



Royal Commission Update - Townsville Day 36 - 23 June 2022

RSL References

Positive:

NA

Negative:

NA

Key remarks

Catalogue of Services

- Responsibility for risk management post-service with those not in touch with DVA/ESOs (20% of veterans)
 - Defence doesn't have any way to do this in any useful way
 - Called for a geographically located, fully encompassing guide to the services of ESOs and DVA in every town in Australia - i.e. the Catalogue of Services
 - This coherent guide would allow for coherence among ESOs and to the benefit of veterans, particularly those not already linked with DVA or any ESO
 - He posited this guide and ESOs being the main bodies responsible for the management of psychosocial risks to veterans post-service

Peak body representing veterans

- Want to acknowledge and respect the volunteerism, goodwill, energy of ESOs
- Scale, variety, distribution and capacity - it is bewildering to me, must be bewildering to others - first step to see Digital Portal (Catalogue of Services)
- Want a collaborative, coherent experience - there are so many ESOs in so many places
- Wonder if there are ways of coordinating smaller ESOs around central leads for veteran supports
- Surprising this Royal Commission doesn't have permanent representation on behalf of veterans in front of them

Procedural issues re. ADF members presenting evidence - Commonwealth Counsel

- Clear they encourage members and former members to come forward
- Want to put in place arrangements for them to come forward, Commonwealth trying to put procedures in place to allow this to happen and overcome any legal issues related to this - this is difficult
- Legal complexity - not possible within existing legislation for any member of Commonwealth officer to grant blanket immunity for any statutory secrecy provision/statute - many different and bespoke statutes
- What the Commission proposed in October would never be effective

- Trying to create novel arrangements - this includes with intelligence agencies etc.
- Scope of the information to be talked about - how do you define limitations on exposing this information, storage, protected information
- How do you deal with issues such as disclosure, identification etc.
- There is no inhibition for Defence personnel discussing life in Defence per se.
- Appropriate way forward may be to deal with everything except protected information, and have a protocol for protected information
- Counsel assisting the RC suggests making coming forward with relevant information for serving members part of their duties
- Commissioners suggested legislative change to the Commonwealth
- General Campbell has been encouraging members to come forward confident their story can be told without expressing issues such as questions of mission or operational circumstance, but of the human interaction - could make a directive? - hesitant to do this
- General Campbell - supervisors are not to discourage anyone to come forward to the Royal Commission

9:00am - 12:15pm - General Angus Campbell AO DSC, Chief of the Defence Force

Individual inquiry into suicide in 2017

- Discussions related to concerns with claims -
- Allegations of bullying of Person B were not anyway in the Army Incident Management system
- Reasonable perception that IGADF may be biased when investigating
 - IGADF is independent, accountable and willing to take on new information - Commissioner questions this independence, as they are uniformed officers
 - Who has oversight of IGADF? Defence Ombudsman
 - Suggestion that the IGADF could be staffed by police officers, perhaps with Army experience

Unacceptable behaviour and reporting

- Chain of Command to be held to account for poor behaviour, and account for the wellbeing of those under their command
- Belief that reporting things would not change things and that it is easier to keep quiet are the two most common reasons for not complaining about unacceptable behaviour
 - Trust in the complaints system is low
- Encourage reporting to make ADF the best it can be

Unacceptable behaviour and career progression

- Chain of Command to be held to account for poor behaviour, and account for the wellbeing of those under their command
 - Also to undertake longitudinal review of personnel who demonstrate poor character etc.
- By July 2018, still no way to search in the Army Incident Management System (AIMS) for a fuller picture of patterns of behaviour and/or incidents - started to be developed after this
- Careers Management Army team important to enterprise performance management framework in Army - this is the constellation of processes, some of which are documented policies - one of the tools for ensuring accountability Performance Assessment Reports and
- Careers Advisors are personnel assigned to advise members on careers and assign personnel across the ADF - could be contributors to longitudinal reviews
 - Not always allowed to see all incidents in the Incident Management System - based on fundamental principle of presumption of innocence
- Systemic failure linking incidence reporting to performance review - describes this as a developing system
 - Balance between seeing incidents as opportunity to develop people with those who are not making progress

- Needs to be a case-by-case aspect
- Officer Promotion document of the 2010s doesn't have a field prompting a reviews of AIMS – didn't expect this to be the case because of the immaturity of the AIMS system at the time
- Appraisal body deciding whether officer should be promoted, who has been reported for unacceptable behaviour in the past, should not be aware of the incidents? Depends on the system being available
 - General point that if the person has learnt from the past
 - In the case of a person with longitudinal behaviour, it should be taken into account – pause or stop on promotion

