



Australian Government
Defence

Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence **2023–2028**



Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023–2028

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Foreword

Family and domestic violence is incompatible with Defence values and behaviours, and of the wider Australian community.

The Australian Defence Force and the Defence Australian Public Service reflect the broad community they serve and support.

Sadly, that means that they, and their families are not immune from experiencing family and domestic violence.

We all need to do our part to eliminate this serious issue from the Defence community, and indeed, the broader Australian community.

The Australian Government is committed to achieving our goal of ending family and domestic violence within one generation. We know more must be done.

It's time to take action now, and a stepping stone to achieving that is the introduction of the *Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023–2028* (the Strategy).

This Strategy aims to uphold Defence values and behaviours in preventing family and domestic violence, support those experiencing violence and break down the barriers that may deter victims from seeking help.

The Strategy also provides support channels for Defence personnel to access appropriate perpetrator intervention services.

This Strategy is underpinned by the four domains detailed in the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*:

- Prevention
- Early Intervention
- Response
- Recovery.

This Strategy demonstrates our commitment to ending family and domestic violence within the Defence community.

Change begins with culture. Cultural change throughout a large organisation is more than creating new policies, procedures and bodies.

It means believing and supporting victim-survivors, prioritising safety, being guided by victim-survivors' needs while also maintaining an approach that those who use violence are responsible for their behaviour.

Cultural change requires a sustained commitment that is driven by our values. Our Defence values are about having the courage and integrity to do what is needed, to do what is right.

Together, we must end family and domestic violence.

If you, or someone you know needs help, support can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the below:

- Defence Member and Family Helpline on 1800 624 608
- Employee Assistance Program for APS Staff and families on 1300 687 327
- 1800 RESPECT
- The Sexual Misconduct Prevention Response Office on 1800 SeMPRO
- Open Arms Veterans and Family Counselling service 1800 011 046
- MensLine Australia on 1300 78 99 78



Hon Matt Keogh MP

Minister for Defence Personnel
Minister for Veterans Affairs

VISION

Defence is an organisation whose personnel are aware of and committed to providing a safe and supportive workplace. Defence is committed to preventing Family and Domestic Violence by working with Defence personnel and their families to support those at risk of, or affected by Family and Domestic Violence through a range of internal and external services.

