



Chapter 8:

Adequacy and Accessibility
of Support Mechanisms

In summary

- ADF service obligations have a significant impact on family life and stability.
- The ADF's posting and deployment cycle can result in the family of ADF members experiencing problems in accessing child care, disruption to education and employment difficulties. The posting and deployment cycle also causes lengthy periods of separation from family.
- There are a range of services to support the families of ADF members. Many of these work well but a more targeted approach could make them more effective.
- Housing is an important condition of service for ADF members. Despite this, members experience difficulties with the availability of appropriate housing (including proximity to schools, child care and partners' place of work) and the security of on-base housing for women. Many of the challenges are heightened for members with dependents and members living in remote locations.
- Psychological stresses and physical injuries at work can impact on the health of ADF members.
- Between 2007 and 2011, women's involvement in work health and safety incidents overall was broadly proportionate to their representation in the ADF but they were over-represented in reports of minor injuries and work health and safety incidents at the ADF's larger training establishments.
- There are barriers and negative perceptions attached to using the mental health support system available to members.
- Better targeting of support measures may have positive results on the productivity and retention of personnel, including women.

Women and men alike make great personal sacrifices as members of the ADF. They are posted to different locations every few years, deploy overseas and risk their safety in service of their country. The partners and families of serving members also sacrifice much to support their serving member, and the Review is deeply respectful of all of these contributions.

This Chapter will discuss the impact of Defence service on members and their families and examine the supports which are available. Key issues include impacts on family life, access to housing, and members' health. The primary perspective of the Review is women, but the issues discussed below impact on the experience of all personnel. This means that strategies to improve the situation for women will also improve the situation for men.

8.1 Impact on families

The pressures of postings and deployments make the lives and careers of ADF members significantly different from that of their civilian counterparts. This section discusses the impact that ADF service can have on ADF families, including the difficulty in accessing appropriate child care and schooling for children, employment for spouses/partners of ADF members in new locations, separation from families, relationship breakdown, and the implications that these issues have for the ADF. It will also identify measures that the ADF could implement to lessen the impact of ADF service on families.

(a) Posting and deployment cycle

Throughout their careers, many members will experience extended periods of absence from their families. Among permanent ADF members, 56% have been deployed operationally since 1999 and most of these deployments were between two and eight months. More recently, 21% of permanent members had been deployed on operations in the 12 months to May 2011, with an average duration of 4.1 months.¹ Navy personnel posted to seagoing ships can also spend between 150 and 180 days away from home on non-operational deployments each year.² ADF members also spend time away from home for ADF purposes other than deployments, such as training exercises. The 2011 ADF Census data indicated that the average time away from home was 65 nights in the 12 months to May 2011.³

ADF members can also expect postings to different locations throughout their careers. As outlined in section 4.4, each Service aims to provide personnel with three year postings in each role and back-to-back postings in the same geographic location, although qualitative evidence presented to the Review suggests more frequent movements often occur. Certainly, responses to the 2009 *Families Survey* suggest a high rate of movement for ADF families during a member's period of service.⁴ It states, '42.8% of respondents reported that they had moved between one and three times, while just over one-quarter (26.3%) reported that they had moved between four and six times. Overall, 9.9% of the respondents reported that they had moved ten or more times.'⁵ In 2010/11, Defence spent approximately \$203.8 million on 21,300 relocations, the majority of which were related to postings.⁶

The time that women, in particular, may spend on deployment or away from their families can give rise to judgemental attitudes from people in the community. There is a perception in the community that a 'good' mother is always with her children and should never spend extended periods away from them. Known as the 'good mother belief', this perception is not generally made about fathers. ADF women can be particularly vulnerable to negative attitudes from those not in Defence about their decision to deploy. This can place a significant emotional burden on serving mothers.

(b) Impact on families and children

The Report has already discussed the challenges that ADF families can encounter in accessing appropriate child care that is responsive to their needs, particularly in relation to the hours and locations of child care supported by the ADF (see Chapter 6). In addition to these issues, the ADF's posting and deployment cycle can create issues for members who need to access child care. The need for child care is heightened when an ADF member is deployed, which can place extra caring pressures on an ADF member's spouse or other family members. This pressure is increased for single parents or in situations where both parents are posted or deployed at the same time. At these times, personnel may seek assistance from extended families, such as having a grandparent move in to provide extra assistance:

When I was up here a couple of years ago my commanding officer had a two or three year old son and her husband was deployed. Then we got sent on exercise in Queensland for two months or just over. She flew her mother up to live in her house and look after her child.⁷

Sometimes when you're single, because people are so aware that you're single, they all want to help you...but when you're with a partner, no one helps you as much because they think that you're the parent, so you're ok. I think it's funny that often women that I know...will get the mother-in-law to move in [when they are deployed] but when the...men deploy, women are often left with the kids. We don't get a nanny or an in-law to come with us, but when the man's left with the child, then there is help brought in.⁸

Members can also experience difficulties accessing child care when they are posted to a new location:

She has to compete with the wider community to get child care places and yet sometimes she doesn't know that she's coming here until three months beforehand. When you've got a six month waiting list for child care, that's bloody hard. She's literally bouncing around trying to find a day care centre and at the same time, not knowing where she's going to be living but she knows where she's posted to.⁹

Posting to a new location is a particularly important time at which families may require child care support. Not all families are able to seek assistance from a friend or other family member. Furthermore, the assistance required at these times would generally need to be more flexible than that provided by a traditional child care centre. This reflects the sometimes short notice given to members prior to deployment and the extended hours during which support may be required.

