



Submission to the Second Action Plan Consultation
Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and
Children 2022–2032

“Nothing about us, Without us”

Date: Friday 31 July 2026

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Executive Summary

Women Veterans Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second National Action Plan (NAP) under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Women veterans¹ are a growing and increasingly diverse population whose experiences remain largely invisible within Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV). While noteworthy progress has been made through the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and the Australian Government's Women Veterans Strategy, women veterans continue to be under-recognised within mainstream policy, research, and service systems.

Women veterans are currently invisible within Australia's priority population framework despite experiencing unique service-related risk factors, barriers to disclosure and complex interactions between Defence, veteran and civilian systems.

Military service should be understood as part of a broader life course continuum rather than a discrete period of employment. Experiences before enlistment, during service and following transition collectively shape a woman's exposure to risk, protective factors, help-seeking, and recovery. Unlike most occupations, Defence is not simply an employer, it is also a community. Frequent postings, separation from family and support networks, service-related trauma, transition from military life, concerns about confidentiality, dual-serving relationships and the close connection between professional and personal lives can all influence a woman's safety, help-seeking, and recovery.

It should not be assumed that family and domestic violence within the Defence and veteran community is addressed through separate or specialised military systems. While Defence undertakes mandatory education and compliance activities relating to respectful behaviours, unacceptable conduct and workplace culture, these initiatives are primarily designed to meet organisational compliance obligations. These activities are not a substitute for specialist family and domestic violence prevention, early intervention, or response services. Much of this education is delivered within workplaces by personnel who may not possess specialist expertise in family and domestic violence practice or trauma-informed intervention. As a result, women veterans continue to rely predominantly on the same mainstream service systems as the broader Australian community, making it essential that these systems are equipped to recognise and respond to the unique circumstances of military service.

Similarly, it should not be assumed that the gendered experiences of women veterans identified through the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide will be

¹ The term Veteran refers to any current or former serving Australian Defence Force members

addressed through existing reform processes alone. While the Australian Government has agreed to significant Royal Commission recommendations and implementation activity is underway, women veterans have yet to see clear, measurable and system-wide improvements across prevention, disclosure, support, transition and recovery. The Second NAP therefore presents an important opportunity to ensure that women veterans are explicitly recognised within Australia's national response to family, domestic and sexual violence, rather than assuming their needs will be addressed through Defence and Veteran centric reforms alone.

Women veterans are not seeking separate systems. They are seeking equitable recognition within existing systems so that responses are better informed, more coordinated, and more responsive to the realities of military service.

Importantly, women veterans bring more than lived experience to this conversation—they bring expertise. Across Australia, women veterans contribute as leaders, clinicians, researchers, police officers, emergency responders, advocates, academics, and community leaders. Their experience navigating complex institutions, responding to trauma, and supporting others position them as valuable partners in shaping future policy and reform.

Women Veterans Australia supports the vision and outcomes of Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 and welcomes the development of the Second NAP. Our recommendations are intended to strengthen implementation by ensuring that the experiences of women veterans and military families are recognised within existing national systems, rather than through the creation of parallel arrangements.

Women Veterans Australia believes the Second NAP presents a significant opportunity to strengthen Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence by recognising military service as an important contextual factor that can influence vulnerability, help-seeking, safety and recovery. By improving visibility, strengthening coordination across Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and mainstream services, and investing in specialist capability, governments can ensure that women veterans are not overlooked within Australia's broader commitment to ending violence against women and children.

Recognising women veterans within the Second NAP is not about creating a new priority cohort. It is about ensuring Australia's response is sufficiently inclusive, evidence-informed and coordinated to recognise the realities of military service and respond equitably to all women.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that the Second NAP:

1. Improve recognition of women veterans across frontline services.

Introduce routine identification of veteran status across health, family and domestic

violence, housing, legal, and community services by asking every client, ***"Have you ever served in the Australian Defence Force?"*** and ***"Are you a partner of a current or former serving Australian Defence Force member?"*** Visibility is the first step towards better support, coordinated referrals and improved outcomes.

Military service should be recognised as an important contextual factor that intersects with other aspects of identity to shape women's experiences of violence, help-seeking, safety and recovery.

2. Strengthen coordinated, trauma-informed systems.

Improve collaboration between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Open Arms, mainstream family and domestic violence services and community organisations to create seamless pathways that reduce the burden on victim-survivors and improve continuity of care.

3. Support earlier access to help.

Invest in confidential, gender-responsive and military-informed services that address the unique barriers experienced by women veterans, including concerns about confidentiality, organisational visibility, career impacts, and loss of identity during transition.

4. Recognise military-specific contexts within responses to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse.

Strengthen practitioner awareness of the unique ways coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and post-separation abuse may present within military and veteran communities. This would include the impacts of service-related trauma, close-knit Defence communities and dual-serving relationships.

5. Recognise the diversity of women veterans.

Ensure implementation of the Second NAP reflects the diversity of women veterans, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse women, LGBTQIA+ veterans, reservists, carers, and those living in regional and remote Australia.

6. Improve national data collection.

Embed routine collection of veteran status within national datasets, funded services, research, and evaluation activities to strengthen the evidence base and ensure women veterans are visible within policy development and service planning. This includes coordinating with Defence reporting mechanisms and data collection where available.

7. Embed women veterans in co-design and implementation.

Recognise women veterans as partners in reform by involving them in the ongoing design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs developed under the Second NAP.

8. Strengthen specialist family and domestic violence capability across Defence, veteran and mainstream systems.

Recognise that workplace compliance training alone is not a substitute for specialist family and domestic violence prevention and response. Strengthening capability across Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and veteran support services by embedding contemporary, evidence-based family and domestic violence expertise, strengthening referral pathways to specialist services, and ensuring military-specific contexts are understood across the broader service system.

Conclusion

Women veterans occupy a unique position at the intersection of military service, gender, trauma, transition, and recovery. Recognising their experiences within the Second NAP is not about creating separate systems, it is about ensuring existing systems can recognise and respond to the realities of military service.

By improving visibility, strengthening coordination, enhancing capability, and partnering with women veterans as contributors to reform, Australia has an opportunity to build a more inclusive, evidence-informed, and effective national response to family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Women veterans bring more than lived experience to this conversation, they bring expertise. Their voices should not simply be heard; they should help shape Australia's next phase of national reform.

