

# Inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits

July 2020

Report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman,  
Michael Manthorpe PSM, under the *Ombudsman Act 1976*

REPORT NO. **04 | 2020**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1 December 2016 the Commonwealth Ombudsman, in his role as the Defence Force Ombudsman, has held an oversight role regarding reports of serious abuse in Defence. We receive, assess and respond to reports of serious abuse in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and can inquire into the effectiveness and appropriateness of Defence's procedures in relation to making and responding to complaints of abuse.

While most of the reports the Office receives relate to historic abuse, we continue to receive some recent reports of unacceptable workplace behaviour and abuse. These recent cases do not point to systemic abuse in the manner which was apparent in Defence in earlier periods, however, the fact that incidents continue to occur reinforces the importance of continued vigilance. It is critical that Defence continues to monitor, review and strengthen its policies and procedures, including its recruit training and annual training programs, particularly for Commanders and managers, to mitigate against the risk of systemic abuse and to ensure that where inappropriate behaviour or abuse does occur, incidents are dealt with appropriately at both the individual and organisational level.

We have previously examined the appropriateness of Defence's framework for making and responding to complaints of abuse.<sup>1</sup> Our latest inquiry builds on this by considering the training the ADF provides to its recruits about required behaviours for members of Defence, including behaviour that is considered unacceptable in the workplace.

The purpose of recruit training is to equip recruits with the vocational skills and qualifications required to perform their role and provide an additional level of training to assist recruits to contextualise the business, operating environment and expected behaviours, including what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and abuse. While training alone cannot eliminate all instances of abuse, appropriate training and education is one of the primary preventative tools available to Defence, to reduce the likelihood that serious forms of abuse will continue to occur, while also building a culture where incidents are reported and dealt with appropriately.

Our inquiry assessed the recruit training curriculum and content, delivery and evaluation approach for measuring the effectiveness of training related to required behaviours that is delivered to ADF recruits. Overall, our inquiry did not identify significant concerns with the ADF's approach to recruit training. We are largely satisfied the training curriculum appropriately reflects Defence's policies and procedures on required behaviours and for the training we reviewed, we are satisfied it is delivered consistent with the curriculum.

While the findings in this report are positive overall, we identified some areas for improvement. We found Defence's overarching framework used by the recruit schools to administer recruit training was sound, however, the training that specifically teaches recruits about required behaviours is not included in all parts of this framework. The ADF would also benefit from further developing its capability to provide regular assurance that recruit training on required behaviour remains appropriately focused on the most significant risks as they develop. Further maturing Defence's training framework in this manner will assist Defence to ensure training is as effective as possible in addressing serious abuse issues.

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<sup>1</sup> [Defence Force Ombudsman, 'Defence's policies for receiving and responding to reports of abuse', Report No. 4 | 2019.](#)

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We have made five recommendations in this report designed to address the way in which:

1. the recruit schools assess instructors who deliver behaviour training
2. Defence evaluates the effectiveness of required behaviour training developed by the recruit schools
3. Defence evaluates the effectiveness of required behaviour training developed externally to the recruit schools
4. Defence uses data to assist in the identification of systemic issues related to incidents of unacceptable behaviour or culture, to feedback into training
5. Defence collaborates across the services to inform continuous improvement and better practice approaches to behaviour training.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: ASSESSING INSTRUCTORS DELIVERY OF BEHAVIOUR TRAINING**

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: EVALUATION OF BEHAVIOUR TRAINING DEVELOPED BY THE RECRUIT SCHOOLS**

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: EVALUATION OF BEHAVIOUR TRAINING DEVELOPED EXTERNALLY TO THE RECRUIT SCHOOLS**

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: ANALYSIS TO SUPPORT IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS AND ISSUES**

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.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: GOVERNANCE—COLLABORATION BETWEEN RECRUIT SCHOOLS**

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.

The Office consulted Defence throughout the inquiry including in the development of the inquiry scope, the preliminary conclusions and proposed recommendations. The Office thanks Defence for its assistance with this inquiry, including its timely responses to our information requests and for hosting the investigation team at the recruit schools during the fieldwork stage of the inquiry.

## Part 1: INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF INQUIRY

1.1. In 2011, the Minister for Defence announced six independent reviews in response to an incident at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). The independent reviews considered aspects of the ADF's culture, including the treatment of women, alcohol use, social media use, complaint handling and incident management.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, Defence released its response to those reviews. The *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2012-2017*, formed a five-year strategy to implement 175 recommendations made by the independent reviews to support cultural reform in Defence. The 2017 update, *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2017-2022* identifies Defence's cultural reform priorities, including strengthening accountability in leadership, inclusion and integration, ethics and workplace behaviours, and health, wellness and safety. This inquiry is informed by both the priorities set out in the Pathway to Change, and the specific policies and associated procedures developed under it by Defence.

### The Defence Force Ombudsman's role

1.2. The Commonwealth Ombudsman's role as the Defence Force Ombudsman is established under Part IIA of the *Ombudsman Act 1976* (the Act) and the Ombudsman Regulations 2017 (the Regulations). For simplicity, we refer to 'the Ombudsman' in this report.