Accountability and governance

- For an organisation to function properly need properly defined roles, accountability for actions
- Challenge of competing outcomes of wellbeing of whole of life of service member is balanced with operational readiness – best outcome is that those are in collaboration]
- Should be formal recognition in the outcomes for Defence that Defence has responsibility for lifetime wellbeing of members – one-day in veterans is the way the ADF sees veterans
- Accepts a person may experience latent harm following service after the protective factors of service are lifted – looking to get these protective factors to last after transition
 - Work systems of ADF are key to supporting veterans over the whole of their life – these are evolving to incorporate the concept of psychosocial risk (early stages)
 - Also working to actively encourage help seeking
- Accountability structure for psychosocial risk in work systems:
 - First Principles review – outlines challenge of the diarchy for establishing accountability
 - Split between Defence and DVA in the support of veterans – work is underway to bridge the information gap between the two means Defence and DVA will be seen as a continuum – there are Veterans Support Officers working on the ground in ADF – data sharing between the two orgs – not yet extended to an individual's medical conditions, but of groups
 - Risk management – considerations of balancing of risk and mitigation of risk – input into command authority
- Physical, psychological and social harm minimisation is the responsibility of Command, with the Secretary in support of that accountability – chain of command crucial in addressing unacceptable behaviours and instilling cultural change
 - The phenomenon of psychosocial safety and risks to psychosocial safety are very diffuse in the ADF, making it difficult for any particular commander to be held accountable
- Chief of Defence is accountable to Minister of Defence, serves at the pleasure of the Crown
 - Daily reporting cycle, Defence Annual report, other thematic reports
- Complaints system across ADF – possible high number of incidents are never reported
- Responsibility for risk management post-service with those not in touch with DVA/ESOs (20% of veterans) – Defence doesn't have any way to do this in any useful way
 - Called for a geographically located, fully encompassing guide to the services of ESOs and DVA in every town in Australia – i.e. the Catalogue of Services
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ADF and cultural reform

- When it comes to culture, training units are of greater importance due to indoctrinating into culture of ADF – this particular true for ADFA
- Person with command authority has more influence in driving cultural effects
- Chain of command is the most important tool to promote lifetime wellbeing and minimising risk, while the community/peer is also important – need to get chain of command and peer effect in line

- Embedding psychosocial risk management journey in culture of the ADF
- Supportive of ADF and DVA publicly reporting about wellbeing issues
- Monitoring of effectiveness of changes - need to understand progress - Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) and Pulse surveys, exit surveys, Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) all helps us understand this
 - New reporting Pathway to Change survey results to record some of this also - will generate a dashboard - doesn't include data from Unacceptable Behaviour survey
- May have seen some going backwards in the last couple of years due to COVID-19, which affected the teaching of the ADFA curriculum
- ADF functions as a force in being to conduct operations today - chain of command flows from there - other thing is to look at temporally beyond the current about the environment we may be operating in, circumstance of capability we may need to bring in the next 10-20 years, and to look at partners - many starred officers are part of this
- No place for informal initiation and/or hazing rights
- Considering opportunities to reduce relocation, particularly among non-commissioned ranks - need to find optimal mix between stability and career development movement

Separation rates and recruiting

- Separation have materially increased over the past 12 months
- Is recruiting linked to separation? Can depend on the type of skill that is separating, the mix between full and parttime separators - may change how requirements of recruiting i.e. physical requirements, may be given some bandwidth or waiver to allow a lower level than the recruiting requirement
- ADF risk appetite during recruitment has increased - prepared to consider candidates with a marginally higher psychological risk indicator for certain roles - doesn't this have the potential to create adverse outcomes/vicious cycle?
- Recruiting media campaign seeking to minimise some of the perceived negative connotations of ADF role attributes or what does not necessarily align with what young people look for in a job
 - These campaigns adapt to perceptions of the day - the more important work is what's happening within the Defence People Group
 - Also developing a recruiting and retention team to address what might be a change to the value proposition of recruiting but also the aspiration and behavioural inclination to stay
- How informed are recruits when recruited by ADF? Separation between advertising campaign and the portal to recruitment
- Separations within a year of joining - is this a concern? Yes, because we want to retain our people
- Involuntary Separation - separation due to as not suitable for service - does this show that there are problems in recruiting? Selection process is fallible, some people do brilliantly unexpectedly, while others perform worse
- Length of service being shorter than aspired and those under 30 when they separate are cohorts particularly at risk

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1:15pm - 3:00pm - Dr Violet McGaw, Educational & Developmental Psychologist

