Australian Government
Defence

# DEFENCE CULTURE BLUEPRINT REPORT 2025



To defend Australia and its national interests in order to advance Australia's security and prosperity

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Defence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. Defence recognises their continuing connection to traditional lands and waters and would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present.

Defence would also like to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.

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1 http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C1968A00063
2 https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00127
3 https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A03712
4 https://www.defence.gov.au/business-industry/industry-governance/defence-security-principles-framework

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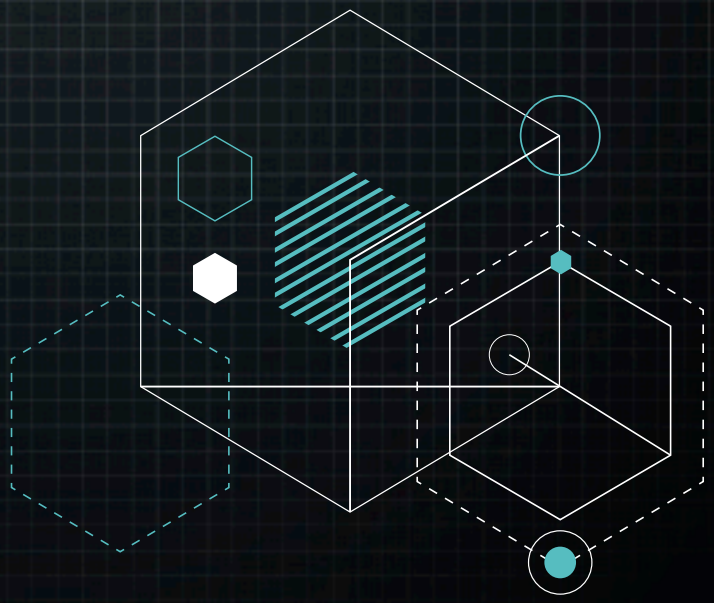

# Foreword

Culture is fundamental to achieving the Defence mission and implementing the *National Defence Strategy*. To fulfil our mission, we must keep evolving and strengthening our culture to support our people in achieving operational effectiveness.

The National Defence Strategy calls for a generational uplift in Defence's capabilities. It acknowledges people as Defence's most important capability and culture reform as fundamental

to achieving the Defence mission. Culture is directly linked to warfighting outcomes—ensuring that behaviours, leadership and organisational norms enable an integrated and focused force capable of impactful projection through the full spectrum of proportionate response. Culture must drive readiness, interoperability and innovation.

We continue to expect all of our people will demonstrate the Defence Values - Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity and Excellence – and foster a safe and inclusive workplace, and we support them to do so. The *Defence Culture Blueprint Report 2025* provides an account of performance against the strategic objectives of the Defence Culture Blueprint program.

Our culture reflects not just what we do, but how we do it. It is an expression of who we are and what is important to us. The Defence Values and Behaviours anchor our culture, which is reflected in our shared beliefs and attitudes and influences our everyday practices. Sexual violence and all unacceptable behaviours have no place in Defence and we are prioritising actions that keep evolving our culture, including further work to:

- Prevent unacceptable behaviour and sexual violence, and when it does occur, address it appropriately and promptly.
- Prioritise the wellbeing of our people through implementation of the *Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030*, given that health, safety and wellbeing are essential in developing systems to sustain capability and support readiness.
- Implement recommendations from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS).
- Ensure senior leadership are accountable for safety, health and wellbeing targets, with a focus on psychosocial safety, to shape a culture that enables performance and ensures a positive workplace experience.

As this report highlights, we have more work to do to ensure all personnel enjoy a safe and respectful experience at work. Culture reform will therefore continue to be prioritised. Our strength lies in the expertise, experience and capability of our people, and our people remain our most important capability.



Meghan Quinn PSM
Secretary of the Department of Defence



Admiral Mark D Hammond, AO, RAN
Chief of the Defence Force

# Executive Summary

**Defence culture reflects the shared values, beliefs and behaviours that underpin how we serve, lead and work together. A strong, inclusive and accountable culture is fundamental to the Defence mission and long-term capability.**

In November 2023, Defence launched the ***Defence Culture Strategy: Defence Culture Blueprint Program 2023*** (the DCB program), marking the next phase of cultural reform. Building on lessons from the interim and final recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (RCDVS), this reflects a focused, accountable, and outcomes-driven approach.

Culture is foundational for the delivery of the Defence mission. Its importance is embedded across Defence's strategic guidance and our measures of performance, shaping how objectives are achieved and sustained. This is outlined within the *National Defence Strategy* (NDS), *Defence Workforce Plan*, *Defence Corporate Plan*, *Defence Annual Report*, and *Portfolio Budget Statements*.

The DCB program positions culture as a strategic capability that enables the ADF to integrate across domains, innovate rapidly and maintain decision advantage in the face of coercion and conflict. A strong and cohesive culture will ensure Defence can withstand disruption, sustain operations and achieve capability effects critical to the NDS.

The DCB program operates alongside a number of other interrelated strategies, including the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy, Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy, Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence, and the Veteran Transition Strategy.

The RCDVS marked a critical juncture in Australia's commitment to addressing systemic issues that have led to the tragic loss of life among serving and former ADF members. Similarly, the DCB program recognises that organisational culture is a lived experience influencing behaviours, decisions and outcomes. The DCB program prioritises leadership, inclusion, psychosocial safety and accountability, aligning closely with the RCDVS interim and final report recommendations. This alignment supports Defence in driving meaningful change through further shifts in values, norms, and practices across all levels of Defence, delivering ongoing individual and institutional change.

Defence assumed responsibility for 54 of the 122 RCDVS Final Report recommendations and shares accountability for a further 22 with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and other agencies following the 9 September 2024 release of the *RCDVS Final Report* and the Government's 2 December 2024 response.

Significant progress has been made in addressing these recommendations, with priority given to initiatives that mitigate health and safety risks for our people, including action to prevent sexual violence, alongside fulfilling the Positive Duty obligations under the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment* (*Respect@Work*) *Act 2022* (Cth). This work is being implemented in close collaboration with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and other relevant Commonwealth entities to ensure a coordinated and effective response.

The *Defence Culture Blueprint Report 2025* is our inaugural culture report. It is part of Defence's ongoing shift to greater transparency and accountability in relation to our organisational culture and highlights steps we are taking to keep improving the experience of our people at work. Our organisational culture is assessed using data collected through the YourSay Defence Workplace (YourSay) Surveys, specifically the Workforce Behaviours Survey and Workplace Experience Survey, as well as workforce demographic and trend data.

Tranche One of the DCB program commenced in 2023 and concludes in 2026. During Tranche One, initial culture targets and measurements have been established and are reflected in this report. These targets and measures will evolve in Tranche Two (2026-29) and as Defence continues to implement RCDVS recommendations.

Key findings made in this inaugural DCB report include:

### Strategic Objective One:
**Defence prioritises people and culture to deliver on the Defence Mission**

- Defence has prioritised the growth of the ADF and the strengthening of representation across workforce segments needed to deliver the NDS. Growth was achieved in 2024-25 and Defence has partially achieved strengthening of identified workforce segments.
- In 2025, 82 per cent of Defence personnel who responded to the YourSay Survey were proud to work in Defence, suggesting a strong connection to the Defence mission.
- The number of personnel who see their workplace prioritising health, safety and wellbeing declined, indicating there is more to do on prioritising our workforce at the enterprise and individual levels.

### Strategic Objective Two:
**Defence is aligned and connected in driving cultural change**

- In 2025, YourSay Survey results indicated that our people are experiencing increasing confidence in leadership. However, targeted work is still required to enhance the overall employee experience, particularly in the reporting and management of unacceptable behaviour, including sexual violence.
- Perceptions of leadership visibility and accountability have improved, but inconsistent behaviour and responsiveness remain a source of frustration for some of our people.
- In 2026, Defence continues to prioritise leadership development, equipping leaders to model expected behaviours and reinforce accountability mechanisms. This includes ensuring leaders continue to prioritise health, safety, and wellbeing, respond quickly to issues and maintain a unified, values-driven approach to enable long-term cultural maturity to support the Defence mission.

### Strategic Objective Three:
**Defence is diverse and inclusive**

- In 2025, Defence respondents to the YourSay Survey identified that over 80 per cent of supervisors support an inclusive workplace and people are treated with respect. However, our people do not always feel comfortable identifying as a member of a diversity group. This signals there is more work to do to deliver a culturally safe and inclusive workplace.

### Strategic Objective Four:
**Defence culture contributes positively to individual, team and organisational resilience and wellbeing**

- Indicators of Defence's Psychosocial Safety Climate show stable results. With the introduction of the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030 and implementation of the RCDVS recommendations, Defence expects to see an increase in low to medium risks during Tranche Two of the DCB program's implementation, and a decrease in high to very high risks.

## Strategic Objective Five:

**Defence values the contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence Mission**

- In 2025, Defence respondents of the YourSay Survey indicated they felt their contributions were valued, and many report a strong sense of pride in working for Defence. This reflects growing recognition of the importance of meaningful work, purpose and acknowledgment for Defence personnel.
- There is more work to better utilise our ADF Total Workforce System and Defence will continue to increase the opportunities for Industry work to contribute to our mission.

## Strategic Objective Six:

**Defence is recognised by the Government and the Public as a trusted national institution**

- In 2024-25, Defence fulfilled all Commonwealth requests for domestic disaster operations and remains committed to implementing Government-endorsed RCDVS recommendations.
- Defence recognises that public trust is shaped by both organisational and individual actions. We will continue culture reforms that prioritise people, with a focus on preventing unacceptable behaviour and sexual violence, and increasing access to wellbeing and mental health support.

Throughout this report, case studies and testimonials provided by Defence personnel are included to demonstrate how culture is being lived across the Defence enterprise.

These practical examples showcase the everyday actions and first hand experiences at a local level that collectively shape Defence's culture.

# Culture – part of Defence strategic guidance

The below infographic illustrates how the strategic outcomes of the DCB program provides a culture foundation for Defence strategic guidance. Culture and the importance of culture reform are reflected across these documents.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="6">National Defence Strategy</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">Defence is focused on recruiting, retaining and growing the highly specialised and skilled workforce required to meet capability needs.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Integrated Investment Program</th><th colspan="3">Defence Workforce Plan</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">The Government's investment in a highly skilled ADF and Defence civilian workforce across the coming decade will be critical to the successful delivery and operation of the capabilities set out in the Integrated Investment Program.</td><td colspan="3">Improving Defence's culture is fundamental to achieving the Defence mission and implementing the National Defence Strategy.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">2024-2028 Defence Corporate Plan and 2024-25 Portfolio Budget Statement</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Outcome One<br>Defend Australia and its national interests through the conduct of operations and the provision of support for the Australian community and civilian authorities in accordance with Government direction.</td><td colspan="3">Outcome Two<br>Protect and advance Australia's strategic interests through the provision of strategic policy; the development, delivery and sustainment of military, intelligence and enabling capabilities, and the promotion of regional and global security and stability as directed by Government.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">Defence Annual Report</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Key Activity One<br>Conduct operations and deployments to defend Australia and its national interests.</td><td colspan="2">Key Activity Two<br>Defence is a strategy-led organisation. It supports operationalising and implementing the government-directed biennial National Defence Strategy.</td><td colspan="2">Key Activity Three<br>Enable intelligence-informed decision-making.</td><td>Key Activity Four<br>Invest in Defence people.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Key Activity Five<br>Defence's international engagement – operational presence; support to regional security capability; people-to-people engagement; and bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagement – support a strategy of denial in our primary area of military interest.</td><td colspan="2">Key Activity Six<br>Deliver future capability.</td><td colspan="2">Key Activity Seven<br>Develop the sovereign defence industrial base required for our national security.</td><td>Key Activity Eight<br>Defence supports improved regulatory performance, capability and culture through regulatory stewardship in line with the government's commitment to Australian Public Service reform.</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="6">Defence Culture Blueprint</th></tr>
<tr><td>Strategic Objective One<br>Defence prioritises people and culture to deliver on the Defence Mission.</td><td>Strategic Objective Two<br>Defence is aligned and connected in driving cultural change.</td><td>Strategic Objective Three<br>Defence is diverse and inclusive.</td><td>Strategic Objective Four<br>Defence culture contributes positively to individual, team and organisational resilience and wellbeing.</td><td>Strategic Objective Five<br>Defence values the contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence Mission.</td><td>Strategic Objective Six<br>Defence is recognised by the Government and the Public as a trusted national institution.</td></tr>
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# Defence Culture Vision

The DCB program sets our long-term shared vision of a culture that values our people to enhance people capability and performance to support delivery of the Defence mission.

The Defence Culture Framework, illustrated below, underpins this vision through six key components that continue to shape culture across the Defence organisation: Leadership, People and Teams, Systems, Connection, Development and Identity. The Defence Values and Behaviours are at the core of the Defence Culture Framework. These components provide the structure for embedding cultural practices against the six strategic objectives within the DCB program.




Recognising that systemic and institutional culture change requires sustained effort over time, the program's vision is delivered over a 10-year lifecycle through four Tranches as outlined below.

| BUILD & ELEVATE 2023-2026 | EMBED & ADAPT 2026-2029 | ENHANCE & MATURE 2029-2032 | EVOLVE 2033 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Focuses on establishing the foundations for further cultural change – developing processes that enhance capability and performance, and introducing mechanisms to monitor progress. | Will refine foundations to achieve best practice evaluation. Improvement targets will be set during this tranche and, as implementation of the RCDVS recommendations occurs, data will be used to guide targeted actions to where they are most needed. | Will leverage organisational intelligence and culture evaluation to embed culture reform more deeply into decision-making and leadership practices. | Will evaluate the overall impact of the program, using insights and lessons learned to recalibrate or develop a new culture strategy aligned with future strategic context. |

Our culture efforts under each tranche are monitored within the *Defence Culture Blueprint Action Plan*. This enterprise-level action plan translates the DCB program vision and framework into practical steps that guide implementation and ensure progress is measured and sustained.

