



RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

Date: 19 June 2025

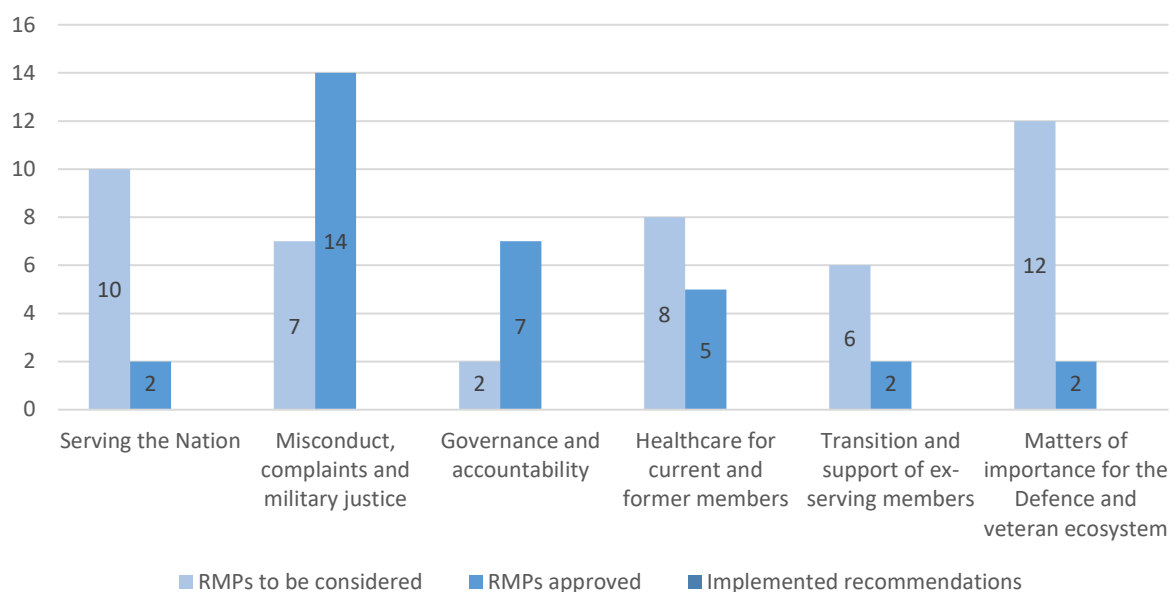
The RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) met on 19 June 2025 to discuss the progress of the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program and consider a number of Reform Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs not approved will be the subject of further planning and consideration based on feedback provided 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 32 RMPs approved with a further 45 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 in ab initio training - **Approved**

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

- Recommendation 18 - Strengthen workplace protections during sexual misconduct investigations - **Approved**
- Recommendation 24 - Annually publish anonymised data on outcomes of all incidents of sexual misconduct - **Approved**
- Recommendation 26 - Foster a strong culture of reporting unacceptable behaviour - **Approved**
- Recommendation 36 - Trial a model outside the chain of command for supporting members involved in military justice processes - **Approved**
- Recommendation 39 - Address risk factors for suicide and suicidality and report on progress as part of enterprise-level risk management - **Approved**

Governance and accountability

- Recommendation 53 - Give members 21 days to make a complaint after being notified of a decision to terminate their service - **Approved**
- Recommendation 56 - Improve guidance and understanding of Defence's 'if in doubt, notify' policy - **Approved**

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 63 - Reduce stigma and remove structural and cultural barriers to help seeking - **Approved**
- Recommendation 65 – Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively - **Not 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 in ab initio training](#)

The RCDVS Final Report identified ab initio training as a period of heightened risk for suicide or suicidality in recruits. It is also a period that plays an important role in suicide prevention by enabling early identification of suicide risk and intervention. Additionally, ab initio is a critical time to prepare new members for service life through building resilience and help-seeking behaviours.

The Board considered the policy and reform measures proposed to improve outcomes and access to support for all recruits and Trainee Officers undergoing ab initio training. The Board also considered the programs already being piloted across ADF training establishments, including at the Australian Defence Force Academy, to better support mental health, resilience and leadership development.

Further, the Board discussed reform that was already completed or underway across the three Services (Navy, Army and Air Force). The Board discussed the approach to implement element (c)(i) “longitudinal tracking of health, wellbeing and safety outcomes for members from initial training and throughout their Australian Defence Force career” of the recommendation. The Board sought more information on this element to be provided to the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board on 14 August 2025.

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

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

[Recommendation 18 - Strengthen workplace protections during sexual misconduct investigations](#)

The Board approved a RMP for Recommendation 18 on 1 May 2025.

A verbal update was provided to this Board to confirm that updates on policy reform activities as per the approved RMP would be provided to the Board as required.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 18 as presented at the 1 May 2025 Program Board.

Recommendation 24 - Annually publish anonymised data on outcomes of all incidents of sexual misconduct

The RCDVS identified that a lack of publically available data regarding sexual misconduct in the ADF undermines public trust and does not meet expectations for government transparency. The RCDVS Final Report also noted that information published in annual reports acts as a form of deterrence.

While some sexual misconduct data is published in the Defence Annual Report, the Office of Director of Military Prosecutions Annual Report, Judge Advocate General webpages, Inspector General ADF Annual Report and the SeMPRO (Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office) Annual Report, the Final Report found that these reports are fragmented and do not sufficiently identify the nature and types of sexual offences.

The Board considered the proposed approach to establish comprehensive sexual misconduct data reports to be published annually. The Board discussed the criticality and the challenges with extracting appropriate data for standardised reporting and further work to be undertaken. It was agreed that anonymised data will be published and reported in Annual Reports.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 24.