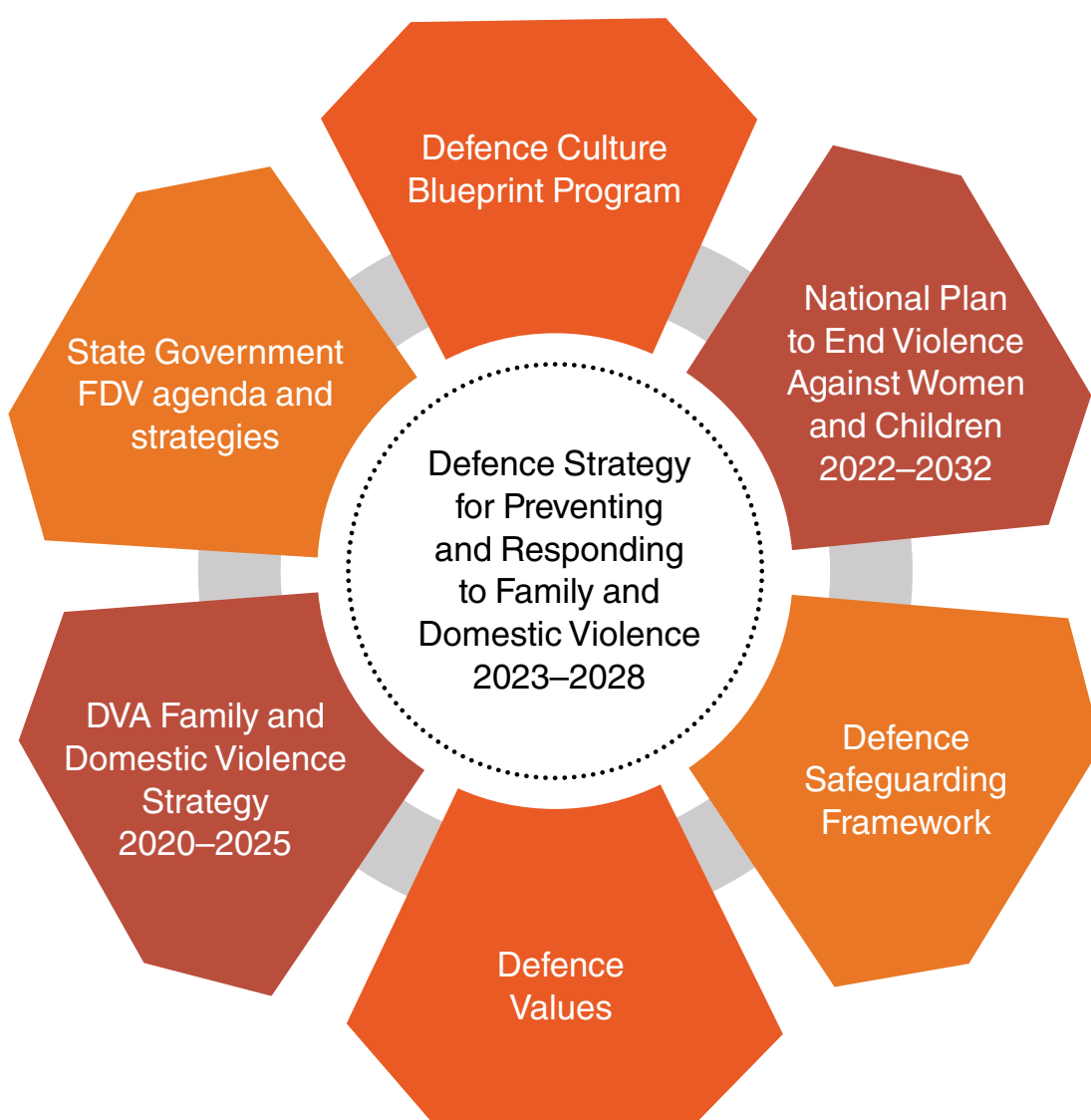


Figure 1: This figure highlights how the *Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to FDV 2023–28* relates other key internal and external initiatives.

Intent

Defence is a values-based, highly-ethical organisation and our people are our most important capability. It is imperative that as an organisation, Defence takes steps to actively prevent, and respond appropriately to FDV in support of our community. The Defence Values are displayed below:



Over recent years, FDV has gained increasing community visibility. The Commonwealth and State Governments have prioritised responses to tackling the issues associated with FDV.

FDV is unacceptable in Defence. FDV and the impacts it can have on members and families is fundamentally incompatible with the Defence Values.

Defence continues to work towards being an inclusive, supportive and responsive organisation. The previous FDV strategy resulted in raising awareness and understanding of FDV in Defence workplaces through providing specialist training to welfare personnel, and also develop and implement policies to support Defence personnel experiencing FDV. There is, however, more that can be achieved and the *Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023–2028* will continue implementing strategies to both prevent and support Defence personnel impacted by FDV. This approach is in-line with contemporary community objectives and Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government initiatives.

When Defence personnel are subjected to, or use, violence in their relationships, very real costs and impacts flow to the workplace and can impact operational capability. The Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to FDV aims to contribute to a Defence community that is safe from FDV and committed to responding effectively to those affected. FDV is a challenging and complex issue; it requires coordinated, comprehensive, and long-term initiatives. Defence as an organisation aims to be responsive to FDV and reflective of the broader Australian community sentiment.

Three action plans to be drafted over the life of the Strategy will develop a coherent and integrated organisational plan to prevent and respond to FDV.

Scope

This Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to FDV pertains to all Defence personnel, including Australian Defence Force (ADF), Australian Public Service (APS), contractors and consultants whether permanent, fixed-term temporary, full-time, part-time or casual personnel.

Practical action and support will be provided to Defence personnel and their families, with consideration of the individual employment relationships.

In regards to Australian Defence Force Cadets (cadets, officers/instructors of cadets and volunteers) information available in the Defence Youth Safety Framework (including YOUTHPOLMAN). This suite of policies provides a framework for youth safety and protection across Defence

What is family and domestic violence?