The program has six strategic objectives to position culture as a critical enabler of capability and provide sustained focus and investment in our people and culture. This DCB annual report is centred on these strategic objectives.



# Strategic Objectives of the Defence Culture Blueprint Program

OBJECTIVES

01 Defence prioritises people and culture to deliver on the Defence Mission.

02 Defence is aligned and connected in driving cultural change.

03 Defence is diverse and inclusive.

04 Defence Culture contributes positively to individual, team, and organisational resilience and wellbeing.

05 Defence values the contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence Mission.

06 Defence is recognised by the government and the public as a trusted national institution.

# Monitoring Strategic Objective achievement

## Strategic Objective One:

### *Defence prioritises people and culture to deliver on the Defence mission*

*Our people are our foundation and greatest capability.* To safeguard Australia and its national interests, Defence is ensuring its warfighting capability can meet evolving requirements, and is ready for impactful projection across the full spectrum of proportionate response. Prioritising people and culture to deliver the mission requires action at the enterprise and individual level.

In the first years of implementation of the NDS, Defence made progress in transforming how we operate, deliver and sustain our objectives on behalf of Australia. Defence has delivered priority capabilities, strengthened partnerships, enhanced national resilience and laid the foundations for continued success. As we look ahead, Defence will continue to transform, learning from experience, investing in our people and culture, and working with partners to ensure Australia's security now and into the future.

At the enterprise level, Defence has prioritised the growth of the workforce, including our most critical workforce occupations. Growing the workforce ensures that the organisation has the capacity to deliver on its mission and enables greater flexibility and respite for our people.

The release of the *Defence Workforce Plan* in November 2024 marked a step change in our approach to recruitment, retention and workforce development. While this plan provides the pathways to grow the permanent ADF to 69,000 members, Defence recognises that recruitment and retention pressures remain a key challenge requiring sustained focus. In 2024–25 Defence achieved its highest annual intake of members into the ADF in almost 15 years, and significantly reduced ADF separation rates while maintaining an average funded strength of over 59,000 full-time ADF members.

To assess progress towards this strategic objective, Defence has used performance against *Defence Corporate Plan* performance measures 4.1 and 4.2, as reported in the Defence Annual Report 2024-25. In addition, the below responses from the YourSay Survey has been used to assess personnel views on whether Defence prioritises people and culture.

Defence has made progress towards applicable performance targets (4.1 and 4.2) outlined in the Defence Annual Report 2024-25, with all targets either achieved or partially achieved.

| Performance Target | Outcome | Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| Target 4.1a – Defence achieves the ADF and APS Budgeted Workforce Requirement as set out in the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan. | Achieved | The permanent ADF workforce exceeded the Budgeted Workforce Requirement at the end of 2024–25 with a result of 100.51 per cent. The APS exceeded the Budgeted Workforce Requirement at the end of 2024–25 with a result of 100.34 per cent. |
| Target 4.1b – The net flow of the ADF and APS workforce over a 12-month period is trending positive and is positioning Defence to achieve the Budgeted Workforce Requirement over the forward estimates. | Achieved | The net flow of the permanent ADF exceeded the targeted net flow, with a final result of 1.4 per cent at the end of the reporting period. The net flow of the APS exceeded the targeted net flow, with a final result of 6.7 per cent at the end of the reporting period. |
| Target 4.2a – The Defence workforce has the technical skills required to deliver the National Defence Strategy as measured through the Defence Strategic Workforce Segments | Achieved | At the end of the reporting period, 10 out of 14 Strategic Workforce Segments (for the permanent ADF and APS workforce) had exceeded the Budgeted Workforce Requirement. This rep-resents 71 per cent.<br>The permanent ADF workforce exceeded the Budgeted Workforce Requirement for five out of eight Strategic Workforce Segments. The APS exceeded the Budgeted Workforce Requirement for five out of six Strategic Workforce Segments. |
| Target 4.2b – The net flow of the ADF and APS workforce over a 12-month period against the Budgeted Workforce Requirement by Strategic Workforce Segment | Partially achieved | Defence partially achieved this target in 2024–25. The net flow for 10 out of 14 Strategic Workforce Segments (combined for permanent ADF and APS) met the target percentage required to reach the Budgeted Workforce Requirement at the end of 2024–25. This represents 71 per cent. The net flow for five of the eight permanent ADF Strategic Workforce Segments exceeded the target required to reach the Budgeted Workforce Requirement.<br>The net flow of five of the six APS Strategic Workforce Segments exceeded the target required to reach the Budgeted Workforce Requirement. |

*Source: Defence Annual Report 2024-25.*

It's not enough to simply state that we prioritise our people and culture to deliver the Defence mission – this prioritisation must be felt and experienced.

Responses to the 2025 YourSay Survey show an encouraging trend in pride among our people in working for Defence. This is a positive result and we must continue to reflect and build upon it.

Health, safety and wellbeing remain our highest priority. The RCDVS recommendations make clear that Defence must continue to take decisive action.

While we have made progress, we acknowledge we are not yet where we need to be. In 2026, our focus will continue on addressing cultural and workforce challenges, stabilising areas of concern, and building on the positive gains achieved to date. This is important work to support the required improvements needed by the end of DCB program Tranche Two.

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| I am proud to be a member of Defence. | Navy | 68% | 76% | 79% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards and remains above 80 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 66% | 78% | 80% | Upward | |
| | Air Force | 72% | 82% | 83% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 68% | 79% | 81% | Upward | |
| | APS | 62% | 81% | 83% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | 67% | 80% | 82% | Upward | |
| In my workplace, managers / supervisors act quickly to address issues that affect people's safety and mental wellbeing. | Navy | 78% | 75% | 76% | Upward | Trend to change to upwards with an increase of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 77% | 75% | 73% | Downward | |
| | Air Force | 79% | 74% | 74% | Stable | |
| | *ADF Total* | 78% | 75% | 74% | Downward | |
| | APS | 58% | 64% | 63% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | 73% | 71% | 70% | Downward | |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience and Defence Workplace Behaviours Survey*

# Actions taken to prioritise DCB Strategic Objective One

- **Royal Commission Implementation.** Defence established the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program Board (the Board) to provide governance, oversight and support to the RCDVS Defence Implementation Program. The Board sets direction, makes key decisions regarding reform initiatives and provides assurance to Government and relevant external oversight bodies that Defence is comprehensively addressing the RCDVS Final Report recommendations. In 2025, the Board has considered all Reform Management Plans for each Defence-led recommendation. The ongoing effort towards implementing the recommendations will contribute to the continued effort towards cultural change.
- **Defence Benefits and Conditions of Service.** The Defence Benefits and Conditions of Service (DBCS) Framework outlines what Defence offers its workforce in recognition of their skills, expertise, commitment and service. A compelling employment offer is a critical enabler of mission success, strengthening Defence's ability to recruit, retain and compete for highly skilled personnel in a competitive labour market. DBCS defines what is unique about the culture, environment, and benefits of working in Defence and helps the workforce understand the broad range of benefits, opportunities and support services that reflect the nature of service and employment.
- **Defence Leadership Framework.** This sets out a road map for good leadership by providing a set of attributes that can be applied at any level and in any area of the Australian Defence organisation. The Defence Leadership Framework will help Defence personnel in demonstrating these behaviours within a complex and integrated workforce. The Framework supports a culture that enhances trust, collaboration, and adaptability – key drivers of organisational resilience and the wellbeing of our people.

- **Capstone.** The Capstone program supports newly appointed or promoted members of the Senior Leadership Group. The program was refreshed in 2025 and has introduced a masterclass on stewardship and accountability, along with a dedicated session on psychosocial safety.
- ADF Social Mastery education programs, including **Navy Social Mastery**, **Army Professional Military Education Plan** and **RAAF Professional Military Education** continuum embed the *Culture in the Profession of Arms Doctrine*. This provides service-specific mentoring pathways, building the capacity of individuals and teams to adapt to the challenges faced by each of the Services.
- Defence is also prioritising our people and culture through professional development within the **Defence Assisted Study Scheme** (for ADF members) and **Studybank** (for APS personnel). Defence has also continued to invest in ADF training schools and the Australian Defence College. Defence continues to uplift APS capability, with a focus on building the procurement, contracting and project management skills needed to deliver Defence capabilities for the Maritime, Land, Air, Space and Cyber domains as part of implementing the NDS. The investment on uplifting APS capability is helping to reduce Defence's reliance on contracted staff in line with the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework.
- **Learn eXcel Perform (LXP) platform.** As part of Defence's digital transformation, a modern Learning Experience Platform (LXP) has been implemented to deliver scalable, personalised learning for all personnel. LXP captures outcomes from social and experiential learning, supports compliance training, and aligns with Digital Service Standards for inclusive practices. The system is integrated with LinkedIn Learning and other systems, enabling just-in-time learning and strengthens technical and leadership skills essential for a rapidly changing strategic environment.
- **Build on You.** This program continues to engage Defence personnel with specifically designed and targeted content that is accessible across the enterprise anytime, anywhere. Themes in 2025 ranged from change management, strategic writing, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), innovation and personal development for a remote and/or isolated workforce. In collaboration with Melbourne Business School, Build on You is facilitated by internal and external industry experts and professionals for ADF and APS staff.
- **ADF Transition Program.** This program provides support for ADF members and their families when transitioning from full-time military service. Investment in this function is part of a whole-of-life approach taken for military members. Connection between Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs continues to mature in implementing this program.
- **APS Mobility Guidelines.** This program provides greater career pathway opportunities for APS personnel seeking a change in career both in and out of Defence. Mobility is a key priority for Defence to build, maintain and leverage capabilities across the workforce.
- **APS Craft Programs:** Defence has expanded the range and capacity of centrally-funded places available across the APS Craft suite of learning. These courses align to six foundational APS Capability categories defined by the *Highly Capable Future Ready: APS Learning and Development Strategy*1. Courses are delivered virtually and face-to-face to enable greater regional participation, and participation increasing by seven per cent in the 2024-25 financial year.

1 https://www.apsc.gov.au/learning-and-development/highly-capable-future-ready-aps-learning-and-development-strategy

# Moving Forward - Tranche Two Priorities (2026-2028)

Tranche Two will focus on maintaining and enhancing existing workforce trends, alongside effort to improve our people's experience of workplace health, safety and wellbeing. Early Tranche Two priorities include but are not limited to the following activities.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **1.1 Implement the Defence Leadership Framework** | Defence leaders strengthen trust and cultural cohesion through consistently demonstrating expected behaviours, values and accountability. | RCDVS Recommendations 9, 11 and 12.<br>*2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Action 5.2 |
| **1.2 Promote the DBCS through storytelling that highlights lived experiences, shaped by purpose, connection to mission, and culture.** | Defence demonstrates culture is an enabler of positive workplace experience, which strengthens belonging and collaboration across the integrated workforce. | *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Action 6.3 |
| **1.3 Integrate wellbeing into Defence policies, procedures and decision-making.** | Mental health and wellbeing are treated as core enablers of readiness, sustaining workforce resilience, performance and mission delivery. | RCDVS Recommendation 3, 13, 18 and 63.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan* - Action 1.2.1 |

Our approach to monitoring progress will continue to evolve, with future iterations of this report expected to incorporate broader data to support a more comprehensive view of performance and impact. Future measures may include whether:

- People development is embedded across the organisation
- Culture is recognised and treated as a core component of Defence capability
- A strong and inclusive culture is sustained at all levels of the organisation.

# CASE STUDY

## *Enhancing Navy Culture: How Targeted Workshops Enhanced Unity Identity and Capability*

A community within Navy sought assistance from Navy Culture's High Function Team to help develop their identity to improve satisfaction and bolster capability.

A focus on our people and how they come together to form teams, helps make sure our people have a positive experience of work and are supported to contribute to Defence capability.

High-performing teams go beyond just 'high-performing people.' Research shows that clarity of roles and responsibilities, a shared identity, connection to purpose, a sense of belonging and psychological safety are critical factors to cultivating high performance among people and teams.

Members of the unit felt undervalued, with growing confusion about their collective identity and purpose. They were uncertain about who they were as a team and how they could better deliver on the mission to achieve capability requirements.

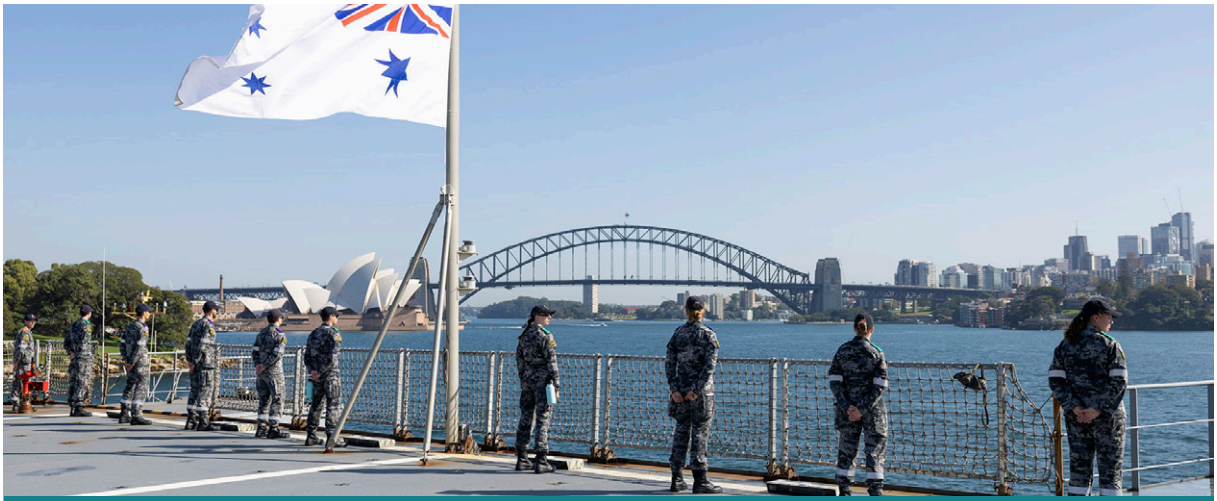
Recognising the challenges the unit faced, the unit commander initiated a 'pulse survey' to anonymously measure levels of satisfaction across the unit. The survey results revealed significant room for improvement. The members needed a clear direction to re-establish their collective identity and shared purpose.

