributions of those in the ecosystem to better connect services, strengthen the focus on veterans and families transitioning well with enabling ready access to the right services at the right time. There is also greater recognition that actions during service can have downstream effects.

A transition ecosystem that is integrated and responsive to the needs of those navigating it will support the overall wellbeing⁷ of veterans and their families. This approach will provide a level of certainty for those transitioning, continually improving services and encouraging veterans and their families to take ownership of their transition.

6 The ADF Total Workforce System (TWS) provides Defence with the flexibility and agility it needs to meet current and future workforce demands. For individuals, the TWS recognises that there is a life outside of full-time ADF Service. To help individuals achieve the right balance between their personal commitments and service responsibilities, the TWS provides more options in the way people can serve.

7 For the purposes of this Strategy, the aligned Defence and DVA Wellbeing Factors are used to describe wellbeing. The factors are health, social support and connection, education and skills employment, income and financial wellbeing, safety and respect and recognition.

How has Transition Evolved?

Since 2017, transition has been examined through a number of reviews and inquiries. Figure 1 provides a high-level overview of the key reviews and inquiries with Appendix A providing further detail.

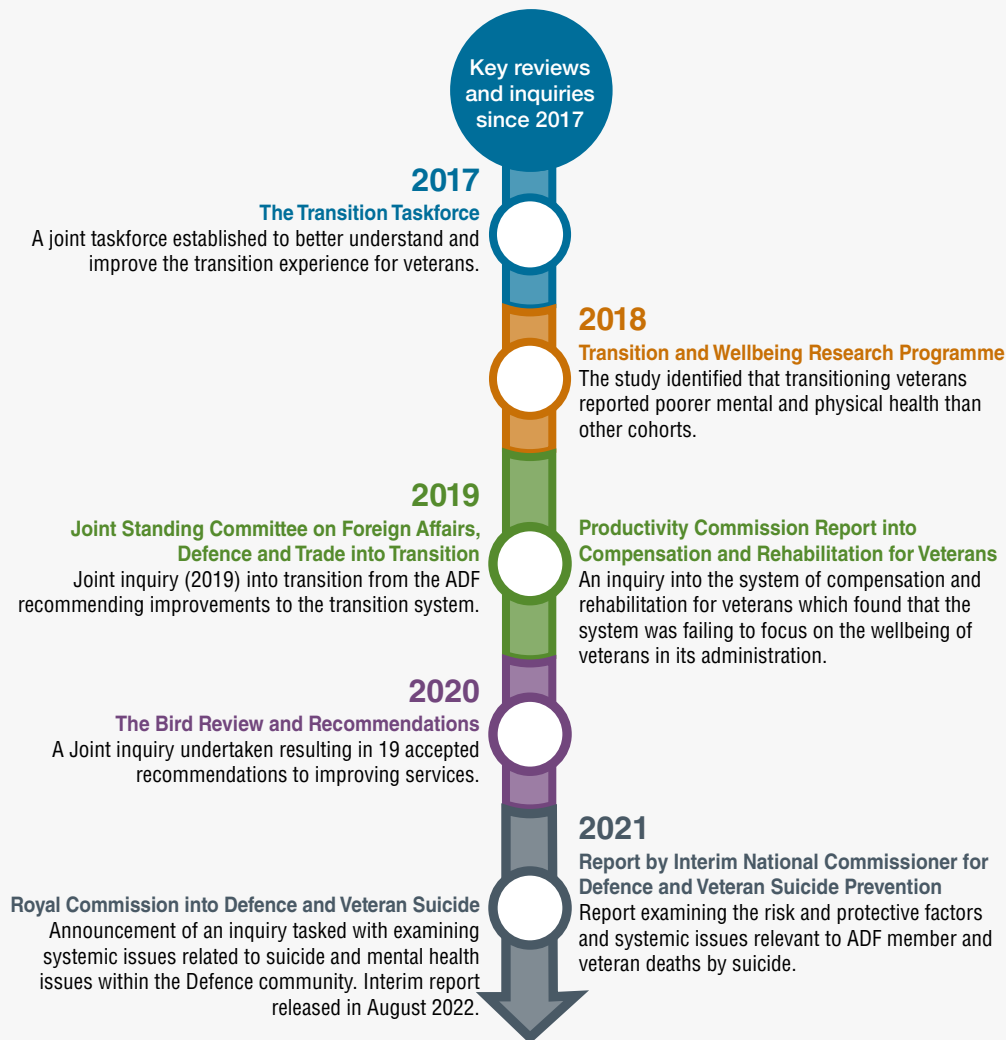


Figure 1: Key Transition Reviews and Inquiries

These activities have led to a number of improvements within Defence, DVA, CSC (Figure 2) and across the transition ecosystem more broadly. This has supported the evolution from an entitlement-based model based on length of service and mode of transition, to a needs-based model. With the purpose being one where service providers work together to focus on preparing transitioning veterans and their families, this includes supporting them to be a proactive participant in their own transition. It is imperative that the transition ecosystem continues to develop a needs-based approach to better identify veteran needs and facilitate the provision of targeted support.