For the purpose of this strategy, FDV is defined as conduct that is *violent, threatening, coercive, controlling or intended to cause the family or household member to be fearful*. It can include, but is not limited to:

- physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or psychological abuse
- neglect
- controlling finances
- stalking
- coercive control
- harm to an animal or property
- restricting spiritual or cultural participation
- exposing children to the effects of the above behaviours.

Key terminology and definitions: working towards national consistency

The current National Plan released in October 2022 and discussions at the National Summit on Women's Safety in 2021 highlighted the need for clear and consistent national definitions of the different forms of violence so that everyone can work from a consistent understanding.

National definitions should be used to inform and support program design, public and private sector policies, as well as legislation across jurisdictions to ensure that all Australians have equal access to support and justice. They should also inform everyday working and social experiences as Australia's private and civil sectors apply this consistent understanding to workplaces, community and government settings.

Some key National definitions included in the National Plan are detailed in the Glossary at the end of this document. Terms such as intimate partner violence and family violence are expanded on. For the purposes of this Strategy the definitions in the National Plan are a reference which can be used.

Source: National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032, released in October 2022.

Objectives

The objectives of the Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to FDV are to:

- facilitate and co-ordinate appropriate Defence responses to FDV experienced in the Defence community.
- provide those at risk of being subjected to FDV with appropriate supports including referral to specialised victim-centred services.
- acknowledge that those involved in or accused of being involved in acts of FDV are responsible for their behaviour and provide them with appropriate interventions, and referral to appropriate specialised perpetrator services.
- provide Defence personnel with the skills, knowledge and confidence to recognise, respond and refer people at risk of, subjected to and affected by FDV so as to respond effectively to their needs in accordance with Defence Values and Behaviours.
- contribute to the broader community's efforts in preventing FDV by promoting an understanding and awareness of FDV, particularly within a Defence context and its impact on capability.

The four domains and principles of the Defence FDV Strategy

This Strategy will be achieved through a range of actions and activities to be delivered under the four Domains of prevention, early interventions, response and recovery. These domains align with those used in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children. The Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to FDV is underpinned by principles that combined with the four domains provide the framework for the development and implementation of updated FDV policies, programs and practices. In developing this Strategy, the guiding principles of the Safeguarding framework have been considered. Defence Values directly link to each domain.

Domain One: Prevention

A consistent strength of character to do what is right exemplifies the Defence value of integrity. Prevention of FDV starts by targeting societal and cultural drivers that produce FDV i.e. the basic factors that induce people to act in a violent or abusive way towards their intimate partners, family members or others in their domestic situation. Defence continues to work towards improving our workplace culture as part of the Diversity and Inclusion Cultural reform.

- The nature of Defence's role requires the highest ethical and moral standards at all levels and in all aspects of our lives.
- Defence will work towards an organisational culture that espouses the Defence Values and Behaviours.
- Regardless of differences such as gender, sexuality, culture, religion, age and ability, Defence personnel are required to exceed community values and standards to prevent and manage family and domestic violence should it occur.
- Defence will communicate messaging on respectful relationships and encourage employees concerned about their relationships to seek support and referrals.
- Defence will embed training to educate Defence personnel about FDV to raise awareness in line with Defence Values through dedicated online and face-to-face training.
- Appropriate and allowable actions will be taken in accordance with individual employment conditions of Defence personnel.
- Defence will continue to raise awareness of FDV and the work being done in support of the National Plan.
- Defence will continue to work with peak bodies in this area to maintain awareness of best practice, and maintain partnerships to enhance prevention approaches and service delivery.
- Defence will manage accused perpetrators according to the specific circumstances including engagement with and referral to accountability systems such as justice and legal systems and programs that support and educate for behaviour changes.

Domain Two: Early intervention

Having the strength of character to do what is right and not waiting for a situation to change or someone else to provide assistance, demonstrates Defence's value of courage. Defence's approach to early intervention in relation to FDV exhibits this through its efforts in identifying and supporting individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of violence by stopping violence from escalating and protecting victim-survivors from further harm. Defence will provide a supportive, flexible and safe workplace for Defence personnel subjected to or affected by FDV.

