



Australian Government

Defence

Defence Member and Family Support

Defence Families Update



December 2023

To defend Australia and its national interests in order
to advance Australia's security and prosperity

www.defence.gov.au



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Foreword

As the Chief of Personnel, I have the responsibility for and privilege of managing ADF people throughout their career lifecycle, enabling health, wellbeing, education and support services – and importantly, supporting families.

I am pleased to write to you, to all ADF families, and I hope that you find this update informative.

In response to the Defence Strategic Review (see page 2) we are implementing a Defence People System, where our people are supported at all stages throughout their career and where careers are managed in an integrated way.

Families play a pivotal role in the wellbeing and support of their loved ones, and it is essential that ADF families receive our support and engagement along a member's career in the ADF.

I recognise that when a person embarks on their ADF career, it is often the case that their family experiences both the challenges and the opportunities that come with military life.

We want our people to continue to serve within an organisation that continues to serve them, especially as their lives and families evolve.

A program of work that has been ongoing since 2019 is the ADF Employment Offer Modernisation Program. Through this program, we are making a series of practical enhancements, including to pay and conditions, leave entitlements, and housing. These changes are being implemented now and will continue into 2024.

I encourage you to read about these new policies (see page 3) and how they may benefit your family.

Defence is undergoing a number of changes brought about by the Defence Strategic Review. I know these changes will likely have impacts on families. If these changes are causing you anxiety or stress and you need support please reach out to the Defence Member and Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

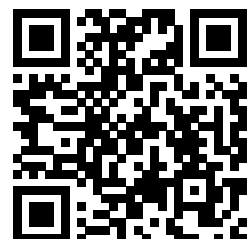
The Helpline is staffed by trained professionals who are there to assist, provide advice and refer you to other services where they can.

We couldn't do what we do without the commitment and dedication of ADF families.

Thank you for all that you do to support Defence.



Natasha Fox AO, CSC
Lieutenant General
Chief of Personnel



Supporting our people and their families

People are our greatest capability and the ADF brings together an extraordinary group of people.

In April 2023, you may have heard about the Defence Strategic Review (the Review), one of the biggest Defence announcements in recent history. The Review is ultimately about strengthening Australia's national security and ensuring our readiness for future challenges.

One of the important initiatives outlined in the Review is a plan to improve the growth and retention of a highly skilled Defence workforce. This means a number of changes are underway as we reorganise the workforce to best support our people to align with the Review's priorities.

The Review's recommendations will take time to implement and will likely lead to a number of changes that could impact on your family, such as a change of location.

We understand the flow on effect to housing, childcare and education, as well as the support systems you rely upon. Defence Member and Family Support is here to help you with these or any concerns you have navigating Defence life.

If you want to know more about the Review, visit defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review.



New initiatives for you and your family

Defence is committed to the continual improvement of initiatives, services and programs that support our people and their families.

Part of this ongoing commitment are a number of new initiatives released as part of the ADF Employment Offer Modernisation Program.

ADF Employment Offer Modernisation Program

New initiatives delivered under the ADF Employment Offer Modernisation Program recognise and respond to the unique nature of military service, and the impact this has on you and your family. The changes are happening now and will continue into 2024.

There are important changes that can benefit your family, such as housing, the way families are categorised and leave entitlements. Some of the biggest changes are outlined below, but be sure to visit the ADF Modernisation Program website (pay-conditions.defence.gov.au/adf-employment-modernisation) for all of the information.

Housing

Defence families have diverse needs and housing flexibility can make a big difference to your family's circumstances during a posting.

Often families face a number of difficult decisions as they try to balance employment and education with the location of service accommodation.

That's why after listening to your feedback, Defence implemented the Flexible Housing Trial.

The trial allows members who are posting with their family to live further away from their normal place of duty to support a recognised dependant's employment or education. This great initiative has been helping ADF families find much needed balance with their unique family needs.

To find out more, visit pay.conditions.defence.gov.au/housing.

Family categorisation framework

It's not just housing that has become more flexible. We know modern family structures come in all shapes and sizes. In recognition of this, the new categorisation framework can open up travel benefits allowing members to reunite with a family member who doesn't live with them or to visit a child in another state.

There are a few new acronyms to learn, such as **Recognised Other Person** (ROP) and **Non Resident Family** (NRF), you can find out more about the new categories on the Defence website at pay-conditions.defence.gov.au/categorisation-framework.