Posting to a new location may also create other forms of instability for families. One issue that emerged is disruption to the education of older children. One female member told the Review:

My eldest daughter is six, she has lived in two different states, she's lived in four different houses, five different day cares, two different schools and she's in Year One...Now luckily she is adaptable, confident, outgoing...but at the same time, she can only put up with so much.¹⁰

Another member stated:

Obviously, every three years if you get posted to another posting...you're disrupting their school.¹¹

These reports are supported by the 2008 Defence Attitudes Survey, where between 47% and 55% of ADF respondents who indicated they have dependent children reported that their children's education was being affected by postings.¹² This is a significant percentage and is indicative of the sacrifice that members and their families are making for the ADF. Depending on the new posting location, members may also have difficulty accessing quality education for their children. While not the case in all locations, this was raised as an issue in some remote and regional areas visited by the Review. For example, in one location the Review heard:

In high school though, the education level's probably not to the same standard as the rest of the country...when they leave here, they do have some problems when they go back to either study in another school or go to university. So we do have the opportunity and Defence can pay for education at boarding schools elsewhere, but it's not always the best option for high school.¹³

Partners/spouses of members may also encounter employment difficulties in new posting locations. Some of these issues are identified in the draft 2011 ADF Census report, which found that, after the last job change due to Service-related relocation, the spouses/partners of ADF members were out of work for an average of 5.4 months. That report also notes that the income of many spouses/partners was less when they regained employment than they had received previously.¹⁴ One member articulated the difficulties that partners/spouses who are not members of the ADF can encounter in maintaining their career:

The [ADF] doesn't really take into account their situation so they'll send me wherever they want and then obviously [my partner has] just got to pack up and start a new job. It's hard for her to get ahead anywhere...It's hard for your partner to have a career when you're in the Defence Force.¹⁵

Career difficulties are not isolated to cases where only one partner/spouse is in the ADF. The posting cycle can also have an impact on career and family life where both spouses are ADF members:

It's very hard to have two successful careers and children...There's a lot you need to manage and there's a lot of luck involved [to get] postings in the same location which also coincide with your promotion...At the end of the day it was easier for [my wife] to discharge and get civil employment than it was to continue...The other part was with both being serving members, at one stage there we were sort of tag teaming. I was overseas, came back, she left a month later, came back, I went and did promotion courses. There was a two year period where we saw each other 30 or 40 days.¹⁶

Due to the disruptions and instability that regular re-posting can create for families, a number of members told the Review of their decision to be 'Member with Dependents (Unaccompanied)' (sometimes referred to as 'married separated'), whereby they are posted to one location while their family remains in a separate location, and the associated strains that this can create:

There's a lot of people living married but separated...in Defence because their wife and children are steady at school and they don't want to be...moving their children all the time, every two years, because they're happy at their school and that would be disruptive to family life. So the husband has

taken it on to live separated from the family to...ensure stability for his wife and children...and then of course that puts pressure on...everyone and the relationship.¹⁷

Extended periods of separation from families, due to deployment, exercises or other postings, can be difficult for ADF members. A number of members spoke to the Review about missing important family events. In a deployed environment the Review met one ADF member who had not yet seen his newborn child. Other members stated:

I think it's a personal feeling more than anything else, I felt like I've abandoned my kids for the last five months...I missed two birthdays, I missed a tenth birthday and a seventh birthday.¹⁸

A lot of men that have deployed [have] been away from their children. They've missed births... My husband has been gone for...over three years of his little girl's life, and she's six.¹⁹

Members also told the Review about the impact deployments have on their children:

We're talking about people leaving their children, which I'm still dealing with...I couldn't go to the letterbox without my son thinking that I wasn't coming back.²⁰

The 2009 *Dunt Mental Health Review* (the Dunt Review) considered the effect that ADF service can have on members' families. In addition to some of the issues discussed above, the Dunt Review noted that families may encounter some of the adverse psychological impacts that the deployment experience can have on members.²¹

The Review heard that members on deployment have varying degrees of access to communications technologies such as Internet-based video calling (for example, through Skype), which would assist to maintain contact with their families during long periods of separation. One female member on deployment spoke of how useful these tools are:

You know once upon a time we were writing letters and it was taking three months to get to each other. Now I can Skype [my husband] and see the kids in the background. It's really good to be able to deploy and know that we have access to that. For the people that don't it must be very hard.²²

The Review spoke to a woman on deployment who was present for her six year old daughter's ANZAC Day Service through the technology 'Face Time'. It had been a positive experience for both the ADF member and her daughter.²³

Another woman spoke of how she would like to have improved access to communications tools in order to maintain her relationship with her partner:

I'm in a situation where I'm not communicating with my partner other than email because there's no opportunity to do it. You go, well, that's deployment, deal with it. But you see other people that do have the access and you get really envious. You see they have these tools to maintain their relationship.²⁴

(c) Relationship stress

Anecdotally, the Review also heard that relationship breakdown is a significant issue within the ADF. In consultations, ADF members reported:

