



Australian Government

Defence

RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

2025 Out of Session – Reform Management Plans

The RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) have agreed to consider (review) updates or changes requested to some Reform Management Plans (RMPs) out of session. This would occur where it is not a requirement for the Board to meet face-to-face to discuss changes.

Reform Management Plans Considered

Serving the Nation

- Recommendation 9 - Improve organisational culture and leadership accountability to increase member wellbeing safety
- Recommendation 13 - Co-design a new doctrine recognising that operational readiness depends on a healthy workforce

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

- Recommendation 19 - Protect victims of sexual misconduct from disadvantage over the course of their careers
- Recommendation 26 - Foster a strong culture of reporting unacceptable behaviour

Governance and accountability

- Recommendation 39 - Address risk factors for suicide and suicidality and report on progress as part of enterprise-level risk management
- Recommendation 40 - Improve governance mechanisms from the unit level to the enterprise level
- Recommendation 56 - Improve guidance and understanding of Defence's 'if in doubt, notify' policy

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 61 - Establish a brain injury program
- Recommendation 65 - Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively
- Recommendation 69 - Improve suicide-prevention training so it is practical, tailored, informed by lived experience and delivered in person

- Recommendation 76 - Develop a postvention framework with experts and those with lived experience of suicide bereavement
- Recommendation 77 - Develop a suite of postvention resources in collaboration with stakeholders

Transition and support for ex-serving members

- Recommendation 80 – The Department of Veterans’ Affairs to take responsibility for supporting members to transition out of the Australian Defence Force
- Recommendation 85 - Develop employment pathways for ex-serving members in public sector agencies

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

- Recommendation 112 - Include data on suicide and suicidality in the enterprise-wide Defence data catalogue
- Recommendation 114 - Defence and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to prioritise research into veteran health and wellbeing, and publish their workplans
- Recommendation 115 - Defence and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to publish their research into veteran health and wellbeing

Serving the Nation

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

The RCDVS Final Report identified shortcomings in Defence's culture and leadership accountability, despite past culture reviews. The RCDVS noted that Defence would benefit from data driven outcomes-based targets and greater transparency of Defence's progress against culture targets that will enable Defence to measure culture changes and identify areas for improvement.

Since the RCDVS commenced, Defence has progressed action to improve Defence's organisational culture and leadership accountability. In November 2023, Defence launched the Defence Culture Blueprint and associated Action Plan. This Action Plan, along with the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy, have been directing Defence's culture and wellbeing reform efforts. Defence also progressed a review of Pathway to Change to identify opportunities to learn from previous culture reform programs and has been working with the Office for Women, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Treasury Evaluation Centre and Gartner Group to understand more about best practice data driven metrics.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 9 when presented at the 1 May 2025 Board. The Board discussed the need for leadership accountability at the unit level and the use of survey data to identify areas requiring further investigation. They noted the importance of linking unit-level insights to the enterprise and improving survey participation through clearer communication about their value. The Board discussed the challenges of inconsistent reporting and the absence of incident management teams in some Groups.

The RMP was updated following Board discussion and feedback. The linkages to Recommendation 26 (Foster a strong culture of reporting unacceptable behaviour) were noted, as well as the need to fully understand 'leadership accountability' and support safety and wellbeing of our workforce especially noting the integrated ADF and APS environment.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 9 on 30 June 2025.

Recommendation 13 - Co-design a new doctrine recognising that operational readiness depends on a healthy workforce

The RCDVS identified the need for a paradigm shift to better control risks in non-operational contexts and, as a result, better prioritise members' safety, health and wellbeing. The RCDVS emphasised the need for people to be seen as a capability in and of themselves, rather than as an input to Defence capability. To support these efforts, the RCDVS recommended new doctrine on 'people, capability and service' to be co-designed with serving and ex-serving ADF members across Services, ranks, genders and ages.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 13 when presented at the 17 July 2025 Board. It was presented to the Board as a draft and supported in principle by members, with the requirement for further consultation to occur and then return for consideration out of session once finalised.

The Board considered the updated RMP and noted the three phased approach to commence drafting doctrine, co-designing the doctrine through a select panel and finalising and publishing the doctrine.