The unit commander requested targeted support from Navy Culture's High Function Team to help build the unit's identity and improve connections both across the unit and within Defence. The goal was to foster a stronger sense of purpose and cohesion among the unit, ultimately enhancing the unit's overall effectiveness. This was delivered through a series of targeted workshops that aimed to address the concerns highlighted in the pulse survey.

Through these workshops, Navy's Culture team worked closely with members of the unit to identify key points of concern and potential outcomes they wanted to achieve. They developed a number of strategies designed to enhance the unit's culture, wellbeing and job satisfaction. These strategies included initiatives to improve communication, foster teamwork and clarity of the unit's mission.

The impact of these efforts were immediate both within the unit and across the ADF organisation. Members of the unit quickly began to feel more valued and understood. They developed a stronger sense of collective identity and shared purpose to contribute to capability.

These workshops are now being successfully implemented across other units in the Navy. Navy Culture's High Function Team are in high demand to deliver this effective cultural change model, which boosts identity, delivers capability and improves culture across the Navy.



*Royal Australian Navy officer trainees stand on the stern of HMAS Choules as the Ship departs Fleet Base East in Sydney, New South Wales.*

# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective One

Defence has prioritised the growth of the ADF workforce and the strengthening of representation across workforce segments needed to deliver the *NDS.* Growth has been achieved in 2025 and Defence has partially achieved strengthening of identified workforce segments.

In 2025, 82 per cent of Defence personnel who responded to the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey were proud to work in Defence, suggesting a strong connection to the Defence mission.

The number of personnel who experience the workplace prioritising health, safety and wellbeing declined, indicating there is more to do to prioritise workforce at the enterprise and individual levels.

Across DCB Tranche Two, Defence will prioritise strengthening leadership through implementation of the Defence Leadership Framework, embedding wellbeing into policy and decision-making, and reinforcing the DBCS by sharing lived experiences that connect purpose, mission and culture.

# Strategic Objective Two:

## *Defence is aligned and connected in driving cultural change*

The National Defence Strategy acknowledges cultural reform as fundamental to delivering on the Defence mission. Culture change in Defence relies on strong connection across the organisation and within diverse work environments. Cultural change is reinforced through our people by ensuring we work together in a manner consistent with Defence's Values and Behaviours.

Achieving the NDS vision of a more agile and potent integrated, focused force depends on the reliability and predictability of our people and systems under-pressure. In times of conflict, our people must have confidence in the skills, experience and professionalism in the people beside them to focus on mission. A strong culture shaped by shared values, behaviours and expectations strengthens long-term preparedness and becomes our default operating-model under pressure. This requires leadership.

When senior leaders prioritise collective benefits and outcomes across Defence, they demonstrate responsible leadership. To be effective, senior leaders must be invested in improving the workplace culture including in areas such as wellbeing, inclusion and trust.

To assess the effectiveness of Defence leaders in aligning and driving culture change, Defence draws on results from the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey and performance against the *Defence Corporate Plan* as reported on in the *Defence Annual Report 2024-25*, particularly performance measure 4.3 **Defence Values and Behaviours enable our people to deliver Australia's National Defence.**

While results from the YourSay Workforce Experience Survey indicate that our people are experiencing small gains in leadership visibility and collaboration, there is a need for senior leaders to substantially improve engagement with our people. Across DCB program Tranche Two, Defence will focus on building consistency and strengthening senior leader engagement to ensure these improvements are sustained and expanded.

> *"The reason I still work for Defence is a mixture of purpose and people – we all share similar goals and motivation."*
>
> **- Wing Commander Renee Burke Air Force**

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| Defence senior leaders are steering Defence in the right direction. | Navy | 49% | 34% | 36% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards with an increase of at least 5 percent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 33% | 30% | 32% | Upward | |
| | Air Force | 51% | 40% | 41% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 43% | 34% | 36% | Upward | |
| | APS | 41% | 45% | 44% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **42%** | **38%** | **39%** | **Upward** | |
| People from different areas cooperate to achieve good outcomes for Defence. | Navy | 62% | 60% | 71% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards with an increase of at least 5 percent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 59% | 63% | 70% | Upward | |
| | Air Force | 67% | 68% | 76% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 62% | 64% | 72% | Upward | |
| | APS | 60% | 65% | 68% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **62%** | **64%** | **71%** | **Upward** | |
| The people in my work group are open, honest and transparent. | Navy | 66% | 71% | 73% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards with an increase of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 62% | 74% | 74% | Stable | |
| | Air Force | 69% | 75% | 75% | Stable | |
| | *ADF Total* | 65% | 74% | 74% | Stable | |
| | APS | 70% | 72% | 75% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **66%** | **73%** | **75%** | **Upward** | |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience*

An examination of progress against Defence Corporate Plan performance measure 4.3 as reported in the *Defence Annual Report 2024-25* indicates that incidences of unacceptable behaviour are still too high, and fewer people believe that appropriate action will be taken if they report an incident of unacceptable behaviour. Defence leaders must continue to prioritise safety and wellbeing, and respond quickly and effectively to issues to drive a culture that builds and sustains the people capability needed to deliver the Defence mission.

| Performance Target | Outcome | Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| Target 4.3a – The proportion of ADF and Defence APS personnel that believe appropriate action will be taken if they report an incident of unacceptable behaviour has increased in the last 12 months. | Not achieved | In 2024–25, 80.9 per cent of ADF and Defence APS personnel who participated believed appropriate action would be taken if they reported an incident of unacceptable behaviour.<br>In 2023–24, the result was 82 per cent, which reflects a decrease of 1.1 per cent between the two reporting periods and a result of not achieved (against a target of a 5 per cent or more increase from the previous year). |
| Target 4.3b – The proportion of ADF and Defence APS personnel who have experienced any unacceptable behaviour in the workplace has decreased in the last 12 months. | Not achieved | In 2024–25, 38.8 per cent of ADF and Defence APS personnel who participated reported an experience of any unacceptable behaviour. In 2023–24 the result was 37.9 per cent, reflecting an increase of 0.9 per cent between the two reporting periods and a result of not achieved (against a target of a 5 per cent or more decrease from the previous year). |

*Source: Defence Annual Report 2024-25.*

## Actions taken to prioritise Strategic Objective Two

**Defence Leadership Framework.** This framework sets out a road map for good leadership by providing a set of attributes that can be applied at any level and in any area of Defence. The framework will help Defence personnel in demonstrating behaviours within a complex and integrated workforce. The framework supports a culture that enhances trust, collaboration and adaptability – key drivers of organisational resilience and the wellbeing of our people.

**Capstone.** This program supports newly-appointed or promoted members of the senior leadership group and provides a consistent baseline of professional development and shared alignment in expectations for the senior leadership group.

**Leaders' Commitment to Culture:** The Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force, along with all Group Heads and Service Chiefs, have made commitment statements that clearly communicate their culture priorities.

Since the launch of the DCB program, the following enterprise actions have been prioritised to align and drive culture strategic direction and governance focused efforts:

- **Enterprise Culture Action Plan:** This plan was established following the launch of the DCB program. It identifies enterprise-level culture actions and accountabilities for implementation, with the development of new initiatives co-designed between Defence People Group and all Groups and Services. Progress towards achieving these actions is monitored and reported quarterly to the Culture and Diversity Steering Group. The Defence People Committee also monitors progress of actions within the Enterprise culture action plan.
- The **2023 Joint Directive Accountabilities for Culture** reinforces the accountability for all personnel to ensure Defence Values and Behaviours are at the centre of individual, team, and enterprise performance.
- The **Defence People System**, which sets our operating system on how we design, develop, deliver and assure strategic workforce and people effects, has two planned results specifically targeting the alignment of culture change:
    - Planned Result 4: Prioritise the integrated force structure.
    - Planned Result 21: Reform Defence culture to optimise the Service and Group sub-cultures in order to deliver a Defence culture with integrated identities and effects.

Since the launch of the DCB program, Defence has prioritised enterprise actions to prevent and address unacceptable behaviour, including sexual violence. In 2024-25, Defence advanced the DCB program to reinforce Values and Behaviours and began implementing Royal Commission recommendations, focusing on sexual violence prevention, suicide prevention, and improved complaint systems. This includes:

- **Reporting of unacceptable behaviour.** Defence has established the Complaint, Resolution and Support Services (CRSS) as a centralised and specialised unit to provide ADF members and APS personnel with a choice in how they report unacceptable behaviour complaints, with a focus on trauma-informed practices and supports to individuals. A team of trained complaint handlers from the ADF and APS work in this unit. This unit accepts reports of unacceptable behaviour outside of the chain of command/line manager and provide the ability to make an anonymous complaint. This unit also has an area that provides guidance and support to Commanders and managers responsible for managing these complaints to ensure Defence policies and process are applied.
- **Prevention of sexual violence and Respect@Work legislation.** Together with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Defence developed a framework that tailors actions to implement *Respect@Work*, based on our unique roles and environments. In addition, Defence continues to prioritise the implementation of 2022 legislated *Respect@Work* positive duty requiring workplaces, and particularly leaders, to proactively prevent sexual violence and create safe and respectful workplaces. In 2025, Defence partnered with Our Watch and AHRC to develop the Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy to be released in 2026.
- **Military Justice Reform.** In response to the RCDVS Final Report recommendations relating to the military justice system and sexual violence, Defence has commenced action to reform legislation and supporting policy to ensure the military justice system is clear and consistently applied, transparent, procedurally fair and supports all those involved in it. Defence has also released a Charter for Military Justice proceedings to ensure that all participants in the military justice system understand their rights and obligations.
- **Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (1800SEMPRO).** Defence provides a 24/7 confidential advice and support helpline to current and former ADF members, Defence APS personnel, Defence contractors, ADF Cadets, Officers and Instructors of Cadets and their families. The office is staffed by mental health professionals who specialise in sexual violence and trauma.
- **Stop Sexual Harassment Directions.** With the introduction of the R@W legislation, APS employees can apply to the Fair Work Commission for a Stop Sexual Harassment Order. To ensure the same mechanisms are available to the ADF, Defence introduced a process for ADF members to apply for Stop Sexual Harassment Directions outside their chain of command.
- **Leadership accountabilities and behaviours.** From November 2024 to June 2025, the Chief of the Defence Force issued directives to strengthen accountability and leadership standards. These included:
    - Command guidance on the consideration of suspension action of ADF members alleged to have engaged in serious misconduct and for delegates to consider initiating involuntary separation action for ADF members found to have engaged in serious misconduct.
    - A framework for command selection based on character, behaviour, and cultural alignment, and explicit requirements for ‘fit and proper’ assessments and emotional intelligence under the Social Mastery domain – one of three pillars used to assess command suitability.

- **Workplace Behaviour Adviser (WBA) Network.** With nearly 1,500 trained ADF and APS voluntary advisers, this network provides informal support to identify and manage unacceptable behaviour. WBAs are located across all Defence bases, and offer impartial advice on policy, resolution options and reporting processes for incidents and complaints.
- **Healthy Relationships Program.** In May 2025, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) commenced a pilot program to empower ADFA trainee officers to navigate and manage their personal, professional and intimate relationships, aligned with Defence Values. Subject to evaluation, this program will be available for adaptation and implementation across other Defence ab-initio training establishments.
- **Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships.** These workshops are a Fleet-led culture reform initiative, adapted from the New Zealand Defence Force model and tailored for Navy's operating environment. The workshops seek to strengthen Navy's culture through providing a shared language, practical skills, and early-intervention tools. By addressing harmful behaviours early, Fleet is ensuring teams remain focused, cohesive and ready for the demands of high-end warfighting. Feedback across Fleet highlights improved confidence in intervention, clearer understanding of boundaries and consent and a strong preference for facilitated, conversation-based learning over computer-based training. The workshops are not just education – they are a cornerstone of Navy's cultural resilience and a key enabler of Fleet's ability to remain lethal, focused, and ready.
- The Defence Suicide Prevention Program has been enhanced as part of the Defence SafeSide Project. This includes:
    - Modernising Defence's clinical risk formulation approach through the adoption of the **Defence SafeSide Framework.**
    - Updates to policy, resources and role-specific training that sets the standard of clinical practice and incorporates member-centred safety planning.
    - Broadening suicide prevention beyond a health response required new training courses were customised for Defence, tailored for ranks and roles and informed by lived experience to support these changes and embed a shared language and suicide prevention framework across Defence.
    - Training delivered across the Defence Enterprise:
        - 91,970 Defence personnel completed the Defence Suicide Awareness annual training 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025.
        - 1,081 Defence clinicians completed the clinical risk formulation training between 26 August 2024 and 31 December 2025.
        - 24,507 Defence leaders and managers completed training focused on supporting members at risk between 13 September 2024 and 31 December 2025.
        - 3,183 Defence health professionals, chaplains and wellbeing support personnel completed training focused on supporting members at risk between 2 October 2024 and 31 December 2025.
- Defence has delivered 1,724 alternative dispute resolution interventions (mediation, facilitated conversations, conflict coaching) and conducted complaint management workshops attended by 5,832 participants.