Recognising women veterans within the Second NAP is not about creating a new priority group. Rather, it acknowledges that military service exists along a continuum of civilian–military–civilian life, with experiences before, during and after service collectively shaping vulnerability, protective factors, help-seeking, and recovery. Australia's response to family, domestic, and sexual violence should reflect this continuum by ensuring systems are sufficiently inclusive, evidence-informed and coordinated to recognise the realities of military service and respond equitably to all women.

Introduction

Women Veterans Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second NAP under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Women veterans represent a growing and increasingly diverse cohort whose experiences remain largely absent from Australia's national policy discourse on family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV). While women now comprise almost one in five serving members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), they remain significantly under-recognised within both veteran services and mainstream responses to violence against women. Many women do not identify as veterans following transition from military service, meaning they are frequently invisible within policy, research, and service delivery.

The Royal Commission (RC) into Defence and Veteran Suicide recognised that women often experience military service, transition, and recovery differently and highlighted the need for more tailored, gender-responsive approaches. Additionally ongoing work to implement the RC recommendations and further research acknowledges that women veterans have distinct experiences and face barriers to accessing appropriate support.

The National Plan recognises that responses to family, domestic, and sexual violence must be person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally safe, and responsive to the diverse experiences of victim-survivors. Women Veterans Australia strongly supports these principles. We believe the Second NAP presents an opportunity to strengthen their application by explicitly recognising women veterans as a distinct population whose experiences sit at the intersection of military service, trauma, gender inequality, transition, and violence.

Women veterans are not seeking separate systems. We are seeking equitable recognition within existing systems so that responses better reflect the realities of military service and enable coordinated, accessible, and effective support.

Understanding the Military Context

To effectively respond to family, domestic, and sexual violence affecting women veterans, it is important to recognise that military service creates a unique social and institutional context that differs significantly from most civilian workplaces and communities.

Unlike almost every other occupation, Defence is not simply an employer, it is also a community. It shapes where people live, who they socialise with, where their children attend school, the health services they access and the support networks they build. Military families often relocate every few years through postings, resulting in repeated separation from extended family, friendship groups, and established community support. While these moves are an accepted part of military life, they can also reduce protective factors and increase vulnerability during times of crisis.

For women experiencing family, domestic or sexual violence, these circumstances can create additional barriers to seeking help.

Many women are married to, or partnered with, serving members or veterans. In some cases, both partners serve in the Australian Defence Force. This can create concerns about confidentiality, career implications, organisational visibility and potential impacts on a partner's employment or progression. In close-knit military communities, where professional and personal lives are intricately connected, women may fear that seeking support will not remain private or could affect their family's standing within the Defence community.

Military culture can also influence help-seeking behaviours. Values such as resilience, self-reliance, loyalty, and mission focus are fundamental strengths of military service, but they may also contribute to delayed disclosure, particularly where women have previously experienced negative responses to reporting unacceptable behaviour or sexual misconduct.

Transition from military service introduces further complexity. For many women, leaving Defence can involve the simultaneous loss of employment, housing, healthcare providers, identity, social networks, and community. At the very time a woman may be experiencing violence, trauma, or significant life change, she may also be navigating multiple government systems, rebuilding support networks, and adjusting to civilian life.

The evidence demonstrates that family and domestic violence is driven by a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community and societal factors. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)², drawing on Australia's National Research

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Factors associated with Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/understanding-fdsv/factors-associated-with-fdsv>

Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and other national evidence, identifies a range of recognised risk factors associated with the use of, or exposure to, family and domestic violence. These include previous exposure to family violence, alcohol and other drug misuse, unemployment and financial stress, coercive controlling behaviours, poor mental health (as one contributing factor among many, rather than a sole cause), and gender inequality, including attitudes that condone or minimise violence against women.

For women who have served in the Australian Defence Force, these recognised civilian risk factors may be compounded by the unique demands and circumstances of military service. While military service is not, in itself, a cause of family and domestic violence, it can create additional stressors and structural conditions that influence risk, reporting and access to support. Research relating to military populations identifies a number of service-specific factors that intersect with established civilian risk factors.³

Established civilian risk factors	Additional military-specific factors
Alcohol and other drug misuse	Deployment and Operational Service
Financial stress and unemployment	Reintegration following deployment.
Childhood trauma and adverse life experiences	Frequent postings and relocation.
Relationship conflict	Separation from civilian family and support networks
Coercive controlling behaviours	Military hierarchy, power dynamics and organisational culture
Poor mental health including trauma related conditions	PTSD, moral injury and operational trauma
Housing insecurity	Dependent on Defence provided housing
Economic insecurity	Transition from military to civilian life and loss of military identity

These military-specific factors reinforce the need for family, domestic and sexual violence responses that recognise the continuum of military service, from recruitment and service through to transition and civilian life, and strengthen coordination between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and mainstream family violence services. A response that recognises both the shared risk factors across the Australian community and the additional complexity of military service is more likely to improve prevention, early intervention and support for women veterans and their families.

Recognising military service should not be viewed as creating a separate response to family, domestic, and sexual violence. Rather, it enables existing systems to better

³ Synthesised from Australian and international military and veteran literature, including Defence, DVA and allied military research referenced throughout this submission.

understand the context in which violence occurs, identify additional risks, strengthen referral pathways, and deliver more personalised, integrated, and effective support.

Improving outcomes for women veterans requires systems that recognise the whole person, not simply the presenting issue, and respond in a way that acknowledges the intersection of military service, gender, trauma, transition, and recovery.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Visibility Begins with Recognition - why women veterans matter

Women are one of the fastest growing veteran cohorts in Australia. They now comprise approximately 20% of the permanent Australian Defence Force, while women veterans represent an estimated 13–14% of Australia's veteran population.

Despite this, women veterans remain largely invisible within Australia's family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) policy, research, and service systems. Many women do not self-identify as veterans following transition from military service, and veteran status is rarely identified or recorded within mainstream health, justice, and community services. As a result, women are frequently unable to access veteran-specific supports and policymakers lack the data needed to understand their experiences or design evidence-informed responses.

We recommend that **all** frontline services funded under the NAP, routinely ask every client two additional questions:

"Have you ever served in the Australian Defence Force?"

"Are you a partner of a current or former serving Australian Defence Force member?"