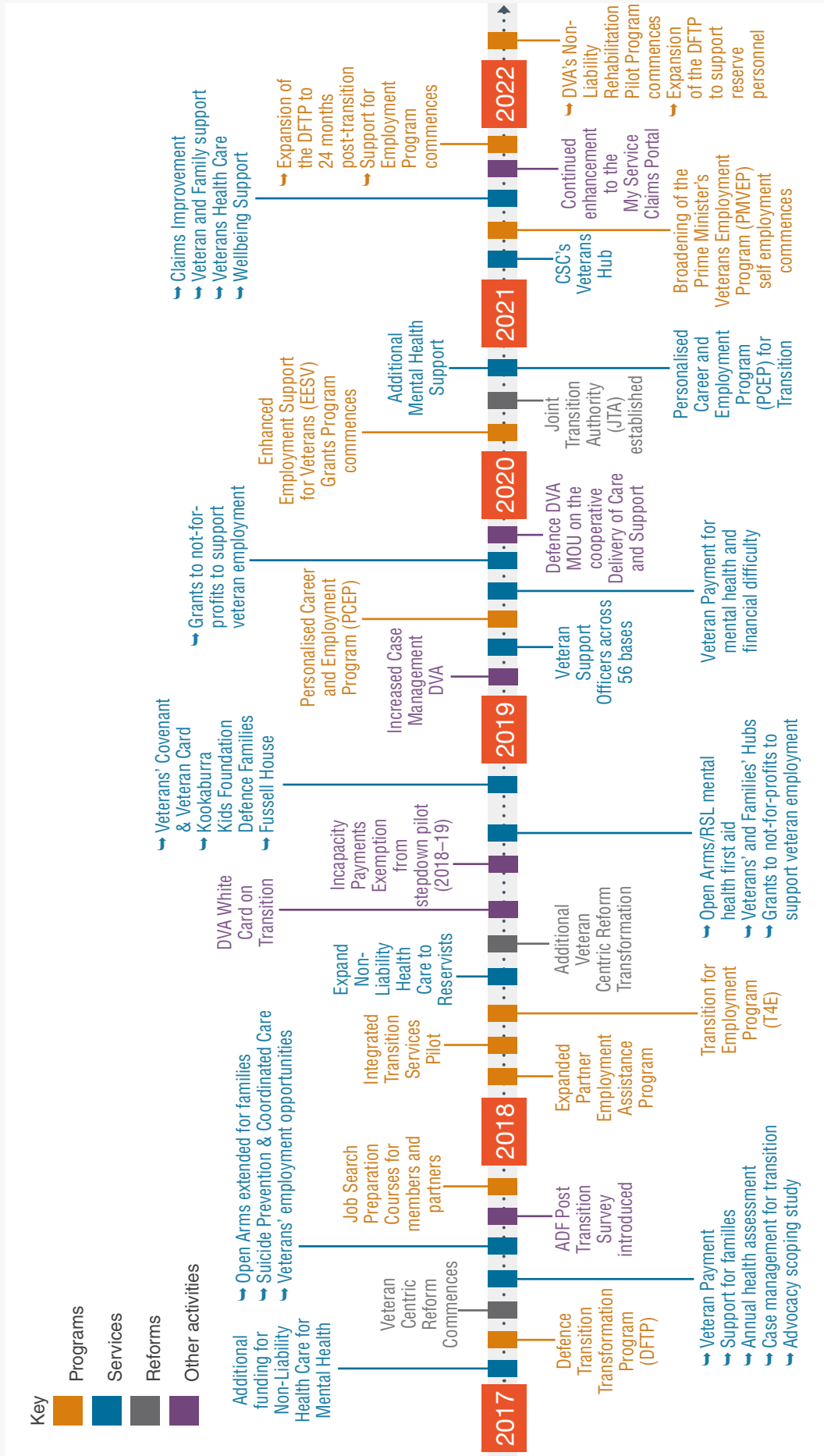


Figure 2: Timeline of Key Defence, DVA and CSC Transition Improvements since 2017

The Transition Landscape

Every individual who transitions undertakes a journey with its own set of unique circumstances and outcomes. The data shows transitions from the ADF comprises of a diverse cohort who can experience unique challenges. These challenges can be particularly difficult for some, including veterans who are either transitioning involuntarily for medical or other reasons, aged less than 30, of non-commissioned officer rank, or who have less than one year of service.⁸ Veterans who have a combination of these and other factors may also be at higher risk of difficult transition experiences.

The number of transitioning veterans rose to 6,696 in 2022. The forecast indicates a further increase for 2023 as the employment environment and a range of operational and workforce factors continue to place pressure on the transition ecosystem.