- Defence will promote access to information about FDV including the support options available through Defence and external agencies.
- Defence will align and coordinate access to support services to best meet the needs of people affected by FDV including alleged or known perpetrators of FDV.
- Defence will scope and develop a common framework of understanding and managing FDV across Defence.
- Defence will implement the means to collate Defence-wide data for identifying the prevalence of FDV, risk factors and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention measures and interventions.
- Defence will work with government and non-government stakeholders to ensure our policies and processes reflect best practice and align with national strategies.
- As an integral part of leadership at all levels, Defence will provide all personnel with the tools and confidence to be ethical bystanders and up-standers in appropriately responding to FDV in their personal and professional lives.
- Defence leaders and managers will undertake training on how to support people subjected to or affected by FDV in a compassionate and appropriate manner.
- Defence will provide FDV Awareness training to all Defence personnel to assist with supporting other Defence personnel subjected to FDV or who may be an alleged perpetrator of FDV.
- Defence will support referral of Defence personnel to participate in perpetrator interventions including civilian perpetrator accountability systems such as the criminal justice system, if deemed appropriate.

Domain Three: Response

Selflessness of character to place the security and interests of our nations and its people ahead of our own demonstrates the value of service. Defence wants personnel or their families experiencing family and domestic violence to feel safe to talk to a colleague, manager, or to access Defence frontline services to receive information, support and the referrals they need. Our leaders play a significant role in creating an environment that achieves this. Response includes efforts and programs used to address existing violence and support victim-survivors experiencing violence. It also refers to the response given to perpetrators. Specialised professional FDV services are delivered by States and Territories, local government and the community sector, and are supported at Commonwealth level with national programs and investment.

- Defence will refer those subjected to, or affected by, FDV including alleged or known perpetrators to appropriate services providers in a timely way. We will maintain up-to-date information about external service providers to ensure referrals are appropriate.
- Defence personnel will undertake relevant and targeted training to build effective skills to support people subjected to or affected by FDV in a compassionate and culturally appropriate way.
- Experiencing FDV is a traumatic event and is disempowering in nature; it can be difficult to disclose. Defence will respond with compassion and sensitivity to Defence personnel and families of Defence members subjected to FDV.
- Provision of trauma-informed internal support services that respond to individuals with sensitivity and respect. This type of service includes reducing the number of times victim-survivors have to tell their story, provide a safe space to talk about their concerns and empowering them to make an informed decision through providing clear information about services available.
- Defence will provide support and referral to recognised ADF families in instances where there is a relationship breakdown and they are affected by alleged FDV. Defence personnel who may have experienced a relationship breakdown will be provided with assistance by their Commanders and Managers as required.
- All issues of FDV raised will be taken seriously and managed within the bounds of legal and policy considerations and informed by the wishes of the affected Defence personnel member.
- Defence will provide referrals and supports to those accused of being involved in acts of FDV.
- Defence will support access to perpetrator interventions through:
 - Prioritising safety in relation to all perpetrator interventions.
 - Referral to justice systems as appropriate.
 - Referral to appropriate external programs that educate to change violent behaviour and attitudes.

Domain Four: Recovery

Treating others with dignity and positive regard exemplifies respect. Defence aims to support FDV victim-survivors to work towards recovery by respecting their own identified needs. To facilitate respect in recovery, Defence aims to minimise barriers to recovery and minimise possibilities for re-traumatisation and harm within services and systems. This involves the recognition of victim-survivors' lived experience of trauma and taking steps to prevent experiences that may lead to re-traumatisation when working with and supporting them.

- Defence will align and coordinate Defence support services for victim-survivors.
- Defence will respond with compassion and sensitivity to people who disclose historic FDV, members and family who seek support for FDV will be treated with dignity as they recover, and will support them to make informed decisions free of coercion.
- Those who seek support to address the use violence in the family will be treated with respect.
- Defence will provide support and education to Defence personnel to reduce the risk of vicarious trauma and promote internal and external resources available for those who may be affected by disclosures and or information.
- Defence will work to co-ordinate and align with internal and external stakeholders to ensure an integrated and coordinated response to those subjected to or affected by FDV.
- Defence will work to provide appropriate timely support and referrals for alleged perpetrators.

