



Royal Commission Update - Wagga Wagga Day 4 - 1 December 2022

General remarks

- 15 May 2023 - Perth hearings
- Second half of the year hearings in Adelaide and Melbourne
- Releasing several discussion papers in coming months
- Will also be releasing a special report later in 2023
- Research of the Royal Commission will continue - will examine NZ and US for best practice
- Work on the Final Report progressing
- Since release of Interim Report, Government has been implementing response
- National ESO Forum mentioned again - progressing advances in the ESO sector
- We need a sustained and determined effort to address the issues in recruitment, training, culture, transition and discharge, and treatment of family, Defence will not be able to attract the workforce it requires

Counsel Assisting Closing Address

- Significant matters presented in AIHW reports - has this been properly socialised or used to inform changes for ADF members
 - Is everything that could be done being progressed?
- Royal Commission will continue to explore whether DVA and Defence are doing everything possible
- Defence must observe its responsibility to those it calls upon to defend the nation, including those affected by suicide and suicide ideation
- Ex-serving women - particularly at risk across all ranks and all lengths of service - what needs to happen to make this change
- Need to examine involuntary medical discharge - another particularly at-risk cohort
- Workplace Behaviour Surveys
 - Much left to be desired in response and assistance with interpretation of data at training academies
- Referred to lowering of recruiting entry standards, and the possible negative effects of these
- Referred to Kapooka embracing new, wellbeing

8:30am - 2:45pm - Air Commodore Julie Adams Commandant, Australian Defence Force Academy - Lieutenant Colonel David Cave Commanding Officer, Australian Defence Force Academy

- 1126 trainees currently at ADFA - 30% Navy, 35% RAAF, 35% Army - one third of all ADF Officers go through ADFA
 - 28% female, 71% male, 1% undefined

- Average age is between 17 and 22
- ADFA plays critical role in the future of Defence, including culture - one of the most important influences on culture - leader is the most important part of setting this culture
- Commandant has infrequent contact with recruits, CO has more frequent contact

Staff

- Total staff of 101 - 1:20 student-facing staff to cadet ratio, with current staff shortfall of 16% - at other training institutions, this ratio is 1:5
 - Not good - splitting too much time between admin and students
 - Recruiting can be difficult due to ADFA, or any training unit, being seen as less prestigious than a command unit
 - Challenge across the enterprise that we are short of staff relative to government funding
- Gender distribution - 22 females, 70 males
- Staff typically have two-year tenure
- There is a risk of burnout at ADFA - particularly for those who don't have a strong background in leadership or instructor training - when stressed, can default to 'less productive forms of motivation' i.e. directive, in extreme cases unacceptable behaviour
 - Trainer might not invest additional time in helping bring an individual up to speed
 - Chain of command holds responsibility for oversight of when this occurs - Is not as high as perhaps he would like, due to lower staff to cadet ratio
- Spend a lot of time monitoring staff, making sure they're supported

Trainees

- Recruited for the conscientiousness - can be link for some between anxiety, high pressure and mental health risks - but can also improve performance, wellbeing, coping skills of significant part of the trainee pool
 - Definite likelihood that it is a riskier place than comparative University setting
- Recruit from top few percent of Australian youth in terms of emotional and intellectual results
- Fear of failure can be a prevalent issue for the trainees
- Minimum age for recruits (17) is not too low - maturity is more important than age
 - Some areas of academy where this maturity may not be accounted for sufficiently
 - Should give opportunity to those who are motivated to come to ADFA
 - 2013 found that increasing minimum entry age could not be changed because of recruitment imperatives i.e. moulding the members - statement written as if recruitment imperatives were placed above wellbeing of trainees
 - No evidence to suggest those younger than 18 are more affected than those who are 18-20 - to make them wait another 12 months and not join with their school-age cohort would be manifestly unfair
 - Does not think particular age is helpful - screening at front end is more helpful and effective - unacceptable behaviour is not tied to age
- For 65% of cohort, it will be the first time for most of them out of home - Navy has single-service training before ADFA at HMAS Cresswell and on-the-job training
 - These Navy recruits are more mature and better equipped for the rigours of ADFA
 - Likes the stepped introduction to military life, then ADFA - worth exploring doing single-service year before going to ADFA
 - This can also apply to attrition for health reasons from the ADF - if brought in in a staged way, may not lose them
- Should female trainees be placed with female mentors, or external female mentors - this is currently

available

- Residential support officers there to support trainees is useful – significant benefits – 4th year trainees
- Other leadership positions similar to House captain role – 3rd year trainees have opportunity to lead peers in no-rank environment – assist in smooth conduct of administration – provide agency into how we best run ADFA
 - Abuse of power is not a large concern here

