



# Actions Speak

Defence's implementation of recommendations from our inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.



## Why did we do this report?

The Commonwealth Ombudsman has a discrete role as Defence Force Ombudsman to receive, assess, and respond to reports of serious abuse, and also to inquire into the effectiveness and appropriateness of Defence's procedures in relation to making and responding to complaints of abuse.

In 2020, we published a report on our [Inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits](#) (Defence Recruit Training Report). The inquiry focused on the training Defence gives recruits on required behaviours for Defence members, including behaviour considered unacceptable in the workplace. The Defence Recruit Training Report identified areas where Defence could improve training provided to new recruits. We made 5 recommendations to Defence for action, which Defence accepted.

In our 2022 report [Did They Do What They Said They Would? \(Volume 2\)](#) we assessed Defence had implemented recommendations 1, 2 and 5 and had partially implemented recommendations 3 and 4.

This report considers Defence's implementation of the two outstanding recommendations from our Defence Recruit Training Report.

## How did we assess implementation?

We conducted a desktop review of Defence's implementation of our recommendations. This involved considering management assertions and documents provided by Defence in response to questions about its implementation of these recommendations.

## What did we find?

We found Defence had implemented 4 recommendations in full. We decided not to further assess recommendation 4 in this report, as it has been superseded by a recommendation in our 2023 report, [Defending Fairness: Does Defence handle unacceptable behaviour complaints effectively?](#) (Defending Fairness Report).



Implemented – 4



Not assessed – 1






## Next Steps

Implementation of our recommendations will make enduring improvements for a vulnerable cohort of Defence personnel, the new recruit. We are pleased to see the action Defence has taken to implement our recommendations and encourage Defence to look for ways to continually improve training about required and unacceptable behaviours.

While we are no longer actively monitoring the recommendations from this report, we will continue to assess Defence's improvements in this area in our future assessment of the implementation of recommendations from our 2023 Defending Fairness Report. In addition, if we become aware of issues including with the effectiveness of an agency's implementation of the recommendations in practice, either through complaints or other sources, we have the power to take further action.



# Recommendations summary

<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>The Navy, Army and Air Force each amend their current processes so that all recruit training on required behaviours is regularly assessed.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>The Navy, Army and Air Force regularly evaluate all required behaviours training developed by recruit schools for assurance that the training is effective and addresses the risks connected with unacceptable behaviour.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>Defence regularly evaluate all required behaviours training developed externally to recruit schools for assurance that the training is effective and addresses the risks connected with unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Defence should evaluate its key behaviours training package as a priority.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>Defence use data to assist in the identification of systemic issues related to incidents of unacceptable behaviour or culture, to feed back into training.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>Defence develop a formal arrangement for continuing collaboration between recruit schools to share better practice in the key elements of recruit training on required behaviours. The Department of Defence should have a lead role in these arrangements.</p>	

# Commonwealth Ombudsman assessment

## Defence's implementation of our recommendations



### Recommendation 1

We recommend that each of the services amend their existing framework to ensure the delivery of all recruit training on required behaviours is subject to regular assessment, regardless of who delivers the training.

**Status:** Implemented



#### Ombudsman comments

We assessed this recommendation as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report. We found that each service had updated related policies, procedures and training instructions which outlined the evaluation requirements for instructors delivering training on required behaviours.



### Recommendation 2

We recommend that the services evaluate all recruit training developed by the recruit schools related to Defence's required behaviours, to gain assurance that training effectively achieves the intended learning outcomes and addresses the risks associated with unacceptable behaviour. Evaluation should take place on a regular and ongoing basis.

**Status:** Implemented



#### Ombudsman comments

We assessed this recommendation as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report. We reviewed documentation from each service that outlined changes to the evaluation of behaviour training developed by their recruit schools.





### Recommendation 3

We recommend that Defence evaluates all training developed externally to the recruit schools that is related to Defence's required behaviours, to gain assurance that training effectively achieves intended learning outcomes and addresses the risks associated with unacceptable behaviour. Evaluation should take place on a regular and ongoing basis.

Defence should evaluate the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training package as a priority.

**Status:** Implemented



#### Ombudsman comments

In our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, we found that Defence had partially implemented this recommendation. We said that to consider the recommendation implemented, the Office expected the new Healthy Relationships and Sexual Ethics training package to be implemented, and for Defence to outline its plan to conduct regular and ongoing reviews of the training package to ensure it achieves the intended learning outcomes and addresses the risks associated with unacceptable behaviour.

Defence has since evaluated and replaced the 'Healthy Relationships and Sexual Ethics' training package mentioned in the recommendation with the Foundation of Knowledge (FoundOK) module. The FoundOK module is then supplemented by follow on modules, referred to as Application of Knowledge (AppOK) modules, initially covering Consent, Peer Response to a Disclosure, Technology, and Protective Behaviours, with more modules to be created as the educational needs are identified. FoundOK was released in January 2023, the first AppOK module, Consent Matters, was released in December 2023, and the second AppOK Module Peer Response to a Disclosure was released in July 2024. The remaining modules will be rolled out over 2024-2025.

