



RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

Date: 1 May 2025

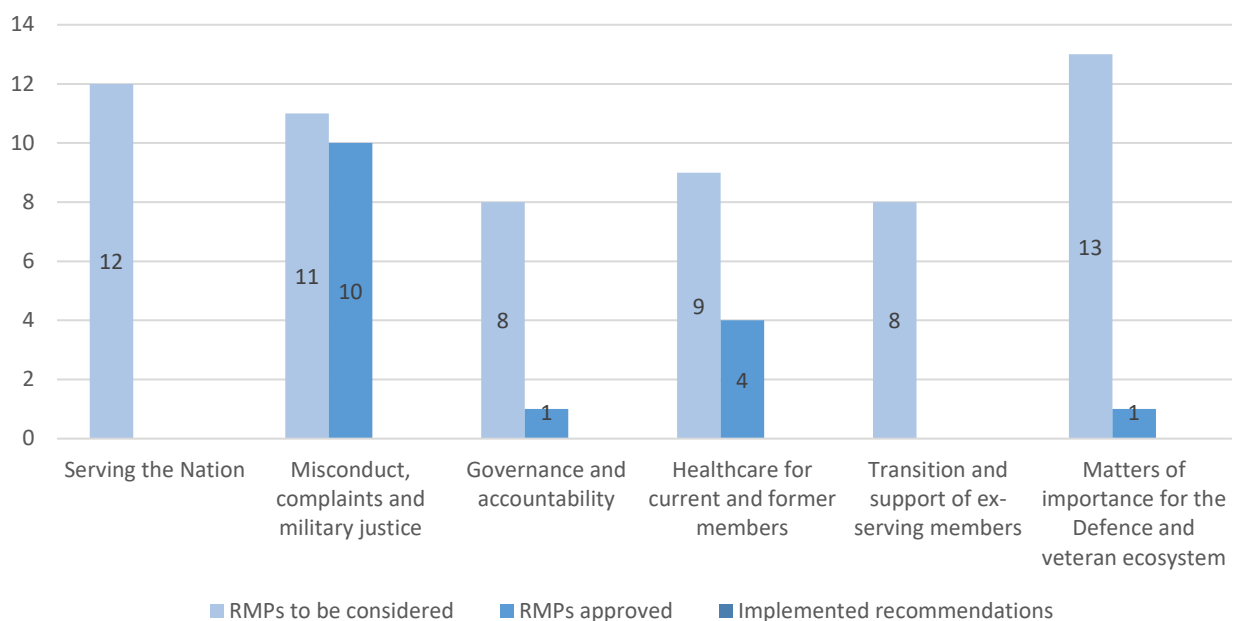
The RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) met on 1 May 2025 to discuss the progress of the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program and consider a number of Reform Management Plans (RMPs). RMPs not approved will be the subject of further planning and consideration based on feedback provided 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 16 RMPs approved with a further 61 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 9 - Improve organisational culture and leadership accountability to increase member wellbeing safety - **Not approved**

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

- Recommendation 16 - Evaluate training on managing sexual misconduct and make it mandatory for all leaders - **Approved**
- Recommendation 17 - Prioritise the prevention of sexual misconduct in the Australian Defence Force - **Approved**
- Recommendation 18 - Strengthen workplace protections during sexual misconduct investigations - **Approved**
- Recommendation 19 - Protect victims of sexual misconduct from disadvantage over the course of their careers - **Not approved**

Governance and accountability

- Recommendation 39 - Address risk factors for suicide and suicidality and report on progress as part of enterprise-level risk management - **Not approved**

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 61 - Establish a brain injury program - **Approved**
- Recommendation 63 - Reduce stigma and remove structural and cultural barriers to help seeking - **Approved**
- Recommendation 68 - Strike the right balance between upholding confidentiality and disclosing information when a member is in distress - **Approved**
- Recommendation 69 - Improve suicide-prevention training so it is practical, tailored, informed by lived experience and delivered in person - **Not approved**

Program Board Outcomes

Acknowledgement of Defence members and veterans who have died by suicide

The Board considered and agreed on the need to open each Program Board with an acknowledgement of Defence members and veterans who have died by suicide. This acknowledgement would reinforce to the members of the Board why the timely and effective implementation of reforms is so important.

A paper would be presented to the 27 May 2025 Program Board with an update on the number of known or suspected deaths by suicide of full-time serving ADF members.

Serving the Nation

Recommendation 9 - Improve organisational culture and leadership accountability to increase member wellbeing safety

Program Board outcome: The Board did **not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 9.

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

Recommendation 16 - Evaluate training on managing sexual misconduct and make it mandatory for all leaders

The RCDVS identified that commanders and managers must receive adequate training to manage sexual misconduct incidents and that current workshops must be evaluated to ensure they are effective. Given the impact of sexual misconduct on victims' physical and mental health, and the potential links to suicide and suicidality, the RCDVS considered it essential that Defence trains decision-makers in how to respond with skill and confidence.