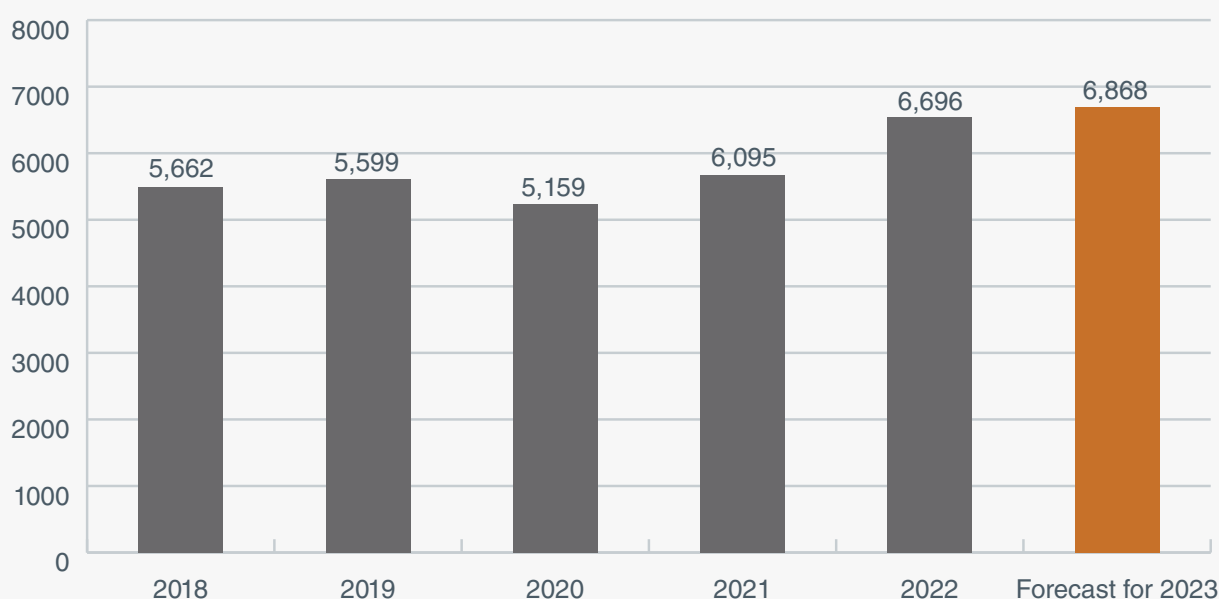


Figure 3: Number of ADF Members Transitioning by Calendar Year

Reference. Based on Defence data at 31 December, 2022

⁸ <www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/transition-and-wellbeing-research-programme>

Of these transitioning veterans there are distinct differences across Navy, Army and Air Force. The majority of yearly transitions are from the Army, consistent with it being the largest of the three Services. The roles, transition processes and historical transition outcomes also vary across the Service.

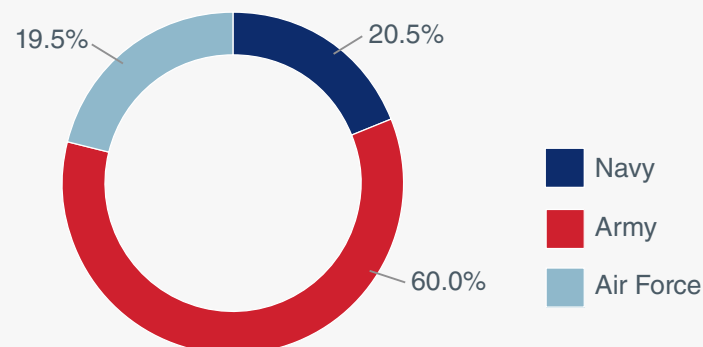


Figure 4: Number of Transitioning ADF Members by Service Arm

Reference. Based on Defence data from the previous 5 years up to 31 December, 2022

Most transitions remain voluntary, followed by medical and administrative.

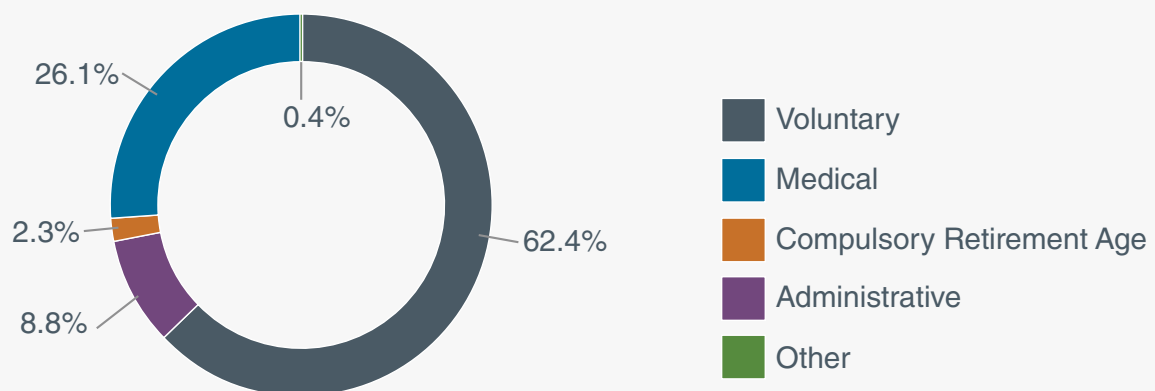


Figure 5: Number of Transitioning ADF Members by Mode of Separation

Reference. Based on Defence data from the previous 5 years up to 31 December, 2022

The age that veteran's transition can also affect their transition experience and outcomes.

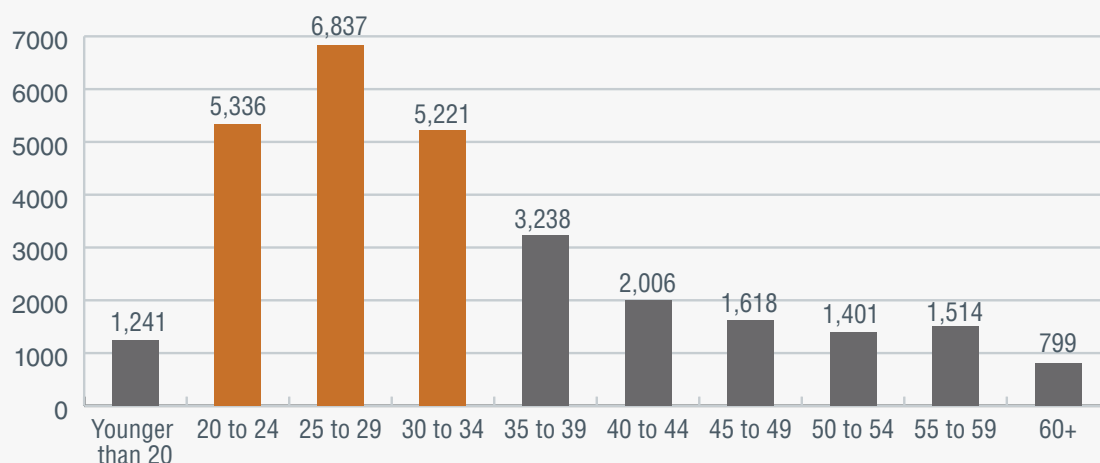


Figure 6: Number of Transitioning ADF Members by Age

Reference. Based on Defence data from the previous 5 years up to 31 December, 2022

SECTION 3

Improving Transition for Veterans and their Families



Marine Engineering Officer, Lieutenant Commander John Jerrett, of HMAS *Sirius* is greeted by his children upon his return home to Fleet Base West in Western Australia.

