



RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

Date: 14 August 2025

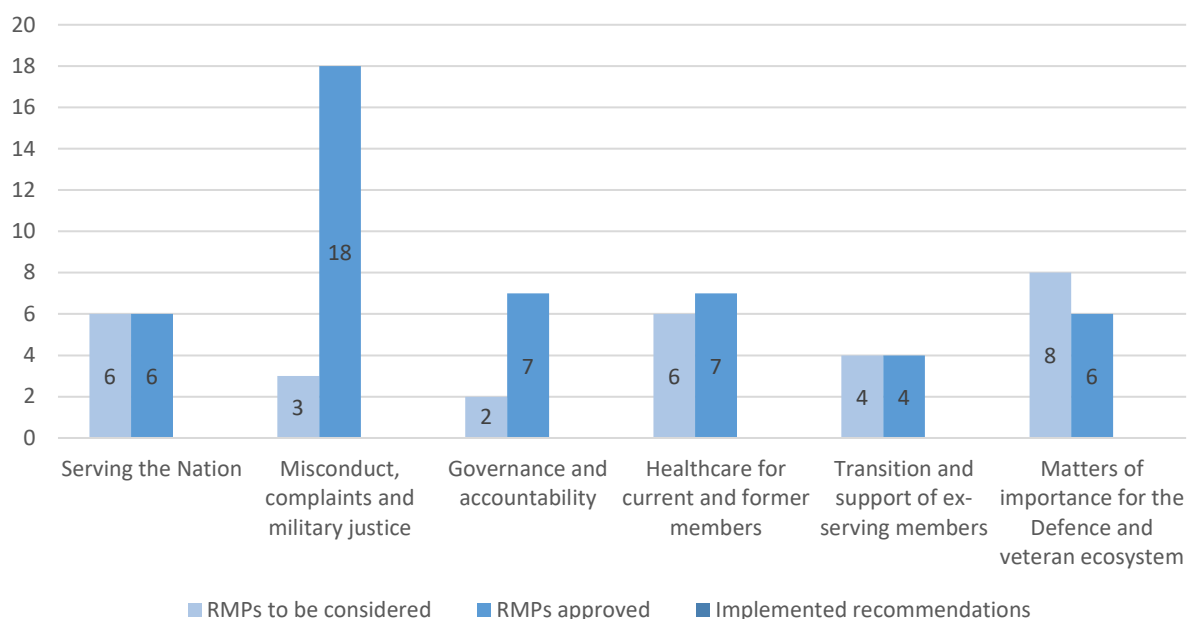
The RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) met on 14 August 2025 to discuss the progress of the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program and consider a number of Reform Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs not approved will be the subject of further planning and consideration based on feedback provided by the Board. Implementation activities for approved RMPs are underway and progress of these activities will be reported to future Program Boards.

Progress on Defence Recommendations

Following the Board there have been 48 RMPs approved with a further 29 RMPs to be considered or reconsidered.

Each recommendation has been grouped within a thematic framework. The progress of RMPs against this thematic framework is detailed below.

Progress on Defence Recommendations by Theme



Reform Management Plans Considered

Serving the Nation

- Recommendation 2 - Improve outcomes and access to support for recruits into ab initio training - **Approved**
- Recommendation 3 - Build the capability of career managers - **Approved**
- Recommendation 7 - Increase employment opportunities within the Australian Defence Force for members who cannot be deployed - **Approved**
- Recommendation 8 - Maximise workforce retention by addressing factors that contribute to voluntary separation - **Approved**
- Recommendation 11 - Assess Australian Defence Force leaders based on upward feedback and performance against culture, health and wellbeing targets - **Approved**

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

- Recommendation 33 - Seek to understand whether/how involvement in military justice processes contributes to adverse outcomes - **Approved**

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 62 - Establish a research translation centre for Defence and veteran health care - **Approved**
- Recommendation 70 - Revise protocols for responding to suicidal crisis to be in line with clinical best practice - **Approved**

Transition and support for ex-serving members

- Recommendation 83 - Increase opportunities for members to gain civilian qualifications from Defence training and education - **Agreed to return to Board with updates**
- Recommendation 94 - Improve timeliness and reporting on information-sharing between Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs for claims processing - **Approved**

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

- Recommendation 104 - Improve the profile, resourcing and impact of the Defence Family Advocate - **Approved**

Program Board Outcomes

Acknowledgement of Defence members and veterans who have died by suicide

The meeting opened with an acknowledgement of the Defence members and veterans who have died by suicide, including any notifications that have been received since the previous meeting. This acknowledgement reinforces to the members of the Board why the timely and effective implementation of reforms is so important.