Defence plans to review and evaluate all mandatory courses including the FoundOK and AppOK modules commencing in 2025.

We have assessed the material Defence provided for the FoundOK and the first AppOK module, Consent Matters, and are satisfied that Defence has



completed the review of the modules that were in place at the time of the recommendations.

Nonetheless, we expect Defence to continue to review and evaluate all courses on a regular and ongoing basis to ensure training is effectively achieving the intended learning outcomes.



## Recommendation 4

We recommend that Defence conducts regular and ongoing analysis of unacceptable behaviour incidents across Defence. This information should be used to identify trends and risk, to inform evaluation and continuous improvement in recruit training on Defence's required behaviours.

**Status:** Not assessed



### Ombudsman comments

In our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, we found that Defence had partially implemented this recommendation. Subsequently, we published our 2023 [Defending Fairness Report](#) on our own motion inquiry into the effectiveness of Defence's procedures for managing complaints of unacceptable behaviour which focussed on how complaints were being handled by chain of command and managers and made 9 recommendations for improvement.

We consider recommendation 4 in the Defence Recruit Training Report has been superseded by recommendation 1 in our Defending Fairness Report, which recommended Defence prioritise the implementation of the new Defence-wide case management system, ensuring it has certain key features for complaint handling including the ability to identify trends. As a result, we decided not to seek further information at this time to assess the implementation status of recommendation 4. Instead, we will monitor implementation of recommendation 1 of the Defending Fairness Report which, if implemented appropriately, should address recommendation 4 from our Defence Recruit Training Report.







## Recommendation 5

We recommend that Defence develops a formal arrangement for ongoing collaboration between the recruit schools to share better practice in the design, delivery and evaluation of recruit training on Defence's required behaviours. The department should lead the arrangement between the recruit schools.

**Status:** Implemented



### Ombudsman comments

We assessed this recommendation as implemented in our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report. At the time, we reviewed Defence's forward work plan, which showed that collaboration between the recruit schools on training was an ongoing agenda item at meetings between the schools.



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**Defence**

**PO Box 7900 CANBERRA BC ACT 2610**

EC24-004936

Mr Iain Anderson  
Defence Force Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

*Dear Iain*  
Dear Mr Anderson

**Response to Commonwealth Ombudsman's Actions Speak Report**

Thank you for your letter dated 5 September 2024 regarding the Commonwealth Ombudsman's inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits (Actions Speak Report) [Enclosure 1 refers].

Defence is grateful for the opportunity to review the report and identify any factual errors in the report [Enclosure 2 refers]. Defence agrees with the content of the draft Actions Speak Report, and has identified some small factual errors highlighted in yellow [Enclosure 3 refers].

Defence also notes that this report recommendations are no longer actively monitored, and is committed to working on the recommendations identified in the 2023 Defending Fairness report.

Yours sincerely

  
**Greg Moriarty AO**  
Secretary

  
**David Johnston AC**  
Admiral RAN  
Chief of the Defence Force

4 October 2024

4 October 2024

**Enclosure:**

1. Letter from the Commonwealth Ombudsman regarding the inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits, dated 5 September 2024.
2. Draft Actions Speak Report, for Defence's implementation of recommendations from the Commonwealth Ombudsman's inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits.
3. Annotated paragraphs with factual errors identified in Actions Speak Report.

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**Factual errors annotated  
Actions Speak Report**

In our [Did They Do What They Said They Would? Volume 2](#) report, we found that Defence had partially implemented this recommendation. We said that to consider the recommendation implemented, the Office expected the new Healthy Relationships and Sexual Ethics training package to be implemented, and for Defence to outline its plan to conduct regular and ongoing reviews of the training package to ensure it achieves the intended learning outcomes and addresses the risks associated with unacceptable behaviour.

Defence has since evaluated and replaced the 'Healthy Relationships and Sexual Ethics' training package mentioned in the recommendation with the Foundation of Knowledge (FoundOK) module. The FoundOK module is then supplemented by follow on modules, referred to as ~~and four~~ Application of Knowledge (AppOK) modules, initially covering Consent, Peer Response to a Disclosure, Technology, and Protective Behaviours, with more modules to be created as the educational needs are identified. FoundOK was released in January 2023, and the first AppOk module, *Consent Matters*, was released in December 2023, and the second AppOK Module *Peer Response to a Disclosure* was released in July 2024. The remaining modules will be rolled out over 2024-2025.

Defence plans to review and evaluate all mandatory courses including the FoundOK and AppOK modules commencing in 2025.

We have assessed the material Defence provided for the FoundOK and the first AppOK module, *Consent Matters*, and are satisfied that Defence has completed the review of the modules that were in place at the time of the recommendations. Nonetheless, we expect Defence to continue to review and evaluate all courses on a regular and ongoing basis to ensure training is effectively achieving the intended learning outcomes

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Commonwealth Ombudsman

Level 5, 14 Childers Street

Canberra ACT 2600

Tel: 1300 362 072

Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)