The Board considered the three-phased approach to recommendation implementation. Firstly, an independent external evaluator will be engaged to assess the training currently provided; followed by incorporation of amendments identified and evaluating participants' understanding of the content; finally, mandatory delivery to all ADF commanders and managers across the Services.

The Board considered the importance of evaluating and improving the Sexual Misconduct Incident Management Workshop, the mandatory completion for all ADF commanders and managers and subsequent evaluation of proficiency, including the application of relevant policies and trauma-informed principles, of attendees.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 16.

Recommendation 17 - Prioritise the prevention of sexual misconduct in the Australian Defence Force

The RCDVS Final Report identified that sexual misconduct remains a systemic issue in the ADF, and a more comprehensive approach to prevention is needed.

The Board discussed the requirement to develop a comprehensive prevention strategy for sexual misconduct that will include tailored primary prevention, early intervention and behavioural change programs for perpetrators of sexual misconduct.

The Board noted the requirement to develop the strategy in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission and Our Watch, and tailor the strategy to the ADF environment. Internal and external consultation on the strategy will also be undertaken.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 17.

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

The RCDVS identified that when policies preventing sexual misconduct fail, there must be appropriate protections for victims. The RCDVS Final Report highlighted that protection for victims this was largely left to the commanding officers who have responsibility for managing complaints but they are provided little training or guidance on how to do this.

The Board discussed the need for policy and legislative reform as part of this recommendation. Policy would be updated to address the lack of clarity in application of workplace safety measures to be considered during the management of allegations of sexual misconduct, including streamlining suspension policy. Legislative reform would be undertaken to address deficiencies in suspension powers – that is, to introduce options to suspend ADF members during the conduct of civilian criminal investigations prior to charge.

The Board discussed commencing policy reform as soon as practicable and acknowledged that legislative reform may take some time to be completed.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 18 subject to the Board receiving further details on the order of policy reforms.

[Recommendation 19 - Protect victims of sexual misconduct from disadvantage over the course of their careers](#)

Program Board outcome: The Board did **not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 19.

Governance and accountability

[Recommendation 39 - Address risk factors for suicide and suicidality and report on progress as part of enterprise-level risk management](#)

Program Board outcome: The Board did **not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 39.

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

[Recommendation 61 - Establish a brain injury program](#)

The RCDVS Final Report found that military service is associated with an increased likelihood of brain injury. Additionally, the Interim National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention's Preliminary Interim Report (the Boss Report), identified that traumatic brain injury is a risk factor which could lead to a higher rate of suicide.

The Board noted that this recommendation is being implemented jointly with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and acknowledged work completed to date, and that a One Star/ Band One Steering Group has been established to oversee and coordinate actions as well as changes to Defence policy and processes.

The Board considered the key hazards identified, forming the basis for corresponding lines of effort that will facilitate crucial system-wide changes.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 61, subject to clarification on the approach to establishing the neurocognitive program, to be provided to the Board once determined.

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 discussed the requirement to update existing Departmental policy and procedures, particularly those relating to ‘people’, through drafting guidance to improve areas of language, clarity, inclusivity and simplicity. The Board also considered the legislative changes required and future work to update or develop new educational resources.

The Board sought additional information on some elements of the plan, to be provided at the Defence Implementation Program Board on 19 June 2025, including work that has already commenced or been completed and a breakdown of implementation timeframes.

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

Recommendation 68 - Strike the right balance between upholding confidentiality and disclosing information when a member is in distress

The RCDVS Final Report identified that privacy was a barrier to providing family members and commanders with information to best support ADF members experiencing psychological distress and mental health issues. To rectify this, the RCDVS considered it important that members and commanding officers understand how the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) operates and the importance of members consenting to their health information being shared with those able to facilitate appropriate care and support. This will enable Defence and family members to best support members in distress and contribute to reducing suicide and suicidality.

The Board considered work already completed in relation to the recommendation (release of the Privacy in Practice training module in January 2025); upcoming work to update the Defence Privacy Policy to include further information on consent; and updates on the training module to focus on the importance of consent and use of personal information in Defence.

The Board discussed dependencies with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the need for commanders and managers to be educated on their responsibilities and restrictions with regards to information disclosure.

The Board agreed the approach to implement the recommendation would be broadened to include all Defence personnel (ADF and APS) in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 68.

Recommendation 69 - Improve suicide-prevention training so it is practical, tailored, informed by lived experience and delivered in person

Program Board outcome: The Board **did not approve** the RMP for Recommendation 69.

Other business

The Board considered items pertaining to its governance functions including its forward work program, recommendation progress reporting, collective measures of effectiveness, mapping of interdependencies between recommendations and legislative reform activities.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs representative provided an update on co-design workshops conducted for the new wellbeing agency (Recommendation 87).