# Moving Forward – Tranche Two Priorities (2026–2028)

In Tranche Two, Defence will prioritise leadership development and accountability. This includes the management of issues relating to health, safety, wellbeing, and unacceptable behaviour. Preventing and addressing sexual violence remains a key area of focus in Tranche Two. Early Tranche Two priorities include but are not limited to the following activities.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **2.1 Update and implement the Senior ADF Leader Appraisal process.** | Defence has a robust appraisal processes that incorporates upward feedback and assessment against relevant outcomes-based targets to hold leaders accountable for their impact on culture, health and wellbeing of personnel. | RCDVS Recommendations 9 and 11. |
| **2.2 Embed Emotional Intelligence Testing into the Command Selection Framework.** | Defence has a robust leadership selection and promotion process, which continues to assess applicants as fit and proper to perform the duties of the position, or rank, being considered through the context of the Defence Values & Behaviours. | RCDVS Recommendations 9 and 12. |
| **2.3 Enhance enterprise health, wellbeing, safety, and unacceptable behaviour reporting.** | Defence leaders have access to integrated wellbeing, safety and behaviour data to identify risks, intervene early, and deliver evidence-based decisions that sustain a safe, respectful workforce and protect readiness, capability and mission effectiveness. Data is also proactively reviewed through Defence enterprise governance arrangements. | RCDVS Recommendations 26, 27, 55, 113.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* - Action 6.2.2 and 6.3.1.<br>*Defence Work Health Safety Strategy 2023-2028* Framework - Systems pillar objective. |
| **2.4 Deliver targeted communications and engagement on the CRSS reporting pathways and support services.** | Increased confidence and willingness to raise concerns strengthens a culture of accountability, trust and psychological safety, enabling earlier and more consistent resolution of unacceptable behaviour. | RCDVS Recommendations 26, 27 and 113. |
| **2.5 Enhance integration between commanders, managers and the Workplace Behaviour Adviser (WBA) network.** | Enhanced leadership capability enables earlier identification and resolution of unacceptable behaviour, embedding positive culture as a foundation for cohesive teams, sustained performance and Defence mission delivery. | RCDVS Recommendations 26 and 27. |
| **2.6 Develop and implement a Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy.** | Defence will create a safer, more accountable culture that prevents sexual violence, enables timely and appropriate intervention, and reinforces the cohesion and workforce capability necessary for Defence's operational readiness. | RCDVS Recommendation 17. |
| **2.7 Develop and implement the Defence Respect@Work Positive Duty policy.** | Defence strengthens prevention and early intervention to sexual violence. | RCDVS Recommendation 10.<br>*Defence Respect@Work Enterprise Action Plan* – Actions 1.1 and 3.1. |

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **2.8 Introduce mandatory safe-design principles for all new capability and infrastructure decisions.** | Defence considers sexual violence risks early in the capability development process when built infrastructure and fleet. | Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (*Respect@Work*) Act 2022 (Cth). AHRC regulator guidance. |
| **2.9 Implementation of Service specific Respect@Work Action Plans focused on practical actions in the Services and across the Defence enterprise** | Defence ensure leaders have access to education, training and resources to support prevention, early intervention, and response to sexual violence. | RCDVS Recommendation 10<br>*Defence Respect@Work Enterprise Action Plan* – Action 1.3. |

Our approach to monitoring progress will continue to evolve, with future iterations of this report expected to incorporate broader data to support a more comprehensive view of performance and impact. Future measures may include whether:

- Enterprise-level cultural initiatives are integrated and strategically aligned through the DCB program.
- The DCB program is used to shape and support cultural reform within unique work environments.

# CASE STUDY

## *Investing in relationships to transform the stakeholder experience*

*Collaboration to streamline workflow, develop trust and live the Defence Values.*

Systems and processes drive our daily behaviours and have a meaningful impact on our culture.

When dealing with inefficient systems and processes that affect our day-to-day experience of work, it is common for people to accept them as legacy systems that simply 'are the way they are' and not seek improvements. This can create a disempowered culture, low morale and a poor experience of work.

Director of Defence's Reserve and Cadet Support Division (RCSD) ICT Delivery team noticed that processes had evolved that did not support RCSD to connect and communicate effectively with various teams across Defence Digital Group (DDG).

Alignment with DDG's systems is fundamental to RCSD's ability to deliver services to end users of CadetNet, which is an application used by ADF Cadet volunteers and youth.

The RCSD team sought a partnership with DDG to enhance CadetNet and align it with DDG's standards. The integrated team across RCSD and DDG built a shared knowledge of each area, acknowledging the need to understand each other's work before moving to identify solutions.

Through building positive relationships with colleagues in DDG and encouraging people across RCSD to do the same, the team helped to create an environment of mutual respect and understanding of each other's way of working, resulting in a harmonious collaboration with shared purpose.

This led to increased capability across RCSD, with systems and processes implemented to automate workflow, remove duplication and gain efficiencies. The process of building connection provided a practical example of when it can be more effective to work to enhance a broken relationship, rather than to simply accept it.

This provided a trust and morale boost to the teams, enhanced ways of working and improved the stakeholder experience of CadetNet.




*Air Force Imagery Specialist, Flight Sergeant Michael Bott searches for aircraft using an algorithm that he has helped produced while involved in the Edgy-Air Force program.*

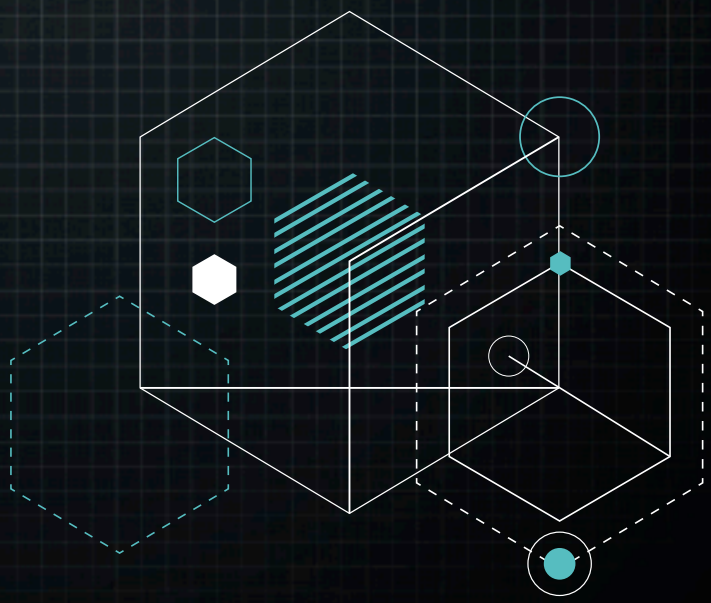
# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective Two

In 2025, the response to the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey told us that our people are experiencing increasing confidence in leadership. However, targeted improvement is still required to enhance the overall employee experience, particularly in the reporting and management of unacceptable behaviour.

Perceptions of leadership visibility and accountability have improved, but inconsistent behaviour and responsiveness remain a source of frustration for some of our people.

Across DCB Tranche 2, Defence will continue to prioritise leadership development, ensure leaders are equipped to model expected behaviours and reinforce accountability mechanisms. This includes ensuring leaders continue to prioritise health, safety, and wellbeing, respond quickly to issues, and maintain a unified, values-driven approach to enable long-term cultural maturity, to support the Defence mission.

To promote health, wellbeing, safety and prevent unacceptable behaviour Defence will strengthen leader accountability through enhanced appraisal and command selection processes, while improving enterprise reporting, engagement, and integration across leaders and the WBA network. This will be underpinned by the implementation of comprehensive *Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy*, including Respect@Work Positive Duty obligations, safe by design principles, and service specific action plans focused on practical, preventative training.





# Strategic Objective Three:

## *Defence is diverse and inclusive*

Diversity and inclusion are force multipliers for Defence capability. They expand recruitment pools, improve retention and strengthen leadership pipelines required for a sustainable, mission ready force.

Harnessing the benefits of a diverse workforce allows us to strengthen the way we collaborate, solve problems and make decisions to maintain the capability edge over our adversaries. It encourages new perspectives, shaping how we innovate and adapt to the rapidly evolving strategic environment and the changing nature of warfare.

For First Nations peoples, this work is guided by the Defence First Nations Commitment, which embeds cultural safety, inclusion and workforce participation as Defence capability enablers.

It is important that the Defence workforce reflects the community it serves. To achieve this, Defence is implementing targeted measures to improve the representation of women, First Nations peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ personnel and people with disability.

Respect (the humanity of character to value others and treat them with dignity) is one of the five Defence Values. Respect enables people to contribute honestly, collaborate effectively and stay engaged with their work. When personnel experience respectful behaviours modelled in their immediate work environment, it signals that Defence's broader efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce are translating into practice.

To assess progress, Defence has considered personnel perceptions of inclusion, respect and experience of the Defence Values in the workplace as reported in the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey. Results indicate that supervisors are generally building inclusive workplaces and people are increasingly treating one another with respect. However, our people do not always feel comfortable identifying as a member of a diversity group, which signals there is more work to do. Targets for the end of DCB program Tranche Two reflect the need for concentrated effort in this area while ensuring we maintain or stabilise upward trends.

An assessment of performance against the *Defence Annual Report 2024-25* indicates that our people increasingly feel that the Defence Values are being used within their workplace. Ongoing work to strengthen the integration of Defence Values in the workplace is expected to further support this trend.

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| My supervisor supports an inclusive workplace. | Navy | 82% | 84% | 82% | Downward | Remains above 80 per cent with an upwards or stable trend by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 78% | 83% | 81% | Downward | |
| | Air Force | 85% | 84% | 85% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 81% | 84% | 82% | Downward | |
| | APS | 78% | 83% | 83% | Stable | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **81%** | **84%** | **82%** | **Downward** | |
| The people in my work group treat each other with respect. | Navy | 79% | 79% | 80% | Upward | Remains above 80 per cent with an upwards or stable trend by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 77% | 81% | 81% | Stable | |
| | Air Force | 81% | 81% | 83% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 79% | 81% | 82% | Upward | |
| | APS | 77% | 79% | 80% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **79%** | **80%** | **81%** | **Upward** | |
| I feel comfortable identifying as a member of a diversity group. *Note: 54 percent of respondents chose to answer neither agree or disagree to this question.* | Navy | N/A | 34% | 35% | Upward | Trend to change to upwards with an increase of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | N/A | 37% | 31% | Downward | |
| | Air Force | N/A | 38% | 34% | Downward | |
| | *ADF Total* | N/A | 37% | 33% | Downward | |
| | APS | N/A | 43% | 39% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **N/A** | **39%** | **35%** | **Downward** | |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience.*

| Performance Target | Outcome | Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| Target 4.3c – The proportion of ADF and Defence APS personnel who are of the view that Defence Values are being used in their work area has increased in the last 12 months. | Partially achieved | In 2024–25, 80.4 per cent of ADF members and Defence APS personnel who participated in the YourSay Survey viewed that Defence Values were being used in their work area. In 2023-24 this result was 79.6 per cent, which reflects an increase of 0.8 per cent between the two reporting periods and a result of partially achieved (against a target of a 5 per cent or more increase from the previous year). |

*Source: Defence Annual Report 2024-25.*

To assess progress, Defence has also considered our demographic data to understand the diversity within our workforce. Defence remains focused on achieving the Government's target that 50 per cent of Government board positions be held by women. As at 30 June 2025, women held 48.1 per cent (38 of the 79) of reportable positions on Defence boards against the Government target of 50 per cent.

- The representation of women in the ADF is improving with the number of women serving in the ADF increasing by 441, with 13 more women in senior officer positions, between 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2025.
- 51.6 per cent of Defence Senior Executive Service positions were filled by women at 30 June 2025.

- In 2024–25, the number of women in STEM cadet roles increased by 83 per cent, while female participation in research and innovation graduate positions in the Defence Science and Technology Group grew by 81 per cent.

With respect to disability, Defence is working to address stigma in the workplace in order to increase the willingness of individuals to self-identify regarding their disability so the Department can better understand the support requirements needed. The most recent ADF Census (2023) reported that 16 per cent of ADF members indicated they have a disability, while the 2025 APS Employee Census reported that 11 per cent of Defence APS personnel indicated they had an ongoing disability.

| Women Participation | | 30 June 2024 | 30 June 2025 | Target by 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navy | Permanent | 24.1% | 24.3% | 26.5% |
| | Reserves | 3.5% | 3.5% | n/a |
| Army | Permanent | 15.3% | 15.3% | 17% |
| | Reserves | 10.7% | 10.6% | n/a |
| Air Force | Permanent | 27.1% | 27.3% | 32% |
| | Reserves | 4.5% | 4.5% | n/a |
| ADF Total | Permanent | 20.8% | 20.9% | n/a |
| | Reserves | 18.7% | 18.7% | n/a |
| Total APS | n/a | 48.5% | 48.7% | 50% |

*Source: Defence Annual Report 2024-25.*

The *Women in the ADF* report provides an annual, data driven snapshot of the participation, experiences and career outcomes of women across the ADF. It is an important consideration in the context of culture, and specifically the DCB program, providing a sense of how Defence is delivering on its commitments to cultural reform in the context of gender. Defence needs to recruit and retain a capable workforce, of which women are a key component. Understanding these drivers is fundamental to ensuring we deliver on our operational effectiveness and support our people. The publication of this data demonstrates Defence's ongoing commitment to diversity, inclusion and transparency in our progress.