These simple questions have the potential to significantly improve safety, early intervention and recovery.

Identifying veteran status enables practitioners to recognise the unique circumstances that may influence a woman's experience of violence, help-seeking, and recovery. These may include military culture, repeated Defence postings, geographic isolation from family and support networks, dual-serving relationships, service-related trauma, transition from military service, Department of Veterans' Affairs entitlements, and access to Open Arms and veteran peer support services.

Routine veteran identification would also strengthen referral pathways between mainstream services and the veteran support system. This could potentially reduce missed

opportunities for early intervention, improve continuity of care, and generate much-needed national data on the experiences of women veterans.

Women veterans are not seeking separate systems. They are seeking equitable recognition within existing systems so that services can respond in ways that are informed, coordinated and responsive to the realities of military service.

If women veterans remain invisible within Australia's health, justice, and social service systems, they will remain invisible within policy, research, and service delivery. Recognition is the first step towards better outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen Coordinated, Trauma-Informed Systems

Family, domestic, and sexual violence (FDSV) remains one of Australia's most significant social, health and human rights challenges, affecting women across all communities, occupations, and life stages.

National data demonstrates the scale of the issue:

- Approximately one in four Australian women (23%) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner since the age of fifteen.
- Around 23% of women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.
- Approximately 16% of women have experienced economic abuse by a partner.
- Almost 45% of women experiencing violence by a current partner do not seek advice or support, highlighting the importance of trusted, accessible, and trauma-informed services that encourage earlier intervention.

While these national statistics are concerning, research in a military context paints an equally, or potentially more concerning picture:

- Available evidence indicates that 29% of recently transitioned ADF members and 22% of currently serving ADF members reported exposure to intimate partner violence within their current relationship.
- Among partners of recently transitioned members, 46% reported exposure to intimate partner violence, compared with 24% of partners of currently serving members.
- Almost one in four (23%) current or former ADF members accessing Specialist Homelessness Services in 2024–25 had experienced family and domestic violence.

- AIHW reports that family and domestic violence within veteran families is not routinely reported, with existing evidence largely limited to intimate partner violence and predominantly focused on male veterans and their female partners, highlighting significant gaps in understanding the experiences of women veterans.⁴

For women veterans, experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence often occur alongside the complexities of military service, transition, and recovery. Many women must navigate multiple systems simultaneously, including Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), Open Arms, health and mental health services, policing, family and domestic violence services, housing providers, legal assistance, and community organisations.

*The Defence Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence 2023-2028*⁵ and *DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020-2025*⁶ are policies designed to address these additional hazards women veterans face. However, too often these systems operate independently. Women are required to repeatedly disclose traumatic experiences, complete multiple assessments, and navigate different eligibility requirements at a time when safety, stability and recovery should be the priority.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide repeatedly identified fragmented systems, poor navigation, and inadequate coordination between services as barriers to wellbeing and recovery. These findings are equally relevant to women veterans experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence and reinforce the need for integrated, person-centred responses that place the individual, not the system, at the centre of care.

While veterans have dedicated veteran services, these systems are not designed around family, domestic and sexual violence, veteran status is generally not captured within mainstream FDSV services, and recognition could be achieved efficiently by leveraging existing National Plan infrastructure rather than creating new programs.

Women Veterans Australia believes that victim-survivors should not be expected to navigate fragmented systems while experiencing trauma. Instead, systems should be integrated, providing a "no wrong door" approach so that wherever a woman veteran seeks help, she is recognised, believed, supported, and connected to the services she needs without having to repeatedly retell her story or navigate complex bureaucracies.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Veteran Families, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/veteran-families>

⁵ <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/defence-strategy-preventing-responding-family-domestic-violence-2023-2028#:~:text=The%20Defence%20Strategy%20for%20Preventing,experienced%20in%20the%20Defence%20community>

⁶ <https://www.dva.gov.au/documents-and-publications/family-and-domestic-violence-strategy>

The Second NAP presents an important opportunity to strengthen coordination across government and community services through integrated referral pathways, shared care arrangements and trauma-informed case coordination. This will embed stronger partnerships between mainstream family, domestic and sexual violence services, and the veteran support system.

For women veterans, recovery should not depend on an individual's ability to navigate bureaucracy.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that implementation of the Second NAP adopts a coordinated "no wrong door" approach that strengthens collaboration between Defence, DVA, Open Arms, specialist family and domestic violence services, health providers, housing, policing, and community organisations. This will improve continuity of care, reduce retraumatisation, support earlier intervention and ensure women veterans receive the right support, at the right time, regardless of where they first seek help.

Recommendation 3: Support Earlier Access to Help

Earlier intervention is one of the most effective ways to improve safety, wellbeing and recovery for victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence. For women veterans, however, seeking support is often influenced by experiences that are unique to military service.

Many women delay accessing support because they have been shaped by a culture that values resilience, self-reliance, loyalty and mission focus. These qualities are fundamental strengths within military service, yet they can also contribute to women minimising their own experiences, consequently delaying disclosure until they reach crisis point.

Concerns about confidentiality, organisational visibility and potential career impacts may present additional barriers, particularly for women who remain connected to Defence or who are in relationships with serving members. Many women are also uncertain about where to seek help following transition from military service. Conversely others do not identify as veterans and therefore do not access veteran-specific services or supports.

Importantly, trust in institutions also influences help-seeking behaviour.

Defence data consistently demonstrates that women experience disproportionately higher levels of unacceptable behaviour than their male counterparts. In 2023–24, 50% of women reported experiencing unacceptable behaviour compared with 30.5% of men.⁷ Defence

⁷ Australian Department of Defence, *Women in the ADF Report 2023–24* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2025), [Women in the ADF 2023–2024 \(PDF, 1.26 MB\)](#)

has also acknowledged that close to 800 sexual assaults were reported across the Australian Defence Force over a five-year period⁸, while recognising that sexual violence remains significantly under-reported. More recently, the Joint Military Police Unit received 215 reports of sexual offences during 2023–24, representing a 33% increase on the previous reporting year.⁹

While these statistics relate specifically to unacceptable behaviour and sexual offences within Defence, they provide important context for understanding women's confidence in reporting systems and institutions more broadly. Previous experiences of disclosure, can shape trust, willingness to seek support and future engagement with health, justice and community services.