New and improved leave

From 1 July 2023, ADF personnel have access to new and improved leave conditions including an extra five days of leave per year and access to personal leave.

ADF personnel can access personal leave if:

- a close relative is seriously ill or has died
- they need time away to attend to urgent personal matters
- they or their partner's pregnancy has ended in miscarriage
- they or someone in their household has been the subject of family and domestic violence.

Further improvements are on the way, including the ability for ADF personnel to transfer recreation leave between themselves and their partners if both are serving. These changes are due to come into effect from mid-2024.

With extra investment planned in Defence over the next 12 months, you'll continue to see changes and improvements to pay and conditions.

Keep up to date by signing up to receive the monthly newsletter on Pay and Conditions.

Visit pay-conditions.defence.gov.au/form/newsletter-signup.



Helping veterans and families to transition well

All ADF personnel will experience transition at some point in their ADF career, some may even transition more than once. Transition can take a number of forms, it may mean leaving the ADF, moving to Reserve service or to another Service.

The recent launch of the Veteran Transition Strategy underpins Defence's commitment to ensuring ADF personnel and their families achieve a positive transition. The Strategy outlines six transition priorities focused on early preparation, access to support, family engagement, employment and skill based training, financial literacy, and value and recognition of service.

However, you may not be aware that transition support has been improving since 2017. From an entitlements model, that was based on a member's length of service, through to the establishment of the Joint Transition Authority in 2020 and the development of the needs-based model that we have today.

An important component of the growth in transition support is the integrated support to our people and their families throughout the transition journey.

We know that ADF families experience some of the challenges associated with a military career and therefore go through their own transition process, with their own individual needs.

Families can take the first steps alongside their serving family member by attending a transition seminar. Seminars are open to ADF personnel, their families, support people and friends. Anyone can attend at any time and they are a great first step to learn more about the process and opportunities available post service.

Visit the relaunched transition website to find out more about the support available at defence.gov.au/transition.

Improved health and wellbeing services

ADF Family Health Program

Defence is investing in ADF families through improved health and wellbeing services.

From 1 July 2023, under an expanded ADF Family Health Program, Defence doubled the annual benefit to \$800 per dependant. On top of the existing medical services covered, the expanded funding and new eligible services give families access to a greater range of preventative and wellbeing supports for an active and healthy lifestyle.

Your family's health is a priority. If you haven't yet signed up, get your current serving member to register your family via the ADF Family Health Program at adffamilyhealth.com and start making the most of the services on offer.

Defence is committed to ensuring your family is supported to maintain healthy and active lifestyles.

The ADF FAMILY HEALTH PROGRAM expanded on 1 July to include preventative health items eligible for reimbursements.

The annual benefit **DOUBLED** from \$400 to **\$800** per dependant



Connecting to your community

Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) understand the importance of connecting to your local community.

Whether you are new to the Defence community, just posted to a new location or have been here for a while. Sometimes it can be difficult finding your way and identifying the services you need.



5 tips for staying connected

Here are five things you can do to connect with your local Defence community.



Find your local Defence community house or group

From coast to coast, Defence has community houses with activities for adults, teens and children. Meet friends, attend workshops, find a playgroup or parents group. Each community centre offers various services to Defence families.

“I love attending the Defence community playgroup with my 3 kids, we were made to feel very welcome and the kids love the different themes they come up with each week” – ADF spouse.

To find your local community house or group, visit defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/local-services-events/community-groups



Sign up to your local newsletter

Keep in touch and up to date with what’s happening in your local area. Newsletters are a great source of information with local Defence and community events, as well as important notices about support programs and services available to your family.

Sign up at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/news-resources/area-office-newsletter-subscription



Defence Member and Family Support Events

Don't miss our welcome events where you can meet other ADF families who have also posted to your location, held every year between January and March.

To see a full list of events in your location, visit defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/local-services-events/events



Opt in to Eventbrite notifications

You can stay connected to events in your local area by 'opting in' to receive event notifications via Eventbrite. Each area has a unique Eventbrite page so you can sit back and relax as the events come straight to your phone. Sign up to receive automatic notifications and never miss an event.

Search for your local Eventbrite page at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/local-services-events/events



Call your local Family Liaison Officer

Planning for a move or just arrived in a new location? Among all the planning and logistics, you may also have questions about the new posting location. DMFS is your first point of call, you can contact us any time, day or night. Call 1800 624 608 and ask to speak to your local Family Liaison Officer. We're local so we know the area well.