Training

- Structure – program is highly regulated
 - 7am is first commitment, with commitments as late as 6pm at night
 - Maintains environment of increased pressure at times – some increased pressure can enhance an individual's ability to perform – but no so far that it causes detriment
- May be overlapping risk factors that can put trainees at risk – these are well-known to ADFA, but maybe not well-understood
 - Understanding of mental health concerns in that age group may not have previously known and understood by Defence in previous years
- Year 1 familiarisation training – YOFT – First 5 weeks – troops who've just come to ADFA
- Most evenings devoted to revision or downtime – deliberate de-load periods in afternoons or evenings during exam periods
- Board of Review conducted twice-per-year – look at every trainee, collate data points on performance, check this performance
 - Travelling well with no further action, travelling very well with commendation, or need assistance to increase performance
 - Trainee will receive report on their performance from CO

Learning Requirements

- Young trainees and adults have different learning requirements
- ADFA staff are high quality individuals from across the ADF – may not have background in instructing adolescents – staff training does a good job of equipping them – but this can be a very a different job to whatever they were doing in Defence, requiring ongoing and targeted training to equip them to be instructors
- ADFA staff not required to have specialised training – no minimum defined teaching training requirement for ADFA staff
 - Staff do have the 2-week ADF Instructor training, with additional ASIIP just-in-time ADFA training
 - Mental health component in the ASIIP training – equipping staff to recognise and intervene when identifying poor mental health, how to promote wellbeing, determine when de-loading may be required
 - Presentation of adolescent learning requirements
 - More training is always desirable – should conduct more training and have higher level of expertise among ADFA staff – but doesn't believe this should be tertiary qualifications
- It would be valuable to deliver training to trainees re. health, mental health and wellbeing
 - This could be for staff as well

Mental Health Issues

- 15-24 cohort is particularly at risk of developing mental health issues
- No mental health professionals posted to ADFA
 - University counselling staff within and next to the physical campus of ADFA – also telehealth

available

- Acute mental health issues will be clinically referred
- Would be desirable to have ADF mental health staff assigned to ADFA
- Data provided on take up of its mental health services, including by themes of presentation
 - Take up rate is about 57% of counsellor capacity - equivalent to 2FTE among 3 psychologists
 - Capacity surges at particular times of the year - Year 1 familiarisation training period and exam period
 - During Board of Review periods, no strong correlation between results being given and services accessed with counsellors
- When a trainee wants additional help, or the need is identified by staff, they will attend the appropriate counselling - need to request this from staff - escorted and picked up after by superior
 - Informed of the availability of these services by ADFA staff
- Currently monitoring trainees who have attempted suicide or suicidal ideation via a watchlist - aim is to maintain corporate knowledge beyond the current rotation of staff
 - Also means they can be provided additional support if required
 - No consequences for trainees - MEC is not necessarily downgraded unless there is a medical reason to - but in the majority of cases the MEC is downgraded - vast majority are then upgraded
 - For anyone who enters a period of healthcare, there is a discussion at a welfare board
- If there is a suicide among trainees
 - Inform closest friends first
 - Speak to division next
 - Speak to whole of ADFA

Historical cultural issues at ADFA

- ADFA has been beset by some disturbing incidents of bad behaviour
- i.e. Gray review found sexual misconduct was part of ADFA conduct
- 2011 review concluded low-level sexual harassment and discrimination against women continued at ADFA - Skype incident happened the same year
 - Has effect on mental wellbeing
- DART report outlined serious abuse - this can be a serious risk factor in poor mental health
- Agree that poor culture at ADFA would be particularly problematic - positive culture must be inculcated during earliest parts of service