For some women veterans, these experiences contribute to reluctance to disclose family, domestic or sexual violence. This is particularly so where they fear they will not be believed, their confidentiality may be compromised, or they will be required to repeatedly recount traumatic experiences across multiple systems.

Women Veterans Australia believes earlier intervention requires services that are confidential, trauma-informed, gender-responsive and informed by an understanding of military service and transition. Earlier access to support will also be strengthened through trusted peer networks, improved awareness of available services, stronger referral pathways between mainstream and veteran services and consistent recognition of veteran status across frontline systems.

Building trust is fundamental to improving early intervention. Women are more likely to seek support when they know they will be listened to, believed, treated with dignity and connected to coordinated services that understand both the impacts of violence and the realities of military service.

Recommendation 4: Recognise military-specific manifestations of coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and post-separation violence

Women Veterans Australia welcomes the Second NAP continued focus on coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse. As understanding of these forms of violence continues to

⁸ Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, *Final Report, Volume 3: Military Sexual Violence, Unacceptable Behaviour and Military Justice* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), Chapter 8, <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report-volume-3>

⁹ Australian Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2024–25* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2025), Table 5.23, "Type of alleged sexual offences reported to the Joint Military Police Unit, 2020–25" [Defence Annual Report 2024–25](#) (PDF, 39.12 MB)

evolve, it is equally important that implementation recognises the unique contexts in which they may occur, including within military and veteran communities.

The NAP recognises that violence against women is shaped by gender inequality, social norms, structural drivers, and power imbalances. Women Veterans Australia supports this understanding and believes it is equally important to recognise that military service can influence how women experience, respond to and recover from violence.

Military service should not be viewed as the cause of violence. Rather, it is an important context that may influence vulnerability, help-seeking, service access, and recovery.

Unlike most occupations, military service is more than a workplace. It shapes identity, leadership, relationships, housing, social networks, and community. Frequent postings, geographic isolation from family and established support networks, dual-serving relationships and transition from military service all contribute to a unique social environment that can influence both risk and access to support.

For many women, military service is characterised by values of resilience, loyalty, discipline, teamwork, and mission focus. These qualities are fundamental strengths of military life and are often central to successful careers. However, they may also influence how some women interpret adversity, respond to unacceptable behaviour, or decide when, and whether to seek support.

Many women veterans have spent years, working within predominantly male environments where certain behaviours may have been normalised or managed differently to civilian workplaces. This should not be interpreted as suggesting that military service causes violence. Rather, it acknowledges that organisational culture and social norms can influence how women recognise coercive control, emotional abuse, or other harmful behaviours, and when they feel it is appropriate or safe to disclose them.

Technology-facilitated abuse may also be present in ways that require greater understanding within military and veteran communities. This may include digital surveillance, monitoring of electronic communications or location, misuse of professional knowledge or military networks, post-separation harassment, or behaviours that exploit a woman's service history, trauma, or mental health to undermine her confidence, credibility, or willingness to seek support.

The growth of online veteran communities has created valuable opportunities for connection, peer support, and advocacy. However, many veteran social media platforms remain predominantly male, and the close-knit nature of the veteran community can create additional concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and reputational harm.

For some women veterans, fear of being recognised by former colleagues or concerns that personal experiences may become known within military or veteran networks, may discourage help-seeking or participation in online support communities. This may be

particularly relevant for women who have experienced military sexual trauma, family and domestic violence or other forms of gender-based violence. These considerations reinforce the importance of confidential, psychologically safe, and women-centred pathways to support.

Evidence also demonstrates the cumulative nature of trauma experienced by many women veterans. Trauma should not be viewed as a single event but as a life-course experience that may accumulate across military service, transition, and personal circumstances.

Many women veterans experience multiple forms of trauma throughout their lives and careers. This includes occupational trauma, military sexual trauma, moral injury, transition-related identity loss, and service-related mental health conditions. These experiences may compound the impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence and influence both help-seeking and recovery.

Evidence from the Transition and Wellbeing Research Program highlights the complexity of women's mental health following military service. Women veterans reported substantially higher rates of mental health conditions than are typically observed in the broader Australian population, including:

- 24.8% reporting symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- 41.9% reporting anxiety disorders; and
- 22.8% reporting panic disorder.

These findings reinforce that trauma among women veterans is often cumulative and multifaceted. It should not be assumed that trauma is solely associated with combat or operational deployment. Rather, trauma may arise through a combination of military service, workplace experiences, military sexual trauma, transition, family circumstances, and other life events.

As outlined in Recommendation 3, Defence reporting data also provides important context for understanding women's trust in institutions and confidence in disclosure. While these statistics do not establish a direct relationship between military service and family, domestic or sexual violence, they demonstrate that previous experiences of reporting, institutional responses and workplace culture can influence trust in systems, confidence in disclosure and future engagement with support services.

Effective responses therefore require practitioners to understand not only the presenting incident, but the broader context in which violence occurs. Military service, gender, trauma, transition, and recovery are often deeply interconnected and should be considered together when assessing risk and designing support.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that implementation of the Second NAP includes workforce capability development to improve understanding of military service and

veteran-specific contexts across the family, domestic, and sexual violence sector. Equally, practitioners within the veteran support system should receive contemporary training on coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, and trauma-informed responses to family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Strengthening knowledge across both sectors will improve identification, reduce retraumatisation, support earlier intervention and ensure women veterans receive responses that are informed, coordinated, person-centred and appropriate to their circumstances.

Recommendation 5: Recognise Diversity Within the Veteran Community

Women veterans are not a homogenous group. Consistent with the National Plan's commitment to addressing the needs of priority populations, responses to family, domestic and sexual violence must recognise that military service intersects with other aspects of identity to shape women's experiences of violence, access to support and recovery. Their experiences are shaped by the intersection of military service with gender, culture, disability, sexuality, age, geography, family responsibilities, and other aspects of identity.

The Second NAP should explicitly recognise the diversity that exists within the women veteran community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women, LGBTQIA+ veterans, reservists, carers, younger and older veterans, and women living in regional, rural, and remote Australia.

An intersectional approach is essential to ensuring services are accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the diverse experiences of women veterans.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women veterans may experience multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage while navigating both military and civilian systems. Their experiences sit at the intersection of military service, culture, identity, gender, and community and should be recognised through culturally safe, community-led approaches that acknowledge these intersecting experiences.

