

# Theme 3: Governance and Accountability

## 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 **Governance and Accountability**. 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](http://www.defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/crisis-support/helplines) for information on support available internal and external to Defence.

### Key Impacts:

- **Wellbeing** outcomes strengthened for members through the integration of suicide and suicidality risk factors into Defence's enterprise Work Health and Safety (WHS) system and the development of outcomes-based monitoring, enabling earlier identification of risk and more consistent, member centred intervention across the organisation.
- **Safer** and fairer workplaces created for members through enhanced WHS governance, improved incident reporting guidance, and strengthened policy settings — including amendments to *Defence Regulation 2016*, extended redress of grievance timeframes, and clearer complaint pathways — ensuring members are supported during critical decision points.
- Clearer, more **accountable** decision making is visible to members through improved governance transparency, including a new digital decision-making tool and clearer administrative processes such as involuntary separation for acts of sexual violence.
- **Stronger** systems of support delivered to members following Defence wide WHS audits, and collaboration with Comcare and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) on clearer service-related reporting, enabling Defence to identify risks earlier and deliver targeted reforms.



## 1) Building Stronger Governance & Systems Accountability

### Recommendations 38-41

- Suicide and suicidality risk factors are being embedded into Defence's enterprise WHS system, strengthening compliance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)* and ensuring a more proactive approach to identifying and responding to risks that affect the wellbeing of members.
- Governance processes from the unit level through to senior committees are being reviewed and strengthened to support better decision-making and clearer accountability for people and wellbeing.
- A digital decision-making pathway tool is under development to provide clear, accessible guidance on governance accountabilities, improving transparency for members and enabling more timely and consistent resolution of wellbeing concerns.
- Independent experts are assessing Defence's project management capability to strengthen Defence's ability to implement people focused reforms effectively and deliver lasting change.



## 2) Strengthening Work Health & Safety Alongside Fairness

### Recommendations 53, 55, 56, 59 & 60

- The extension of the Redress of Grievance (ROG) submission period from 14 to 21 days — enabled by amendments to the *Defence Regulation 2016* which commenced 13 December 2025 — gives members facing early involuntary separation greater time to seek advice, consult updated guidance and lodge a complaint, ensuring fairer access to the redress process.
- The enterprise-wide WHS risk management audit has been completed and the associated Management Action Plan is now being implemented. This activity will strengthen oversight of safety practices and ensures risks are identified and addressed early.
- Enhanced WHS governance reinforces the accountability of senior leaders, supporting safer working environments and greater assurance for members across Defence.
- Improved guidance on the 'if in doubt, notify' principle strengthens Defence's approach to incident reporting, helping ensure that notifiable incidents are escalated promptly and consistently.
- Development of the Service Nexus definition, in consultation with Comcare and DVA, supports clearer assessment of service-related incidents and contributes to timely and accurate reporting that better protects members.
- Defence is working closely with Comcare on psychosocial risk management, including data sharing and participation in a new proactive inspection program to improve harm prevention and early intervention.

This document was last updated on 25th February 2026.