Join the Defence Member and Family Support Facebook and Instagram pages

Stay connected with your community online. Follow Defence Member and Family Support social media accounts for an easy way to learn about how DMFS programs and services can assist you.



@dmfs_audefence



@DefenceMemberFamilySupport

Highlights from National Families Week 2023

Defence families joined 62,000 other Australians to celebrate National Families Week (NFW) from 15–21 May 2023.

The aim of NFW is to celebrate the vital role that families play in teaching, supporting and nurturing children as they grow. For Defence families, it is an opportunity to celebrate and recognise their unique strength and significant contribution to our Defence community.

NFW events varied across the country, however the themes of resilience, community and connection shone through.

In the Hunter region, the fancy dress was for fun, but the competition was real, as families put their mental and physical skills to the test in the Amazing Race!

Sydney families travelled back in time as they climbed aboard the marvellously restored historic boats at the immersive Maritime Museum.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, the Hon. Matt Keogh joined families in Perth, as they explored the captivating history of early aviation at the Aviation Heritage Museum.



“ We had a wonderful time, it was great to see happy smiling people at each stop and to spend family time together doing such a fun activity. The kids say it was awesome! Amazing! The best fun! ”

– ADF family at the Hunter National Families Week event 2023.



In Canberra, families tackled obstacle courses and bounced sky high at the adrenalin packed Flip Out.



If you missed out this year, keep an eye out for National Families Week events in 2024.

You can stay up to date with all of our events by signing up to your local area newsletter at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/news-resources/area-office-newsletter-subscription

ADF family stories

Supporting ADF families through relocation

Samantha's story

Posting to a new location with its initial challenges can be tricky. Relocation and embracing a new environment brings with it exciting opportunities, but also requires ADF families to navigate difficult decisions that impact children and other dependants.

For Samantha and her family, the move to South Australia at the beginning of 2023 was a difficult transition and it took some time to settle into the new surroundings.

It was during this time that Samantha contacted Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) for guidance. DMFS was able to put Samantha in touch with a Defence Social Worker who could talk through the challenges Samantha and her family were facing.

In particular, Samantha sought advice regarding her child's education and how she could make connections within the Defence community in her new location.

By reaching out to DMFS as soon as she felt she needed assistance, Samantha was able to access a range of services that supported her wellbeing while navigating her family's relocation.

Reflecting on her experience Samantha said "Due to my son's issues at his school, I was struggling with anxiety and feeling very overwhelmed.

"DMFS connected with an Education Liaison Officer and a Defence Social Worker who helped me cope with my anxiety and made me feel less overwhelmed.

"Each service provided me with great understanding and support for my situation and circumstances.

"They provided information about family events and playgroups that my youngest son and I could attend. We are currently attending North East Defence Community Playgroup and have made some new friendships.

I am very grateful for the time and effort that DMFS have given to me and the peace of mind that I have knowing that DMFS is always available if and when I need them."

If you are feeling unsure about any aspect of your military life, reach out to DMFS as soon as possible. Engaging with DMFS early, even before you need direct help, offers you the peace of mind knowing that support is available whenever you need it.

Call DMFS anytime on 1800 624 608.

Email us at MemberAndFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au

Visit our website at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families



“Each service provided me with great understanding and support for my situation and circumstances.”

Defence School Mentor Program

Service life impacts ADF children in various ways. While relocating and changing schools creates exciting opportunities, it can also be a difficult transition for many children and their parents.

To support ADF children with this transition, Defence provides funding to eligible schools to assist with the employment of Defence School Mentors (DSMs). There are over 250 schools participating in the program across the country.

DSMs support the wellbeing of ADF children and families. They also act as advocates within the school community, raising awareness of the impacts of service life on children.

The Goode family from the Hunter Valley in NSW describes the positive impact of their school DSM to their children's welfare.



“Mrs Cork from Medowie Christian School has been amazing!

“She has helped our boys settle into their new school and is always happy to answer any questions and help out in any way.

“She keeps us up to date with different Defence activities happening in the local area and has organised activities for Defence kids to get together and share their experiences.

We would like to thank her for her hard work and ongoing support.”

You can find out more about the role of the DSMs and a list of all schools who take part in the program on our website at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families/family-programs-services/support-for-children/defence-school-mentor-program.

