

Theme 1: Serving the Nation

Update on Defence's implementation of the **Australian Government Response** to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Factsheet Themes

Defence has produced six theme-based factsheets outlining the key milestones and reforms delivered as part of the Government's response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide:

1. **Serving the Nation**
2. Misconduct, Complaints and Military Justice
3. Governance and Accountability
4. Health Care for Serving and Ex-Serving Members
5. Transition and Support for Ex-Serving Members
6. Matters of Importance to the Whole Defence and Veteran Ecosystem

Defence Priority Reforms

The Department of Defence is implementing the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, related to the theme of **Serving the Nation**. This factsheet highlights key reform on recommendations for which Defence has primary or shared responsibility.

The recommendations align with five priority areas defined by the Royal Commission — referred to as the 'lines of effort' — supported by enabling actions to reduce suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members.

These lines of effort are to:

- prevent harm
- intervene early
- improve communication, coordination and collaboration
- build capability and capacity
- strengthen oversight and accountability.

Support Information

Visit www.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/crisis-support/helplines for information on support available internal and external to Defence.

Key Impacts

- Defence is strengthening support for new recruits by enhancing **wellbeing**, mental-health access, resilience training and tailored support across ab initio environments.
- Pilot programs across training establishments — including mental-health access, peer mentoring and healthy-relationships — are building early protective factors and fostering **respectful** behaviours.
- Specialist **capability** is being increased through new trauma-informed support roles and a review of ab initio establishments to ensure staffing and support structures meet trainee needs.
- Career management reforms are improving **fairness** and wellbeing, with strengthened **oversight** of involuntary separations, enhanced delegate training and new induction programs emphasising psychosocial awareness.
- Workforce utilisation is being refined through improved **career** manager workload analysis and continued use of MEC J49 to retain and meaningfully employ non-deployable members who may have otherwise had to separate from Defence.
- **Retention** and workforce **sustainability** have improved, supported by initiatives such as early rental allowance eligibility, Alternate Located Work options, reduced relocations and strengthened support for Defence **families**.



1) Recruiting, Training & Early Career Support

Recommendation 2

- Defence is proactively enhancing support for new recruits by focusing on wellbeing, mental health and resilience from the earliest stage of service. This includes recognising unique pressures faced by young trainees and ensuring they have access to tailored support.
- Pilot programs across ADF training establishments are strengthening early access to mental health services, peer mentoring and wellbeing resources. These initiatives aim to reinforce resilience, leadership development and healthy interpersonal behaviours among trainees.
- The Squadron Support Officer Program at ADFA provides an additional, mature support presence within the trainee environment. Members offer mentoring and early intervention to address emerging behaviour or wellbeing concerns.
- The Healthy Relationships Program pilot aims to empower trainee officers to manage personal, professional and intimate relationships safely and in alignment with Defence values.
- An Organisational Capability Review (OCR) of ab initio establishments is underway to ensure appropriate staffing levels and support structures are in place. Aimed for completion in 2026, this review will further assist commanders to provide effective mental health and wellbeing support to both trainees and staff.



2) Career Management & Workforce Utilisation

Recommendations 3 & 7

- Centralising involuntary separation decisions within the Directorate of Military Employment Review ensures complex matters are handled with uniformity and appropriate oversight regardless of a members unit or service.
- Twice yearly Delegate training continues to reinforce standards of good decision making and procedural fairness across the Military Personnel Division.
- Development of the new career manager induction program which commenced in October 2025, places strong emphasis on psychosocial awareness and trauma informed practice. This ensures posting and employment decisions are made with a clear understanding of individual wellbeing needs.
- The continued use of MEC J49 ensures that members who cannot be deployed are retained wherever possible. This approach allows members to continue contributing meaningfully to Defence while maintaining stability, and purpose in their careers.



3) Health, Wellbeing & Member Support

Recommendations 5 & 6

- Reforms to health assessment and post-deployment support processes have placed member wellbeing at the centre of decision-making.
- The enhanced Military Employment Classification Determination (MEC D) process, implemented in January 2025, introduced a provisional classification stage to better capture members' circumstances before final decisions are made.
- Explicit references to wellbeing have been incorporated across core MEC D documentation to ensure members can provide input and have their circumstances fully understood.
- The rollout of the new MEC D tool in November 2025 has strengthened administrative quality, case tracking and reporting across Defence.



4) Retention & Workforce Sustainability

Recommendations 4 & 8

- The Early Eligibility for Rental Allowance Trial, which commenced in September 2024, is providing ADF personnel with greater housing certainty and flexibility by approving rent allowance applications earlier, giving Defence families more time to coordinate important matters such as childcare or school enrolments.
- Alternate Located Work allows an ADF member to deliver their capability from a location other than their unit's normal working location, supporting a member's need to balance military service with other personal and family responsibilities.



5) Leadership, Culture & Accountability

Recommendations 9-13

- Development of whole of Defence datasets and lead indicators — metrics that track early signals of cultural change, not just lag indicators such as incidents or complaints — supports the Defence Culture Blueprint Annual Report, enhancing transparency and providing a clear baseline for future cultural evaluation.
- On 12 December 2025, enterprise and Service-specific Respect@Work Action Plans were formally agreed upon, marking a significant step in strengthening protective factors that sustain a safe and respectful environment for all members.
- Leadership selection processes have been strengthened, supported by Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) Directives issued in February and June 2025 which set clear expectations regarding behavioural standards, emotional intelligence and suitability for command.
- The tri-Service ADF Performance Appraisal Report was used for the first time during the 2025 reporting cycle, providing structured upward and supervisory feedback across key social mastery dimensions.
- Work on the Joint Warfare Note on People Capability and Service—currently in consultation—continues to reinforce that the health and wellbeing of personnel are essential to operational readiness and Defence capability.

This document was last updated on 25th February 2026.