What Factors Influence Transition Experiences and Outcomes?

In understanding what it means to transition well for veterans and their families, it is important to recognise that there is no 'one size fits all' approach and the experiences and outcomes of each individual will vary. Veterans transition for a variety of reasons, at different ages, stages of their life and career. They also have different service experiences, levels of transition preparedness and support needs, which inform their outcomes prior to, during and after their separation from the ADF.

A range of factors influence how well a veteran and their family may transition. The factors are outlined below and are intended to assist transition service providers across the ecosystem when developing and delivering their services. These factors also aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of transition that can be used to assist veterans and their families in navigating their own transition journey.

There are a number of **demographic and personal circumstances**⁹ that impact a veteran's interactions through and beyond their ADF career. These factors are listed below.

Self-Agency

Veterans' and families' degree of self-agency to act independently and make decisions during their transition and in a predominately civilian life is a vital enabler to preparedness and an improved transition experience.

Identity and Personal Values

Veterans' and families' identity, sense of belonging and personal values and beliefs may influence the way they make decisions during transition. These include religious identity, cultural and linguistic background and sexual identity.

Location

Relocating to a new community upon transition or returning to a former community after spending time away may affect the wellbeing of veterans and their families.

Family Circumstances

Veteran and family circumstances can often affect transition experiences and outcomes. For example family dynamics, relationship status, carer responsibilities, financial obligations, living arrangements, etc.

Gender

Veterans' gender can impact their service experience, transition experiences and health outcomes.

Age

Veterans' age and life stage at the time of transition affects their transition outcomes and their goals in a predominately civilian life beyond the ADF.

9 These factors have been developed by the Joint Transition Authority (JTA) within Defence. The factors draw on a comprehensive literature review, a consultation process undertaken by the JTA in 2021 and a Minister's Roundtable on Transition held in October 2021.

Further, the experiences a veteran has during their ADF career, including their **experience navigating transition and interaction with services**¹⁰ throughout are core aspects that influence transition outcomes.

Coordination of Support

Veterans require coordinated support services and support to assist with their personal needs and circumstances.

Leadership and Culture

Veterans require top down leadership, culture and behaviours across their service and unit with the direct support from their team and transition specialists. It is important that this exists over a veteran's career and at transition.

Access to and Awareness of Support

Veterans and families need to be aware of and able to access relevant information to assist them in navigating transition support when their need arises.

Nature of Service Career

The nature of a veteran's service career including length of service, role/rank, service category and service option, deployments and overseas postings, and service arm (Navy, Army, Air Force) may affect their transition outcomes.

Reason and Mode of Transition

Veterans' mode and/or reason for transition may affect their transition outcomes and their experience during and after separation.

Public Perception

The public perception of what it means to serve and recognising the contribution that veterans can make to the community can impact a veteran's transition into civilian life.

Importantly, a **veteran's wellbeing during and post-transition** is critical to how well they and their family transition into a predominately civilian life. The below wellbeing factors mirror the aligned wellbeing factors employed by Defence and the DVA.

Health

Many veterans have distinct health strengths and/or risks/needs due to the nature of their service and the healthcare they receive during and after service.

Social Support and Connection

A strong sense of identity, sense of belonging and direction is important for veterans and their families as roles and relationships within society and home change.

Education and Skills

Veterans, while highly skilled in a military context, can often require support to translate their experience and qualifications into civilian environments.

Employment

Securing meaningful and stable employment post-service is important for veterans and their families as they navigate their transition journey.

¹⁰ Ibid., 17

Income and Financial Wellbeing

Income and financial wellbeing and stability is important for veterans and their families as they navigate changes in employment and income during transition.

Safety

Whether or not a veteran and their family feel safe in day-to-day life can directly or indirectly affect their quality of life. This includes appropriate accommodation and a justice.

Respect and Recognition

Recognising the service of a veteran is an important aspect of building a positive culture around transition within the ADF.

How should Improvements to Transition be measured?

Enabling a data-driven approach to continuous improvement

Consistent and reliable data is critical to understanding and influencing the transition experience of veterans and their families, and to evaluating how system changes impact veteran experience of transition.

Defence will work collaboratively with DVA and other key stakeholders to measure outcomes across the transition ecosystem that are focused on the transition experience of veterans and their families. These will be used to monitor and evaluate the wellbeing of serving veterans and their families, thereby assessing the effectiveness of this Strategy.

The success indicators listed within the priorities in Section Four of this Strategy are based on contemporary research and consultation across the transition ecosystem. These indicators will target coordinated data collection across the transition ecosystem.

Transition outcome evaluation will leverage both qualitative and quantitative data, with veterans and families routinely engaged to understand contemporary experiences, and co-design transition system continuous improvements over time.