Women living in regional and remote Australia may face additional barriers to accessing specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services, including limited-service availability, longer travel distances and fewer opportunities for face-to-face support. For many women veterans, repeated Defence postings have resulted in prolonged separation from family, community, and established support networks, reducing protective factors

and increasing reliance on services that may have limited understanding of military experience.

The Second NAP already recognises the importance of tailoring responses for diverse groups of women. Women veterans should be explicitly recognised within the implementation, data, workforce and intersectionality frameworks of the Second NAP as an under-identified population whose experiences may be shaped by military service. Explicitly recognising women veterans within this framework would strengthen, not duplicate, existing approaches by ensuring military service is considered alongside other factors that influence women's experiences of violence, help-seeking and recovery.

Importantly, recognising diversity also requires recognising veteran status.

Many women do not identify as veterans following transition from military service, and mainstream services rarely ask about military service. As a result, women veterans often remain invisible within health, justice, and community service systems. This invisibility limits access to appropriate supports, weakens referral pathways, and contributes to significant gaps in national data and policy development.

As proposed in Recommendation 1, routine identification of veteran status is also essential to recognising diversity and intersectionality within the veteran community.

"Have you ever served in the Australian Defence Force?" and "Are you a partner of a current or former serving member of the Australian Defence Force"

These simple questions have the potential to significantly improve safety, early intervention, and recovery.

Knowing that a woman has served or a partner of a Veteran enables practitioners to better understand the context in which violence may occur and to identify additional factors that may influence risk, safety, and recovery.

Routine identification of veteran status would also:

- improve recognition of women veterans across frontline services.
- strengthen referral pathways between mainstream and veteran support systems.
- support more coordinated, trauma-informed, and person-centred care.
- reduce missed opportunities for early intervention.
- improve continuity of care across multiple systems; and
- generate meaningful national data to better understand the experiences of women veterans and inform future policy, research, and investment.

This recommendation is not about creating separate systems or establishing a new priority cohort. Rather, it is about ensuring that existing systems recognise military service as an important part of a woman's lived experience and respond accordingly.

Women Veterans Australia believes this is a foundational reform.

By routinely recognising veteran status, Australia can build more coordinated, equitable and trauma-informed responses that ensure women veterans receive the appropriate support, at the appropriate time, regardless of where they first seek help.

If we do not identify women veterans, we cannot understand their experiences. If we cannot understand their experiences, we cannot design services that meet their needs.

Recommendation 6: Improve Data Collection

The effectiveness of the Second NAP will depend on Australia's ability to understand who is accessing services, identify gaps in support and evaluate whether reforms are improving outcomes.

At present, veteran status is not routinely identified or recorded across national family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) datasets, funded services, research, or program evaluations. Consequently, there is limited evidence about the prevalence of FDSV among women veterans, the pathways they take through support systems or the effectiveness of current responses. This absence of evidence should not be interpreted as an absence of need. Rather, it reflects a longstanding gap in recognition, data collection, and policy visibility.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that veteran status become a routine demographic measure across all national FDSV data collections, funded services, research programs, and evaluation activities supported under the NAP.

Routine identification of veteran status would strengthen the national evidence base, improve policy development, support service planning, inform future investment decisions and ensure women veterans are visible within Australia's national response to family, domestic, and sexual violence.

However, improved data collection is about more than research. It is fundamental to improving system coordination and delivering more integrated, person-centred care.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide repeatedly identified fragmented systems, and multiple assessments, as significant barriers to wellbeing and recovery. These findings reinforce the importance of systems that communicate effectively and place the individual, not the organisation, at the centre of care.

Women veterans frequently interact with multiple service systems throughout their lives, including Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), Open Arms, Medicare, state and territory health services, policing, specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services, housing providers, legal assistance, child protection, and the courts. Yet no single

agency has visibility of a woman's complete support journey, and responsibility for coordinating care too often rests with the individual herself.

For women experiencing trauma, this fragmented approach can result in repeated storytelling, inconsistent assessments, missed referrals, delayed access to support and, ultimately, disengagement from services.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that the Australian Government explore opportunities to strengthen secure, cross-jurisdictional data linkage and information sharing across health, justice, veteran and family, domestic and sexual violence systems, supported by robust privacy protections. Better connected systems would enable governments to:

- understand the prevalence and experiences of family, domestic, and sexual violence among women veterans.
- identify barriers to accessing support and opportunities for earlier intervention.
- strengthen referral pathways between mainstream and veteran services.
- improve continuity of care across multiple systems.
- monitor outcomes for specific diverse veteran cohorts; and
- evaluate whether implementation of the Second NAP is delivering equitable outcomes for women veterans.

Improving data collection and system visibility is not an end in itself. It is the foundation for better policy, stronger coordination, and more effective support.

This data collection would be framed by adopting a privacy-by-design approach: veteran status should only be recorded with informed consent, disclosure should remain under the survivor's control, information should never be visible to a serving partner, and data linkage should be governed by safeguards designed for coercive-control contexts

What is not measured cannot be understood. What is not understood cannot be effectively addressed.

Women Veterans Australia supports a victim-survivor-centred, person-led approach in which systems work together around the individual, rather than expecting the individual to navigate fragmented systems. Better identification, better data, and better coordination will enable services to respond more effectively to women veterans and ensure future policy, investment and service delivery are informed by evidence rather than assumption. Universal screening across National Plan-funded services, cross-jurisdictional data linkage, and capability building across multiple workforces constitutes meaningful systems reform. Screening could be introduced alongside appropriate referral pathways, potentially through a phased rollout.

Ultimately, improving system visibility is about more than collecting better data. It is about ensuring women veterans receive the right support, at the right time, through systems that recognise military service, work together effectively and place safety, dignity, and recovery at the centre of every response.

Recommendation 7: Embed Women Veterans in Co-design

The NAP recognises that lasting reform must be informed by the voices and experiences of those most affected. Women Veterans Australia strongly supports this principle and believes women veterans should be recognised not only as victim-survivors, but as partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs developed.

Women veterans bring more than lived experience to this conversation, they bring expertise.

Across Australia, women veterans contribute as leaders, clinicians, researchers, police officers, emergency responders, academics, advocates, public servants, community leaders, and policy practitioners. Many have spent their careers leading complex organisations, responding to crises, designing policy, supporting vulnerable communities, and navigating highly complex institutional systems.