Serving the Nation

Recommendation 2 - Improve outcomes and access to support for recruits into ab initio training

The Board approved a RMP for Recommendation 2 on 19 June 2025, however sought additional information on some elements of the Plan.

The Board considered the updates to the Plan to include clarifying detail on the longitudinal monitoring program, understanding that this program will be delivered through implementation of RCDVS Recommendation 64 (Establish an enterprise-wide program to monitor and prevent physical and psychological injury). Further, the Board considered additional updates regarding existing support programs and pilots underway in Defence, and clarification on the timelines for key deliverables such as mental health screening pilots for ab-initio training establishments (in line with the Mental Health Screening Framework reform project to be delivered as part of Recommendation 65 – Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively).

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3 - Build the capability of career managers

The RCDVS Final Report stated that career managers play a critical role in Defence, but there were concerns regarding caseload, career management training and assurance systems to monitor performance. As career managers exercise a significant influence over the careers of ADF members, which can impact the health and wellbeing of members and their families, it is critical they are providing adequate support to members.

The Board considered the current professional services and training for career managers, and the proposed activities to further upskill and support career managers, including specifically in trauma informed approaches. The Board considered activities related to the adequacy of career manager to caseload ratios, acknowledging the technological solutions currently in place for some functions but acknowledging the benefits of personal and face-to-face engagement for ADF members.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 7 - Increase employment opportunities within the Australian Defence Force for members who cannot be deployed

The RCDVS heard evidence that the threat of being medically ‘downgraded’ reinforced a culture of hiding injury or illness that prevents people from seeking help – including seeking help from within the ADF health system. The RCDVS Final Report highlighted that creating meaningful roles for non-deployable members supports mental health and wellbeing, strengthening retention, which helps address ongoing workforce pressures.

Prior to, and during the RCDVS, Defence implemented changes to the Military Employment Classification (MEC) system, which enabled members who were no longer deployable due to illness or injury to continue employment in meaningful roles.

The Board considered the proposed approach to improve employment opportunities for members who are no longer deployable, through workforce policy and process changes and considered the alignment with Recommendation 6 (Improve the procedural fairness of the military employment classification system). The Board noted the proposed increased use of MEC J42 and J49 codes, introduction of guidelines for career managers to ensure workforce planning and policies are maximised and mechanisms to measure and monitor employment statuses.

The Board discussed the existing flexibility for alternate employment opportunities in the system but noted that broader education may be required for commanders.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 7, with updates to the Plan regarding the inclusion of education for relevant personnel on employment opportunities for ADF members who are unable to be deployed, to be submitted for record keeping by 29 September 2025.

Recommendation 8 - Maximise workforce retention by addressing factors that contribute to voluntary separation

The RCDVS found that a lack of personnel has a cumulative impact across the workforce with high rates of separation having a negative impact on the mental and physical health of the remaining workforce. The RCDVS considered there to be shortfalls in Defence’s data on separation rates and some retention strategies.

The Board considered that the existing work completed as part of the Defence Workforce Plan 2024 would be built upon as part of implementing this recommendation. The Board considered the current separation rates and heard that a more holistic approach to understanding the drivers of separation will be completed by 31 December 2025.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 8, subject to updates to the Plan regarding the enduring approach, to be submitted for record keeping by 29 September 2025.

Recommendation 11 - Assess Australian Defence Force leaders based on upward feedback and performance against culture, health and wellbeing targets

The RCDVS's review of Defence leadership culture and accountability examined how ADF leaders are held to account. The RCDVS identified that senior officer appraisals lacked quantifiable measures for culture and wellbeing and had no mechanism for upward feedback.

The Board considered the phased approach to implementation and the current senior leadership trial cohort (O06+ - Captain (RAN)/Colonel/Group Captain and above ranks). Concurrently, an O05 (Commander/Lieutenant Colonel/Wing Commander) cohort is also being trialled separately to the RMP.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 11.