Data collection and sharing practices within the transition ecosystem is undergoing significant system change. These changes are focused on establishing data partnerships, generating higher quality insights to support measurement and continuous improvement. The sharing of these insights across the transition ecosystem will improve the overall effectiveness of transition support and the transition experience for veterans and their families.

Building a transition ecosystem that can effectively evaluate itself

Defence will work collaboratively with DVA and other key stakeholders across the transition ecosystem to develop evaluation mechanisms that effectively monitor progress in delivering on the vision proposed in the Strategy, including its broader ambitions, indicators, and strategic objectives.

These mechanisms will be guided by the aligned wellbeing factors used by Defence and DVA and where possible, will align baseline outcome measures with the measurable key performance indicators in existing strategies across the transition ecosystem such as the ADF Health Strategy and the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

SECTION 4

Priorities for Transition



Army Captain Laura McCarthy serving under Service Category 3 (SERCAT 3) with her children at home.

Priority One: Veterans and their families plan and prepare early for their transition

Preparing and planning for transition early in a veteran's service journey to support long-term wellbeing and preparedness for life after service.

Australian Army soldier Private Ashley Walsh from 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, talks with a St Joseph's Primary School student during a school visit in Alstonville near Lismore, New South Wales, as part of Operation Flood Assist 2022.



Consultation and research findings¹¹

Research highlights the importance of normalising and embedding transition discussions, actions, and support throughout the service journey of a veteran. Participants in system-wide consultations conducted by the JTA agreed that early preparation encourages self-agency in planning and preparing for life after ADF service and ensuring veterans and families have the support they need to maintain their wellbeing through transition and into a predominately civilian life. This can be particularly important for veterans transitioning earlier than they had planned, irrespective of whether the decision was Service-initiated or of their own choosing.

What does success look like?

Veterans and their families have the support they need to plan for transition throughout their service journey and maintain their wellbeing through transition and into a predominately civilian life.

- Veterans and their families understand why it is important to prepare and plan for their transition.
- Veterans and their families are provided accessible, relevant and targeted information, opportunities and training throughout their service to prepare for a predominately civilian life.
- Veterans and their families are better prepared to adapt to the changes transitioning from an ADF service-centred life to a predominately civilian life can bring.
- Veterans and their families have access to health and well-being services whilst in service to assist them to prepare for their transition and understand the support networks available to them after service.
- Veterans and their families are connected to local communities, peer networks and organisations supporting Defence communities.
- Veterans and their families are encouraged to lodge claims whilst in service so that they can experience a simple and timely claims process for financial compensation and health support.
- Veterans are informed and encouraged to continue to serve in a Reserve capacity where possible.

¹¹ Appendix A and B of this Strategy refers.

Priority Two:

Veterans and their families are aware of and are able to access support appropriate to their needs

Simplifying transition information and support so that veterans and their families can navigate and access the services appropriate to their needs at the right time.

Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Officer Flight Lieutenant Danie Bunting from Joint Health Command conducts medial checks for a pilot at RAAF Base Pearce Health Centre, Western Australia.



Consultation and research findings

Findings from research and consultations conducted by the JTA suggests that many transitioning veterans and their families feel that reliable information about transition services is fragmented and often difficult to access.

There is a need to ensure consistency of service provision and effective communication to facilitate greater awareness and uptake of services.

Suggestions arising through the consultations included the need to centralise information and points of contact, ensure consistency of documentation and record-keeping across the key agencies, simplifying language used in transition resources and communicating transition information throughout a veteran's career.

Further, some veterans and their families can find the experience of transition particularly challenging. Among the identified at-risk veteran cohorts are those who are transitioning involuntarily for medical or other reasons, are aged less than 30, are of non-commissioned officer rank, or have less than four years of service.

Veterans and families require a needs-based approach to enable the identification of those at higher risk of experiencing vulnerabilities in transition so that targeted, proactive support can be provided.

What does success look like?

Transitioning veterans and their families are aware of the transition support available and are able to access the services that are required, they are entitled to and are appropriate for their needs.

- Veterans and their families have easy access to contemporary, understandable, relevant and connected information across the transition ecosystem.
- Veterans and their families experience the right support and services at the right time across the transition ecosystem through the enhanced use of information, data and insights.
- Veterans have access to appropriate and relevant rehabilitation services, and they and their families can access wellbeing services, including mental health to assist them with the process of transition and adjustment into a predominantly civilian life.



Royal Australian Navy Commander Mick Wrenn, an Active Electronic Scanned Array project officer in Australian Defence Force Headquarters, with his family (L-R) Captain Ewy De Guzman, Rhonda Wrenn and Bethany Wrenn during a farewell ceremony at the Russell, Canberra to award Commander Wrenn the Defence Long Service Medal and recognise 50 years of combined service in both the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Navy.

Priority Three:

Families are engaged through transition

Engaging and supporting families through their veterans' transition into a predominately civilian life.

Chief of Army Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, AO, DSC, and wife Katy during the Chief of Army handover parade held at Russell Offices in Canberra.



Consultation and research findings

Research considered through the evidence gathering process confirmed the central role that families, partners or other significant support people play in supporting their transitioning veteran and barriers that can hinder that support including lack of transition information and exclusion from transition conversations or activities.

In consultations conducted by the JTA, participants acknowledged that family members often undergo their own experience of transition alongside the veteran and can also require support.

The evidence suggests a clear need to embed the family or other significant support people more meaningfully into transition and design tailored communication and support that allows them to effectively support transitioning veterans into a predominately civilian life.

What does success look like?