The Board provided feedback to be incorporated into the RMP and the doctrine. This includes balancing the strengths and vulnerabilities of service culture and linking wellbeing initiatives to operational outcomes.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 13 on 17 December 2025. An updated RMP incorporating feedback is to be provided to the Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office for record keeping.

Misconduct, complaints and military justice

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

The RCDVS found that current Defence processes to support and protect victims of sexual misconduct were inadequate and in some cases may directly or indirectly disadvantage members over the course of their career. It is imperative that clear policies and procedures are in place to support victims of sexual misconduct upon their return to work and over the course of their career, provide a safe and supportive workplace and reduce contributing factors for suicide and suicidality.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 19 when presented at the 1 May 2025 Board. The Board considered the initiatives that either exist, or are being developed, to support the implementation of this recommendation. The Board discussed the need to ensure processes and key terms are adequately defined and the importance of a neutral label and appropriate processes to ensure that careers of victims are not disadvantaged. The Board requested the Plan be updated with clearer connection between the requirements of the recommendation and the planned implementation actions.

In considering the updates to the RMP, the Board reiterated the importance of a neutral label and noted that updated career management training, processes and procedures will be critical to successful implementation.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 19 on 30 June 2025.

[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 approved the RMP for Recommendation 26 when presented at the 19 June 2025 Defence Implementation Program Board; however, requested further review of the Plan and opportunity for Board members to provide additional feedback.

The Board noted the RMP provides a comprehensive and practical framework to strengthen Defence's reporting culture and address systemic barriers to reporting unacceptable behaviour.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updates to the RMP for Recommendation 26 on 17 December 2025, requesting a further minor amendment be made and the RMP be provided to the Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office for record keeping.

Governance and accountability

[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.

At the 19 June 2025 Program Board, the RMP was approved. At the 20 November Program Board, an update was provided on the ADF Suicide Review Pilot, the Board requested the RMP be updated to incorporate the ADF Suicide Review Pilot for out of session consideration.

Program Board Outcome: As at end of 2025, awaiting Program Board's decision.

[Recommendation 40 - Improve governance mechanisms from the unit level to the enterprise level](#)

The RCDVS Final Report indicated that Defence did not have an approach across all levels of the Defence enterprise to ensure that accountabilities are being correctly discharged, and that systems within Defence were considered to be burdensome, duplicative and place onerous reporting requirements on managers within that system.

The Board approved the RMP for Recommendation 40 when presented at the 27 May 2025 Board; however, sought additional information regarding adjusting the scope of the recommendation to focus on governance related to people systems.

The amended RMP was considered and the Board noted it had been suitably amended in accordance with previous feedback.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 40 on 5 September 2025.

[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 were a barrier to Comcare obtaining a complete picture of notifiable incidents in Defence. The report focused on incidents connected to ADF service, highlighting a lack of

quality assurance for determinations of service nexus and guidance on whether psychosocial incidents should be notified to Comcare.

The Board noted that Defence is implementing this recommendation jointly with Comcare.

The Board approved the RMP for Recommendation 56 when presented at the 19 June 2025 Board, subject to the inclusion of work already completed and consideration of an accountability method where reporting is found to not be occurring.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 56 on 20 November 2025, subject to updates and policy amendments to reflect Groups and Services having a centralised advisory service, and the improved flexibility to build better legislative compliance, strengthened safety systems and a stronger workforce. An updated Plan incorporating the out of session feedback was requested to be presented to the 12 December 2025 Program Board.

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 this recommendation is being implemented jointly with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Board approved the RMP for Recommendation 61 when presented at the 1 May 2025 Program Board. It then returned to the 11 September 2025 Program Board with requested updates; however, the Board requested that the Plan be updated to include further details on recommendation scope.

In November, the Board considered updates to the Plan out of session. The Board agreed to the updates, subject to amending some timeframes within the Plan.

Program Board outcome: The Board **agreed** to the updated RMP for Recommendation 61, subject to amending some timeframes. An updated Plan incorporating the out of session feedback was requested to be presented to the 12 December 2025 Program Board.