Their perspectives are informed by military service, leadership, and lived experience, together with a deep understanding of how systems succeed, where they fall short and how they can better support women experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence.

Embedding women veterans in ongoing co-design will strengthen policy development, improve implementation, and help ensure responses are practical, trauma-informed, person-led and grounded in lived reality.

Women Veterans Australia also encourages the Australian Government to ensure that co-design processes reflect the diversity of the veteran community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women veterans remain largely absent from research, policy, and service design despite sitting at the intersection of gender, culture, military service, and community. Their perspectives should be explicitly recognised.

Women Veterans Australia also believes there is an opportunity for Australia to demonstrate national leadership by recognising the military as an important setting for preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Defence is one of Australia's largest and most influential institutions and has invested significantly in cultural reform, gender equality, and the prevention of unacceptable behaviour. Continued progress in this environment has the potential to generate important lessons for other sectors and demonstrate how complex organisations can address gender inequality, strengthen respectful workplace cultures, and improve responses to violence against women.

The Australian Defence Force comprises more than 100,000 permanent and reserve personnel, with thousands more transitioning into civilian communities each year. The values, behaviours and relationships shaped during military service do not end when people leave Defence. Rather, they continue into families, workplaces and communities across Australia. Strengthening respectful relationships, gender equality and violence prevention within Defence therefore has the potential to generate benefits well beyond the military itself, contributing to broader national efforts to prevent violence against women and children. In this way, Defence should not only be viewed as a workplace, but as an important institutional setting for driving long-term social and cultural change.

The experiences of women veterans therefore have relevance beyond the veteran community. They provide valuable insights into organisational culture, institutional trust, leadership, prevention, and systems reform that can strengthen Australia's broader response to family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that women veterans, be actively involved in the ongoing co-design, implementation, and evaluation of the Second NAP through advisory groups, consultation processes, research partnerships, and evaluation activities. Meaningful participation is not simply good practice, it leads to better policy, stronger implementation, and more effective outcomes. As we often say, "Nothing about us, without us." For Women Veterans Australia, this principle reflects our commitment to ensuring that women veterans are recognised not simply as recipients of services, but as leaders, practitioners, researchers, and partners in reform.

Recommendation 8: Strengthen Primary Prevention Across Culture, Institutions and Online Spaces

Women Veterans Australia supports a stronger national focus on primary prevention and early intervention under the Second NAP. Ending violence against women requires more than responding after harm has occurred. It requires sustained action to address the attitudes, behaviours, systems, and structures that allow violence, inequality, and abuse to occur.

Representation Matters

For women veterans, this includes recognising how gendered norms are reinforced through institutions, media, commemorative culture, online spaces, and public narratives about service.

Despite women's long contribution to Australia's military history, public imagery and events associated with service, including ANZAC Day and other commemorative activities, continue to disproportionately centre men's service and sacrifice. This matters. Visibility shapes recognition, recognition shapes belonging, and belonging influences whether women see themselves reflected in the systems designed to support them.

Mainstream media, veteran platforms, and public institutions all have a role in challenging outdated narratives that elevate men's experiences as the default and position women as peripheral. Stronger representation of women veterans in public messaging, media coverage, commemorative events, and policy communication would help shift social norms and reinforce that women's service, leadership, and sacrifice are central to Australia's national story.

Safe online environments

Online spaces also require greater attention. Social media can provide connection, advocacy, and peer support, but anonymous posting, misogynistic commentary, harassment, and reputational attacks can create unsafe environments for women veterans. In close-knit military and veteran communities, fear of being identified, judged, or targeted can prevent women from seeking support or speaking openly about their experiences. Online platforms, veteran organisations, and governments should work together to strengthen moderation, accountability, and safe reporting pathways.

Education beyond compliance

Education on harmful attitudes and behaviours must also move beyond compliance. Mandatory training alone is unlikely to shift culture if it is experienced as a tick-box exercise. Prevention education should help people understand the real-world harm caused by coercive control, sexual harassment, image-based abuse, misogyny, victim-blaming, and technology-facilitated abuse. This is particularly important for young people, where prevention efforts should focus on empathy, respectful relationships, digital responsibility, and the impact of harmful behaviours on others.

Women Veterans Australia also recommends that the Second NAP consider the risks associated with increasing financial digitisation and ensure financial-system reforms and digital banking practices protect victim-survivors' access to independent, private and immediately usable funds, including in circumstances involving monitored accounts, shared devices or technology-facilitated financial abuse. Financial abuse is a recognised form of coercive control. For victim-survivors, access to independent funds can be critical to safety, escape, and recovery. As payment systems become increasingly digital, governments must ensure that women experiencing violence are not further exposed to surveillance, control or economic dependence through restricted access to cash, monitored transactions or shared financial technologies.

Women Veterans Australia recommends that the Second NAP strengthen primary prevention by:

- improving representation of women veterans in media, commemoration, and public narratives.
- addressing misogyny, harassment, and anonymous abuse in online veteran spaces.

- supporting education that demonstrates the actual harm caused by coercive control, sexual harassment, and technology-facilitated abuse.
- moving organisational training beyond compliance toward genuine behavioural and cultural change.
- strengthening respectful relationships and digital safety education for young people.
- recognising financial abuse risks associated with digital banking and a shift toward cashless systems; and
- supporting Defence, veteran organisations and mainstream institutions to model respectful, inclusive and gender-equitable cultures.

The Second NAP should distinguish between awareness activities and specialist capability-building. Sustainable change requires investment in qualified expertise capable of influencing organisational culture, leadership, policy, prevention and evaluation, not solely mandatory compliance training.

Primary prevention must occur at every level: individual, community, organisational, institutional, and societal. Defence and the veteran sector have a significant role to play. If Australia can demonstrate meaningful progress in preventing gender-based harm within military and veteran contexts, it can provide leadership and practical lessons for other institutions across the country.

Conclusion

Military service should not be viewed as a discrete period of employment but as part of a broader civilian–military–civilian continuum that shapes identity, relationships, health, help-seeking, and recovery throughout a woman's life. Recognising women veterans within the Second NAP is therefore not about creating a new priority group, it is about ensuring Australia's response to family, domestic, and sexual violence is sufficiently inclusive, evidence-informed and coordinated to recognise the realities of military service and respond equitably across that continuum.