1.3. The Defence portfolio consists of several organisations that together are responsible for supporting the defence of Australia and its national interests. The Defence Force Ombudsman maintains oversight of the Department of Defence (the department) and the ADF which consists of the three services, the Royal Australian Navy (Navy), the Australian Regular Army (Army) and the Royal Australian Air Force (Air Force). This report uses the term 'the ADF' when referring to the three services as a collective. The term 'the services' is used when referring to contextual differences between the Navy, Army and Air Force.

1.4. From 1 December 2016, the Ombudsman's role expanded to include an abuse reporting function for serving and former Defence members and civilians deployed on Defence operations. The Office provides an independent and confidential mechanism to enable reporting of incidents involving sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, and serious bullying and harassment within Defence. The Office may respond to reports of abuse by:

- facilitating a referral to counselling through Open Arms—Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly known as the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, or VVCS)
- arranging a restorative engagement conference to support reportees to tell their personal story of abuse to a senior representative of Defence, in a private, facilitated meeting. The conference also provides the opportunity for Defence to acknowledge and respond to a personal story of abuse
- recommending a reparation payment—from 15 December 2017, the Ombudsman may recommend that Defence make a reparation payment in acknowledgement that the most serious forms of abuse and/or sexual assault should not have occurred and that Defence, through its actions or inactions, contributed to the circumstances which allowed the abuse to occur.

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<sup>2</sup> [Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Review of the Defence Annual Report 2010-2011; Chapter 7: Reviews of Defence Culture \(paragraph 7.2\)](#)

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1.5. In addition to receiving reports of abuse from members of Defence, the Ombudsman may also inquire into matters relating to complaints of abuse under s 14(1)(c) of the Regulations. We conduct inquiries to gain assurance that Defence’s approach for managing the issue of abuse in the ADF is effective and appropriate, and is consistent with the priorities identified by government, including under the Pathway to Change strategy.

1.6. In late 2017, we commenced our first inquiry under s 14(1)(c) of the Regulations and conducted a baseline assessment of Defence’s policies and procedures for making and responding to reports of abuse.<sup>3</sup> We formed the view that Defence’s policies were generally appropriate but made six recommendations to assist Defence strengthen its collective approach to abuse prevention.

1.7. In 2019, we also published a report about the Office’s experience administering the Defence Abuse reporting program and reflected on our progress up to 30 June 2019.<sup>4</sup> We reported on three years of data collected by our Office concerning reports of abuse to assist us to better understand the nature of abuse in the ADF. Historical data shows the groups most likely to be vulnerable, where incidents have occurred, and the types of abuse that occurred, for example sexual, physical or verbal. By understanding the nature of abuse in Defence, we can target our inquiries to consider whether Defence’s current framework addresses the potential systemic problems identified in our data. While the majority, but not all reports we received related to abuse that occurred many years ago, we have received around 70 reports of unacceptable behaviour and abuse relating to incidents reported to have occurred since 30 June 2014.

### **Objective and scope**

1.8. The objective of this inquiry was to review training provided to new recruits by the Navy, the Army and the Air Force on Defence’s required behaviours. The training included lessons on what may be considered as unacceptable behaviour and the requirement for all ADF members to refrain from engaging in such behaviours.

1.9. ‘Unacceptable behaviour’ is defined by Defence as behaviour that is offensive, belittling, abusive or threatening to another person. The term broadly covers behaviour ranging from minor workplace infractions to behaviour that amounts to a serious criminal offence. For example, workplace bullying may involve intimidating behaviour, verbal abuse and excluding or isolating others. More serious instances of unacceptable behaviour may include the use of physical force, sexual assault and rape.

1.10. Most recruits are aged between 17 and 24 years old. Recruit training is the first exposure to the ADF for most members and provides the cultural foundation for a career in Defence. Given many young recruits provide lifelong service, training may have a lasting impact on Defence culture for generations after. For these reasons, this inquiry focussed specifically on the 11 weeks of training provided to recruits on joining the Navy, Army or Air Force through the General Entry pathway. The General Entry pathway applies to sailors, soldiers and airmen/airwomen who make up the majority of the ADF, while Officer Entry applies to those who join the ADF in a leadership and management role.