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

Recommendation 33 - Seek to understand whether/how involvement in military justice processes contributes to adverse outcomes

The RCDVS Final Report identified that there is a heightened risk of suicide and suicidality for some serving and ex-serving members who interact with the military justice system. The RCDVS recommended further research to understand the stressors that are associated with, and can lead to, involvement in administrative and disciplinary processes.

The Board considered the in-house capability being built to initiate this research, including the proposed timelines for research delivery. The need for appropriate ethics approvals was a consideration as part of timelines.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 33.

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

Recommendation 62 - Establish a research translation centre for Defence and veteran health care

To improve health care for serving and ex-serving members, the RCDVS recommended better coordination and collaboration of experts. Research translation centres were identified as an example of a suitable model to support the translation of Defence and veteran health research and increase reach among health practitioners and the health system.

The Board considered the implications of implementing the recommendation in accordance with its wording and heard how Defence and DVA are working together on an alternate

proposal to meet the intent of the recommendation. It was noted that this recommendation was 'agreed-in-principle' by Government in December 2024.

The Board considered the linkages with other recommendations including 114, 115, 116, 117, 120 and 121 and the interdepartmental working and steering groups that have been established to coordinate efforts.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 62.

[Recommendation 70 - Revise protocols for responding to suicidal crisis to be in line with clinical best practice](#)

The Board approved a RMP for Recommendation 70 on 20 February 2025.

The Board considered updates made to the RMP to reflect revised timelines for delivery of policy, guidance and a protocol framework. The approach for an external body to develop revised protocols for responding to suicidal crisis was also reviewed following confirmation of an existing comprehensive evidence base to guide suicidal response protocols and aftercare services. This evidence base identified the importance of including localised guidance and co-designing with persons with lived experience. The Board considered and agreed to this approach.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 70.

Transition and support for ex-serving members

[Recommendation 83 - Increase opportunities for members to gain civilian qualifications from Defence training and education](#)

The RMP for Recommendation 83 was not approved when initially considered at the 27 May 2025 Program Board.

The Board noted that further work was required to develop the implementation approach and update the RMP.

Program Board outcome: The Board **agreed** to consider the RMP for Recommendation 83 at the Defence Implementation Program Board on 14 October 2025.

[Recommendation 94 - Improve timeliness and reporting on information-sharing between Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs for claims processing](#)

The RCDVS acknowledged that ongoing administrative and ICT solutions have been implemented to enable timely provision of information from Defence to DVA to support efficient claims processing. The RCDVS recommended a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for information exchange as one could not be identified in annual reports. During the RCDVS, Defence provided evidence regarding its progress towards digitisation of records; the RCDVS recommended this continue as a priority and be reported on.

The Board considered the two elements to this recommendation, which are managed by different areas of Defence. The Board heard that KPIs for provision of information between Defence and DVA would be set in a Memorandum of Understanding initially and then

reported through the Joint Transition Authority Annual Progress Report. With regard to digitisation of records, this is expected to be completed by June 2026.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 94.

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

[Recommendation 104 - Improve the profile, resourcing and impact of the Defence Family Advocate](#)

The RCDVS identified the need to review and consider the Defence Family Advocate and the impact of this position through detailed analysis of administrative and governance processes. This included work to formalise the relationship between the Defence Family Advocate and the Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner.

This recommendation is being implemented by Defence and DVA, with DVA solely responsible for part (b) of the recommendation. The Board considered the work already completed to review and address governance and operational gaps on behalf of Defence Families of Australia, including stronger governance arrangements and increased remuneration. The Board noted that Defence continues to work with the Defence Family Advocate on continuous business improvements.

The Board noted ministerial consultation on this recommendation and discussed how the governance changes would be communicated to Defence and veteran communities.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 104.

Other business

The Board considered items pertaining to its governance functions including programmatic performance and collective measures of effectiveness, forward work program, recommendation relationship mapping, and resource requirements.

The Board acknowledged the coordinated communications strategy being developed by PM&C, Defence, and DVA regarding the implementation of Royal Commission recommendations ahead of the one-year anniversary of the RCDVS Final Report.