



Australian Government

Defence

RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

Date: 17 July 2025

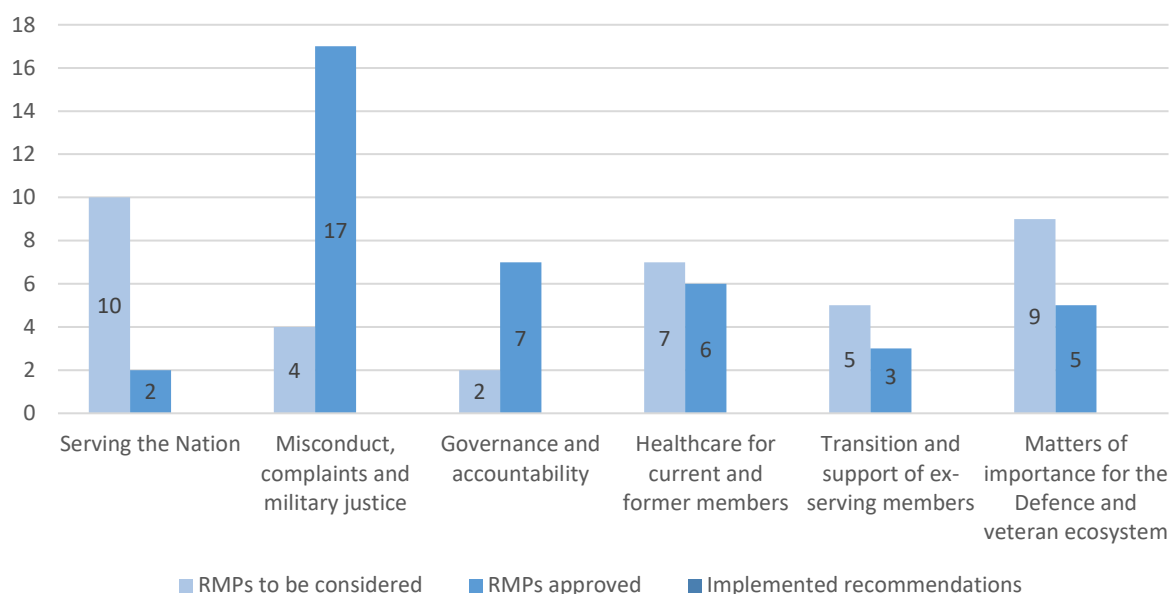
The RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) met on 17 July 2025 to discuss the progress of the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program and consider a number of Reform Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs not approved will be the subject of further planning and consideration based on feedback provided 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 40 RMPs approved with a further 37 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 13 - Co-design a new doctrine recognising that operational readiness depends on a healthy workforce - **Not approved**

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

- Recommendation 31 - Consider how mental health may contribute to poor conduct before recommending administrative termination - **Approved**
- Recommendation 35 - Determine whether support mechanisms for members involved with military justice processes are effective - **Approved**
- Recommendation 37 - Develop a charter of minimum standards for all members involved in military justice processes - **Approved**

Governance and accountability

- Recommendation 55 - Conduct an audit into Defence workplace health and safety risk - **Approved amended milestone**

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 66 - Where possible, support injured members to be rehabilitated at work, within their home unit - **Approved**

Transition and support for ex-serving members

- Recommendation 82 - Establish a consistent, locally responsive policy on ex-serving members' access to bases - **Approved**

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

- Recommendation 102 - Implement and improve upon the Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence - **Approved**
- Recommendation 103 - Improve the support, communication and services provided to Defence families - **Approved**
- Recommendation 106 - Establish a suicide database of serving and ex-serving members - **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 13 - Co-design a new doctrine recognising that operational readiness depends on a healthy workforce](#)

Program Board outcome: The Board did **not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 13. It will return for consideration out of session by 30 September 2025.

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

[Recommendation 31 - Consider how mental health may contribute to poor conduct before recommending administrative termination](#)

The RCDVS identified that involuntary separation is a risk factor in suicide and suicidality statistics and called for stronger safeguards to manage the risks to wellbeing for members who are subject to an involuntary separation process.

The Board considered the proposed approach to mandate decision-makers consider the current state of a member's mental health and the role it may have played in the behaviour that attracted the administrative action.

The Board considered the amendments required to the *Defence Regulation 2016* section 24 to include an express requirement to consider a member's mental health status. The Board noted that in November 2024, the Chief of the Defence Force issued an interim Directive 'Consideration of Suspension from Duty and Involuntary Separation of ADF Members Alleged to have Engaged in Serious Misconduct', which required individual factors including mental health condition to be considered. The Board discussed the current challenges faced by commanders where mental health information is unavailable due to consent. The Board requested inclusion of regular or proactive requests for consent to access information in the approach to implementation.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 31, with updates regarding consent to be made to the Plan and submitted for record keeping by 27 August 2025.

[Recommendation 35 - Determine whether support mechanisms for members involved with military justice processes are effective](#)

The Final Report of the RCDVS highlighted the need for Defence to evaluate the effectiveness of the key support mechanisms for those involved in military justice proceedings and consider members' experiences of the supports provided. This is to ensure that members

navigating the system have access to appropriate, timely and effective support, and that such mechanisms are applied consistency across all services.

The Board considered the phased approach to implementation, culminating in an evaluation report that will provide evidence of the extent to which key military justice support mechanisms are effective, and where improvements can be made.

The Board noted that a review to baseline support mechanisms for those involved in military justice proceedings is scheduled for September 2025. This includes face-to-face engagement with key stakeholders and will determine evaluation purpose and scope.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 35, with updates regarding the incorporation of a baselining assessment using current information and initiatives to be made to the Plan and submitted for record keeping by 27 August 2025.