Last year [in] the unit I was with prior to going on our exercise, I had 23 break ups [out of 32 unit members].²⁵

It takes a special person to be an Army wife. 'Cause I know a lot of other people that may have full partnered with a female when they were younger, joined the Defence Force then all of a sudden within a year, [it's] 'no, I can't stand this'... You see a lot of breakups in the Defence Force.²⁶

The limited communication options for submariners can create anxiety about family or partners. A submariner told the Review:

I remember I was on a 12 week patrol [and] my wife was sending through the family-grams. Her dad had got really sick while I was on patrol and she was so sad about it...She stopped sending them for about four weeks because she was just dealing with the fact that he had cancer and everything, so she wasn't sending them. I'm out there at sea, suddenly the family-grams stop, nothing for a month and I'm thinking 'what [is going on]?'...if [Navy] can devise ways of even just getting a little bit more of written stuff from your family I think that would be a lot better and I think they should address that.²⁷

Data from the 2011 Census suggests that 16.9% of permanent members have experienced a divorce and/or a revocation/breakdown of a Defence-recognised de facto/interdependent partnership at any time during their ADF service.²⁸ Given that the median length of service is seven years for permanent ADF members, it does appear that many ADF members experience a significant relationship breakdown within a relatively short period of time.²⁹ However, it is difficult to ascertain how this compares to relationship breakdown and divorce rates in the broader Australian community.³⁰

(d) Implications for ADF

The impact that ADF service, particularly the posting and deployment cycle, has on members' family life has broader implications for the ADF. A key issue is the impact on retention. The Review heard many stories about members choosing to move to the Reserve or discharge from the ADF because they did not want to continue the instability and/or separation in their family lives:

It's taken the last five years to get my husband posted to the same locality as me...He's been told he's only here for the next two years. When he posts, I'll be leaving because it took so long for us to get posted together and it was really distressing for me.³¹

It's the simple things that they could fix without it really costing any money and paying anybody any more, and that could fix retention. Because the guys who are exiting to go to mining, it isn't because they don't love the Army anymore. It's the family is sick of the guy going on two minutes' notice to move without any sort of warning, or he's going on a course and...away for four months. Then we're going to send him on deployment for six months. It's those issues...that affect my retention and my interest in retention, not the money.³²

Other members indicated that they considered taking similar action:

out of the three years I will have spent in this posting, we will have been co-located for less than 11 months...It is a constant, demoralising struggle to be co-located and many times I have considered discharge due to being fed-up with the lack of cooperation and negative attitude from [Service].³³

Men and women in deployed environments in particular, told the Review about the psychological impact of being away for long periods from their families. This added further stress to an already challenging environment.³⁴

These observations suggest that there is an imperative for the ADF to improve the extent to which they support serving members and their families. The ADF has many resources in place but these efforts need to be enhanced and targeted.

(e) Support services and policies

(i) Existing support

Defence's policy on family support is set out in Defence Instruction (General) Personnel 42-1 *Australian Defence Force Family Support Policy*. The Defence Community Organisation (DCO) has primary responsibility for providing practical support services, through:

- critical incident and casualty support
- absence from home support, to 'minimise the impact on families of the members' absence from home due to deployment or other service-related reasons'
- mobility support, to 'minimise the effects on families of moving locations'.³⁵

Specific supports offered by DCO include the Emergency Support for Families Scheme, assistance for members who have dependents with special needs, education assistance and the Partner Education and Employment Program. DCO also manages Defence's child care program.³⁶

Further, Defence Families of Australia is a ministerially appointed group that represents the views of Defence families by reporting, making recommendations and influencing policy that directly affects families.³⁷ It also maintains an accessible and informative website offering advice for families and partners in a series of areas including health, money and education. These are necessary and very important supports which the Review endorses.

(ii) Areas for improvement

There are several other areas where the support system could be improved. The recent restructure to DCO has caused some uncertainty regarding the level and types of services to be offered in the future, particularly in the provision of child care.³⁸

Some members suggested that the mechanisms through which DCO offers support to the families of deployed personnel do not always meet the needs of these families. In particular, the Review heard that the times at which support activities are scheduled do not allow attendance by working partners/spouses. One woman spoke about the difficulties her partner had encountered:

On deployments my partner is not looked after with the welfare issue because he can't come to morning teas, he can't drop everything and do the day thing. He's a full time worker, so he doesn't get the phone calls, he doesn't get the contact.³⁹

DCO could consider scheduling some support activities at alternative times to enable working spouses/partners to also participate. A similar suggestion was also raised by some respondents to the 2009 *Families Survey*.⁴⁰

It was also suggested to the Review that support for members and their families should be more integrated than it is currently. The Review heard that:

The programs that exist within Defence are still very much 'this is for the member, this is for the family' ...they need to get those programmes connected and then, you know that would really show that a member is considered to be a part of the family unit. It's not an us and them ...mentality.⁴¹

Options to further integrate the support provided to members and their families, as a means of better addressing the impact that ADF life has on families, would be beneficial.