The permanent ADF First Nations workforce self-identifying on Defence human resources systems remained steady at 3.9 per cent as at 30 June 2025, with no change from 30 June 2024. First Nations representation among Defence APS employees self-identifying on Defence human resources systems has decreased slightly from 1.9 per cent at 30 June 2024 to 1.8 per cent at 30 June 2025.

Reliance on self-identification in human resource systems can result in under-reporting actual participation rates. Results in the 2024 APS Employee Census reported three per cent of Defence APS personnel self-identifying as First Nations. The most recent ADF Census (2023) reported 3.9 per cent of ADF members self-identifying as First Nations.

| First Nations Representation | | 30 June 2024 | 30 June 2025 | Target by 2030 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navy | Permanent | 3.9% | 3.9% | 5% |
| | Reserves | 2.3% | 2.5% | n/a |
| Army | Permanent | 4.2% | 4.1% | 5% |
| | Reserves | 3.7% | 3.4% | n/a |
| Air Force | Permanent | 3.3% | 3.5% | 5% |
| | Reserves | 1.7% | 1.9% | n/a |
| ADF Total | Permanent | 3.9% | 3.9% | 5% |
| | Reserves | 3.1% | 3.0% | n/a |
| Total APS | n/a | 1.9% | 1.8% | 5% |

*Source:* ***Defence Annual Report 2024-25.***

## Actions taken to prioritise Strategic Objective Three

Initiatives undertaken to deliver against this strategic objective are currently focused on ensuring our workforce has the diversity of background, skills and experience to engage positively in a complex geopolitical environment.

In 2025, we expanded our efforts to build our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) workforce, including developing the *Defence Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Action Plan 2025–2030*. The APS CALD Strategy emphasises the importance of attracting talent from the full breadth of Australia's diverse population. Defence also participates in whole-of-Government initiatives that uplift cultural capability and modernise APS recruitment and promotion processes to reflect a more thorough understanding of merit. A key component of effort in 2026 will relate to an uplift in communications to help First Nations personnel feel safe to self identify (refer below action within the Defence First Nations Commitment).

Since the launch of the DCB program, the following enterprise actions have been prioritised to ensure a focus remains on fostering culturally safe and respectful workplaces and embedding strength-based approaches.

- **The Defence First Nations Commitment** is due to launch in early 2026 and will drive and embed positive change for First Nations personnel and build on Defence's engagement with First Nations communities. The Commitment reflects Defence's approach to delivering the whole-of-Government priority of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. As part of the launch of the Commitment, Defence will work with personnel in ensuring they are comfortable in self-reporting their First Nations background.
- The **Defence Inclusion Toolkit** provides Commanders, Managers and Supervisors access to information on all aspects of diversity and intersectionality to support their leadership role. This includes a responsibility for the wellbeing and respectful workplace experience of their team, with the intent to uplift team dynamics and performance across the board.

In 2024-25, the ADF took action to strengthen the integration of Defence Values in the workplace.

- **Navy** advanced cultural initiatives through the rollout of the Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships program, promoting understanding and prevention of sexual violence. The Navy Leaders Forum engaged middle management in leadership discussions, while the Navy Coaching Academy equipped leaders with tools for effective feedback and communication.
- **Army** conducted its annual Command Climate Survey to gather feedback on unit level climate, informing local and strategic decisions. Initiatives included piloting the Strength Through Respect workshop and the Miringu Project – Telling Army's First Nations Story, which highlights shared military heritage and integrates First Nations practices into Army traditions. Army also continues to foster a culture that prepares soldiers for the challenges of combat through a range of activities to develop social and professional mastery to manage the physical, mental and moral impacts of war.
- **Air Force** used culture data to guide priorities and address emerging issues through specialist teams. Senior leadership meetings focused on people and culture strategies and increasing engagement with aviators. This was supported by the Adaptive Culture team's workshops and presentations for aviators, teams and leaders to operationalise the DCB program. Air Force also delivered a suite of highly valued retention initiatives for our diverse workforce including the Maternity Support Networking Groups across Bases.

# Moving Forward - Tranche Two Priorities (2026-2028)

While our people believe that supervisors are supporting an inclusive workplace and that they are treated with respect, many do not always feel comfortable identifying as a member of a diversity group. Addressing this will be a priority in Tranche Two. Activities underway to support this effort include the below.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **3.1 Develop and implement ADF Cross-Cultural Learning Continuum.** | Enhance ADF capability through cross-cultural understanding during warfighting and other military operations and activities. | ADF Cross-Cultural Capability (to be developed), Cross-Cultural Foundation Learning Objectives stemming from Afghanistan Inquiry Response Enterprise Initiative 58. |
| **3.2 Mature the Defence Inclusion Toolkit.** | Defence leaders are confident in creating an environment that supports our people to perform at their best and where they feel safe and supported. | *Defence Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Action Plan* – Headline Action 2. |
| **3.3 Ensure Defence people policies and processes support cultural safety and use inclusive language** | Defence processes guard against harmful behaviours, such as discrimination based on identity or background, and support psychosocially safe workplaces. | *Defence Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Action Plan* – Headline Action 1. |
| **3.4 Deliver targeted programs to provide First Nations people with Defence career pathways.** | Defence recruits and retains a diverse workforce that can leverage varying perspectives to effectively solve problems and make decisions to deliver on the Defence mission. | *First Nations Commitment* Pillar 1. |

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **3.5 Implement initiatives to increase inclusion, respect, wellbeing and safety of First Nations personnel and communities.** | By embedding reconciliation and cultural safety, Defence improves recruitment, retention and progression of First Nations peoples, strengthening trust, workforce cohesion and the capability needed to operate effectively across Australia and with diverse communities. | *First Nations Commitment* Pillars 2 and 3. |
| **3.6 Continue to deliver the annual gender reporting, including the Women in ADF Report.** | Defence strengthens gender equality across the workforce through measurable improvements in representation, leadership and workplace equity. | *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Action 7.9. |

Our approach to assessing achievement against this strategic objective will continue to evolve, with future iterations of this report expected to incorporate broader data to support a more comprehensive view of performance and impact. Future measures may include whether:

- People feel confident to express themselves and safe to contribute their ideas without fear of exclusion or reprisal.
- Defence is recognised as an employer of choice, attracting a broad and capable talent pool.

# CASE STUDY

## *A cohesive squadron patch to reflect diverse identities*

Identity plays a crucial role in building a shared culture. In the Defence context it operates on many levels, from individual to team, Group or Service and beyond. Effectively leveraging elements of identity in shaping culture can ultimately improve team and organisational performance, while respecting individuality and diversity.

Air Force's No. 10 Squadron (10SQN) is based at RAAF Base Edinburgh. The Commanding Officer (CO) of 10SQN at the time was dedicated to championing diversity in her team. She believed that every member's individual skill brings something different, but critical, to the fight. Early on in her tenure as CO 10SQN, she identified two distinct, but disparate, identities operating within the Squadron that presented a risk to both operational effectiveness and her people's experience of work.

Following a long history of being a maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare unit, 10SQN transitioned into an Electronic Warfare (EW) role, operating the AP-3C (EW) Orion aircraft up to December 2023. Previously a smaller sub-unit, the EW team had their own living culture and identity. Two separate and competing identities presented a challenge in fostering a cohesive team and culture within 10SQN.

A physical manifestation of the squadron's disjointed identity was the two different (but approved) patches being worn by members. Ultimately, neither the patches nor the culture reflected the merging of the team.

The CO identified that the patches were viewed as core to the Squadron's identity and so took the opportunity to fuse elements of the existing 10SQN and EW identities into one Squadron patch. In doing so, the CO sought to shift the focus to the future, rather than highlighting a divide in the past.

Instead of taking on the challenge of re-imagining the patch herself, she engaged her team through a design competition. The brief was simple – "Design a squadron patch which fuses the heritage of 10SQN and the awesomeness of EW."

With enthusiastic uptake within the team, it was the newest and most junior member whose design ultimately won the competition and this then became the new patch associated with 10SQN.




Incorporating three central elements of the number 10, the P3 aircraft and the white knight symbol, the new patch physically fused elements of both 10SQN and EW identities.

While the patch was ultimately a symbol of the continuing body of cultural work to build a consistent identity within 10SQN, as people began to wear it with pride there was an evident shift toward a shared culture within the team.

# CASE STUDY

## *Fostering an inclusive environment for Gender Diverse personnel*

*Leadership, collaboration and education led to the development of a new approach to diversity and inclusion training by Defence.*

Gender-diverse ADF trainees previously navigated a particular workplace where they faced issues such as inconsistent gender-neutral facilities, misgendering and limited access to support systems tailored to their needs.

A supervisor recognised the need for a more understanding and inclusive environment through education on supporting gender-diverse members.

Training sessions were held with a focus on creating inclusive behaviours, use of appropriate terminology, fostering understanding and support for diversity within the workplace, understanding gender pronouns and recognising unconscious biases.

The success of the program has been largely due to its delivery by gender-diverse trainees with lived experience. Feedback from personnel indicates they now feel more supported.

The principles of the program have been embedded into the ongoing training of ADF members.

This effort has increased workplace inclusivity and contributed to the continuous culture reform, influencing improved team dynamics and performance.

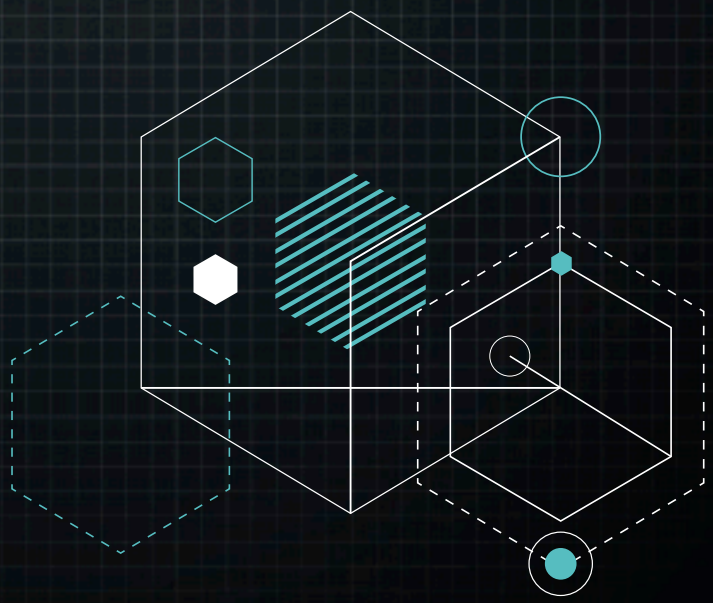



*Able Seaman Maritime Personnel Operator Kieryn Nieves interacting with defence personnel at the Diversity and Inclusion display at HMAS Watson's Families day, Sydney, New South Wales.*

# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective Three

In 2025, Defence respondents to the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey identified that over 80 per cent of their supervisors supported an inclusive workplace and people are treated with respect. However, our people do not always feel comfortable identifying as a member of a diversity group. This signals there is more work to do to deliver a culturally safe and inclusive workplace.

Across DCB Tranche Two, Defence will advance inclusion and cultural safety by implementing an ADF Cross Cultural Learning Continuum, maturing the Defence Inclusion Toolkit, ensuring Defence people systems use inclusive language, and delivering targeted initiatives that build First Nations, Gender and CALD career pathways and wellbeing.





# Strategic Objective Four:

## *Defence culture contributes positively to individual, team and organisational resilience and wellbeing*

Culture plays a critical role in supporting wellbeing and resilience across Defence. A culture where individuals and teams thrive strengthens Defence's operational capability and allows our organisation to deliver on its mission in complex and high-demand environments.

A professional and respectful culture builds trust, psychological safety, discipline and cohesion, reducing avoidable harm and enabling sound decision making under pressure. This strong organisational culture also underpins physical and psychological readiness, helping individuals and teams withstand high operational tempo, recover quickly and remain engaged and deployable.

To assess progress towards achieving this strategic objective, Defence uses a validated measure of psychosocial safety climate (PSC). This measure captures how personnel experience their work environment, including key factors such as leadership, workload, support, teamwork and psychological safety. A low-risk score for PSC is an indicator of a psychologically healthy workplace and is associated with a lower risk for worker wellbeing. A high-risk score indicates the inverse – that a workplace is not prioritising the psychological wellbeing of its personnel and is associated with a higher risk of poor organisational outcomes. The PSC results are complemented by YourSay Workforce Experience Survey and Workplace Behaviours Survey data.

Defence's PSC remains largely consistent year-on-year, with the majority of the workforce falling within the low-risk category. There was a slight increase in the proportion of staff reporting high and very high risk in 2024-25.

*"I appreciate the inclusive teams, wellbeing programs, and recognition frameworks. These allow me to focus fully on contributing to safety and security, knowing my family is well supported."*

**- AB Naffissa Mohamed Navy**

| | Proportion of respondents within each Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC-9) calculated risk category | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Low Risk | | Moderate Risk | | High Risk | | Very High Risk | |
| | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 |
| Navy | 76% | 76% | 5% | 6% | 11% | 12% | 8% | 7% |
| Army | 74% | 73% | 5% | 5% | 13% | 14% | 8% | 9% |
| Air Force | 76% | 74% | 5% | 6% | 12% | 13% | 6% | 7% |
| *ADF Total* | *76%* | *74%* | *5%* | *5%* | *12%* | *13%* | *7%* | *8%* |
| APS | 64% | 63% | 8% | 8% | 18% | 18% | 10% | 10% |
| **Whole of Defence Total** | **72%** | **70%** | **6%** | **6%** | **14%** | **15%** | **8%** | **9%** |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience*

Results from the YourSay Workforce Experience Survey and Defence Workplace Behaviours Survey indicate a general downward trend for items related to wellbeing and resilience.

Specifically, fewer people:

- Feel comfortable raising issues related to safety and mental wellbeing;
- Feel their psychological wellbeing is taken seriously; and
- Feel their manager provides them with clear and consistent performance expectations.