1.11. Our expertise is in reviewing the administrative actions of government agencies. We reviewed the administrative framework that supports the design and delivery of recruit

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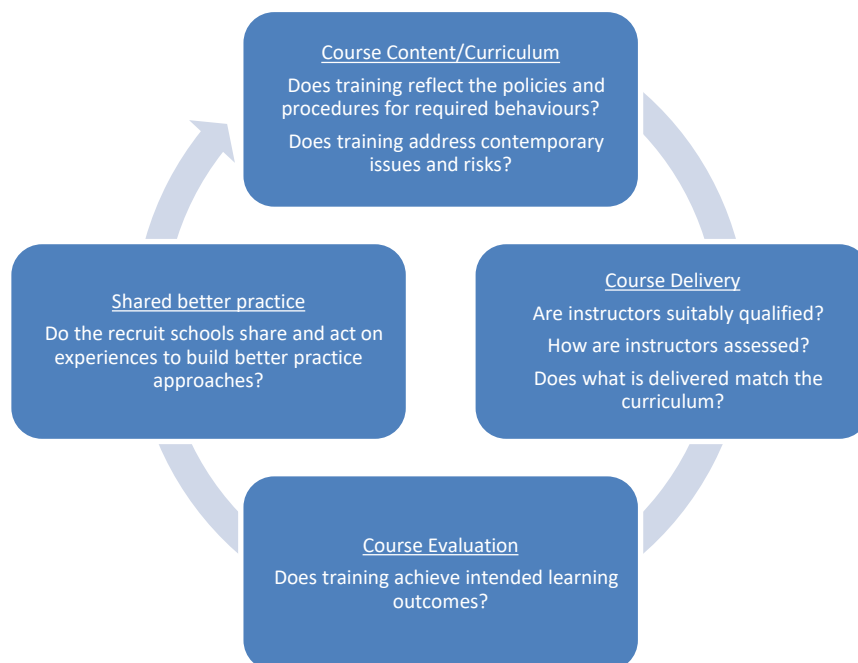
<sup>3</sup> [Defence Force Ombudsman, ‘Defence’s policies for receiving and responding to reports of abuse’, Report No. 4 | 2019.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Defence Force Ombudsman, ‘Overview of the Defence abuse reporting function by the Defence Force Ombudsman’, Report No. 05 | 2019.](#)

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training, directly observed training delivery at each of the recruit schools and considered the appropriateness of Defence’s frameworks for evaluating training effectiveness in support of its required behaviours policy objectives.

1.12. To assess current arrangements for recruit training, we posed a series of questions under the following interrelated areas:



1.13. This inquiry did not consider:

- Unacceptable behaviour training provided to officer cadets at ADFA. While those members at ADFA also complete unacceptable behaviour training on Defence’s required behaviours, ADFA has been subject to multiple inquiries by oversight bodies in recent years, including the Australian Human Rights Commission.<sup>5</sup>
- Defence’s policy and procedures for making and responding to complaints about unacceptable behaviour. The Office assessed the policy framework in our first inquiry.
- How the three recruit schools respond to individual instances of unacceptable behaviour.

## Methodology

1.14. We conducted a desktop audit to inform our understanding of how the ADF manages each stage of recruit training design, delivery and evaluation. This included reviewing Defence’s training policies and procedures for managing each stage, the recruit training curriculums and content for all three services.

1.15. Our desktop audit also considered the ADF’s formal and informal governance mechanisms for managing each stage of the training process, including responsibility and

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, Audit Report.

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accountability for development, implementation and delivery of the curriculum, and sharing better practice approaches between the Army, Navy and Air Force.

1.16. In July and August 2019, we attended the recruit training establishments for the Navy, Army and Air Force. For simplicity, this report refers to ‘the recruit schools’ when referring to the recruit training establishments collectively. There is one recruit school for each of the services; the Navy’s Recruit School at HMAS *Cerberus* near Melbourne, Victoria, the Army’s 1st Recruit Training Battalion in Kapooka, New South Wales, and the Air Force’s No. 1 Recruit Training Unit at RAAF Base Wagga Wagga, New South Wales.

1.17. During our visits, we observed the delivery of training on Defence’s required behaviours to recruits during their initial 11 week training, over several days at each school. This included training about unacceptable behaviour. During these visits, we spoke to the recruit school’s Commanding Officers and Chief Instructors, as well as section commanders and training systems staff, about their roles and responsibilities in recruit training and how the ADF’s procedures are applied in practice.

1.18. Following these visits, we requested additional information from the ADF to fill information gaps and confirm our understanding of the policies, procedures and practices that govern recruit training.

1.19. The Office provided the Chief of the Defence Force and the Secretary of Defence with the opportunity to comment on the draft report. Defence’s response is attached to this report.

1.20. The Office thanks those staff from Defence who provided information to assist with this inquiry.



## Part 2: OVERVIEW

### The recruit training course

2.1. On joining the ADF as a general entry sailor, soldier, airman or airwoman, all recruits complete an 11-week training course at the recruit school for their respective service. The purpose of recruit training is to induct recruits into the ADF through intensive training in basic military skills, knowledge and required behaviour. As part of the training the recruit schools deliver specific content designed to educate recruits about Defence's standards of required behaviour, with a view to minimising unacceptable behaviour incidents, and encourage appropriate reporting and following up when incidents occur. After completing initial recruit training, recruits complete further training to specialise in a specific technical or non-technical role.