Another issue is the limited availability of services offered by DCO to couples where both partners are ADF members. The DCO website notes that its 'main priority is the immediate family of ADF members'.⁴² One member explained the difficulty that she and her spouse had experienced in accessing appropriate services for their circumstances:

We talk about people whose spouses may be civilians, we don't talk about them having their spouses as serving member...So the Defence Community Organisation now is for families of serving members, not just serving members, which immediately excludes both my husband and I from going there and getting support through DCO because the expectation is that there are enough support mechanisms for serving members within Defence.⁴³

The member continued to explain that while she was able to access a psychologist as an ADF member, she wasn't able to receive assistance from a DCO social worker as she would have preferred.⁴⁴ This suggests a need for the ADF to consider broadening the types of support offered to families where both partners are members of the ADF.

In addition, the Review recommends that a more holistic, structured and coordinated mechanism is required to facilitate members' access to particular services at the time of posting (whether to a new location or on deployment), or throughout the posting cycle. Career management agencies should develop a Support to Posting plan as part of career planning and/or when posting decisions are made and communicated to members. This plan should be developed in consultation and with the agreement of each member. It will enable both the career management agency and member to reduce the instability caused by postings and deployments, and also facilitate members' access to services when they need them most.

Greater efforts to develop 'joint career plans' for partners who are both serving members would also alleviate many of the stresses Defence couples face. Joint Career Plans would help to reduce separation, ensure greater family stability and improve career opportunities for both partners (rather than one partner exiting the Service due to difficulties in being co-located, or one partner being repeatedly deployed/undertaking operational service).

8.2 Housing

The provision of housing assistance is an important condition of service for ADF members, particularly in the context of posting cycles that require members to move regularly from location to location. Housing assistance provided by the ADF is valued by members but the Review heard that it also presents challenges. These include difficulties with the locations of Defence housing, issues with accessing appropriate housing in remote areas and safety concerns. These challenges and their impact on members (and in some instances, their families) will be discussed in this section.

There are several forms of housing assistance available to members depending on their needs at a particular time:

- Service Residences – Defence owned or rented property off-base
- Rent Allowance that enables members to rent in the private market
- Living-In accommodation – Defence owned on-base accommodation
- Home Purchase Assistance Scheme that supports members to purchase their own home.

Members are normally eligible for one form of housing assistance at a time. Service residences and on-base accommodation are prioritised for members with dependents, but other members may be able to use them if there is a surplus.⁴⁵

The importance of housing assistance was affirmed by members in the Review's focus groups and many reported positive experiences of housing, such as the sense of community and support fostered through the provision of 'married quarters' on-base.⁴⁶ The high value placed on housing assistance by members of the ADF was also affirmed by the 2008 Defence Attitude Survey, with over 60% of ADF members stating that subsidised housing remained an important influence on their decision to stay in the ADF.⁴⁷ However, there are a number of challenges related to the provision of housing support, as discussed below.

(a) Members with dependents

The Review found that members posting with dependents face particular challenges in relation to housing. The ADF policy that housing should be provided within a 30 kilometre radius of the members' place of duty has a significant impact on members with dependents. For example, this policy does not take into consideration the distance to a partner's place of work (civilian or ADF) or appropriate childcare facilities and schooling. For some members this results in them having to either forfeit housing assistance to secure housing that meets their family's needs, or sacrifice good schooling for their children and/or many hours of travel a day to drive to school or work:

Basically we were told [that it] doesn't matter how far your wife has to travel to work. We only post you based on [your place of duty] so you're entitled to these houses.⁴⁸

You get a house that's available. You may be lucky and have a selection of a few, but at the end of the day if there's only one house available then that's yours...So you either have to go and buy or rent privately and knock back the house, or put your child in a school in a zone that you may not be comfortable with.⁴⁹

The impact of this policy was heightened for members posted to some locations where there is a shortage of Defence housing (including in remote locations) and many capital cities where members are often forced to live at the outer edges of the city radius with little or no choice about the particular home.⁵⁰ Greater flexibility in the design and implementation of Defence housing policies could mitigate these impacts.

(b) Remote locations

Members can face difficulties in securing appropriate, affordable and safe housing, especially in remote locations.

The ADF informed the Review that securing Defence housing in remote locations, such as Karratha, Geraldton, Nhulunbuy, Weipa, Tully and Mission Beach, is particularly challenging.⁵¹ Difficulty in accessing housing is compounded in mining areas such as Karratha, where rents can be very high. While Defence is currently building and acquiring housing in many of these remote areas, the impacts of the shortage on members were a key issue in focus groups:

Places to stay, rental properties, and the quality and the standard and the price for what you're paying is just astronomical here.⁵²

It's very hard for 'singlies' to get any type of accommodation. But in my section I've actually seen so far two 18 year old [marriages] go ahead. They get married so they can get a married quarter, because they can't get it in town.⁵³

Trying to get into a rental as a de facto was difficult, because all of the companies [think] 'we're not renting to you guys because you're just going to get de facto and then get a DHA house, so we don't want to rent to you'.⁵⁴

While single members may be able to use married quarters on base when they are not in use, this is not permanent and they may be asked to vacate at short notice if the accommodation is needed by other members:

All the young singlies that were in married quarters got kicked out. It was so terrible...They were empty for so long and then they [say] 'you can have those married quarters and live in there because they're empty'. And suddenly something happens and they all get kicked out. They've got dogs, a houseful of furniture.⁵⁵