For more information email dsm.program@defence.gov.au



Defence celebrates ADF children with the Child of the ADF Medallion

The new Child of the ADF Medallion recognises the resilience and challenges ADF children experience through having parents in the ADF.

In addition to spending time away from their family members, ADF children may have to relocate, and take up extra responsibilities at home.

The award ceremonies take place around the country and are attended by hundreds of Defence families.

One of this year's medallion recipients is 8-year-old Harry. Harry's father, Air Force Sergeant Mick Dellaca is with 26 Squadron and his role has required him to regularly spend time away from his family.

Harry and his family attended RAAF Base Williamtown to receive the award.



“It's because of all the work I do at home helping Mum when Dad is away...it feels good and really special to have this medal because it's hard when Dad isn't home.”

— Harry (Defence News, 27 July 2023).



Congratulations to all of the 2023 Child of the ADF Medallion recipients!

The Child of the ADF Medallion events are designed to be fun and engaging for the whole family. In addition to receiving the medallion, the children have the opportunity to discover the type of work their ADF family member performs in their role.

This year, children got the opportunity to sit behind the wheel of a fire truck and a quad bike, wear body armour the same weight as them, and bounce surgical hand glove balloons inside an ambulance.

Do you know a child who should be nominated for the Child of the ADF Medallion?

The program is open to all ADF children aged 3 to 18 years.

Nominations can be made for ADF children experiencing any of the following circumstances:

- managing a recent relocation
- connecting to their community after a relocation
- managing a lengthy period of absence due to service requirements
- adaptability and resilience experienced due to a short notice posting, deployment, exercise or other commitment by the ADF member, or
- a difficult family situation.

Nominations can be made throughout the year. The first medallions were awarded during National Family Week 2023.

For more information, contact DMFS on 1800 624 608.

Transition – What’s your game plan?

Tristan’s Story

After 14 years in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), Tristan Smith successfully transitioned from full-time service to be a fire fighter in Western Australia (WA). He has also kept ties with Defence by continuing to serve in the Reserves.

Tristan joined the ADF straight after school in 2008, entering through the ADF GAP Year program. His diverse career included a plumbing apprenticeship, working with the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP), completing the Army Work Diving course, underwater demolitions qualifications and deploying for six months to Iraq.

Following his successful completion of the Basic Clearance Diver Course (BCD) in 2019, Tristan transitioned to the Navy, posting to an Australian Clearance Diving Team.

Reflecting on his transition from the Army to the Navy, Tristan explains “I enjoyed the Army Work Diving course and wanted to go further.”

Following a desire for stability in location and a successful application to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in Western Australia, Tristan transitioned to civilian life in 2022. His advice to people thinking about transition is to make use of all the resources at your disposal.

Tristan said, “It makes life easier. Also work out the reasons why you’re leaving and what you want to do afterwards. Don’t just leave because you’ve had a bad day.

“Make an effort to form friends and an identity outside of your work environment prior to transition. Have a plan B for prospective job opportunities. Transition can be a smooth process provided you put in the effort and ready yourself for it properly.”

Embracing the transition support available, Tristan attended a virtual transition seminar and met regularly with his transition coach, who took him through targeted career transition coaching modules.

Tristan reflected that “Career coaching was a fantastic way to target job opportunities, find out more about yourself and hold yourself accountable. I was keen on being a fire fighter or in rescue choppers, but I knew I needed a plan B, as they are competitive fields. I worked with Yvette from Right Management in Perth and really enjoyed it.

“I still wanted adrenaline, surprise and the physical work, but I also wanted stability in my location. I love people, community engagement and want to make a difference.”

ADF personnel and families experience many ups and downs during their military life, however after a successful career Tristan is grateful for the opportunities the military gave him.

“I’m really grateful for the opportunities it gave me and important lessons it taught me over my career. I started as a nervous, quiet 19 year old and left a confident positive adult ready for the next challenges life will throw at me,” he said.

“ I still wanted adrenaline, surprise and the physical work, but I also wanted stability in my location. I love people, community engagement and want to make a difference. ”



Stay in touch

Defence Member and Family Helpline

Call us anytime on 1800 624 608

The Helpline call centre is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

Email us at memberandfamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au

Visit our website at defence.gov.au/adf-members-families

Find information about services and programs available to ADF families.








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