Family members, partners, or other support people are recognised as valued stakeholders in transition and feel included in, informed, and supported through their veteran's transition into a predominately civilian life.

- Families are informed and included in decisions through the transition to a predominately civilian life.
- Families are supported by a transition ecosystem that understands and recognises the role that family plays in a veteran's life.
- Veterans are educated on the importance of family involvement but the transition ecosystem recognises that veterans will seek different levels of family engagement in their transition.
- Families receive direct communications in regards to transition and understand the process and entitlements available for themselves as well as for their veteran family member.
- Families have appropriate access to transition and wellbeing support and services through the transition to a predominately civilian life.

Priority Four:

Veterans and their families have access to employment, education and skills development opportunities

Enhancing education, skills and civilian employment opportunities for veterans and their families.

Royal Australian Air Force member Leading Aircraftwoman Chantelle Bradford shows female High School students from Cornerstone College an interactive game during 'Science Alive' at Wayville Showgrounds in Adelaide.



Consultation and research findings

Research and consultations conducted by the JTA found for many transitioning veterans, particularly younger veterans who still have a number of years in their working life ahead of them, their ability to secure stable meaningful engagement or employment is a key element for transitioning well into a predominately civilian life.

Transitioning veterans can face challenges in understanding how to navigate civilian career pathways or in translating their military skills and experience to a civilian context. Equally, civilian employers often lack an understanding of the capabilities, skills and value that veterans can bring to their organisations.

What does success look like?

Veterans and their families are provided with education and professional development that equips them to secure meaningful and sustainable civilian employment or engagement aligned to their individual goals.

- Veterans and their families are supported during their ADF careers and have access to career support programs to consider and prepare for alternative career pathways following their transition to a predominately civilian life.
- Veterans have a good understanding of the civilian employment landscape and civilian employers recognise the valuable skills of veterans through engagement and information sharing between Defence and industry bodies.
- Veterans and their families are supported by career advisers and lived experience in making the transition to civilian employment.

- Defence, DVA, State and Territory Veterans' Affairs and Ex-Service Organisations develop consistent and coordinated approaches to veteran employment.
- Veterans are supported to translate their ADF skills and qualifications for civilian employment.
- Veterans are meaningfully engaged in employment or other activities that directly aligns to their transition goals.
- Veterans are aware of employment opportunities in a Reserve capacity and the ability to return to full time service where able.



Commanding Officer HMAS *Adelaide* Captain Stuart Watters RAN, provides a tour of HMAS *Adelaide* to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, the Honourable Richard Marles MP (centre) at Fleet Base East in Sydney, New South Wales.

Priority Five: Financial wellbeing for veterans and their families

Empowering veterans and their families to achieve a sense of security and an ability to meet financial needs.

Navy Reserve Cell representative, Chief Petty Officer Paul Taylor, talks to a Defence member, during an Australian Defence Force Member and Family Transition Seminar in Melbourne.



Consultation and research findings

Research conducted by the JTA found that financial wellbeing is different for every individual as everyone's financial situation is unique, but the common factor is having a sense of security and feeling as though there is enough money to meet the individual's needs. Financial security is about being in control of day-to-day and long term finances and having the financial freedom to make choices that allow the individual to enjoy life.

Much of the evidence showed that it is important veterans and their families start thinking about their financial wellbeing and developing good habits early.

The ability to plan early and adapt to changing financial circumstances can build the self-agency required for veterans to achieve their goals across different ages, careers and circumstances.

What does success look like?

Veterans and their families are educated on financial wellbeing, understand available options and have access to financial literacy throughout the veteran's service career and through transition.

- Veterans and their families can identify their unique needs, financial goals and better understand their circumstances to improve their financial wellbeing as they transition to a predominately civilian life.
- Veterans and their families are aware of and have access to the suite of services available to them to support their financial wellbeing.
- Veterans and their families are able to make informed decisions with regard to their civilian financial wellbeing to maximise wellbeing and security after transition.

Priority Six: Veterans and their families feel supported and recognised

Building a positive transition culture that supports veterans and their families transitioning to a predominately civilian life and recognises and values their ADF service.

Warrant Officer Suzanne Hall with Mrs Thelma Zimmerman during the Air Force Centenary Commemorative Service in Adelaide.



Consultation and research findings

The literature review and consultations conducted by the JTA investigated the role that culture and recognition play in transition.

Consultation with participants emphasised the need to change the culture and narrative around transition by normalising it. For many transitioning veterans still in the ADF, fear of disconnection and isolation from their unit can be a barrier to proactively seeking transition support, including medical treatment.

Early engagement for both ADF members and Command through education and training were cited as ways to mitigate this. Part of this effort is ongoing investment into programs that promote the wellbeing of transitioning veterans, formalising recognition of service as a standard and providing guidance and clarity on the roles and responsibilities across the transition ecosystem.

Effort is required across the transition ecosystem to address some stigmas and negative perceptions in the community around military service that can impact how veterans and their families engage with the ADF community during and after transition. This includes improving community understanding of life in the military, reinforcing the positive aspects of service in public communications and creating opportunities for partnerships with civilian community organisations to facilitate a shared understanding.

What does success look like?

Veterans and their families are recognised and supported through their transition to a predominately civilian life.

- Veterans and families are supported by a positive and respectful transition culture that recognises their diversity of experiences, giving them the confidence to proactively engage with support services through their transition to a predominately civilian life.
- Veterans and families are supported by a transition ecosystem that normalises transition as a standard aspect of ADF service.
- Veterans and their families are encouraged to build civilian connections through initiatives that improve community engagement with the ADF and recognise and value their ADF service.
- Formal recognition by the ADF hierarchy of a veteran's service occurs at the point of transition.
- Veterans consider engagement as a Reservist to maintain a connection with the ADF and the social connections it provides.