2.2. Recruit training is delivered by specialist instructors responsible for delivering different aspects of recruit training. 'Recruit' or 'Military Skills' Instructors are responsible for the overall management of recruit training and deliver lessons in military discipline, marching and parade, and dress. Other trainers who are subject matter experts in their field deliver lessons to teach specific skills such as first aid and physical fitness. Training covering unacceptable behaviour is delivered by a combination of Commanders and other subject matter experts, including chaplains or psychologists.

2.3. The curriculum, content and delivery of recruit training on Defence's required behaviours is informed by an overarching policy framework. Defence's *Systems Approach to Defence Learning* (SADL) provides the governance framework for defence training, while Defence policies and procedures set out required standards of behaviour for all Defence members, including recruits.

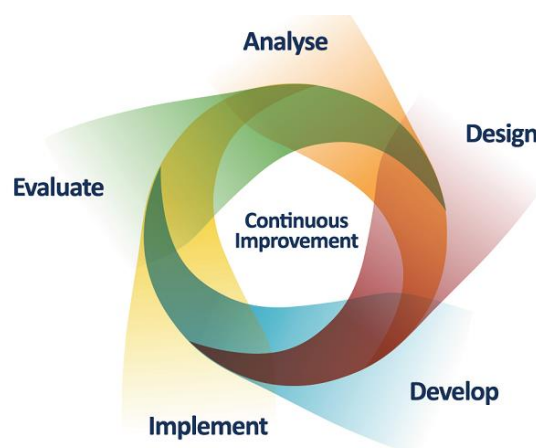
### Defence's training framework

#### *Systems Approach to Defence Learning*

2.4. Defence's Systems Approach to Defence Learning (SADL) is Defence's training systems framework and sets out the operational policy and procedures for training management and governance in the ADF.

2.5. Under the SADL, training in the ADF is developed in five phases: Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate (*Figure 1*).

*Figure 1: Systems Approach to Defence Learning Framework*



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2.6. The SADL is designed to support a training framework which enables Defence to provide assurance that training is both fit for purpose and meets Defence’s performance and capability needs. Each SADL phase informs the next as a continuous development cycle:

- **Analyse**—job performance and capability requirements are analysed and outlined in a Training Requirements Specification (TRS) document.
- **Design**—the TRS document is used to create course learning outcomes, an assessment strategy and resource requirements, which together form a draft Learning Management Package.
- **Develop**—the learning materials, equipment and resources identified in the Learning Management Package are prepared and trialled, and the Learning Management Package is finalised.
- **Implement**—training is delivered in a Defence workplace or training establishment. A learning review conducted at the course conclusion confirms if the course meets requirements or if there are issues to be resolved.
- **Evaluate**—training is reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose, addresses performance requirements and supports Defence in achieving its mission.

2.7. The SADL framework is designed to support continuous improvement throughout the training cycle, with evaluation underpinning all five phases. At each stage, the inputs and outputs of each phase may be reviewed, evaluated and revised as necessary to enable updates to training following internal or external evaluation, lessons learned and in support of force modernisation activities.

### ***Defence Learning Management Packages***

2.8. Recruit training is delivered according to a Learning Management Package, which is developed and modified using the processes established by the SADL framework. Learning Management Packages are designed to provide all the information required to develop training materials and to support training delivery, including:

- course management information, including course objectives, learning outcomes, assessment requirements and course evaluation plans
- the course curriculum, content and learning outcomes
- the equipment needed to deliver the course
- guidance on how to assess trainee performance
- other relevant supporting training documentation and materials.

### **Defence’s policy framework for managing unacceptable behaviour**

2.9. All Defence personnel, including recruits, are required to comply with Defence’s required behaviours policies and standards, as well as procedures for responding to instances of unacceptable behaviour. The policy framework for required behaviours in Defence is provided for in the following documents:

- *Defence Instruction (Administrative Policy)*, (the Administrative Policy), establishes the policy framework for administrative matters across Defence

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- *Instruction PPL7—Required Behaviours in Defence* (PPL7-Required Behaviour) establishes Defence policy on the behavioural standards required of all Defence personnel
- The *Complaints and Alternative Resolutions Manual* (CARM):
  - *Chapter 3—Responding to unacceptable behaviour*, specifies the obligations, functions and duties for preventing, reporting and managing unacceptable behaviour
  - *Chapter 9—Responding to Sexual Misconduct* is produced by the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO) and sets out procedures to be followed by Defence personnel following an incident involving sexual misconduct.

2.10. Defence's *Administrative Policy* and *PPL7-Required Behaviour* establish the behaviours expected of all Defence personnel. The CARM sets out procedural requirements and specifies roles and responsibilities for notifying and responding to unacceptable behaviour incidents.

### **Application of the training and policy framework to recruit training**

2.11. The above policies and requirements under the SADL inform the content of training on required behaviours in the ADF. There are some contextual differences in the training between each school; for example, the Navy provides lessons on communal living designed to help recruits adapt to and work in the confines of a ship at sea. Aside from these necessary differences, the ADF requires that the core content of required behaviours training in all three recruit schools cover the following:

- Defence's policy and procedures in relation to unacceptable behaviour
- character building, ethical decision-making, healthy relationships and sexual ethics
- building personal resilience and developing skills to effectively manage stressful environments.