Delivering the Strategy

This Strategy will be operationalised overtime through three phased enterprise wide action plans that cover the duration of the Strategy and detail the specific mechanisms designed to achieve the strategic objectives. The Strategy Action Plan will focus on five key approaches to operationalise the objectives of the Strategy. These include:

- Communication and Promotion
- Training
- Policy Review and update
- Support Services
- Governance and Accountability

Preventing and responding to FDV requires a collaborative approach across Defence including the three Services, joint establishments, Defence APS personnel, chain of command, welfare, medical services, military police and Chaplains. In addition, partnering with national agencies and local support services is vital. A key priority for this strategy is identifying means to improve partnership working both internal and external to Defence.

Working in partnership

The Defence FDV Working Group, chaired by the Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) Branch, brings together representatives of Policy and specialist welfare delivery from each of the single Services, the APS, Chaplaincy, Joint Military Police Unit, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (1800 SeMPRO), Joint Health Command and DFA. This Group is accountable to Defence Senior Leadership for the implementation and reporting of the Strategy and evaluation of its performance. Progress of implementation and outcomes are to be reported to the Working Group and actions will be recorded accordingly. This mechanism will assist with evaluating outcomes and the success of the Strategy.

Measuring success

Incidents or known events which are reported in the workplace will provide evidence on how FDV affects Defence personnel. The collection and collation of data in a consistent manner across the Groups and Services through the creation of an agreed dataset will be scoped whilst considering current databases such as COMTRACK and Defence Incident Reports.

Additionally, reporting systems will be established within Defence to assist the identification of risk factors, emergent trends and issues, some of which may be unique to, or exacerbated by, Service life. Moreover, it will assist in tracking and evaluating the effectiveness of prevention measures and interventions in order to refine and improve Policy and practice.

The mechanism for assuring this information is reported and analysed once data collection commences will be through the Defence FDV Working Group. This will form part of the Evaluation Plan currently being developed. This will establish baseline data and track progress towards meeting the Strategy's objectives.

Reviewing and reporting progress of meeting the Defence FDV Strategy objectives

The governance and reporting framework will identify the accountabilities for the implementation of the Strategy. An evaluation of progress will be taken annually with revised and new priorities identified. A written report detailing actions and outcomes from the Defence FDV Working Group will be delivered to Minister for Defence Personnel, Chief of the Defence Force, Secretary for Defence, and Defence People Committee annually.

Glossary

Intimate partner violence, also commonly referred to as ‘**domestic violence**’, refers to a pattern of behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children and between other family members. This includes, for example, elder abuse, violence perpetrated by children or young people against parents, guardians or siblings, and violence perpetrated by other members of the family such as parents-in-law. Family violence is also the term preferred by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples noting the ways violence can manifest across extended family networks.

Sexual violence refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not freely given or obtained. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual violence can be non-physical and include unwanted comments or harassment of a sexual nature.

Gender-based violence refers to violence that is used against someone because of their gender. It describes violence rooted in gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination. While people of all genders can experience gender-based violence, the term is most often used to describe violence against women and girls, because the majority of cases of gender-based violence are perpetrated by men against women, because they are women. Gender-based violence can include female genital mutilation, trafficking of girls, forced marriage, and dowry abuse. Violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people of all genders is also gender-based violence.

Coercive control is often a significant part of a person’s experience of family and domestic violence and describes someone’s use of abusive behaviours against another person over time, with the effect of establishing and maintaining power and dominance over them.

Abusive behaviours that perpetrators can use as part of their pattern of abuse include physical abuse (including sexual abuse), monitoring a victim-survivor’s actions, restricting a victim-survivor’s freedom or independence, social abuse, using threats and intimidation, emotional or psychological abuse (including spiritual and religious abuse), financial abuse, sexual coercion, reproductive coercion, lateral violence, systems abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and animal abuse. A focus on coercive control reflects a shift from specific, isolated incidents (of primarily physical violence) to a recognition that individual acts can be used by perpetrators to form a broader pattern of abusive behaviours that reinforce and strengthen the control and dominance of one person over another.

Consent is defined by relevant laws of all state territories. Consent is required to enter into sexual activity and can be either “freely or voluntarily” given or a “free” or “free and voluntary” agreement. Legal definitions of consent vary between Australian state and territory jurisdictions with ongoing reforms in a number of states and territories to amend the definition of consent to require affirmative communication.

Perpetrator is a person who carries out a harmful, illegal or immoral act.

