



What are the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference?

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (the Royal Commission) is required to inquire into the matters set out in the terms of reference. The terms of reference are summarised below.

The terms of reference

The terms of reference guide the Royal Commission's inquiry. They state that the Royal Commission must investigate issues and themes relating to Defence and veteran deaths by suicide, attempted or contemplated suicide, and poor mental health outcomes. It must consider:

- a. Common issues and themes
- b. Contributing risk factors, such as:
 - i. Recruitment
 - ii. Service (e.g., training, bullying, abuse, postings, deployments, rank system and promotions)
 - iii. Transition from or within the Australian Defence Force (ADF)
 - iv. Support services (e.g., timeliness, quality, availability)
 - v. How personal information is held and shared between government entities
 - vi. How mental and physical health information is reported and recording during service
- c. Impact of culture in the ADF, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and Department of Defence
- d. Services provided by non-government organisations (e.g., ex-service organisations)
- e. Protective and rehabilitative factors
- f. Support services for affected families
- g. Engagement with DVA and the Department of Defence about claims and entitlements
- h. Legislation relating to DVA and claims and entitlements
 - i. Other contributing risk factors including:
 - i. Social or family contexts
 - ii. Housing or employment
 - iii. Economic and financial circumstances
- j. Anything related to the above

You can read the full terms of reference on the [Royal Commission's website](#).

What is relevant to the terms of reference

The scope of the Royal Commission's inquiry is very broad, and it aims to learn about all the factors leading to Defence and veteran suicides. This means that any issues that can contribute to unreasonable stress for serving ADF members, ex-serving members and their families, are relevant to the Royal Commission's inquiry.

You do not need to have been personally affected by the loss of a loved one to have important information for the Royal Commission. The inquiry is about all factors that can lead ADF members, and their families, to struggle during and after service.

The families of ADF members go through unique stresses as their serving members transfer between bases, as they go on and return from deployments, and as they transition to civilian life after service. Often it is family members who see the stresses and strains in the serving member, and all members of the Defence community have important experiences to share.

Everything that leads to poor mental health outcomes for ADF members, veterans, and their families, is relevant to this Royal Commission.

How to use the terms of reference

If you are sharing information with the Royal Commission, you should consider which of the terms of reference apply to your experience.

If you are making a submission, you can mark which terms of reference apply to you on the submission form. You can also use those terms of reference as headings in your submission or as guiding principles to focus your submission.

If you are sharing information in a private session, you can use the terms of reference to establish what topics you would like to raise. You can list the terms of reference and put examples or information you would like to speak to under each, then use them as talking points in the private session.

Contact the Defence and Veterans Legal Service

If you would like advice about the terms of reference, or about how to share information with the Royal Commission, call the Defence and Veterans Legal Service (DAVLS).

DAVLS is a free, independent legal service that supports ADF personnel and veterans, and their families, carers and supporters, to share their experiences with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

DAVLS can help you to:

- Understand your rights and protections when engaging with the Royal Commission
- Make a submission
- Prepare for and attend a private session
- Connect with other available services, such as counselling, advocacy, and other legal support.

To book an appointment with a DAVLS solicitor you can **call 1800 33 1800** from anywhere in Australia.

You can also send an email inquiry to defencevetslegal@legalaid.qld.gov.au or via the DAVLS website at: <https://defenceveteranslegalservice.org.au/Contact-us>.