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| People's psychological wellbeing is taken seriously in my workplace. | Navy | 75% | 75% | 72% | Downward | Trend to change to upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 75% | 75% | 70% | Downward | |
| | Air Force | 76% | 76% | 72% | Downward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 75% | 75% | 71% | Downward | |
| | APS | 58% | 65% | 61% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **70%** | **72%** | **67%** | **Downward** | |
| People in my workplace feel comfortable raising safety and mental wellbeing issues with managers / supervisors. | Navy | 67% | 68% | 68% | Stable | Trend to change to upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 64% | 67% | 66% | Downward | |
| | Air Force | 65% | 68% | 67% | Downward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 65% | 68% | 67% | Downward | |
| | APS | 47% | 54% | 53% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **60%** | **63%** | **61%** | **Downward** | |

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| My supervisor provides me with clear and consistent performance expectations. | Navy | 64% | 69% | 67% | Downward | Trend to change to upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 60% | 69% | 69% | Stable | |
| | Air Force | 64% | 68% | 70% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 62% | 69% | 69% | Stable | |
| | APS | 62% | 70% | 68% | Downward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **62%** | **69%** | **68%** | **Downward** | |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience and Defence Workplace Behaviour Survey*

Defence draws on its progress against Defence Corporate Plan performance measure 4.4: Defence supports ADF members and their families by providing access to support services and programs having regard to lifetime wellbeing, as reported in the Defence Annual Report 2024-25.

The Defence Corporate Plan set targets to support positive action towards resilience and wellbeing. Defence 'substantially achieved' two out of three targets. This included achieving target registrations for the ADF Family Health Program and the delivery of fit-for-purpose Defence suicide prevention training. As reported in the Defence Annual Report, Defence was unable to report on whether support services and programs were delivered in accordance with service delivery timeframes due to limited data.

| Performance Target | Outcome | Analysis |
|---|---|---|
| Target 4.4a – At least 75 per cent of eligible permanent ADF members and their families are registered with the ADF Family Health Program. | Substantially achieved | Defence substantially achieved its intended performance against this target during the reporting period, with 74.06 per cent of eligible members registered for the ADF Family Health Program as at 30 June 2025, against a target of at least 75 per cent for achievement of the target. |
| Target 4.4b – 100 per cent of support services and programs are provided to permanent ADF and their families in accordance with identified service delivery timeframes. | Unable to report | Defence was unable to report against this target for 2024–25. There were three programs intended to be included for assessment, which were the Partner Employment Assistance Program, the Education Assistance Scheme and the Special Accommodation for Emergencies Scheme. Due to information systems only being configured to enable capture and reporting of the approval time for referrals late in the reporting period for the Special Accommodation for Emergencies Scheme, a performance result could not be calculated.<br>For the Partner Employment Assistance Program, Defence processed 99.78 per cent (1,382 out of 1,385) of registrations within five days for the reporting period.<br>For the Education Assistance Scheme, Defence processed 93.43 per cent (256 out of 274) of completed applications received, within five days for the reporting period. |
| Target 4.4c – Defence suicide prevention training is practical, tailored, informed by lived experience and delivered in-person. | Substantially achieved | Training participants having assessed suicide prevention training was practical (achieved), tailored (achieved) and informed by lived experience (achieved). Defence assessed that the training was delivered in-person (partially achieved). |

*Source: Defence Annual Report 2024-25.*

# Actions taken to prioritise Strategic Objective Four

Since the launch of the DCB program, the following enterprise actions have been prioritised to improve and strengthen proactive interventions in areas where risks or barriers remain as follows.

- **Implementation of recommendations from the *RCDVS Final Report*.** The RCDVS examined systemic issues and common themes in past deaths-by-suicide of ADF members and veterans, including suspected suicides and lived experience of suicide risks. In acknowledging the significance of statements made by witnesses, and in addressing the findings from the RCDVS, Defence is driving culture reform to ensure all personnel feel safe and respected, leaders are held to account for their actions and reform is both measurable and prioritised based on data.
    - For example, *RCDVS Final Report* Recommendations nine and 26 focus on improving our monitoring, reporting and visibility of risks to support a resilient and healthy workforce. These recommendations are complemented by Recommendation 17, which prioritises the prevention of sexual violence and Recommendation 24 which calls for the annual publication of anonymised data on the outcomes of all incidents of sexual violence. Collectively, Defence's implementation of these recommendations will strengthen transparency, accountability, and workforce wellbeing.
- **Work Health and Safety Strategy**. Defence's high-operating tempo and dynamic work environment requires flexible and agile Work Health and Safety (WHS) strategies and practices. Defence's WHS Strategy has been designed to prioritise the health and safety of our people and ensure that we are not putting the health and safety of others at risk.
- **The Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030.** This strategy was developed in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) for the Defence and Veteran community including APS personnel, contractors, ADF Cadets and ADF families. The strengths-based Strategy aims to embed individual and collective mental health and wellbeing considerations into broader Defence decision making, policy, processes and education.
    - This strategy is supported by Defence's *Suicide Prevention Action Plan*, which outlines Defence and DVA's approach to suicide prevention at individual, organisational and community levels. It promotes an evidence based, outcomes-focused, person-centred and systems approach to suicide prevention, underpinned by lived experience and compassion.
- **The Defence Leadership Framework.** This Framework sets out a road map for effective leadership by providing a set of attributes that can be applied at any level and in any area of the Australian Defence organisation. The Defence Leadership Framework will help Defence personnel in demonstrating these behaviours within a complex, integrated workforce. The Framework supports a culture that enhances trust, collaboration, and adaptability - key drivers of organisational resilience and the wellbeing of our people.

# Moving Forward - Tranche Two Priorities (2026-2028)

In Tranche Two, Defence will prioritise leadership development and accountability. This includes the management of issues relating to health, safety, wellbeing, and unacceptable behaviour. Preventing and addressing sexual violence remains a key area of focus in Tranche Two. Early Tranche Two priorities include but are not limited to the following activities.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **4.1 Implement activities aimed at improving how Defence prevents and responds to issues relating to psychosocial safety, mental health and wellbeing.** | Defence embeds a culture that protects the mental health, safety and wellbeing of Defence personnel, veterans and their families.<br>This prevents avoidable harm, enables earlier intervention and faster recovery, and strengthens trust in Defence's care for its people. In turn, this sustains force readiness, operational continuity and performance in high-risk and prolonged operating environments. | RCDVS Recommendations 9, 33, 55, 59, 64, 69, 70, 76, 77, 78, 102, 103, 113<br>*2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Actions 7.4, 7.5, 8.1 and 8.2.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* - Action 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.3.1, 3.4.1, and 3.2.1. |
| **4.1.1 Build help seeking and help offering capability through education, leadership behaviour and trauma informed practice.** | Reduced stigma and increased help seeking enable earlier support, faster recovery and sustained individual and team performance. | RCDVS Recommendation 26, 63 and 67.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* - Actions 1.1.1, 1.3.1, 2.1.1, 2.3.1, 3.3.1 and 3.4.1.<br>*Suicide Prevention Action Plan* - 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.7 |
| **4.1.2 Improve access to timely, high quality mental health care and continuity of support across service, transition and post service.** | Accessible and continuous care reduces workforce disruption, supports recovery and preserves operational capability across the service lifecycle. | RCDVS Recommendations 70.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* - Actions 3.2.1 and 4.5.1.<br>*Suicide Prevention Action Plan* - Objective 5.5. |
| **4.1.3 Build commander and manager capability, including tools and supports, when managing personnel to build protective factors, manage risk factors and support people experiencing distress.** | Leaders can identify groups disproportionately impacted by suicide, intervene early and reduce risk factors to prevent suicide and/or suicidal behaviours. | RCDVS Recommendation 69.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* – Actions 2.2.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.4 and 3.3.1<br>*Suicide Prevention Action Plan* - Action 5.1.1., 5.1.2, 5.3.1, 5.4.1 and 5.7.1. |
| **4.1.4 Continue to implement the Defence suicide prevention framework, including delivery of tailored Defence suicide awareness training.** | Promoting protective factors to strengthen wellbeing and help our people to obtain, maintain and improve their mental health and wellbeing. | RCDVS Recommendation 69.<br>*Suicide Prevention Action Plan* - Action 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. |
| **4.2 Defence to develop First Nations-led mental health first aid training.** | Culturally safe, First Nations led health and wellbeing supports improve trust, early help seeking, retention and psychosocial safety for First Nations personnel, contributing to a resilient and sustainable Defence workforce. | *Defence First Nations Commitment* – Pillar 3 (Health, Wellbeing and Truth Telling). |

Our approach to monitoring progress will continue to evolve, with future iterations of this report expected to incorporate broader data to support a more comprehensive view of performance and impact. Future measures may include whether:

- Actions taken to shape culture are improving people's day-to-day experience of work.
- Those actions are contributing to improved wellbeing across the workforce.
- Teams operate with clarity of purpose.

# CASE STUDY

## *Resilience, Rehab and Respite Room*

### *JMS NSW/ACT supports Defence personnel*

Members posted to the 1st Joint Movement Unit (1JMU) had struggled to find a place to recuperate, re-establish co-working relationships, participate in training and maintain their overall health and wellbeing.

The high-tempo nature of the unit, coupled with a lack of resources and no dedicated space had created a challenging environment for members to take care of their health and wellbeing at work.

The Resilience, Rehab and Respite (RRR) Room has now been created. This room is a dedicated space for members to access resources and rehabilitation equipment in a conducive environment that supports members' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

The RRR Room has been supported by Open Arms, SeMPRO, R U OK?, Beyond Blue's New-Access Program and Veteran Gaming Australia and features a range of resources and equipment relating to mental fitness and wellbeing.

The RRR Room has positively influenced the culture within the sub-unit, with members now having a dedicated space to relax and access much needed resources. The sub-unit achieved a milestone of 100 per cent Army Individual Readiness Notice compliance and deployable Military Employment Classification status in September 2024.

1JMU's most valuable asset is its people. The RRR Room serves as a testament to the unit's commitment to its members' wellbeing, fostering a culture of resilience, rehabilitation and respite.




*Sophia Campion from the R U OK? Day organisation serves sausages at the R U OK? Day free sausage sizzle breakfast at Blamey Square in Canberra.*

# CASE STUDY

## *Investing in our people through the Mobility Monday Initiative*

*Developing fitness in the workplace to build connection and improve wellbeing*

Members from the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group (CASG), Heavy Air Lift Systems Program Office (HALSPO) at RAAF Base Amberley primarily perform office-based roles.

While the benefits of physical activity are well documented, these do not always align with the nature of office work.

Recognising this, a HALSPO supervisor sought to improve workplace morale and foster synergy between sections by introducing routines with a shared goal.

Research highlighted that workplace exercise reduces the risk of musculoskeletal injuries and enhances overall wellbeing.

Studies also show that individuals who exercise regularly experience greater personal accomplishment and lower levels of psychological distress, perceived stress and emotional exhaustion.

A strength and conditioning and mobility routine was developed leading to the launch of 'Mobility Monday'.

This initiative aims to improve workplace fitness and reduce injuries associated with repetitive strain and administrative tasks.

Four workouts, each with three difficulty levels (Beginner to Advanced) were developed in consultation with the Physical Training Instructors for HALSPO teams.

Participation is voluntary, yet the majority of the cohort have fully embraced the opportunity. The program can be completed in the office or at any time during the day.

Early results have been positive, with the program being extended to other teams within the building.



*Teams from HMAS Canberra and HMAS Albatross shake hands post match at the Albatross Nirimba Cup Soccer Competition at The Ridge Sporting Complex, Sydney, New South Wales.*

# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective Four

Indicators of Defence's Psychosocial Safety Climate show stable results. Defence expects to see an increase in low to medium risks during Tranche Two of the DCB implementation, along with a decrease in high to very high risks with the introduction of the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030 and implementation of the RCDVS Final Report recommendations.

Specifically Defence will strengthen psychosocial safety, mental health and wellbeing through improved prevention and response initiatives. These initiatives include building help seeking and leadership capability, enhancing access to timely and continuous mental health care, and equipping commanders and managers to better identify and manage risk to improve experiences of our people. This will be supported by ongoing implementation of the Defence suicide prevention framework and the implementation of First Nations led mental health first aid training.

# Strategic Objective Five:

## *Defence values the contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence Mission*

Warfighting is a whole-of-nation effort. The ADF, APS and Australia's sovereign defence industrial base form an integrated national capability that provides the resilience, expertise and infrastructure required to sustain operations in contested and high risk environments.

A shared culture creates common expectations, behaviours and the collective mindsets required to operate as one. Integration supports rapid mobilisation, shared learning and faster adoption of concepts, improving operational planning and joint effects. Shared structures and consistent standards further strengthen coordination, improve response times and enable the mobilisation of capabilities at scale.

The *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* provides the detail on how Defence is recruiting, retaining and growing the highly specialised and skilled workforce required to meet its capability needs and achieve the objectives in the NDS and Integrated Investment Program. This plan highlights the important contribution of ADF, APS and Industry in achieving the Defence mission.

> *"The camaraderie, mutual respect, and shared values are my favourite part of working in Defence. We are more like a family than a government department and we perform more like a team than in many areas of society."*
>
> **- WOFF Brendon Gardner Air Force – Reserves**

### ADF

The ADF Total Workforce System (TWS) provides Defence with the flexibility and agility it needs to meet current and future workforce demands. The TWS acknowledges that people are our most valuable capability, and to attract and retain the right people, Defence needs a contemporary, flexible and agile workforce environment.

The TWS has been designed to realise the following effects, for individual members and the Defence Organisation.