Summary of Priorities for Transition



Figure 7: Six Priorities for Transition

APPENDICES

Royal Australian Navy sailor Petty Officer Physical Training Instructor Holly Lloyd, displays the Royal Australian Navy White Ensign in front of the city of Cairns during a Freedom of Entry March.



APPENDIX A—KEY TRANSITION REVIEWS AND INQUIRIES

A range of inquiries, reviews and studies have been conducted in recent years that have informed transformation of the Transition Ecosystem. The following are particularly pertinent to veteran and family wellbeing.

Transition Taskforce

The Transition Taskforce,¹² co-chaired by Defence and DVA, was established in response to this policy and sought to better understand the experience of transition at that time. The Taskforce considered contemporary government inquiries and reviews examining the experience of service leavers and their families; relevant research; current Defence, DVA and CSC services and emerging transition service initiatives; and other international veteran servicing programs and initiatives. The Taskforce's report, *Improving the Transition Experience*, was published in 2018.

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Transition from the Australian Defence Force

Various research and inquiries have examined the transition experience of veterans and their families since that time. In May 2018, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) resolved to inquire into and report on transition from the ADF. JSCFADT's report, *Inquiry into transition from the Australian Defence Force*,¹³ was released in April 2019. The report made 11 recommendations related to providing effective support to ADF personnel in their post service lives, mental health care during and after service, and whole-of-government support for effective transition to civilian employment.

Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme

The Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme (TWRP),¹⁴ jointly commissioned by Defence and DVA, is the most comprehensive study undertaken in Australia to examine the impact of military service on the mental, physical, and social health of veterans and their families. Conducted in 2015 and progressively publishing eight reports between 2018 and 2019, the TWRP identified that transitioned veterans reported poorer mental health, more physical health symptoms and greater psychosocial issues than serving ADF members.

Jesse Bird Reviews and Reports

Following the 2017 death by suicide of Jesse Bird, an Australian veteran who served in Afghanistan,¹⁵ a Joint Inquiry was undertaken by Defence, DVA and the Veterans and Families Counselling Service (formerly Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service) to examine the management of his case. The Joint Inquiry resulted in 19 recommendations focused on improving services for veterans seeking compensation and support, all of which were accepted by the Australian Government. An independent review was completed in 2019 by Emeritus Professor Robin Creyke that informed progress and actions in relation to the recommendations of the Joint Inquiry. This was followed by a coronial inquest into the factors that contributed to Jesse Bird's death, with the findings handed down in April 2020. Victorian Coroner Jacqui Hawkins found "Jesse's death was the catalyst for comprehensive system-wide review and reform of DVA and Defence processes".

¹² <www.dva.gov.au/documents-and-publications/transition-taskforce>

¹³ <www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/TransitionfromtheADF/Report>

¹⁴ <www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/transition-and-wellbeing-research-programme>

¹⁵ <www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/reporting/reviews-and-reports/jesse-bird-reviews-and-reports>

Productivity Commission Inquiry into Compensation and Rehabilitation for Veterans

In March 2018, the Australian Government announced the Productivity Commission (PC) would undertake an inquiry into the system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans. The Australian Government tabled the final inquiry report, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*,¹⁶ in Parliament in July 2019. Overall, the report identified that the veterans' compensation and rehabilitation system requires fundamental reform, despite recent improvements to the system. The PC found that "stewardship of transition remains poor and supports have not improved in ways that are tangible to veterans". It recommended that a JTA be established within Defence.

Interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention

In February 2020, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, announced the establishment of a new National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention. Dr Bernadette Boss CSC was appointed as the interim National Commissioner in November 2020 to commence the Independent Review into Past Defence and Veteran Suicides. The Prime Minister's subsequent announcement of the commencement of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide in July 2021 resulted in Dr Boss delivering her Preliminary Interim Report¹⁷ on her work to date on the Independent Review in September 2021. Dr Boss made seven recommendations relating specifically to transition and the need for Defence and DVA to provide better support for transitioning veterans and their families.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

The Royal Commission¹⁸ is undertaking a systemic analysis of transition as a possible contributing risk factor relevant to Defence and veteran death by suicide as part of its Terms of Reference. The interim report of the Royal Commission was released on 11 August 2022.¹⁹ ²⁰ The Government published its response to the interim report recommendations on 26 September 2022.²¹ The Royal Commission's final report is due to the Government in June 2024. The interim report indicates that the Royal Commission will continue to focus on the contemporary veterans' experiences of leaving the ADF and ensuring systems are in place to support a smooth transition. It is anticipated that the Royal Commissioners will recommend further reforms to the transition ecosystem and therefore this Strategy will be reviewed and updated to reflect any recommendations made in the final report.

16 <www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/veterans#report>

17 <<https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20220816132515/https://www.nationalcommissionerdvsp.gov.au/our-work/independent-review-past-defence-and-veteran-suicides>>

18 <<https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au>>

19 <<https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/interim-report>>

20 Hard copy of interim report: <<https://www4.pmg.com.au/dvsrc/>>

21 <<https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/governments-response-interim-report>>

APPENDIX B - RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION

In addition to the reviews and inquiries listed at Appendix A, the following references were drawn upon to inform the Veteran Transition Strategy.

