



Australian Government

Defence

RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board Update

2026 Out of Session – Reform Management Plans

The RCDVS (Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide) Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) have agreed to consider (review) updates or changes requested to some Reform Management Plans (RMPs) or other governance matters 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

Governance and accountability

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

Health care for serving and ex-serving members

- Recommendation 63 - Reduce stigma and remove structural and cultural barriers to help seeking
- Recommendation 65 - Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively

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

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

- Recommendation 115 - Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs to publish their research into veteran health and wellbeing

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 2025 Program Board](#), the Board requested an update to the RMP to incorporate the ADF Suicide Review Pilot for Out of Session consideration.

Program Board Outcome: The Board considered and **approved** the updated RMP on 28 January 2026.

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) and Defence policies and procedures. The RCDVS acknowledged the range of programs, including training and guidance materials that are in place for commanding officers in promoting the health and wellbeing of ADF personnel, but called for further training and communications to reduce stigma and promote help seeking.

At the [1 May 2025 Program Board](#), the Board approved the RMP, subject to further information on what work has commenced or been completed and a breakdown of implementation timeframes. The amended RMP was subsequently approved at the [19 June 2025 Program Board](#).

At the [2 April 2026 Program Board](#), it was noted that further updates were required to the RMP. The Board considered the updated RMP which revised the approach to training initiatives and policy including updating procedural and process guidance aimed at reducing stigma. The revised approach would leverage Groups and Services responsibility to use the guidance materials to drive enterprise level changes. Updates were also made to timelines for specific deliverables to meet overall implementation timeframes.

Program Board outcome: The Board considered and **approved** the updated RMP on 7 June 2026.

Recommendation 65 - Improve access to, timeliness and quality of mental health screening and use the data effectively

The RCDVS identified that mental health screening was critical to enabling early intervention, reducing the progression of mental ill health and improving long-term wellbeing outcomes. Current screening practices form part of a broader, proactive approach that includes education, monitoring, and early intervention, ensuring identification and support occur as early as possible.

The RMP for Recommendation 65 was first presented at the [19 June 2025 Program Board](#). The Board did not approve the RMP, requesting it be refined to better align with the intent of the Royal Commission, narrow its scope, and explore opportunities to simplify the use of screening tools. The amended RMP was approved Out of Session on 5 September 2025.

The implementation area submitted an updated RMP for Out of Session consideration in June 2026 to reflect a revised implementation approach and adjustments to the mental health screening at ab-initio training pilot. The Board noted the reliance on ethics approval to enable the pilot to commence and amendments to the timelines to account for this.

Program Board outcome: The Board considered and **approved** the updated RMP on 24 June 2026.

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 the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) should take greater responsibility for supporting members transitioning to civilian life, particularly in addressing the cultural and social challenges associated with this journey. This includes supporting transitioning members to build or rebuild their civilian identity, find purpose beyond military service, and strengthen connections with friends, family and the broader community. The RCDVS observed that ex-serving personnel reported experiencing difficulties integrating into civilian life and that the associated psychological adjustment, including the loss of familiar military culture, purpose, identity and community could increase the risk of suicidality.

The Board considered Defence's update on this recommendation at the [12 December 2025 Program Board](#) and directed the development of an RMP for Recommendation 80, recognising Defence's joint implementation responsibility with DVA.

The Board subsequently considered and did not approve the RMP Out of Session on 16 January 2026, requesting updates related to timelines for the establishment of the Veteran and Family Wellbeing Agency and greater clarity regarding the joint implementation efforts between Defence and DVA before reconsidering the RMP.

The RMP was updated, including more information on agreed Defence and DVA information sharing arrangements and the establishment of the Veteran and Family Wellbeing Agency.

Program Board Outcome: The Board considered and **approved** the updated RMP on 1 April 2026.

Matters of importance to the whole Defence and veteran ecosystem

[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 DVA 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 at the [14 October 2025 Program Board](#), subject to amendments to strengthen linkages to Recommendation 114. The Board suggested further updates were required to address the element of the Recommendation relating to review by independent researchers Out of Session on 17 December 2025.

The RMP was subsequently updated to reflect the role of the Defence and DVA Research Expert Advisory Group (established under Recommendation 117) in providing independent advice on mental health and wellbeing research agendas, plans and projects, as well as providing independent review of internal research when required by Defence and DVA. Further, any research published in scientific literature will continue to undergo independent external peer review as part of the standard publication process.

Program Board Outcome: The Board considered and **approved** the updated RMP on 10 February 2026.