Members also described some of the problems of 'living-in' accommodation on base, which was heightened for members in remote locations who have a smaller social network and few choices about alternative accommodation:

You feel like you live in a fishbowl.⁵⁶

Everyone knows exactly what everybody else is doing.⁵⁷

I'm a shift worker, so I will be at work from eight o'clock at night until eight o'clock in the morning, have to sleep during the day, and it's almost impossible sometimes... You have roommates, you have cleaners come in, you have the boozier which is right behind me.⁵⁸

(c) Safety

The Review was concerned by statements of women in focus groups relating to feeling unsafe living in on-base accommodation:

We had two girls in my room and the door would not lock, and they would not fix it... Anybody could walk in and out of our rooms anytime they wanted.⁵⁹

The lines where X's partner initially was, where the assault took place, she was the only female in 'tin city' [as it is referred to]. She was living there with all the males in her course of which there were eight. In the lines immediately next door there were a large number of recently returned soldiers being accommodated.⁶⁰

If you lived in the accommodation lines, alcohol becomes a major problem resulting in drunken behaviour and many booze parties. Some soldiers were loud, obnoxious and out of control as alcohol was allowed on base. When [I] complained, [the] unit did nothing. I didn't drink, smoke and kept to myself... I hated it.⁶¹

The Review has been informed that the ADF is currently making efforts to upgrade single living-in accommodation on some bases, including the security features of this accommodation. For example, under the Single Living Environment and Accommodation Precinct (Single LEAP) project, the units are being fitted with 'crimsafe doors' which, according to the ADF, have 'already protected at least one female resident from the aggravated advances of a spurned male colleague'.⁶²

Further, the Review heard that as 'each unit has its own ensuite, the risk associated with women having to travel [through] male dominated [accommodation] to shared shower and lavatory facilities, particularly at night' is reduced.⁶³ The Review is encouraged by these efforts to increase security and suggests the ADF extend this to temporary accommodations for recruits and trainees also.

8.3 Health and injuries

Serving in the ADF can also have health impacts on members, including psychological stresses and physical injuries.

The health and fitness of its members is central to the ADF's ability to deliver its core responsibilities as a fighting force. As such, free health care, including dental and other ancillary health care (e.g. physiotherapy, optical and podiatry) is provided to all permanent ADF members.⁶⁴ The ADF has a number of strategically important policies and organisations that are responsible for managing the health and wellbeing of its members. These are discussed in Appendix O.1.⁶⁵

An Australian National Audit Office audit of health services for ADF personnel noted that the provision of comprehensive health care was seen as an important factor in the recruitment and retention of personnel.⁶⁶ This is supported by the findings of the most recent Defence Attitude Survey in which 76% of female respondents and 73% of male respondents said that they considered free medical and dental care to be a very or extremely important factor influencing their decision to stay in the ADF, while 50% of female respondents and 52% of male respondents believed that the ADF Family Health Trial was 'very' or 'extremely important'.⁶⁷

(a) Work Health and Safety

The nature of the work undertaken by the ADF contains particular risks and hazards. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this means that ADF members may experience some form of health and/or safety incident throughout their career.

Under workplace health and safety laws, Defence has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of workers as far as is 'reasonably practicable'. Work health and safety legislation provides a framework for health and safety management in Defence workplaces. Where an environment is dangerous to their workers' health, Defence is responsible for ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to redress the problem under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act). Under this framework, a WHS incident occurring 'in the conduct of a business or undertaking', must be reported by the supervisor of the workplace or injured person.⁶⁸ The Review was provided with data on physical and psychological incidents extracted from notification and reporting forms (as required under the previous Occupational Health and Safety Act) for the past five years.⁶⁹

Between 2007 and 2011, women were involved in around 13.4% of all incidents, broadly proportionate to their representation in the ADF population (currently 13.8%). Across each Service there was slightly higher proportional representation of women experiencing WHS incidents in Army and Navy (for Air Force the proportion was slightly lower):

- women made up 10.4% of WHS incidents in Army (compared to an overall representation of 9.9% of the Army population)
- women made up 21.1% of WHS incidents in Navy (compared to an overall representation of 18.5% of the Navy population)
- women made up 16.5% of WHS incidents in Air Force (compared to an overall representation of 17.1% of the Air Force population).

By category of injury, women were under-represented in some types of injury and over-represented in others. Women were notably over-represented in minor injuries, where women made up 17% of all reported incidents.⁷⁰ By Service, women made up 13.4% of minor injuries in Army, 25.7% of minor injuries in Navy and 21.6% of minor injuries in Air Force. Within the sport and fitness training category, women made up 18.3% of injuries while undertaking physical training activities.

It was notable that there was a disproportionately high representation of incidents involving women in some of the larger training establishments. For example, between 2007 and 2011:

- at ADFA, there were 359 reported incidents with 37.8% involving women
- at HMAS *Creswell*, there were 532 incidents with 29.3% involving women
- at Duntroon, there were 462 incidents with 17.5% involving women
- at Blamey Barracks, Kapooka, there were 2,565 incidents with 17.7% involving women
- at RAAF Base Wagga, there were 1,080 incidents with 24.5% involving women
- at HMAS *Cerberus* there were 2,183 incidents with 26.4% involving women.