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) 2018, Homelessness amongst Australian contemporary veterans: using the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection to examine veteran homelessness, https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/46583/AHURI-Report_Homelessness-Amongst-Australian-contemporary-veterans_SHS-Collection.pdf

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018, A profile of Australia's veterans, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/1b8bd886-7b49-4b9b-9163-152021a014df/aihw-phe-235.pdf.aspx?inline=true>

AIHW 2018, Development of a Veteran-Centred Model, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/development-veteran-centred-model-working-paper/contents/summary>

Dr Samantha Cromptvoets, Australian National University 2012, Australian National University, The health and wellbeing of female Vietnam and Contemporary Veterans, https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/consultation%20and%20grants/healthstudies/servicewomen/viet_fem_con_report.pdf

Dr Samantha Cromptvoets, Australian National University 2013, Exploring Future Service Needs of Australian Defence Force Reservists, https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/future_service_needs_for_adf_reservists.pdf

Defence Force Welfare Association 2018, Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (Committee) Enquiry into Transition from the ADF, <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=f5e2baa1-ed95-4ab0-a777-1db1f0459ed6&subId=613606>

Transition Taskforce Report, Improving The Transition Experience, <https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/transition-taskforce-improving-the-transition-experience.pdf>

National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders university 2012, Providing Pathways Guidance to Young Veterans For a Successful Transition to Civilian Workforce, <https://www.dva.gov.au/documents-and-publications/providing-pathways-guidance-young-veterans-successful-transition-civilian>

Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Study (including all 8 reports that were developed as part of the study), <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/research/transition-and-wellbeing-research-programme>

National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University 2012, Providing Pathways Guidance to Young Veterans For a Successful Transition to Civilian Workforce, <https://www.dva.gov.au/documents-and-publications/providing-pathways-guidance-young-veterans-successful-transition-civilian>

National Mental Health Commission Review, https://www.dva.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/publications/health/Final_Report.pdf

JTA Mapping Process 2021, Over 90 stakeholders across Defence, DVA and CSC have provided mapping input into the Defence transition process including mode of separation and variations across service lines. This mapping will be expanded to include JTA partner agencies.

JTA Consultation Process 2021, External consultation sessions involving current ADF members, veterans, families, ESOs, state and territory government, academia, and industry. Consultations explored transition system complexity, employment, medical transition, leadership and the role of the Commanding Officer, family involvement and uptake of services.



Australian Army soldier, Trooper Katherine Van Kampen talks with local children during a Key Leadership Engagement meeting with Indigenous Elders and members of the Fitzroy Crossing township in the Kimberley Region where heavy rainfall from Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie has isolated communities.

APPENDIX C - GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

Definitions of specific terms used throughout the Veteran Transition Strategy are provided below.

1. ADF Total Workforce System (TWS)

The TWS provides Defence with the flexibility and agility it needs to meet current and future workforce demands. The TWS acknowledges that people are Defence's most valuable asset, and to attract and retain the right people, Defence needs a contemporary, flexible and agile workforce environment. For individuals, the TWS recognises that there is a life outside of full-time ADF Service. To help individuals achieve the right balance between their personal commitments and service responsibilities, the TWS provides more options in the way people can serve.

The TWS has been designed to realise the following effects, for individual members and the Defence Organisation:

- Sustainment of capability by attracting and retaining the right people
- Diversity and inclusiveness within the Services
- Provision of flexible service paths
- Enablement of organisational agility by designing flexibility into current and future workforce structures.

2. Family— (in relation to a Defence veteran)

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a family as **'a group of two or more people that are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering, and who usually live together in the same household'** (Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2016).

The term 'in the context of this strategy, refers to the people who have supported a veteran's ADF service, regardless of the time their association with the veteran commenced, and on which the veteran relies to support them in their transition.

3. Separate / Separation

The cessation of all forms of ADF service.

4. Transition

For the purposes of the Strategy, transition is the journey of a veteran and their family from an ADF service-centred life to a predominantly civilian life.

5. Transition Ecosystem

The transition ecosystem encompasses all the services and programs relating to transition that are provided by all key stakeholders. This includes:

- a. Veterans and their families
- b. Defence, including the Joint Transition Authority
- c. DVA
- d. CSC
- e. Ex-service organisations
- f. Veteran support and community groups including Veteran Wellbeing Centres

- g. State, territory and other government agencies
- h. Industry and employers
- i. Research and academic bodies.

6. Transition Mode

Transition from the ADF can be voluntary or involuntary:

- a. Voluntary transfer. Occurs when approval to reduce a period of service has been granted and the veteran transfers to the Reserves.
- b. Voluntary separation. Occurs when approval to reduce a period of service has been granted and the veteran ceases all forms of ADF service.
- c. Involuntary transfer. Occurs when retention of a veteran in the Permanent Forces is no longer in the interests of the ADF (command-initiated transfer to the Reserves).
- d. Involuntary separation. All separations that are Service initiated.
- e. Multi-mode separation can also occur when there is a need to follow the process for more than one transition mode.

7. Transition Outcome

A veteran and family transition outcome is a measure of their overall wellbeing after transfer or separation.

8. Wellbeing

A measure of a veteran's and family's satisfaction with their life and is embedded in each stage of the transition process.

9. Veteran

For the purposes of the Strategy, a veteran is a person who is serving or has served in the Australian Defence Force.

Useful Links

Defence Member and Family Support: www.defence.gov.au/members-families/

Department of Veterans' Affairs: www.dva.gov.au

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation: www.csc.gov.au/vetshub



Australian Government

Defence

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation

To defend Australia and its national interests in order
to advance Australia's security and prosperity
www.defence.gov.au