## Part 3: FINDINGS

### Training content

3.1. We reviewed the administrative framework that supports the recruit course curriculum design, together with curriculum documentation and learning materials, to assess whether training design and delivery reflected required content. We considered whether training content communicated the following key messages set out in Defence’s policy, which state that personnel:

- must not engage in unacceptable behaviour, as defined by Defence
- are personally responsible for their behaviour, which must be consistent with the six Defence values and the values of their service
- are responsible for questioning behaviour that could reasonably be interpreted as unacceptable
- are required to notify and report unacceptable behaviour using the appropriate pathways
- understand how and where to access support if they experience or witness unacceptable behaviour in Defence.

3.2. In considering whether training communicated these messages, we reviewed documents provided by the recruit schools, including the curriculum, learning outcomes, teaching notes, lesson presentations and recruit workbooks. We also observed the training delivered to recruits during lessons at all three recruit schools.

3.3. Navy and Air Force recruits complete the same online mandatory workplace behaviour training which all ADF members are required to complete annually, developed by the Defence People Group within Defence. While we did not directly observe Navy and Air Force recruits completing this training, we reviewed the facilitator package, resources and lesson presentation. The documentation we reviewed covered the key policy messages and procedures outlined above in relation to Defence’s required behaviours.

3.4. Army recruits are required to complete training on gender awareness and unacceptable behaviour in a classroom setting, which we directly observed. In both our fieldwork and review of lesson documentation, we observed training design and delivery that reflected the policy content on unacceptable behaviour outlined above.

3.5. We also considered the training provided to recruits under the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training package. This targeted training package was developed externally to the recruit schools by the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO) following a recommendation by the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Review into the Treatment of Women at the Australian Defence Force Academy.<sup>6</sup> Training covers topics such as:

- behaviours which constitute sexual violence or coercion

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Broderick, Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, Audit Report, p164

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- understanding sexual assault, sexual harassment and violence as social problems with social causes and why it affects individual members and Defence as a whole
- the bystander approach, taking personal responsibility for preventing sexual assault and using appropriate strategies to intervene where violence or abuse are occurring, about to occur or have occurred
- how and where to access support in relation to sexual violence.

To assess whether the training content and delivery reflected training requirements in the package, we attended the Navy and Air Force recruit schools to directly observe the training and reviewed the Army's training documentation. The content of the curriculum and lesson documentation we reviewed and lessons we observed, were consistent with Defence's key policy messages.

### **Training delivery**

3.6. During our visits to the recruit schools we observed instructors delivering training on Defence's required behaviours in line with the curriculum documentation and Defence's behaviour policies. We directly observed the character development and healthy relationships training at all three schools. During our visit to the Army, where we observed classes covering topics such as the operation of the military justice system and the Army's social media, alcohol and drug use policies.

3.7. Recruit training is managed and delivered by several different subject matter experts. Recruit Instructors and Military Skills Instructors are responsible for the overall management of recruit training, and teach lessons in military skills including weaponry, marching and parade. These instructors are also responsible for monitoring recruit behaviour. In all three recruit schools, lessons relating to required behaviours are delivered by a combination of Junior Officers (known as Commanders), service chaplains<sup>7</sup> and educators from bodies external to the recruit schools, such as Joint Health Command, who are subject matter experts in their field.

3.8. In the Navy and the Air Force, the healthy relationships and sexual ethics and resilience training is delivered by subject matter experts external to the recruit schools. During our fieldwork, we observed mental health professionals delivering the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training, including a psychologist and a mental health nurse from the SeMPRO educator network. We also observed an Army psychologist deliver the BattleSMART training. In the Army, the chaplains deliver the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training as part of their character development and ethics lessons. We did not directly observe the healthy relationships and sexual ethics component of this training.

### ***Qualifications and skills requirements for training instructors***

3.9. Each of the recruit schools have specific qualification requirements for personnel in Recruit Instructor or Military Skills Instructor roles. Navy Instructors are required to have completed the Navy's ADF Instructor Course before completing the Navy's three-week Recruit Instructor Course. Army Recruit Instructors must complete training to progress to the rank of Corporal, including specific training on military instruction before they are eligible to complete the Army's three-week Recruit Instructor Course. Air Force Military Skills Instructors must complete a seven-week Military Skills Instructor course and a three-day Recruit Instructor Common Course. Consistent with the Recruit and Military Instructor

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<sup>7</sup> Known as 'Padres' in the Army. For simplicity, this report refers to this group collectively as 'Chaplains'

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Course curriculum across the services, instructors' complete training in recruit learning and development and training delivery.

3.10. Commanders who deliver training on required behaviours to recruits have completed training at ADFA and at the Officer College for their respective service<sup>8</sup>. Officer training is designed to teach Commanders core skills for providing instruction in their role as an Officer, such as communication and leadership. To prepare to instruct in the recruit school environment, in the Navy and Army recruit schools, Commanders must complete the three-week Recruit Instructor Course before delivering training to recruits. In the Air Force recruit school, all staff, including Flight Commanders, are required to complete the Recruit Instructor Common Course before delivering training to recruits.