The ADF has robust work health and safety systems in place to address injuries and illness. Women have different health needs and are physiologically different to men, so it is important that these differences are well understood and that women, particularly through the recruit training stage, are given adequate support.

The proportionately higher incident rates for women in some training establishments, the proportionately higher minor injury rates for women, and women's higher representation in physical training activity-related incidents are worthy of greater analysis. While the WHS Act does not require the ADF to protect workers from every possible risk, it does have an obligation to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure all ADF members are protected from work related injury or illness.

Although the data provided must be treated with caution, work days lost from WHS incidents amounted to over 50,000 days over the 5 year period (gradually reducing over time to just over 8000 in 2011).⁷¹ Significantly, almost half of these days were related to minor injury incidents (although, there were proportionately fewer

work days lost by women than men). Providing appropriate WHS support is essential, not only in fulfilling the ADF's legal obligations, but in reducing the risk of cost or other implications of losing personnel altogether through injury. The Review notes that progress has been made over the last five years in this regard.

The WHS data received from the ADF is complex, with inconsistent descriptions of activities being undertaken when injuries occurred. There was difficulty in obtaining data which was comprehensive, gender-disaggregated and manageable. This is concerning as it does not enable the ADF to better understand whether there are different patterns or types of incidents for men and women, and therefore how to best prevent and manage them.

(b) Mental health

The operational effectiveness of the ADF depends on the mental wellbeing of ADF members and their families. To this end, the ADF has conducted a series of studies and initiatives over the previous decade (detailed in Appendix O.2) that Professor Ian Hickie of the Brain and Mind Research Institute has described as world's best practice.⁷²

One of these studies, the 2010 Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study, found that the prevalence of 'mental disorder' in the ADF is similar to the Australian community sample but that profiles of specific disorders in the ADF vary.⁷³ It also found that the mental health of ADF females did not differ significantly from that of females in the Australian community.⁷⁴ Anxiety disorders are the most common mental disorder type in the ADF, with higher prevalence among females, while ADF males experience higher rates of affective disorders than the Australian community sample.⁷⁵

In the Review's consultations, members were aware of the psychological stresses of their jobs. One member suggested that, rather than physical demands, 'it's more psychological type burnout or you know, stress related or relationship pressure' that causes most problems for ADF members.⁷⁶ A senior member told the Review about the need for more emphasis to be placed on mental wellbeing as they were seeing more individuals who:

thundered through their career...but then you look at the other side and they are divorced or separated or their children are not functioning and I think we need to change our culture. You need to have a balance because one, it's good for your mental health, but it's also good for your family and keeping you grounded.⁷⁷

A serving health member also impressed the need to act in this area because of the particular 'stresses in Defence service around mental health, rates of accidents, a propensity to certain unsafe behaviours involving alcohol and other stuff' that personnel dealt with constantly.⁷⁸

The ADF has a range of services in place for members who require assistance with mental health issues. These include medical, psychiatric, psychology, nursing, chaplains and social work services.⁷⁹ There is also an All-Hours Support Line, a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.⁸⁰ This service has been outsourced to a company that provides qualified mental health professionals who have been trained in issues that ADF members and their families face. Services on offer can be within or beyond the chains of command. Services outside the chain of command, such as chaplains and the Support Line, appear more readily accessed by members.

ADF chaplains support many ADF members, and many personnel spoke positively about the support that they received from their chaplains (or padres). One member told the Review about a meeting where he told the padre that he was an atheist:

But there was no 'oh, you're not a believer', or 'I'm going to try and turn you my way' and all that. He was just a caring bloke.⁸¹

Another spoke of a tendency to approach a chaplain before a psychologist because:

I don't want it going on my record [and] it won't go on my record talking to a chaplain.⁸²

However, the Review also heard of an incident where a chaplain was unsupportive and critical of a member in a same-sex relationship.⁸³

In focus groups and through submissions, members related many instances where barriers and stigma impacted upon members who utilised mental health care. One spoke of the difficulties in navigating and accessing the mental health services via the chain of command, noting that:

One of my mates I went through with tried to commit suicide and no one helped him. It got to the hierarchy...the commanding officer, colonel level and then from there no one knows what happens with it, it just stops.⁸⁴

Another member was satisfied with the options available, and said that:

I think a lot of the stigma has gone away from that sort of stuff. I think we've got better whether it's mental health and all those other things that are coming to the forefront.⁸⁵

The Review is aware that, in addition to offering practical mental health support services, the ADF also has a policy focus on improving access to mental health care. The *2012-2015 Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan* is currently being finalised. This will 'align Defence with the national mental health reform agenda, and put in place a system that is self-monitoring and continuously improving.'⁸⁶ The Review considers that this is a positive move, and one that should be implemented as a priority.

8.4 Conclusion

ADF service can have serious impacts on members and their families. These include impacts on family life, access to housing, and members' health. In many cases, these impacts are exacerbated by the ADF's postings and deployment cycle. The best possible support is required to assist personnel in managing these demands and minimising negative outcomes.

The Review is supportive of the range and quality of services offered to ADF members and their families but finds that there are ways in which this could be improved.

Defence Forces around the world are finding that, where personnel, their families and circumstances are supported, retention is improved. The experiences of international services echo those found in the ADF. The following Chapter examines some of the common trends and challenges occurring in these Services.