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

The RCDVS found that while Defence uses best-practice mental health screening tools, issues exist in how these are administered, including opportunities for disclosure, follow-up, and the absence of screening at key vulnerability points such as initial training. It recommended improvements to screening processes, ensuring sufficient workforce capacity and expanding mandatory screening to all known risk periods to better detect and address mental health risks early.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 65 when presented at the 19 June 2025 Defence Implementation Program Board.

The Board considered the amended RMP to tighten the scope to more directly reflect the recommendation of the RCDVS. The Board previously discussed the need to target at-risk cohorts or environments such as ab-initio training schools. The Board confirmed the Army ab-initio training is to be 1st Recruit Training Battalion (Kapooka) and this would need to be updated in the RMP.

The Board expressed their commitment to driving ongoing, working-level engagement to ensure the Plan is delivered on schedule. The Department of Veterans' Affairs emphasised the value of continuous collaboration, particularly in advancing mental health policies and programs, supported by improvements in data collection.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 65 on 5 September 2025. An updated Plan incorporating the out of session feedback was requested to be provided to the Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office for record keeping by 1 December 2025.

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

The RCDVS identified suicide prevention training as an area for improvement and examined the range of activities undertaken by Defence aimed at preventing suicide, including the ADF Suicide Prevention Program, awareness-raising initiatives, specific training and clinical services. The RCDVS also stressed the importance of co-designing training with serving and ex-serving members with lived experience.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 69 when presented at the 1 May 2025 Board and required it to come back out of session.

The Board considered the need to improve outcomes in regards to suicide and suicidality in Defence through a more proactive approach to suicide prevention that includes the provision of suicide prevention training that it is practical, tailored, informed by lived experience and delivered in person. Training will primarily be delivered in person by 31 December 2025, when feasible, practical and safe to do so, with training for high risk groups to be provided in-person as a priority.

The Board noted the comprehensive updates, restrictions to in-person training (whilst remaining the preferred option) and considered whether training can also be conducted across the integrated workforce, optimising the support for all personnel.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 69 on 30 June 2025.

[Recommendation 76 - Develop a postvention framework with experts and those with lived experience of suicide bereavement](#)

The RCDVS Final Report identified that "postvention is the support offered to people impacted by a suicide death, including family members, friends, colleagues and the wider community". Suicide postvention is internationally recognised as a core component of a

systems approach to effective suicide prevention. The RCDVS highlighted shortcomings in ADF postvention support and recommended the development of a postvention framework to be implemented following a serving member's death by suicide.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 76 when presented at the 11 September 2025 Program Board. The Board highlighted the importance of Defence having developed, and implemented, a suicide postvention framework for supporting the serving member's family, colleagues and first responders, following each in-service death by suicide (suspected or confirmed) and the extensive work undertaken to date.

The Board considered the updates to the Plan and the clearer mapping included. The Board requested ongoing work between Defence and DVA, particularly in regards to aligning board papers to reflect the joint efforts being conducted.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 76 on 15 November 2025. An updated RMP incorporating the out of session feedback was requested to be provided to the Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office for record keeping by 1 December 2025.

[Recommendation 77 - Develop a suite of postvention resources in collaboration with stakeholders](#)

The RCDVS identified the requirement to collaboratively develop a postvention network of suicide-bereavement resources to augment current postvention offerings.

The Board did not approve the RMP for Recommendation 77 when presented at the 11 September 2025 Program Board.

The Board highlighted the importance of Defence members, families and first responders impacted by suicide are supported by inclusive access to postvention resources tailored for the military community.

The Board considered the updates to the Plan and the clearer mapping included. The Board requested ongoing work between Defence and DVA, particularly in regards to aligning board papers to reflect the joint efforts being conducted.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 77 on 15 November 2025. An updated RMP incorporating the out of session feedback was requested to be provided to the Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office for record keeping by 1 December 2025.