Women veterans bring more than lived experience, they bring leadership, professional expertise and a deep understanding of complex systems.

Women Veterans Australia could establish and lead an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) comprising subject matter experts, representatives from veteran organisations, and people with lived experience. The EAG would operate within a collective impact framework, providing strategic advice and oversight to support the implementation of the Second Action Plan.

The EAG would facilitate cross-sector collaboration, monitor implementation progress, identify emerging issues, gaps and opportunities, and provide evidence-informed advice to strengthen initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to violence against women and children within Australia's veteran community. Through this role, the EAG would help ensure that implementation remains responsive to emerging needs, informed by lived experience, and aligned with best practice in ending gender-based violence.

By partnering with women veterans in the design, implementation and evaluation of the Second NAP, Australia has an opportunity not only to improve outcomes for women veterans, but to strengthen its national response to family, domestic and sexual violence for all Australians.

Letters of support



RSL
Australia

THE RETURNED & SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA LTD

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ABN | 63 008 488 097
POSTAL | PO Box 30 CAMPBELL ACT 2612
TEL | (02) 6280 4079
EMAIL | enquiries@rsl.org.au

O 092/26

29 July 2026

Second Action Plan Consultation Team
Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Consultation team,

Support for Women Veterans Australia's Submission to the Second Action Plan under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

RSL Australia welcomes development of the Second Action Plan (the Plan) under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 and is pleased to support the submission made by Women Veterans Australia.

As Australia's largest ex-service organisation, RSL Australia supports veterans and veterans' families, providing direct services, undertaking research and voicing the lived experiences of Australia's 580,000 serving and ex-serving Australians. The importance of including serving personnel, veterans and their families in national policies and services that respond to family, domestic and sexual violence cannot be overstated.

- Women remain significantly underrepresented within the Australian Defence Force and the wider veteran community.
- Their experiences in the Australian Defence Force have often been shaped by masculine traditions and structures that can reinforce gendered power imbalances, including expectations that can make it difficult to challenge harmful behaviour, disclose experiences of violence, or ask for help.
- Intersectionality – including rank, age, cultural background, disability, sexuality, caring responsibilities, geographic isolation, injuries related to service and their experiences in transitioning from Defence – can compound inequity.

Sexist and misogynistic commentary directed at Lieutenant General Susan Coyle following her appointment as Australia's first woman Chief of Army should not be dismissed as isolated online behaviour. It demonstrates continued, deeply entrenched gendered attitudes that question women's authority, capability and legitimacy in male dominated institutions that fail to recognise women who demonstrate professional competence, leadership and service.

The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance

rslaustralia.org

RSL Australia supports Women Veterans Australia's position that the Plan should offer responses that are inclusive, informed by evidence, designed to recognise how military service, institutional culture and transition can influence women's experiences of violence and their access to support, and to invest in sustained cultural and organisational change. It is important to understand that leaving Defence does not necessarily mean leaving the Defence community, particularly where a partner or former partner remains serving. For example, a woman experiencing family violence may lose her employment, housing, identity, social networks and access to familiar support systems, while the person using violence retains their position and connections within the military environment.

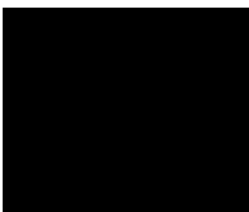
While RSL Australia recognises and supports government initiatives implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, many of the responses are legislative and/or focus on compliance activities, including mandatory training. They would benefit by connecting military and mainstream systems to promote and embed cultural change, and by supporting women right through their continuum of service – from recruitment, throughout their service, as they transition into civilian life, and beyond.

New measures should strengthen referral pathways between government agencies, specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services, and veterans' community services. They could identify military service within data collection mechanisms, through policy and program consultation and codesign with women veterans, and by offering responsive and appropriate recognition and support.

RSL Australia commends Women Veterans Australia for bringing the experiences and perspectives of women veterans to this consultation and supports the recommendations in its submission. RSL Australia believes that the Defence and veteran communities have an opportunity to set a powerful example by directly confronting gender inequality, harmful masculine norms, misogyny and violence.

The Second Action Plan provides an important opportunity to strengthen connections between Defence, veteran and mainstream services, to lead cultural change and provide every woman who has served Australia access to appropriate, informed and coordinated support.

Yours sincerely,



RSL Australia



**Women Veterans Network Australia – WVNA
Incorporated**

ABN: 31 615 786 680

PO Box 1773, Thuringowa QLD 4817

Email: info@wvna.org.au

Website: www.wvna.org.au

To:

Second Action Plan Consultation Team
Department of Social Services

**Re: Support for Women Veterans Australia's Submission to the Second Action Plan
under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022 –
2032**

Dear Consultation Team,

Women Veterans Network Australia (WVNA) is pleased to support the submission made by Women Veterans Australia to inform the development of the Second Action Plan under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

As one of Australia's largest peer networks for former serving women, our community includes women from every Service, rank and generation of military service. Through our network, we hear firsthand the experiences of women navigating transition from Defence and the challenges that continue long after military service has ended.

Among our members are women who have experienced family and domestic violence, coercive control and other forms of gender-based violence. While these experiences are not unique to military families, the military context can create additional complexities that are not always recognised within mainstream policy or service systems.

For some women, one of the most difficult periods occurs during transition from military to civilian life, particularly where a current or former partner remains serving. Leaving Defence can mean losing established support networks, housing, financial security, professional identity and trusted connections, while an abusive partner may continue to live and work within the Defence community. These circumstances can make help-seeking more difficult and increase feelings of isolation at a time when support is needed most.

We therefore support the central message of the Women Veterans Australia submission: that Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence should explicitly recognise the experiences of women veterans and ensure that national systems are equipped to respond to the unique circumstances that military service and transition can create.

*Connecting past and present women who have served in the Australian Defence Force with social support, resources
& information*

We particularly support efforts to strengthen collaboration between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and mainstream family and domestic violence services, improve awareness of military culture within frontline services, and ensure that women veterans are visible within policy development, research and future action.

Women Veterans Network Australia welcomes the opportunity to stand alongside Women Veterans Australia in advocating for a national response that is inclusive, coordinated and informed by the lived experiences of women who have served Australia.