- 1 Department of Defence, *Defence Census Public Report 2011* (draft), p 19, provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 8 March 2012. The final *Defence Census Public Report 2011* was not available to the Review team at the time of writing.
- 2 Advice received from the ADF, 16 July 2012.
- 3 Department of Defence, *Defence Census Public Report 2011* (draft), note 1, pp 17-18.
- 4 The 2009 Families Survey was completed by spouses/partners of permanent full time ADF members, permanent full time ADF members who were single parents, and both members of dual ADF couples. Directorate of Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *A Picture of Australian Defence Force Families 2009: Results from the first survey of Australian Defence Force Families General Report*, DSPPR Report 31/2009, September 2009, p 7, provided to the Review by CMDR A Westwood, 13 November 2011.
- 5 Directorate of Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *A Picture of Australian Defence Force Families 2009: Results from the first survey of Australian Defence Force Families General Report*, above, p 91.
- 6 'ADF Removals Average Costs' provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 1 June 2012. Of the 21,316 relocations in 2010-11, 15,397 were related to domestic and overseas postings and a further 319 were due to 'change of ship's home port/unit relocation'. Other reasons for relocations included discharge, marriage, marriage breakup, death and other housing changes.
- 7 Focus group 11A.
- 8 Focus group 9B.
- 9 Focus group 13B.
- 10 Focus group 32A.
- 11 Focus group 30D.
- 12 Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *2008 Defence Attitudes Survey Summary of Results*, Department of Defence, 2009, p 8. At http://www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dpe_site/publications/2008_Defence_Attitude_Survey_Summary_of_Results.pdf (viewed 26 June 2012).
- 13 Meeting with senior officers, RAAF Base Tindal.
- 14 Department of Defence, *Defence Census Public Report 2011* (draft), note 1, p 22.
- 15 Focus group 31B.
- 16 Focus group 33C.
- 17 Focus group 41A.
- 18 Focus group 14D.
- 19 Focus group 32A.
- 20 Focus group 14A.
- 21 D Dunt, *Review of Mental Health Care in the ADF and Transition through Discharge* (2009), p 129. At <http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/Review.htm> (viewed 25 June 2012).
- 22 Focus group 40A.
- 23 Confidential meeting.
- 24 Focus group 40A.
- 25 Focus group 38B.
- 26 Focus group 32B.
- 27 Focus group 18E.
- 28 '26_2012 Broderick Review Phase 2_RFI 405' provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 18 May 2012.
- 29 Median length of service taken from Department of Defence, *Defence Census Public Report 2011* (draft), note 1, pp 13-14.
- 30 The Australian Bureau of Statistics has some information on divorce rates in Australia. In 2010, the crude divorce rate was 2.3 per 1,000 estimated resident population. In 2006 (latest data available) the total 'age-specific divorce rate' was 12.2 per 1000 resident married population for men, and 12 per 1000 resident married population for women. However, as these rates are based on different samples and do not include breakdown of de facto relationships, it is not possible to compare these statistics to available data for the ADF population. For further information regarding divorce rates in the Australian community, see Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2010*, 'Table 1 Selected divorce indicators, Australia, Selected years, 1990-2010' and 'Table 3 Age-specific divorce rates per married population, Selected years, 1976-2006(a)', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 3310.0. At <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3310.0Main+Features12010?OpenDocument> (viewed 25 May 2012).
- 31 Focus group 23A.
- 32 Focus group 20B.
- 33 *Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force Survey*.
- 34 Focus group 38B.
- 35 'RFI 317 - Presentation Broderick Review' provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 13 March 2012.
- 36 Information available at the DCO website. See Defence Community Organisation, *Welcome to the Defence Community Organisation*, <http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/default.htm> (viewed 25 June 2012).
- 37 Defence Families of Australia, *About Us*, <http://dfa.org.au/about-us-0> (viewed 5 June 2012).
- 38 'RFI 317 - Presentation Broderick Review', note 35; 'RFI 320 - DCO Workforce Review STP' provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 13 March 2012; meeting with Defence Community Organisation.
- 39 Focus group 35F.
- 40 Directorate of Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *A Picture of Australian Defence Force Families 2009: Results from the first survey of Australian Defence Force Families General Report*, note 4, p 84.
- 41 Meeting with Defence Families of Australia.
- 42 Defence Community Organisation, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.defence.gov.au/dco/faqs.htm> (viewed 28 May 2012).
- 43 Focus group 28A.