Transition and support for ex-serving members

[Recommendation 80 – The Department of Veterans' Affairs to take responsibility for supporting members to transition out of the Australian Defence Force](#)

The RCDVS Final Report noted that DVA should take greater responsibility for supporting members in their transition into civilian life, especially in relation to cultural and social challenges of this journey, enabling transitioning members to build or rebuild their identity as a civilian, find their purpose beyond military service, and connect to friends, family and

community after service. The RCDVS observed that ex-serving members reported that cultural and social challenges make it difficult to integrate into civilian life, and this complex and challenging psychological adjustment, including a loss of familiar military culture, purpose, identity and community, can increase risk of suicidality (recommendation 80).

The Board considered Defence's update on this recommendation at the 12 December 2025 Program Board. The Board requested an RMP be developed for Recommendation 80 as Defence is jointly leading this implementation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Board considered the RMP out of session, with feedback provided to the DRCPMO by 23 December 2025. This RMP was not approved on 16 January 2026, requiring further information on joint implementation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Program Board outcome: The Board did not approved the RMP, further work is required.

[Recommendation 85 - Develop employment pathways for ex-serving members in public sector agencies](#)

The RCDVS acknowledged that while Defence provides a range of employment supports for ex-serving members (veterans), limitations continue to hinder veteran employment outcomes. It observed that these supports are currently delivered at a relatively small scale and highlighted a lack of comprehensive data and limited evidence regarding their effectiveness. The development of employment pathways for veterans to APS employment contributes to suicide prevention by providing meaningful work, financial stability, and a renewed sense of purpose and identity.

The Board noted that this as a joint recommendation with the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Board noted that the agencies are aligned in their approach and will contribute or deliver on different components of the recommendation to support implementation.

The Board noted that existing Australian Public Service legislation presents challenges to fully realising the recommendation. As such, implementation will focus on addressing these constraints. It was noted that the expansion of the VetPaths program would occur regardless of legislative change, though amendments would make its expansion more effective.

The Board provided feedback on implementation dates to be further considered.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 85 on 16 December 2025.

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

[Recommendation 112 - Include data on suicide and suicidality in the enterprise-wide Defence data catalogue](#)

The RCDVS found that Defence's fragmented approach to data management and sharing limited its capacity to know what data it holds, where it is, and how to access it. To address this issue, Defence will ensure that all relevant datasets are catalogued and easily discoverable by Defence personnel. A greater awareness of relevant datasets will help

stakeholders access and use data to make evidence-based decisions that underpin Defence's efforts to prevent ADF and veteran suicide.

The Board noted the implementation approach would be in accordance with the Government Response to the RCDVS Final Report. This means including data on suicide and suicidality in the enterprise-wide Defence data catalogue and where possible, Defence would make public the metadata of assets for which release is appropriate through the Australian Government Data Catalogue.

The Board noted that the inclusion of data on suicide and suicidality in the enterprise-wide Defence data catalogue will leverage the organisations data governance framework and practices, and the capabilities of the One Defence Data (1DD) platform.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the RMP for Recommendation 112 on 16 December 2025.

[Recommendation 114 - Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to prioritise research into veteran health and wellbeing, and publish their workplans](#)

The RCDVS Final Report identified a need for Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide transparent communication regarding the health and wellbeing research agenda, alongside the outcomes of research undertaken by, or for, Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The Board approved the RMP for Recommendation 114 when presented at the 14 October 2025 Board; however, sought updates to ensure implementation addressed the recommendation, clear definitions were included and work underway was reflected.

The Board noted that appropriate updates had been made to the RMP. The linkages and work to be completed under other research-related recommendations was further defined.

Program Board outcome: The Board **approved** the updated RMP for Recommendation 114 on 16 December 2025.

[Recommendation 115 - Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to publish their research into veteran health and wellbeing](#)

The RCDVS Final Report highlighted that Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs should change their policies on the publication of research findings to make more information publicly available and adopt a publication by default policy to support transparency.

The Board approved the RMP for Recommendation 114 when presented at the 14 October 2025 Board; however, sought updates to ensure implementation addressed the recommendation, clear definitions were included and work underway was reflected.

The Board noted the updates made to the RMP and the linkages to other research-related recommendations.

Program Board outcome: The Board **did not approve** the updated RMP for Recommendation 115, requesting further clarification on how elements of the recommendation that require review by independent assessors would be addressed.