Current ADFA culture

- 2021 Workplace Behaviours Survey - unacceptable behaviours were reported as high -
 - 40% of trainees experience some form of unacceptable behaviour, with 63% women experiencing it, compared to 31% of males
 - 13% experienced sexual misconduct, 11% bullying, 4% abuse of power, 2% sexual assault/attempted sexual assault
 - Other students are main cause of unacceptable behaviour, with most occurring in the cadet housing environment
 - 45% of trainees are unsure that ADFA cares about their psychosocial safety - felt uncomfortable reporting unacceptable behaviours
- Requires command reinforcement that unacceptable behaviour needs to be stamped out - wanted this clearly reinforced to every staff member

Reporting

- Wanted more detail to support command actions to address the data – still waiting on this
 - Want to be able to take targeted action, but is not possible with the data currently in the report
- Wanted to unpack psychosocial risks at ADFA during risk assessment initiated following the report
 - Risk assessment rating for unacceptable behaviour at ADFA is high due to various environmental factors
 - Includes failure to apply temporary training standards with an adolescent cohort, competitive social and professional behaviours
 - Very limited breakout spaces at ADFA
 - Separated by gender in first year
 - Lack of representation of women in ADFA – leads to lack of peer support for female trainees
 - Hierarchical structure of Defence can be a risk factor
- ADFA's trainee profile and training circumstances represent perfect storm of vulnerability for poor mental health outcomes and unacceptable behaviours i.e. introduction to military life, academic study, residential environment
- DART report outlined risk of residential environment setup – no changes since 2014 despite knowing risk – this is highly undesirable
 - Uncertain why these is a delay – funding is an issue
- Many of the initiatives taken following the surveys have not demonstrated any effect in subsequent surveys
- Some barriers to reporting i.e. not feeling anything would be done, not thinking it's worth it
 - May not want to embarrass ADF or the team
- IGADF will be doing an audit at ADFA soon
- Inadequate reporting in PMKEYS re. formal reports, unacceptable behaviour, administrative sanctions, and family protection orders – does not agree with this

Command

- How can a Commander ensure they have enough information to effectively run ADFA – ask themselves every day – it's a huge question – has good relationships with those below in the Chain of Command
 - Formal and informal networks
 - Encourages reporting and feedback
 - Can be difficult with new situations etc.
- Commandant has 3-year tenure – Strategic direction comes from the Commandant
 - May not be enough to see through wholesale change, but can implement changes
 - Burnout can potentially face Commandant ADFA
- Commander has 2-year tenure, but would have preferred 3 years
 - Need a year to assess situation, a year to initiate changes, a year to imbed those changes
 - Most rewarding position he will ever have
- Burnout can be an issue for anyone in command at ADFA – best officers are the ones who spend significant time out of hours with trainees
- Proposal put up to Higher Chain of Command was for all Services to have 9 months with their service – then have University training in Trimesters
 - This will stage the military training – see service outside the training institution
 - Do some bridging at courses at University
 - Most part focussed on academics at ADFA, with other focus on leadership, ethics, culture etc.
- When we are short of cadet-facing staff, puts extreme pressure on system – administrative overhead ends up taking priority, to the detriment of the trainees

- Need to build some redundancy into the system
- At ADFA, trainees spend 90% of their time without a staff member supervising - this is the opposite of other training institutions

Alcohol

- Some off-base recreational activities - i.e. bonding with alcohol, sporting activities - can create greater risk of sexual misconduct - not typically during the working week or when ADFA staff are involved
- There is a bar in the mess on campus - now have the same prices as external bars
 - During a 'Dining In' night, there are a proportion of attendees who do not drink, and the level of alcohol served is controlled
- Visiting lecturers are directed not to discuss consumption of alcohol

Training on unacceptable behaviour

- Primary means of delivery is a lecture during YOFT, followed by small-group discussion delivered by instructors, but encompassing trainee feedback
 - Follow-up additional lecture training
- Sexual misconduct lectures also occur during YOFT training
- Education on appropriate use of social media is taught
- Education on alcohol is provided during YOFT and after