- 44 Focus group 28A.
- 45 Extracted from 'DGPPEC to DLO Broderick Review – Defence Housing – Feb 12', 'DGPPEC to DLO Broderick Review – Defence Housing – Feb 12 Attachment A- ADF Housing Strategy 2009-29' and 'DGPPEC to DLO Broderick Review – Defence Housing – Feb 12 Attachment B DHA Breakdown of portfolio' provided to the Review by SQNLDR F James, 12 March 2012. The kind of housing assistance provided to personnel is determined based on several factors including whether they are single or have dependents (and the size and age of dependent family), their rank, the location of the posting (including what housing is available and whether the member owns their own home). Defence policy provides that members will live out unless they are required to live in. However members may choose to live in if live-in accommodation is available (this is determined by the commanding officer of each base). Members with dependents will receive rent allowance if a suitable Service Residence is not available. Generally, members without dependents or whose dependents have not accompanied them on a posting, and who are not required to live-in may receive rent allowance so they rent in the private rent market.
- 46 Focus group 33C.
- 47 Directorate of Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *2008 Defence Attitudes Survey Results Report, Department of Defence*, DSPPR Report 7/2009, May 2009, p 220.
- 48 Focus group 31B.
- 49 Focus group 16D.
- 50 'DGPPEC to DLO Broderick Review – Defence Housing' provided to the Review by SDNLDR F James, 12 March 2012 referring to the scarcity of accommodation in many remote locations and capital cities.
- 51 'DGPPEC to DLO Broderick Review – Defence Housing', above.
- 52 Focus group 10A.
- 53 Focus group 10A.
- 54 Focus group 10A.
- 55 Focus group 10A.
- 56 Focus group 10C.
- 57 Focus group 10C.
- 58 Focus group 10A.
- 59 Focus group 16B.
- 60 Confidential submission 8.
- 61 Confidential submission 2.
- 62 SQNLDR F James, email to the Review, 31 May 2012.
- 63 SQNLDR F James, email to the Review, 31 May 2012.
- 64 Australian National Audit Office, *Defence's Management of Health Services to Australian Defence Force Personnel in Australia*, Attorney-General's Department (2010), p 15.
- 65 'Broderick Review Phase 2 Task 96 – ADF Health Plan' provided to the Review by CMDR A Westwood, 12 November 2011.
- 66 Australian National Audit Office, note 64.
- 67 From 2010 Defence Attitude Survey, in Directorate of Strategic Personnel Policy Research, *Brief for Review Teams: Culture of the ADF and Defence*, DSPPR Brief 04/2011 (2011).
- 68 A WHS incident is any accident or event that is caused in the course of Defence work, which involves: work illnesses; uncontrolled fire and explosions; disabling injuries; serious equipment plant or property damage; dangerous occurrences which could have, but did not injure any person; exposures to hazardous substances or circumstances; minor injuries; any other serious incident that could put employees or plant at risk.
- 69 The data was recorded for all WHS incidents for Army, Navy and Air Force members, and in relation to calendar year, location and the type of activity being undertaken when the injury occurred: 'Broderick review by gender.mht' provided by CMDR A Westwood, 23 May 2012.
- 70 In relation to other categories of incidents, over 2007-2011 women represented: 14.4% of Dangerous incidents; 8.7% of Exposure incidents; 17% of Minor injury incidents; 12.2% of Serious injury or illness incidents; 12.5% of Incapacity incidents. The types of activities in which injury incidents occurred were grouped into broad categories including: Sport and fitness training (women were involved in 15.9% of incidents); Work related activities (women were involved in 12.9% of incidents); Other activities (women were involved in 15% of incidents); 'Unspecified' activities (women were involved in 11.4% of incidents); Within the sport and fitness training category there was a significant overrepresentation of women injured while undertaking physical training activities (18.3%).
- 71 The Review was advised that data on work days lost captured through the incident reporting system was not always accurate as not always updated. Defence also indicated they could not include accurate treatment, consequences and outcome information captured on the incident reporting form because this information did not flow "through into the reporting system" in the data extracts provided. The Review was advised that Defence was 'working on this issue and expect to be able to report on all information by mid March 2012', however, the Review was not provided with any further data: CMDR A Westwood, email to the Review, 23 January 2012.
- 72 Department of Defence, *Defence leads the way on mental health research*, 24 October 2011. At <http://www.defence.gov.au/defencenews/stories/2011/oct/1024.htm> (viewed 6 June 2012).
- 73 S E Hodson, A C McFarlane, M Van Hooff and C Davies, *Mental Health in the Australian Defence Force – 2010 ADF Mental Health Prevalence and Wellbeing Study: Executive Report*, Department of Defence (2011), Key Findings.
- 74 Department of Defence, *Capability through mental fitness: 2011 Australian Defence Force Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (2011), p 4. At <http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/docs/2011%20ADF%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%20.pdf> (viewed 30 March 2012).

- 75 Hodson, et al, note 73.
- 76 Focus group 41C.
- 77 Focus group 28A.
- 78 Focus group 13B.
- 79 Joint Health Command, *Mental Health Programs*, Department of Defence. At <http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm> (viewed 6 June 2012). See examples of support material: Joint Health Command, *ADF Mental Health Strategy: All Hours Support Line Fact Sheet*, Department of Defence; Joint Health Command, *ADF Mental Health Strategy: Depression and Anxiety Fact Sheet*, Department of Defence. At http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh_factsheets.htm (viewed 28 June 2012).
- 80 Joint Health Command, *All-hours Support Line*, Department of Defence. At <http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-all-hours.htm> (viewed 6 June 2012).
- 81 Focus group 34B.
- 82 Focus group 19B.
- 83 Confidential submission 8.
- 84 Focus group 34F.
- 85 Focus group 20D.
- 86 Department of Defence Joint Health Command, *ADF Mental Health Strategy*, <http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmhs.htm> (viewed 19 July 2012).



“Everyone has the same hurdles to jump through and women don’t tend to perform better or worse in any particular area. I think it’s just down to individuals and their particular talents or abilities and that’s regardless of sex.”

**ADF member
(Confidential Submission)**