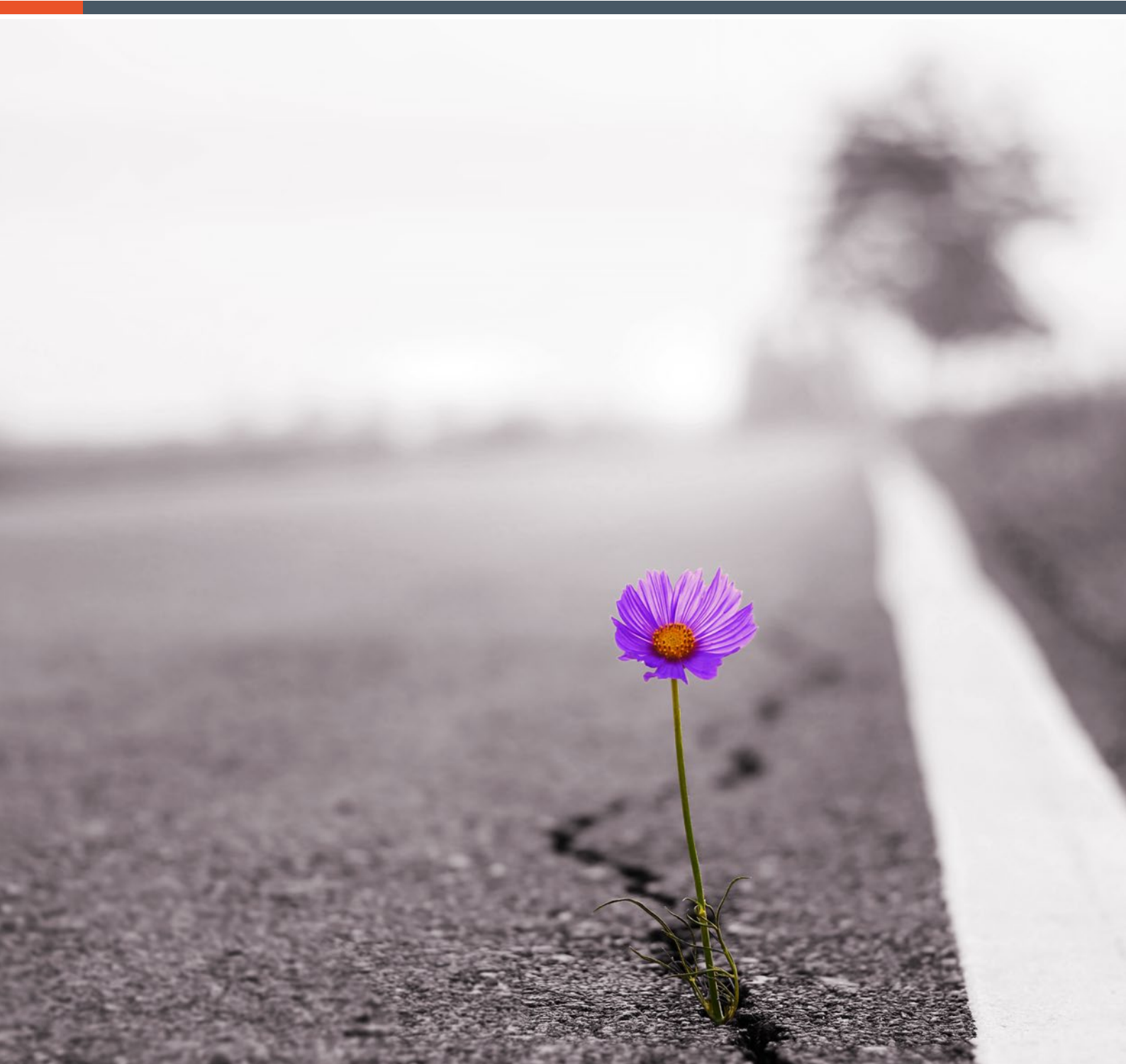
Defence personnel is all Australian Public Services employees in the Department of Defence, Defence locally engaged employees, Defence civilians, Defence members and the equivalents from other Defence organisations on exchange to Defence.

Source: MILPERSMAN Part 1 Chapter 3 – Military Personnel Policy Manual Glossary



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