[Recommendation 37 - Develop a charter of minimum standards for all members involved in military justice processes](#)

The RCDVS identified that a Charter of Minimum Standards for all participants in the military justice process would help establish stronger accountability for those initiating or investigating to ensure a more trauma informed approach.

Defence is modelling the Military Justice Charter on similar frameworks to those used in civilian and like-minded military jurisdictions. The Board noted this is a joint recommendation with the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force.

The Board acknowledged that development of the Charter is well progressed and has been widely consulted with the Military Justice Steering Group and external statutory authorities. The Board discussed the need for a simplified and streamlined policy framework and ways to improve members' understanding and access to policy. The Board requested consideration of co-signing the Charter with the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force and for advice to come back by 27 August 2025.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 37.

Governance and accountability

[Recommendation 55 - Conduct an audit into Defence workplace health and safety risk](#)

The RCDVS examined Defence's obligations under Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation and risk management practices. The RCDVS called for a strengthening of individual and collective accountability of senior members charged with ensuring compliance with WHS requirements that are intended to protect workforce safety and wellbeing. While the RCDVS recognised that Defence's approach to WHS assurance is maturing as demonstrated by ongoing work related to the Defence WHS Strategy 2023–2028, it called for an audit into WHS risk management.

The Board approved a RMP for Recommendation 55 on 20 February 2025.

The Board considered updates to the RMP to amend the timeframes related to delivery of the audit report and presentation to the Defence Audit and Risk Committee.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 55.

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

[Recommendation 66 - Where possible, support injured members to be rehabilitated at work, within their home unit](#)

The RCDVS Final Report identified that members' timely access to safe, quality care cannot be understated and not only is adequate health care implicitly and explicitly promised to serving members, it is protective against suicide and suicidality. The RCDVS acknowledged that although units existed to support members in rehabilitation, these arrangements frequently resulted in members being located away from their usual location, role and peer network.

The Board discussed the work already underway across the three Services in relation to this recommendation. The Board considered the policies, processes and practices that will deliver a common, tailored and transparent approach to recovery for all injured ADF members and the need to demonstrate how Defence is proactively implementing a framework that is consistent in principle with localised application.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 66.

Transition and support for ex-serving members

[Recommendation 82 - Establish a consistent, locally responsive policy on ex-serving members' access to bases](#)

The RCDVS recognised the importance of social connection for transitioning members, to contribute to reducing the risk of suicide and suicidality. The RCDVS recommended that Defence establish a consistent national policy governing access to military bases including fostering ongoing social connections for ex-serving members and their families.

The Board discussed the importance of access to bases for ex-serving members to retain a sense of connection and community during transition.

The Board discussed undertaking a pilot in various locations with an evaluation by the end of 2025 to inform the policy. The Board agreed to match base access timeframes to current transition programs of two years; and noted a review of the recommendation implementation would occur.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 82.

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

[Recommendation 102 - Implement and improve upon the Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence](#)

The RCDVS identified associations in international research between exposure to intimate partner violence and indicators of wellbeing, including suicidality, among serving and ex-

serving members. The RCDVS recommended that Defence should undertake targeted improvements to its existing Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence.

The Board noted that in December 2024, the Defence Action Plan to support the Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) 2023-2028 was released. This aligns with the new Defence policy on FDV which will be included in the Complaints and Alternative Resolutions Manual, supported by an accompanying toolkit for commanders and managers, to be released in August 2025.

The Board discussed that Defence is working closely with Defence Families of Australia on recommendations from their report, including co-chairing a Roundtable with Defence Families of Australia, to work through remaining recommendations.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 102.

Recommendation 103 - Improve the support, communication and services provided to Defence families

The RCDVS identified that family, and the support that serving and ex-serving members may derive from their family, is a protective factor for mental health and the prevention of suicide and suicidality. Specifically, the RCDVS identified opportunities to enhance the existing services offered by Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) Branch and the need for improved communication with families, and their access to DMFS services.

The Board considered the existing DMFS services available and Defence efforts to continue reviewing family support programs and initiatives available to Defence families, including services that support partners and children of ADF members.

The Board discussed the importance of supporting families and the role of states and territories in providing support programs.

The Board considered the proposed approach to communicate with Defence families and the need for close consultation with Defence members, families, Defence Families of Australia, the Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner, and other relevant government agencies to ensure a family-centred and evidence-informed approach.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 103.

Recommendation 106 - Establish a suicide database of serving and ex-serving members

To strengthen suicide prevention efforts, the RCDVS identified the need for a fit for purpose Defence data system that captures data points relevant to understanding the factors that surround deaths by suicide. Access to this data will support Defence to better understand deaths by suicide, and enable evidence-based decision making on preventive actions to reduce suicide, suicidality and self-harm.

Defence and DVA are jointly progressing this recommendation in close collaboration with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The Board considered the existing mechanism in place to capture data, and the approach to relocate this existing database to a different platform by September 2025 as an interim solution pending a comprehensive solution.

The Board discussed how data would be used to support research, reporting and understanding, with a view to develop predictive information that can be used for prevention in the future.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 106.

Other business

The Board considered items pertaining to its governance functions including its forward work program and recommendation implementation progress. The Board noted work underway to capture resourcing impacts of recommendations.

The Board discussed public communications required to ensure transparency of Defence implementation progress.

The DVA representative noted the consultation on the new Wellbeing Agency and the Ex-Service Organisations Peak Body.