Yours sincerely,



President | Women Veterans Network Australia - WVNA

 W: www.wvna.org.au



DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION

28 July 2026

Second Action Plan Consultation Team
Department of Social Services

Through: Women Veterans Australia

Dear Consultation Team,

Re: Support for Women Veterans Australia's Submission to the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

The Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA) welcomes the opportunity to provide this letter in support of the submission made by Women Veterans Australia on the development of the Second Action Plan under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

DFWA has, for many decades, advocated for the wellbeing, fair treatment and proper recognition of serving and former Australian Defence Force personnel and their families. In that capacity, we recognise that women veterans may experience distinctive risks, barriers and service impacts that are not always well understood in mainstream family, domestic and sexual violence policy or service settings.

As the population of Australian women veterans continues to grow, national responses to family, domestic and sexual violence must properly account for the realities of military service, transition and post-service life.

Women veterans may be required to navigate Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, mainstream health and social services, justice pathways and community support systems. Where these systems are not well connected, women veterans experiencing violence can face unnecessary delay, misunderstanding or fragmented support.

DFWA supports the central proposition advanced by Women Veterans Australia: recognition of women veterans in the Second Action Plan is not a request for preferential treatment or a separate policy stream. It is a practical requirement to ensure that national responses are inclusive, evidence-based and capable of meeting the needs of all women, including those whose experiences are shaped by military service.

DFWA particularly supports measures that would strengthen:

- recognition of military service and transition as relevant factors in family, domestic and sexual violence policy and service responses;
- coordination between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and mainstream service systems;

Defence Force Welfare Association National Inc

P: (02) 6152 9162 | E: national@dfwa.org.au | W: www.dfwa.org.au
PO Box 4166 Kingston ACT 2604 | ABN: 49 929 713 439



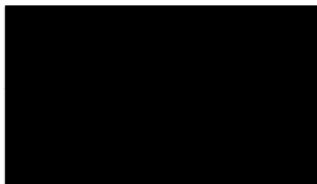
- workforce capability to understand military culture, service-related impacts and the challenges of transition;
- data collection and research that better identify the prevalence, nature and impact of violence affecting women veterans; and
- structured engagement with lived-experience and representative organisations, including Women Veterans Australia, in policy development, service design and implementation.

DFWA also emphasises that military service should not be viewed as a self-contained chapter disconnected from later life. The pathway from enlistment, service and transition into civilian life can shape vulnerability, help-seeking behaviour, trust in institutions and access to effective support. Policy responses must therefore reflect the full service-to-civilian continuum.

The Second Action Plan provides an important opportunity to ensure Australia's response to violence against women is genuinely inclusive of women whose life experiences differ from those assumed in mainstream service models. Incorporating the perspectives of women veterans will improve the evidence base, strengthen service design and support more effective policy implementation.

DFWA commends Women Veterans Australia for its leadership in bringing forward the voices and lived experiences of women veterans through this consultation. We encourage the Australian Government to give close and constructive consideration to the recommendations contained in its submission.

Yours sincerely,



Defence Force Welfare Association



About the Defence Force Welfare Association

The Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA) is an Australia wide organisation, formed in 1959, for the purpose of promoting and protecting the welfare and interests of serving and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families.

Our advocacy areas include:

- Rehabilitation of injured veterans
- Compensation for Service-related injuries
- ADF pay and conditions
- Retirement and superannuation
- Improving service delivery
- Veteran recognition

Since formation, successive Australian Governments have supported and appreciated this important role.

DFWA has Branches or representation in each State and Territory, with the National Office located in Canberra.

DFWA is a non-partisan organisation – we advocate for good policy.

Date 30 June 2026

To:

Second Action Plan Consultation Team
Department of Social Services

**Re: Support for Women Veterans Australia's Submission
to the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End
Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032**

Dear Consultation Team,

The Defence Reserves Association is pleased to provide this letter in support of the submission made by Women Veterans Australia to inform the development of the Second Action Plan under Australia's National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Defence Reserves Association has long advocated for policies and services that improve the wellbeing of reservists and serving and former Australian Defence Force personnel and their families. We recognise that women veterans have unique service experiences that can shape both their exposure to violence and their pathways to seeking support following military service.

As Australia's women veteran population continues to grow, it is essential that national responses to family, domestic and sexual violence recognise the realities of military service and transition. Women veterans often navigate multiple service systems throughout their lives—including Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, mainstream health and social services, and community-based support providers. Without greater coordination and understanding across these systems, there is a risk that women veterans experiencing violence may not receive timely, appropriate or trauma-informed support.

Defence Reserves Association supports the central premise of the Women Veterans Australia submission: that recognising women veterans within the Second Action Plan is not about creating a separate priority cohort, but about ensuring that existing national responses are sufficiently inclusive, evidence-informed and capable of responding equitably to the lived experiences of all women.

In particular, we support consideration of measures that strengthen:

- recognition of military service as a relevant factor within family, domestic and sexual violence policy and service

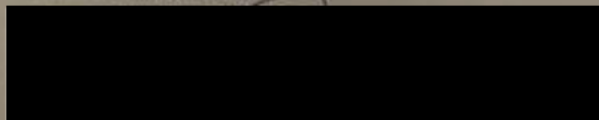
responses;

- improved coordination between Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and mainstream service systems;
- workforce capability to better understand military culture and the impacts of service and transition;
- improved data collection and research to better understand the prevalence and experiences of violence affecting women veterans; and
- opportunities for lived-experience organisations such as Women Veterans Australia to contribute to policy development, service design and implementation.

We also acknowledge the importance of recognising that military service is not a discrete period of an individual's life. The continuum from military service, through transition, and into civilian life creates unique circumstances that can influence vulnerability, help-seeking behaviours and access to support. Effective policy responses should reflect this continuum rather than treating Defence and civilian systems as separate and unrelated environments.

The Second Action Plan presents an important opportunity to ensure Australia's response to violence against women is genuinely inclusive of all women whose life experiences may differ from the broader population. Incorporating the perspectives of women veterans will strengthen both the evidence base and the effectiveness of future policy and service delivery.

Defence Reserves Association commends Women Veterans Australia for its leadership in bringing forward the voices and lived experiences of women veterans through this consultation process and encourages the Australian Government to give careful consideration to the recommendations contained within its submission.



Defence Reserves Association