Recommendation 26 - Foster a strong culture of reporting unacceptable behaviour

Defence's approach to reporting and managing reports of unacceptable behaviour was examined throughout the RCDVS. The RCDVS Final Report provided that in addition to a more effective complaints system that will be delivered via Recommendation 27 (Evaluate outcomes to ensure that Defence has addressed the intent behind recommendations), Defence must also proactively identify and act on hotspots of unacceptable behaviour.

The Board was advised of the linkages between Recommendation 26 and 27, which called for evaluation of recommendation in the Commonwealth Ombudsman's review, *Does Defence Handle Unacceptable Complaints Effectively? Defending Fairness Report*, which highlighted areas for improvement in complaint management and organisational culture.

The Board considered how and where unacceptable behaviour incident data is currently used, and work underway to further develop a Defence People Dashboard for use by Defence leadership in 2025 that identifies unacceptable behaviour reports made; this includes data such as rank, gender and type of unacceptable behaviour reported.

The Board discussed the need for a holistic view of the work that has already been undertaken related to this recommendation and further consideration of how to standardise reporting across Defence. The Board requested further review of the Plan and opportunity for Board members to provide additional feedback within four weeks.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 26.

Recommendation 36 - Trial a model outside the chain of command for supporting members involved in military justice processes

The RCDVS identified that improvements were needed to Defence's approach to supporting members engaged with the military justice system, particularly as engagement with the system can be a risk factor for suicide and suicidality. The RCDVS Final Report proposed that Defence pilot a model for automatic, opt-out referral to both legal and welfare support services for members engaged in certain military justice processes that is separate from the chain of command.

The Board considered the current opt-in legal and welfare support services available for ADF members, noting current welfare services are not independent to the chain of command given command have inherent responsibility for the welfare of their people.

The Board was advised that a review of existing support mechanisms would be undertaken to consider their effectiveness and comparison against civilian justice jurisdictions; this review would inform next steps for a pilot.

The difficulties with the outside of the chain of command model were noted. The Board agreed that a pilot would be undertaken within Army.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 36.

Recommendation 39 - Address risk factors for suicide and suicidality and report on progress as part of enterprise-level risk management

The RCDVS investigated management of risk related to suicide and suicidality. The RCDVS acknowledged that Defence has implemented systems for managing risk, including a framework designed to embed risk awareness into core business practices, this alone was not considered an effective approach. The RCDVS identified in-service risk factors that require active risk controls and ongoing measurement and monitoring to effectively address suicidality.

By implementing reforms in governance, including the establishment of a permanent risk for suicide/suicidality in the Work Health and Safety enterprise risk category, Defence would enhance its capacity to foster a more proactive approach to mental health and wellbeing to reduce suicide and suicidality amongst ADF members.

The RMP for Recommendation 39 was not approved when initially considered at the 1 May 2025 Program Board.

The Board considered the updates to the Plan, which clarified how lead indicators for the risk factors would be identified (i.e. once outcome-based measures are identified and baselined) and provided information on enterprise linkages.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 39.

Governance and accountability

Recommendation 53 - Give members 21 days to make a complaint after being notified of a decision to terminate their service

The RCDVS considered the current timeframe (14 days) for members to submit a Redress of Grievance (ROG) complaint when they receive notice of involuntary cessation of service was inadequate. Given the seriousness of this decision, and the stress it can place on ADF members, it was recommended the timeframe be extended to 21 days.

The Board considered the amendment required to the *Defence Regulation 2016*, and associated policy changes and communication to ADF members once the change is enacted.

The Board discussed interim measures or policies to enact the intent of the recommendation ahead of legislation changes occurring.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 53.

Recommendation 56 - Improve guidance and understanding of Defence's 'if in doubt, notify' policy

The RCDVS Final Report identified that inconsistencies in Defence's incident notification practices was a barrier to the WHS Regulator (Comcare) being able to obtain a complete picture of notifiable incidents. In particular, the RCDVS focused on incidences connected to ADF service, and highlighted a lack of quality assurance for service nexus determinations, and unclear guidance on how to determine whether psychosocial incidents should be notified to Comcare.

The Board discussed the criticality of the definition of the service nexus with Comcare and the need for an agreed approach on this. The Board noted this is a joint recommendation with Comcare and acknowledged the activities Defence and Comcare are undertaking. The Board discussed the need for further details on implemented changes to date across the Services and accountability mechanisms to ensure internal self-correcting to improve the reporting process.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 56.

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

Recommendation 63 - Reduce stigma and remove structural and cultural barriers to help seeking

The RCDVS found that there are structural and cultural barriers to help seeking within Defence. These barriers are exacerbated by stigmatising language in the *Defence Force Discipline Act 1982* (Cth) (DFDA) and Defence policies and procedures. The RCDVS acknowledged the range of programs including training and guidance materials that are in place for commanding officers to support the health and wellbeing of ADF members, but called for further training and communications to reduce stigma and promote help seeking.

The Board approved a RMP for Recommendation 63 on 1 May 2025, however sought additional information on some elements of the Plan to be provided at this RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board.

The Board considered the updates to the Plan, including the breakdown of implementation timeframes and prioritisation of select policies for priority review, given the policies will have most impact on stigma and barriers to help seeking.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 63.

[Recommendation 65 - Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively](#)

Program Board outcome: The Board did **not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 65.

Other business

The Board considered items pertaining to its governance functions including its forward work program and recommendation implementation progress.

The Board noted RMPs are to include more detailed resourcing statements.