Effect of PTSD on functioning within families

- Believes effects of PTSD has grown in recent years - more operations, more exposed to PTSD, therefore more families exposed to PTSD, and therefore more demand for service provision and interest in the phenomenon
- Some stigma reduced for PTSD - seems to be more acceptable to come forward than, for example, depression
- Multiple definitions for family units - this research focus on families with children and those who are actively parenting - looked at the lived experience of families
- Number of deployments - more deployments increase the likelihood of having a mental illness
- Child's experience of mental trauma is different to parent's experience - some impact on resilience or capacity to cope with trauma
- Further research needs to be done around parenting
- Vicarious trauma - partners and families can experience symptoms as part of parent's PTSD
- Intergenerational effect - ongoing mental health impacts
- Overidentification with the parent with PTSD - repeating themes of what were seen in the parent
- Barriers to access services i.e. accessing counselling when looking after children etc. - difficulty in finding family-centred services
 - Stigma and possibility of affecting career - who do I call? Couldn't reach out to the unit
- PTSD has an umbrella effect - effects every aspect of their lives - whole world is PTSD
- Strong sense of immediate family and bonding with their partner - often to the exclusion of everything else
- Living with unpredictability - keeping the kids quiet or removing them if dad's in a bad mood
- Idea of growing in silence as children or adolescents - didn't talk about it, just lived with it - not fine later - taking care of parents or other family members

Veteran parenting with PTSD

- Can be extremely difficult to parent with PTSD
- Can be absence of the veteran parent in the family
- Parents concerned around having their children affected by PTSD
- Suicide or suicide prevention - talked about partners and children being protective - prevented them from suiciding - family support is a protective factor
 - Importance of partners keeping things moving when they couldn't
- Risk factors - children can be hard work - my family would be better off if I wasn't here
 - Treating the condition can be difficult when raising a child - i.e. taking medication around obligations - battle between role as parent and role as a person with PTSD

Recommendations

- Supporting parents and children to cope with stress
- Being able to access mental health support services for families and partners beyond limited Open Arms services would be useful

3:15pm - 5:00pm - Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood, Research Fellow, Phoenix Australia & Adjunct Fellow, University of Adelaide

Females in the military in the Middle East

- Exposures of deployment had effect on range of wellbeing domains
- Females in the ADF suffered double rate of depressive episodes compared to Australian community
 - More likely to experience anxiety than male counterparts

- Within the ADF, serious suicidal ideation were higher among females than males
- Suicidal planning and attempts were higher than general female population
- Satisfaction in relationship reported better relations with children
- Factors giving rise to mental health issues included
 - Protective factors included resilience

Mothers deployed in the Middle East

- Risk and resilience factors:
 - Women with dependent children had better psychological health pre-deployment, while the suffered slightly more distress measures after deployment
 - Women with dependent children weren't overall any worse off
 - Resilience factors included support networks - allowed them to experience deployment - those without them had more challenges to develop a network of supports
 - Many had been primary carers and managed the household - often still carry that load into deployed environment
 - Opportunities to seek support - either through community networks or down to chain of command - benefits of having a supportive chain of command (hit and miss)
 - Process of deploying allowed them to develop strategies - peers helped because there was no formal guidance or systemic support
 - Sometimes there was difficulty in trying to return and reconnect with families - hypervigilance and hyperarousal - often didn't actively seek support - believed they were impacting on children
 - Managing career and families may be fundamentally incompatible
 - Guilt caused by older children was common
- Supports:
 - Early intervention was important for reducing mental disorders - families play a critical role in early identification - women more likely to seek help for a child than themselves
 - General resources and support available - not specific to them - often got these resources ad hoc from social network - not accessible or easily available - need early information so people can make informed decisions about the impact of their service
 - These women wanted to be deployed and loved deployment
 - Often transitioned because of extreme difficulty in managing career and family
 - Lack of supports for fathers who were at home
- Health mother effect:
 - Healthy, deployable cohorts - developed coping strategies - have a cost as they can carry additional load
- Stigma:
 - Still evidence of stigma existing in deployed in the deployed population - public, anticipated and self-stigma
 - Experienced mostly around perceptions of chain of command and colleagues
 - Stigma around parenting and parenting responsibilities - if you are a committed parent, may not be as committed to military duties
 - Recommendations including:
 - Trying to understanding stigma more broadly in military culture and parenting
 - Acknowledge types and nuances of stigma
 - Reached out to Defence - no follow up occurred

Role of family

- Family is important and an extension of the service person - need to think of family being integrated as part of induction into service at outset
- Importance of maintaining connections with family as protective factor
- Need to keep going with work to understand impacts of service and deployment on families and children

- Need to utilise and analyse existing data sets

Improvements to current approaches to research

- Important to build on what we know - already been massive investment
- Turnover of staff in DVA - institutional memory is important - allows research to be progressed
- Funding ceases at delivery of final report - no analysis and translation is left to Departments - don't know if findings amount to anything - can miss critical issues

Recommendations

- Need to put in place policies re. families and women - need to be formalised, not ad hoc i.e. childcare and flexible working
 - Recommendations should be made in conjunction with researchers, population representatives and Departments - co-design
- May need to look at challenges for men with children deployed