- Sustainment of capability by attracting and retaining the right people.
- Diversity and inclusiveness within the Services.
- Provision of flexible service paths.
- Enablement of organisational agility by designing flexibility into current and future workforce structures.

To assess progress towards achieving this strategic objective, the below questions from the YourSay Workforce Experience Survey have been used. These results provide an indication of how our people feel through assessing their sense of belonging and whether they feel that their work makes an important contribution. Since 2023-2024, these figures have trended upward, indicating that implementation of the TWS and other recruitment and retention practices are having a positive impact on this sense of contribution. Across DBC Tranche Two, Defence will seek to increase this upwards trend.

The YourSay Workforce Experience Survey also asked ADF members how the introduction of different service categories (SERCATs) has supported their work-life balance. Trends since 2023-24 have remained stable or increased, with around 44 per cent of ADF members who participated in the survey agreeing that their ability to serve under different SERCATs had helped them achieve a better work-life balance. While not all ADF members will choose to utilise these options, Defence will focus on increasing the percentage of ADF members agreeing that the ability to serve under different SERCATs has helped them achieve a better work-life balance.

## APS

The *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* highlights a deliberate re-balancing of Defence's APS workforce to support delivery of the NDS. This includes strengthening engineering, intelligence, cyber, ICT, project and program management, contracting and procurement categories. The YourSay Workforce Experience Survey indicates rising trends in APS members' sense of contribution and pride since 2023-24. Defence is committed to increasing these positive experiences, while implementing workforce adjustments to support the *NDS*.

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| I believe my work makes an important contribution to Defence. | Navy | 77% | 73% | 74% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 70% | 70% | 72% | Upward | |
| | Air Force | 80% | 77% | 78% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 75% | 73% | 75% | Upward | |
| | APS | 81% | 81% | 82% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **76%** | **76%** | **78%** | **Upward** | |
| I feel a strong sense of belonging to Defence. | Navy | 58% | 57% | 64% | Upward | Continue to trend upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | 58% | 61% | 64% | Upward | |
| | Air Force | 62% | 62% | 65% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | 59% | 61% | 64% | Upward | |
| | APS | 59% | 66% | 68% | Upward | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **59%** | **63%** | **66%** | **Upward** | |

| | | Pathway to Change | DCB Tranche One | | Trend over DCB Tranche One | DCB end Tranche Two Target |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2018-19 | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | | |
| The ability to serve under different SERCATs helps me achieve a better work-life balance. | Navy | N/A | 40% | 44% | Upward | Trend to change to upwards with a change of at least 5 per cent by the end of Tranche Two |
| | Army | N/A | 41% | 41% | Stable | |
| | Air Force | N/A | 44% | 47% | Upward | |
| | *ADF Total* | N/A | 42% | 44% | Upward | |
| | APS | N/A | N/A | 26% | N/A | |
| | **Whole of Defence Total** | **N/A** | **42%** | **42%** | **Stable** | |

*Source: YourSay Defence Workplace Survey - Workplace Experience*

### Defence Industry

A strong, sovereign defence industrial base is central to National Defence, as outlined in the NDS and the Defence Industry Development Strategy (DIDS). By recognising sovereign industrial capability as essential for national Defence, the DIDS strengthens Australia's security and self-reliance by prioritising industrial capability, innovation, and workforce development. It affirms Defence's commitment to strategic, forward-focused partnerships with industry to deliver an innovative, resilient, and competitive defence industrial base. The DIDS integrates industry into planning and capability development, fosters long-term collaboration, and invests in industry growth.

## Actions taken to prioritise Strategic Objective Five

Since the launch of the DCB program, Defence has prioritised the following enterprise actions to enhance collaboration and foster respectful, inclusive and resilient workplaces to improve experiences for ADF and members and our industry partners.

- The **Defence Workforce Plan 2024.** Release and implementation of the *Defence Workforce Plan 2024* supports improving Defence's culture, which is fundamental to achieving the Defence mission and implementation of the NDS. Activities aligned with Strategic Task Seven: Improved Culture, Mental Health and Wellbeing contribute directly to building a respectful, inclusive and resilient Defence culture.
- The **2024 DIDS**. This strategy outlines a range of initiatives to support the growth of a strong and resilient sovereign defence industrial base. A key focus is enhancing collaboration with industry by streamlining engagement processes and commits to providing clear priorities and proactive engagement, enabling industry to plan and innovate with confidence. The *DIDS* recognises the importance of the defence industry workforce in meeting Defence's capability needs and achieving the objectives of the *NDS*, with initiatives including:
    - Defence Industry Development Grants (DIDG) skilling stream which as at 19 November 2025, approx. $1.6m has been awarded under the skilling stream. The DIDG skilling stream assists eligible businesses to upskill and train in priority trade, technical and professional skillsets to develop a workforce that meets Defence requirements in priority areas.

- The Schools Pathways Program, which informs young Australians about the varied pathways and career opportunities relevant to Defence Industry, encouraging engagement in STEM.
- The Defence Industry Internship Program, which creates pathways for tertiary students into Defence Industry by providing paid, high-value internships with small to medium enterprises.

- To complement the *Respect@Work* legislation, Defence is developing a Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy, a new Respect@Work Positive Duty policy and the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (1800SEMPRO) is progressing initiatives to strengthen trust in reporting and response systems.
  - **Reporting of unacceptable behaviour.** Defence has established the CRSS as a centralised and specialised unit to provide ADF members and APS employees with a choice in how they report unacceptable behaviour complaints with a focus on trauma-informed practices and supports to individuals. A team of trained complaint handlers from ADF and APS work in this unit. The unit accepts reports of unacceptable behaviour outside of the chain of command/line manager and the ability to make an anonymous complaint. This unit also has an area that provides guidance and support to Commanders and managers responsible for managing these complaints to ensure Defence policies and process are applied.
  - Understanding the drivers of under-reporting of unacceptable behaviour is critical to implementing the *Respect@Work* framework. This includes, but is not limited to, the perception that reporting will not lead to a discernible outcome.

## Moving Forward - Tranche Two Priorities (2026-2028)

Our YourSay Workplace Experience Survey results indicate that our people believe their contributions are valued and have strong sense of pride in working for Defence. This reflects growing recognition of the importance of meaningful work, purpose, and acknowledgment.

Across DCB Tranche Two, Defence will focus on better utilisation of our ADF Total Workforce System and strengthening the opportunities to work with industry to deliver our mission.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **5.1 Continue to implement the DIDS .** | Defence strengthens collaboration with industry to deliver an innovative, resilient and competitive defence industrial base that creates a stronger, more secure Australia. | 2024 DIDS.<br>*2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Action 3.3. |
| **5.2 Maximise use of ADF Reserve workforce, including working cooperatively with industry to plan ADF Reserve contributions to National defence.** | Defence optimises the contribution of ADF Reserves and industry partners to national capability through coordinated workforce planning. | *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* - Action 3.2. |
| **5.3 Foster alignment, amplify engagement, empower self-service, and optimise impact of the DBCS.** | DBCS is enhanced through how it is communicated, embedded and accessed. The DBCS remains relevant, helping Defence recruit and retain a highly-skilled workforce to deliver current and future operational capability. | *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* – Action 6.3. |

Our approach to monitoring progress will continue to evolve, with future iterations of this report expected to incorporate broader data to support a more comprehensive view of performance and impact. Future measures may include whether:

- Efforts to better address unacceptable behaviour have resulted in a culture where contribution is better valued.
- Defence appropriately rewards and recognises the contributions of individuals and teams across all employment categories.

# CASE STUDY

## *Coaching the Culture*

*A Senior Leadership Action Plan to implement positive cultural practice through behaviour change: Achieving positive culture change requires constant and conscious effort.*

A key driver of change is normalising good practices and endorsing them at the highest level. Defence leaders modelling and rewarding positive behaviour is critical to the success of any culture change initiative.

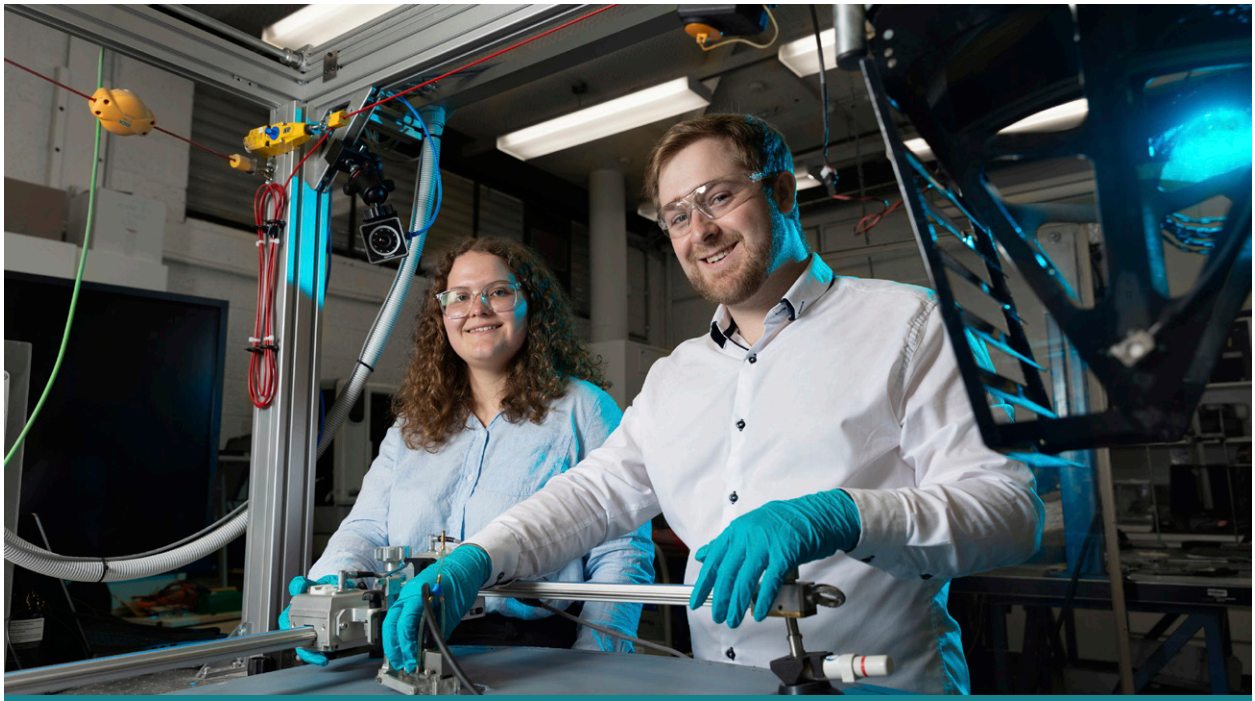
Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) were facing challenges in creating tangible actions to build and grow the culture required to achieve their strategic goals. While culture related discussions were rich and valuable, a lack of action to implement desired changes had resulted in little progress and difficulty in measuring cultural change.

Without the right communication and active endorsement from DSTG leadership, DSTG's people shared a sense of uncertainty about the vision and cultural direction of the Group, resulting in a cycle of repetitive behaviours and little progress towards desired outcomes.

To overcome this challenge, DSTG implemented the Coaching the Culture Leadership Action Plan.

This initiative targets behaviours and practices that actively contribute to positive team culture and has been developed for DSTG's senior leaders as a coaching mechanism, helping leaders to model culture, coach teams to success and ensure a psychologically safe workplace. The plan encourages leaders to commit to five actions in 90 or 120-day cycles.

Actions are developed through collaboration with leaders and their teams and are linked to measureable goals. The aim is to drive cultural change while engaging staff in the change to generate buy-in at all levels.



*DSTG researchers, Eliza and Peter, performing Phased Array Ultrasonic Testing on a carbon-fibre composite specimen, using sound waves to detect damage beneath the surface.*

# CASE STUDY

## *Project Coastwatcher: Army cross-cultural training with First Nations rangers*

*Army's 1st Brigade (1BDE) Junior Leaders practice cross-cultural skills through collaboration with First Nations rangers.*

The littoral zone across Australia's Northern approaches is one of the most culturally diverse regions in the world. It is characterised by both multilingual communities and the enduring presence of First Nations peoples.

This poses both opportunities and challenges for Army's junior leaders, which include opportunities to enhance capability through collaboration, challenges to navigate differences and to maintain Defence Values under pressure. Cross-cultural interactions also hold up a mirror, enabling leaders to reflect upon the culture of their own teams.

Army did not have a service-wide training program to build cross-cultural capability in junior leaders or to give them the opportunity to practice these skills. However, there were some teams in Army with well-practiced cross-cultural skills and there were historical examples of cross-cultural success for Army, not least the Project's namesake: the World War Two Coastwatchers.

There was also enthusiasm from junior leaders at the leading edge of Army's littoral training to learn.

Through Army's Regional Indigenous Liaison Officer (RILO) network, Army Headquarters (AHQ) was aware of widespread interest from First Nations ranger groups to collaborate with Army, particularly in Northern Australia.

First Nations ranger groups are small, not-for-profit corporations that are based in remote communities. These groups are governed by a board of senior Traditional Owners and largely staffed by local First Nations people. They provide land management, conservation and biosecurity services on contract to the Commonwealth.

Over the past ten years, the Commonwealth has increased both the number of ranger groups in Northern Australia and the scope of their responsibilities. This has subsequently created a capacity building challenge for a remote workforce and enthusiasm for collaborative training with Army.

Collaboration between Army and remote First Nations rangers have the strong potential to be mutually beneficial.

This engagement builds the capacity and training resources of rangers and enables Army's junior leaders to practice their cross-cultural capability.

Some Army units identified this and began collaborating with First Nations Ranger groups, most notably the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment in Darwin, through Exercise Sharing Knowledge. In 2024, AHQ conducted pilots to test whether this approach was scalable.