3.11. The recruit schools advised that service chaplains have the skills required to deliver training on ethics and character development based on their tertiary qualifications in theology or ministry, with some chaplains also holding post-graduate qualifications in education and teaching. We could not assess whether these qualifications were sufficient to prepare chaplains to deliver required behaviours training to recruits. However, the recruit schools advised chaplains generally complete training in the course of their military career for the purposes of developing their teaching skills. For example, the chaplains we observed delivering character development lessons at the Navy recruit school were Officers who had completed the required training to become an Officer.

### ***Assessing the delivery of behaviour training***

3.12. In considering how the ADF gains assurance that training delivery is consistent with the curriculum, we considered the appropriateness of current practices for ensuring that recruit instructor's performance is consistent with Defence's policy and contributes to a healthy workplace culture.

3.13. The instructor training curriculum at all three recruit schools includes guidance designed to prepare instructors to appropriately promote equity and diversity, manage recruit welfare and respond to incidents of unacceptable behaviour. These requirements are consistent with the expectation set out in Defence's policy that Commanders, managers and supervisors are responsible for promoting a workplace culture where personnel feel empowered to report unacceptable behaviour and have confidence that their Commanders will support them to do so. While Defence's approach to responding to behavioural incidents was not within the scope of this inquiry, during our visits to the recruit schools we observed instructors and Commanders communicating with recruits in a manner consistent with policy expectations.

3.14. The three recruit schools all take a slightly different approach to assessing training delivery. The Navy recruit school monitors the quality of training delivery under the Navy's Professional Development Framework. Navy instructors must participate in annual professional development activities designed to improve performance and must complete an annual performance appraisal. Under Army's Professional Development policy, recruit Instructors must be assessed at least twice a year on their performance when delivering lessons on weapons, drill and field craft. The Air Force Recruit School advised it is currently updating its operational policy for assessing instructors to align with the Air Force's Learning Practitioner Framework. This framework requires an annual instructor check which includes

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<sup>8</sup> The Royal Australian Naval College, HMAS Creswell, The Royal Military College, Duntroon, RAAF Base East Sale

an assessment of whether lesson content matches the curriculum through training observation.

3.15. The Navy and Air Force confirmed their instructor development framework applies to the Commanders and chaplains who deliver lessons in relation to required behaviours, however, there is no evidence the delivery of lessons relating to behaviours is regularly assessed. Army policy mandates regular assessment of lesson delivery, but this does not include any theory-based lessons such as those relating to unacceptable behaviour. The Army advised the character development and ethics lessons delivered by the chaplains are not subject to assessment under its instructor development policy, because chaplains do not hold an instructional position as they are considered support staff.

3.16. On the basis of our observations, there is limited evaluation of the lessons provided to recruits relating to required behaviours, including those delivered by chaplains. In the absence of this evaluation, the ADF is unable to provide assurance that lessons on unacceptable behaviour appropriately align with the course curriculum, or that delivery is consistent with the promotion of Defence values and behaviour policies.

3.17. In our view, the delivery of training on required behaviours should be subject to similar levels of assessment and oversight as other lessons delivered during recruit training. Strengthening the formal training assessment framework will assist the recruit schools to provide assurance that training delivered by instructors aligns with the curriculum and learning outcomes, and the performance of trainers is consistent with expectations. The frequency of instructor assessments should be informed by the level of oversight necessary to ensure that any issues identified can be responded to in a timely manner. Regular assessment may also assist the services to identify opportunities to further improve training delivery.

#### **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.

## **Evaluating training effectiveness**

### ***Gaining assurance of the effectiveness of training developed by the recruit schools***

3.18. Our inquiry considered Defence's training evaluation framework, including whether it appropriately supports the ADF to provide assurance that recruit training on required behaviours achieves intended learning outcomes.

3.19. The Evaluation Phase of the SADL provides the framework for evaluation of training across Defence. Under the SADL, recruit training is required to be evaluated as part of the following two approaches:

1. **Learning Reviews** that are designed to assist the recruit schools determine whether a course was administered efficiently and effectively.
2. **Workplace Evaluations** that measure how well learning is applied in the workplace and assesses organisational strategic results to determine if training satisfies organisational requirements. Workplace evaluations are conducted by the evaluation authority for recruit training in each service.

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### **Learning reviews**

3.20. Learning Reviews are conducted by each of the recruit schools at the end of every 11 week recruit training course. The approach taken by the three recruit schools to Learning Reviews is similar and relies on information fed back from recruits and instructors about their experience in recruit training. Recruits may provide direct feedback during group discussions with recruit school Commanders or may anonymously respond to written survey questions. The surveys include some questions relating to unacceptable behaviour, for example, the Navy's survey asks recruits to confirm whether the complaints process was explained to them, if they accessed it during training and if their complaint was handled according to the policy and procedures. However, the surveys do not seek feedback on the content or delivery of lessons taught during training on required behaviours and do not allow an assessment of whether the learning outcomes were achieved.

