



Royal Commission Update - Sydney Day 19 - 10 March 2022

RSL References

Positive:

NA

Negative:

NA

General Summary

- Air Force culture presentation
- Expert witness of organisational frameworks for suicide prevention
- No further hearings this week

10,00 - Defence - Air Marshall Mel Hupfeld AO DSC (Chief of Air Force) Warrant Officer Fiona Grasby (Warrant Officer of the Air Force):

Cultural Change Programs

- Pathway to Change 2012, New Horizon (2012) and Our Airforce, Our Culture (2021)
- Significant linkages between the programs - looking to reform personnel systems and processes by reforming culture
- Begins at recruitment - use contract (ManPower) along with significant uniformed presence to recruit - instructed to hire based on cultural values and psychometric testing
- Significant amounts of ongoing training relating to culture for RAAF personnel
- Performance Reporting system - evaluates behaviours, relationship, technical mastery - attachments include rewards, incident reports
- Incident reporting done through Defence Incident Reporting system, Command Critical Information Requirements, and then outside the Chain of Command - Ombudsman, IGADF, public interest disclosures
- Use of surveys - YourSay to workgroup level, Snapshots, Workplace Behaviour Surveys - which can then be reviewed for deeper dives
- RAAF Business Plan includes Measuring and Reporting, including the Airforce Performance & Risk Context, which digs down to the individual officer level or outcome KPIs
- Have seen overall trends in better behaviour - looking to instil at the junior officer level

Significant identified cultural issues

- Hazing and bastardisation
 - Still occurs in some instances in RAAF, trying to stamp out
- Strong teams/tribalism/othering
 - Particular focus on leadership outcomes at all levels
- Hypermasculinity
 - 25.8% participation rate for women in RAAF – aiming for 35% by 2030
 - Need more women in senior leadership – seen slight downturn in female NCOs
 - Will continue to normalise women’s participation in RAAF
- Silence – no jacking
 - Bystander directive issued, including annual training
 - May still be some underreporting of incidents – RAAF admits there is stigma attached to reporting
- Mistreatment
- Career limiting following help-seeking
 - Generally encouraged – seek to remove any negative consequences
- Sexual assault and misconduct
 - Continuing education
 - Support for those who report – person-centric
- Psychological harm from administration processes

Other

- RAAF has lowest rate among all services – hard to determine why this is the case
- Have attempted to follow up with ex-members, although this is primarily DVA’s role, with RAAF assisting
- DV – person-centric approach – relies on perpetrator reporting AVO – can go outside chain of command
- Some elements of program co-design with those with lived experience of suicide/suicidality – no formal peer-to-peer program
- Good overall non-English speaking background recruitment, but need to be better in Senior Leadership – focus of ongoing recruitment

1.30 – Expert Witness – Dr Tony Pisani (SafeSide Prevention) – Suicide prevention, education, culture, organisations, and health systems

- Systemic prevention requires:
 - Promotion of culture of safety and prevention
 - Best practice policies and pathways
 - Workforce education
- SafeSide provides this type of framework for organisation to pursue suicide prevention – currently working with Open Arms and the ADF
- Follows system of:
 - Connect:
 - Asking, collaborating, and committing
 - Assess:
 - Risk

- Resources
 - Foreseeable changes
- Respond:
 - Treatment and mini-intervention
 - Safety plans
 - Contact and observation
 - Team discussion, consultation and referral
- Extend:
 - Extend impact and connection through creating caring contacts i.e. family
 - Shared plans for supports
 - Structured follow-up and supports
- Seek to embed this process in the workforce through high-quality education, sustainable and repeatable actions, group interaction and localised approaches i.e. online learning as a group, which is interactive, accountable and repeatable, and then following this up by creating a Community of Practice
- US Airmen Wingman Connect Program:
 - Upstream strategies focusing on the strengths of teams
 - Positioned as a career development, team development tool – not suicide prevention
 - Focuses on group work interacting to outline each other’s strengths, using language such as guidance, kinship etc.
 - Not largely a health intervention, focused on social networks – peer work and collaboration – forms connections with at-risk members, reducing isolation
 - Demonstrated improved protective factors re. suicide – for those who had previously experienced suicidality they were 5 times less likely to feel isolated, and 3 times better at forming social connections following the program
 - Long-term and ongoing program

For Defence and Veterans:

- Need for use of common language and frameworks
- Sustained effort and commitment
- Don’t place expectations on the person
- Enhance help-seeking by ensuring help is based on what the person needs, not what is better for the system (i.e. application of protocols etc.)
- Need a personalised approach and health system
- High-quality data and testing of interventions for effectiveness
- Wingman approach can be used at the point of transition