In July and September 2024, partnered training was piloted by soldiers from 1BDE and Crocodile Islands Rangers. This first pilot aligned cross-cultural training with a major exercise; the second took a more targeted approach, with a small group of junior leaders from 8/12 Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery.

Outcomes were positive for both soldiers and rangers, with some junior leaders identifying useful lessons that have carried through to subsequent regional deployments.

Lessons from these pilots were fed back to a tri-service working group including the Centre for Defence Leadership and Ethics (the Joint Learning Authority for cross-cultural capability).

AHQ is currently considering models for wider implementation that maximise value for both Army and participating First Nations ranger groups.



# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective Five

In 2025, Defence respondents of the YourSay Workplace Experience Survey indicated they felt their contributions are valued, and many reported a strong sense of pride in working for Defence. This reflects growing recognition of the importance of meaningful work, purpose, and acknowledgment.

There is more work to better utilise our ADF Total Workforce System and Defence will continue to strengthen the opportunities for industry work to contribute to our mission.

Across DCB Tranche Two, Defence will continue to strengthen national capability by implementing the *DIDS*, maximising the contribution of the ADF Reserve through closer cooperation with industry, and optimising the alignment, engagement and impact of the *DBCS* to support workforce sustainability and self service.



# Strategic Objective Six:

## *Defence is recognised by the Government and the Public as a trusted national institution*

Defence's primary role is to defend Australia and its national interests, promote security and stability, and support the Australian community.

To successfully achieve that, Defence must earn and continue to build public trust and confidence by delivering on its commitments, being transparent and accountable and building a safe and respectful workplace culture.

Defence acknowledges that public trust is shaped by individuals within the organisation, as well as the organisation as a whole. This includes past decisions, events or actions. Defence will continue to deliver cultural reforms to prioritise our people, upholding the Defence Values of Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity and Excellence and deliver on the Defence mission in service to the nation that has entrusted us with this responsibility.

To monitor progress towards this strategic objective, Defence draws on progress against *Defence Corporate Plan* performance measures 1.2 and 4.4d, as reported in the Defence Annual Report 2024-25.

Performance Measure 1.2, Defence commits Australian Defence Force and Australian Public Service assistance to domestic crisis and emergency response, as directed by Government, is a critical test of responsiveness, coordination, and trustworthiness in action.

Performance Measure 1.2 has been achieved by Defence. The target that 100 per cent of domestic disaster operations were supported by ADF members in response to Commonwealth assistance requests has been met. While there were no activation requirements for APS personnel to surge during the reporting period, Defence encourages APS personnel to assist with surges when appropriate. This operational success shows the commitment of Defence to earning the trust of the Australian public.

Performance Measure 4.4d required Defence to achieve consideration of Reform Management Plans for 100 per cent of Defence-led, Government-agreed recommendations from the *RCDVS Final Report*, which were on the Forward Work Plan for the Program Board in 2024-25. Defence substantially achieved this target for the 2024–25 reporting period. This was demonstrated by 94.12 per cent of Defence-led, Government-agreed recommendations from the RCDVS on the Forward Work Plan for the Program Board in 2024–25 having an approved Reform Management Plan.

Public trust is built not only through mission success, but also through how Defence treats its people, manages resources and upholds standards. Systems that enable performance, enforce cultural accountability and reward contribution all play a role in reinforcing trust internally and externally.

# Moving Forward - Tranche Two Priorities (2026-2028)

Through DCB Tranche Two, Defence will continue to advance cultural reform, prioritising our people by reinforcing Defence Values, and enabling mission delivery in service to the nation.

| Action | Outcome | Drivers |
|---|---|---|
| **6.1 Defence will implement agreed recommendations of the RCDVS Final Report.** | Improve the culture, wellbeing and lived experiences of Defence personnel and continues to improve trust through accountable implementation of Royal Commission recommendations. | RCDVS Government agreed Defence led recommendations. |
| **6.2 Continue to implement the Veterans Transition Strategy 2023 cross-agency action plan.** | Defence improves the transition outcomes of ADF members and their families by supporting them to be better prepared for, and achieve positive outcomes, from their transition journey. The Strategy contributes to improving veteran wellbeing outcomes, service recognition, and public trust. | *2024 Defence Workforce Plan* – Action 8.3. |
| **6.3 Strengthen connections among Defence, DVA, other government departments, ex-service organisations and community organisations to improve wellbeing outcomes.** | Improved wellbeing outcomes and continuity of support, building public and Government trust, and reinforcing Defence's credibility, workforce sustainability and ability to deliver its mission. | RCDVS recommendations 70 and 103.<br>*Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* – Actions 3.1.2, 4.5.1, 4.5.2 and 4.5.3. |
| **6.4 With DVA, foster the value of military service across the Australian community, building recognition, connectedness and respect for Defence members, families and veterans.** | Strengthened recognition of military service builds public trust and community support, reinforcing pride, belonging and workforce sustainability that enable Defence to grow, sustain and deliver the force required for its mission. | *Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Action* – Action 4.1.1. |

Our approach to monitoring progress will continue to evolve. Future iterations of this report need to incorporate broader measures of performance and impact particularly in regard to our people. Future measures may include whether:

- Individuals and teams are recognised and rewarded for their contribution.
- Defence's systems, facilities and equipment are fit for purpose and enable performance.
- Culture accountabilities are clearly defined, upheld and enforced.

# CASE STUDY

## *Army support for families: Geckos Family Centre*

*Community Centre run by Army's 3 Brigade (BDE) provides support to Defence Families.*

Ensuring our personnel and their families feel supported and part of the community is a critical part of ensuring the preparedness of our ADF.

Geckos Family Centre is a long-standing Community Centre run by Army's 3rd Brigade, which provides support to Defence families in the Townsville region.

Staffed by Army members, the Geckos Family Centre delivers a suite of activities and events both on and off-base. These include weekly playgroups for children up to five years old, weekly craft groups, wellness activities (such as yoga, Pilates and fitness), school holiday activities and events and functions.

Through this approach, families are encouraged and empowered to connect with other Defence families and the wider community.

Families report that the connections they have gained through the centre have enhanced their own individual wellbeing and helped to enable Defence members in their roles.




*(L-R) Former Commander of the 3rd Brigade, Brigadier Kahlil Fegan, DSC, Lynn Harding, Jillian Kesby, Brett Armstrong and Warrant Officer Class Two James Stewart at the Geckos Open Day on 13 August 2022 at Lavarack Barracks, Queensland.*

# Key Findings and Way Forward: DCB Strategic Objective Six

In 2024-25, Defence fulfilled all Commonwealth Government requests for domestic disaster operations and remains committed to implementing Government-endorsed ***RCDVS Final Report*** recommendations.

Defence recognises that public trust is shaped by both organisational and individual actions. We will continue implementing cultural reform that prioritises people, with a focus on preventing unacceptable behaviour, including sexual violence and increasing access to wellbeing and mental health support.

Across DCB Tranche Two, Defence will continue to implement agreed recommendations of *RCDVS Final Report,* continue delivery of the *Veterans Transition Strategy 2023* cross agency Action Plan, and strengthen collaboration with DVA, government, ex service and community organisations to improve wellbeing outcomes. This includes fostering greater recognition, connectedness and respect for military service across the Australian community for Defence members, families and veterans.

# Looking Ahead



This is Defence's inaugural report on the DCB program. It provides a baseline for Defence to assess our collective efforts to evolve our culture and strengthen the collective health, wellbeing and safety of our people. We will publish future iterations of this report annually, which will support the maturation of the program through its 10-year lifecycle.

Defence is prioritising actions to improve the prevention of unacceptable behaviour and sexual violence, and to respond appropriately when it occurs. Defence is enhancing data coordination and analysis to strengthen governance, inform enterprise-level priorities, and ensure targeted actions are appropriately resourced.

In 2024-25, Defence prioritised implementation of the Government-agreed recommendations which address sexual violence, suicide prevention, programs and improved systems for complaints. These reforms specifically relate to providing clearer direction regarding our expectations on the elimination of sexual violence within all Defence workplaces, build healthy, professional relationships with peers and ensure our people have access to supports as they navigate their workplace experiences together, safely and respectfully. Defence continues to prioritise implementation of the RCDVS recommendations, alongside fulfilling obligations under the Respect@Work legislation to eliminate sexual violence from all Defence workplaces.

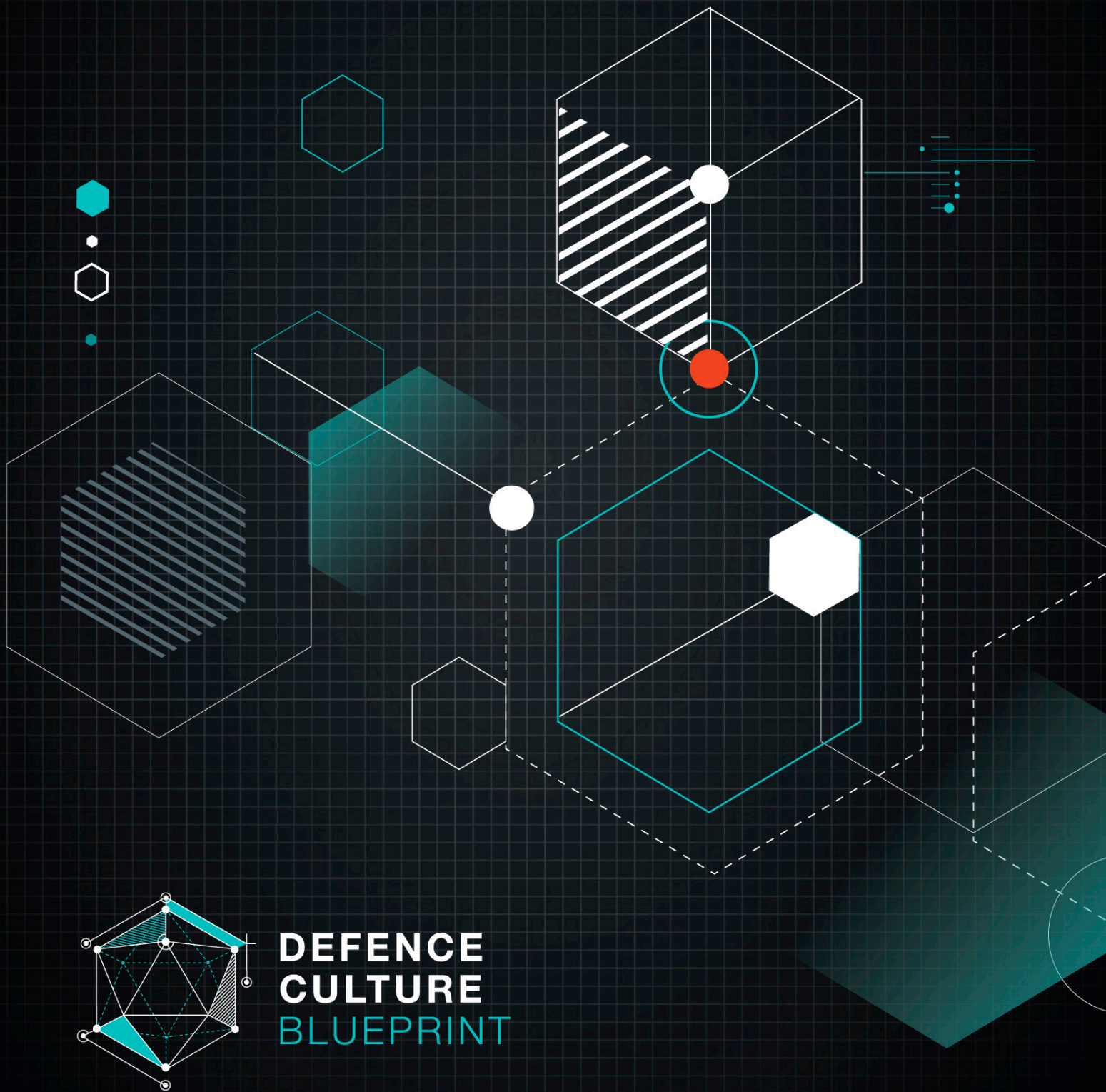
Defence is strengthening policy, accountability and leadership systems. Key initiatives include the release of the *2024 Defence Instruction on Expected Behaviours*, and *CDF Directives 03–2025* and *05–2025*, which outline the Chief of the Defence Force's direction regarding the integration of culture considerations including social mastery, emotional intelligence and values alignment into command appointments, promotion decisions and selection for other key appointments.

Defence is also focused on strengthening the broader system of supports for its people. This includes improvements to conditions of service, training and wellbeing initiatives. A key priority is improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of our people through the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2029*, in partnership with the DVA, and the *Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2028*.

Leadership capability continues to be developed through the Defence Leadership Framework. Recognising the importance of evidence-based practice, Defence has extended its partnership with the AHRC for a further five years. This collaboration will continue to deliver targeted culture research, including the Women's Health Project, which aims to identify and address systemic barriers for women accessing key health supports throughout their ADF service.

In 2026, Defence will shift into the second Tranche of DCB program implementation - Embed and Adapt 2026-29. Tranche Two will build on the foundations of Tranche One by continuing culture focused action, while embedding culture reform in business-as-usual practices. Tranche Two is designed to achieve best practice in culture and evaluation, matured further using data and our actions to implement RCDVS recommendation to further adapt and deliver tailored actions where they are most needed. We will monitor progress towards our targets throughout Tranche Two to ensure efforts are prioritised to support progress and we will adjust our efforts where we are not on track.

As stated at the beginning of this report, Defence is at our best when we support each other, learn from each other and work in accordance with our Defence Values and Behaviours. Building a strong and safe culture is our shared responsibility.



# DEFENCE CULTURE BLUEPRINT