3.21. With recruit courses graduating every four weeks, the Navy and Air Force conduct approximately 12 Learning Reviews each year. The Army has a higher intake of recruits with courses graduating weekly. As a result, Army completes Learning Reviews most weeks of the year. We reviewed all Learning Review reports completed by the Navy and Air Force between January and September 2019 and a sample of 14 Army Learning Review reports for the period July to September 2019.

3.22. Learning Reviews tend to focus on practical issues, such as course administration and scheduling, or the quality of food and equipment provided to recruits during training. Generally, reviews do not address whether training content or delivery addressed broad policy requirements, or whether any adjustments need to be made to training to reflect contemporary issues or risks relating to inappropriate behaviour. Some of the reviews we sampled noted specific behavioural issues or incidents relating to individual recruits during their 11 weeks of training, however, these incident reports are not fed back into training design or development.

### **Workplace evaluations**

3.23. The services each take a slightly different approach to Workplace Evaluations. Based on the information provided to us, there is no coordinated or uniform approach to the conduct of these evaluations, including in relation to training on required behaviours.

3.24. The Navy's annual Workplace Evaluation program is driven by identified gaps in workplace performance, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Based on the information provided to us, this program does not include evaluation of recruit training on required behaviours. It appears recruit training is unlikely to be subject to future evaluation as Navy defines a 'workplace' as a unit where fully trained personnel work and RAN Recruit School does not fall within that definition.

3.25. The Army is currently implementing a five-year plan to evaluate all initial training courses, including the Army Recruit Course. The evaluation strategy aims to evaluate the transfer of training including skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours into the workplace. The extent to which Army intends to assess whether the recruit training on required behaviours is effective as part of this plan is unclear.

3.26. The Air Force recently commenced a Workplace Evaluation to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of recruit training. The evaluation does not propose to analyse training related to required behaviours. The Air Force proposes to include the topic of unacceptable behaviour in focus group discussions with a view to increasing its



understanding of whether the behaviours taught during recruit training can be applied in subsequent training environments. In our view, the services would benefit from expanding the evaluation of recruit training to include consideration of required behaviours content. Regular and focused evaluation will assist the services to provide assurance that training remains focused on issues of concern, is understood and adopted by recruits and is working as an effective preventative control for managing unacceptable behaviour in the ADF. Strengthening evaluation of recruit training on required behaviours will also assist to maximise opportunities for continuous improvement, particularly if this information is effectively shared between the services. This point is discussed further below at paragraph 3.39.

#### **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.

#### ***Gaining assurance of the effectiveness of externally developed recruit training***

3.27. Our inquiry considered the evaluation framework for assessing training content developed by educators external to the recruit schools. We found that neither the department nor any of the services have a mechanism in place to provide assurance that the externally developed training is effective. In particular, the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training package does not appear to be subject to any regular or systematic evaluation.

3.28. The department's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO) is responsible for providing a suite of services to Defence personnel. SeMPRO is responsible for the development and delivery of training and education products on sexual misconduct prevention and management, including the healthy relationships and sexual ethics package. We understand SeMPRO has not evaluated the training package or maintained oversight of it since distributing it to the ADF.

3.29. The Navy and Army recruit schools advised us they do not evaluate the healthy relationships and sexual ethics training because SeMPRO retains ownership and responsibility for the training as the subject matter experts. In collaboration with SeMPRO, a limited review was conducted by the Air Force in 2018, however, this review focussed on how the package was embedded into recruit training rather than the effectiveness of training.

3.30. There is currently no authority responsible or accountable for ensuring that training related to required behaviours that is developed externally to the recruit schools is subject to evaluation. Incorporating this aspect of recruit training into Defence's training evaluation framework may assist Defence to ensure this material remains fit for purpose.

3.31. Identifying a central coordination group responsible for content, delivery and evaluation of externally developed training may assist in providing the ADF assurance that all content delivered as part of recruit training is subject to appropriate oversight. Such an arrangement would be consistent with Defence policy, which provides that a single service or group may be assigned to manage the delivery of education and training where multiple services require the same learning outcome.

### **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.

## **Analysis to support training evaluation and course development**

3.32. We considered how training on unacceptable behaviour is informed by unacceptable behavioural incidents or events.

### ***Incident reporting***

3.33. Each of the services maintains personnel records on recruits during the 11 week training course, including training module assessments and notes on behaviour. When a Recruit Instructor or Commander receives a report of unacceptable behaviour during recruit training they are required to create a notification in a software program 'ComTrack' (Complaint Management, Tracking and Reporting System). This information is used by the services to inform individual responses by Command to track individual recruit performance, record steps taken in response to incidents of unacceptable behaviour and to inform decisions to recognise exemplary behaviour.

### ***Trend analysis***

3.34. Defence undertakes limited analysis of the recruit incident data to support the identification of trends or risks in unacceptable behaviour, including for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of training content and delivery. Defence advised it has a practice of assessing data on unacceptable behavioural incidents across the entire ADF to identify trends. This information provides Defence with some insight into the groups most likely to behave inappropriately and the circumstances in which unacceptable behaviour most commonly occurs. While the most common circumstances in which serious abuse occurs may remain consistent over time, formalising this practice and using data collected as part of the evaluation process may assist Defence to provide greater assurance the training on required behaviours provided to recruits remains appropriately focused and is as effective as possible in addressing common issues.

3.35. Defence administers a Workplace Behaviours Survey to initial training establishments on an annual basis. This research aims to provide high quality intelligence about the types and impacts of unacceptable behaviour experienced by recruits who participate in the survey. Defence has advised that opportunities exist to explore how workplace behaviour's research can be used to support training evaluation activities, including the identification of trends and risks in unacceptable behaviour to inform priority areas for recruit training.

3.36. A combination of formalised and regular quantitative and qualitative analysis performed as part of the training evaluation and development stages may also increase Defence's capability to better understand when and how certain attitudes or beliefs form that may contribute to incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Analysis should include consideration of behavioural incidents beyond the 11 week recruit training period, include data from all incidents and include those that may be indicative of future unacceptable

## **Commonwealth Ombudsman—Defence Health Check: Inquiry into behaviour training for Defence recruits**

behaviour. Qualitative analysis, including surveys of attitudes at certain intervals following recruit training may be of assistance in identifying any need for further training, or adjustments in content or timing of training. Qualitative analysis may assist with the development of contemporary unacceptable behaviour case studies to inform training content.

### ***System capability***

3.37. Defence currently operates around 50 different databases, worksheets and bespoke systems with limited cross-connectivity. The services advised analysis of recruit data from these systems is possible at the recruit school level using current systems and data. However, this is resource intensive and requires manual effort to perform effective analysis.

3.38. In 2019, Defence commenced a trial of the Defence Enterprise Student Management System (ESMS), a centralised learning system designed to gather recruit assessment results and inform course updates and development. Should ESMS be rolled out, Defence advised it would enhance the recruit schools' capability to cross-check training performance with unacceptable behaviours incidents to better identify if any content gaps exist, and adjust training to address those gaps. Defence also advised the system may enhance the ADF's ability to provide feedback to external training providers on content or delivery of externally designed material.

#### **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.

### **Collaboration between recruit schools**

3.39. Defence is a complex, diverse and geographically dispersed organisation, comprising nine corporate structures and three services, each having its own distinct organisational mandate. In 2014, the Broderick Review commented on the ongoing cultural tension between the services, which, compounded by complexities in Defence's organisational structure, contributed to inefficiencies.<sup>9</sup> Our inquiry found there are no formal arrangements currently in place to support collaboration or communication between the recruit schools in relation to required behaviours training.

3.40. In 2018, the Commanding Officers of the recruit schools formed an informal working group comprising the Commanding Officer from each recruit school and senior staff, including the Command Warrant Officer (Navy), Regimental Sergeant Major (Army) and Executive Officer (Air Force). The informal arrangement provided an opportunity for the recruit schools to share information and discuss approaches to recruit training. While the group did not discuss the topic of training on required behaviours, this initiative serves as an example of a positive collaborative arrangement.

3.41. In our view, the recruit schools would benefit from a formal arrangement for ongoing collaboration between the schools, to maximise opportunities to share best practice and improve recruit training, including the training on required behaviours. A central point

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<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Broderick, Australian Human Rights Commission (2014) Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, Audit Report, p. 21.

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of contact in the department to provide administrative support would assist to facilitate the collaboration.

**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.

## APPENDIX A – RESPONSE FROM DEFENCE



Australian Government  
Department of Defence

PO Box 7900 CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

EC20-002048

**Mr Michael Manthorpe PSM**  
Commonwealth Ombudsman  
The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442  
Canberra ACT 2601

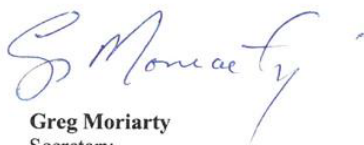
*Dear Michael*  
Dear Mr Manthorpe

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 2020 notifying us of the completion of Stage Three of the Defence Health Check, which considered the efficacy of Defence's recruit school training as that training relates to acceptable behaviours.

Defence supports the five recommendations included in the draft report. These recommendations support the continued implementation of the Department's Pathway to Change cultural reform agenda and will provide greater assurance that behaviour training is effective. As per your request we have attached the Department's feedback on the report in relation to errors of fact or omissions.

We would like to thank your staff who have liaised and worked with Defence during this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

  
**Greg Moriarty**  
Secretary

5 June 2020

  
**Angus J Campbell AO, DSC**  
General  
Chief of the Defence Force

5 June 2020

**Attachment:**

A. Defence Health Check Stage 3 draft report, with Defence's comments on errors or fact and omission.