# Working with Veterans

Staff training package







### Training purpose

This training is designed to support staff to contribute to supportive working environments for veteran employees by:

- building knowledge of the Australian Defence Force (ADF)
- increasing understanding of the experiences of veterans
- making connections to veteran-friendly practices.



### Training overview



Understanding the ADF

Moving from the ADF to civilian employment

Working with veteran colleagues



### Understanding the ADF

### Learning goal:

This section is designed to enhance your knowledge of the ADF and build awareness of the experiences of veterans.

#### This section will explore:

- the structure and function of the ADF
- culture and identity in the ADF
- ADF values, expectations and practices
- transferability of ADF values and practices to civilian employment.



Thinking about our own experiences and views of serving and ex-serving ADF members is important for understanding any assumptions we might have.

Reflection

#### Take a moment to reflect on the following questions:

- When you think of ADF personnel, what mental image do you form?
- Have you had any experience with ADF personnel or veterans?

As you progress through this training, consider whether the information **supports** or **challenges** any prior assumptions you may have.





The Australian Defence Force's primary responsibility is national defence.

It has bases around the country and conducts both domestic and overseas operations.

Activities are wide-ranging and include:

- international security operations
- border protection
- humanitarian and peacekeeping operations
- natural disaster management and support.

#### **Royal Australian Navy**

The Royal Australian Navy is Australia's **maritime** military force.

#### **Australian Army**

The Australian Army is Australia's **land** military force.

#### **Royal Australian Air Force**

The Royal Australian Air Force is Australia's **air** military force.

### The ADF is one of Australia's largest employers.



Roles in the ADF are diverse. They can range from engineering to healthcare, administration to trades, logistics to management and much more.









Approximately **581,000** Australians have served or currently serve in the ADF (2021 Census)

Approximately 496,000 individuals are ex-serving ADF members (2021 Census)



### The ADF rank system gives the Navy, Army and Air Force their hierarchical structure.

- Ranks define each ADF member's role and responsibilities.
- ADF members can progress through ranks as they gain training and experience.
- ADF members frequently undertake training and are equipped to step up into leadership roles when required.

You can find out more about ADF rank structures and roles via the links below:

- www.navy.gov.au/about/organisation/ranks
- www.army.gov.au/about-us/ranks
- www.airforce.gov.au/about-us/ranks





### It is important for non-veteran staff to have some understanding of ADF values and practices.

### Why?

- This knowledge enables non-veteran staff to build their awareness of the potential cultural differences between ADF and civilian workplaces.
- This knowledge is also useful for supervisors and managers to understand the skills that veterans can bring to their organisation.

### The ADF has a set of core values which all members are expected to live by, both in and out of uniform.



#### **Service**

The selflessness of character to place the security and interests of our nation and its people ahead of my own.

#### Courage

The strength of character to say and do the right thing, always, especially in the face of adversity.

#### Respect

The humanity of character to value others and treat them with dignity.

#### **Integrity**

The consistency of character to align my thoughts, words and actions to do what is right.

#### **Excellence**

The willingness to strive each day to be the best I can be, both professionally and personally.



The Australian Navy, Army and Air Force each have their own mission and culture but ultimately operate under these unified values.

Knowledge link



Consider these core values when thinking about the attributes that veterans can bring to your workplace. These strengths can be utilised across a variety of contexts in your organisation.

## In line with the core ADF values, ADF members are expected to exhibit certain behaviours. These are highly desirable and transferable to the civilian workplace.



- Act with purpose for Defence and the nation
- Be adaptable, innovative and agile
- Collaborate and be team-focused
- Be accountable and trustworthy
- Reflect, learn and improve
- Be inclusive and value others

While these behaviours can be found in civilian workplaces, they have an important role in the ADF.

The unique nature of ADF service, which can involve high-risk and potentially life-threatening contexts, means these practices and values are critical for ADF members.

#### There are also several practices that are central to ADF culture.



These may have great personal significance to those who have served, across both combat and non-combat roles.

Working within a team towards a shared mission

Seeing the broader impact of individual actions

Having a profound sense of camaraderie and purpose



Having a high level of trust in teammates and leaders

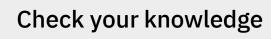
Having a strong work ethic and a high level of orderliness



Respecting and complying with authority



Often these values and practices continue to be important to ex-service people after they have moved from the ADF to civilian employment.





### Q. Which of the following behaviour expectations are central to the ADF?

- A Collaborate and be team-focused
- **B** Reflect, learn and improve
- **C** Be adaptable, innovative and agile
- **D** Act with purpose for Defence and the nation



### A. All of these are behaviour expectations in the ADF.

Collaborate and be team-focused



**B** Reflect, learn and improve



**C** Be adaptable, innovative and agile



**D** Act with purpose for Defence and the nation



ADF members are also expected to:

- Be accountable and trustworthy
- Be inclusive and value others.





### Learning goal:

This section is designed to build awareness of some of the experiences of veterans when moving to civilian employment.

#### This section will explore:

- common features of the ADF transition experience
- transferable skills from service to civilian employment.



### The experience of moving from the ADF is unique for each veteran.

Many people leave the ADF and navigate the transition to civilian life without significant issues.

For others, transitioning from ADF culture into civilian culture can bring significant life changes.



While there can be some common features, transitioning out of the ADF looks different for everyone.



### Approximately 6,000 people leave ADF full-time service each year.

The type of transition that veterans experience is important because it can have an impact on the process of adjustment to civilian life.

Moving from the ADF usually occurs via three pathways:

- Voluntary
- Medical
- Administrative

Most members transition voluntarily, but for others it can feel like the decision has been taken away from them. This can sometimes be the case for medical and administrative discharge.

### Leaving the ADF can involve more than just changing employment.



When leaving the ADF, people can experience a range of life changes, not just new employment.





How would you navigate these kinds of changes?
What support would you find useful from employers or colleagues?



### After leaving the ADF, shared routines, relationships and common values can be lost.

ADF members work in an environment where they share a common purpose and values.

Often there is a strong sense of camaraderie and community due to the routines, team configurations and living arrangements that make the ADF experience unique from other civilian workplaces.

The bonds that are formed through this shared experience can often be stronger than is typical of civilian workplaces.



### After service, veterans bring a range of skills to civilian employment.













Leadership Problem-solving

Communication

Resilience Adaptability

#### **Veterans are a diverse workforce**

Veterans have specialist qualifications and technical expertise sought after in a range of fields.

#### Veterans have a world-class skillset

Members of the ADF receive world-class training. They have developed a skillset that is otherwise difficult to obtain and expensive to cultivate in new employees.

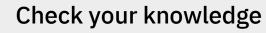
Many of the skills and capabilities that veterans have developed in the ADF are readily transferable to the civilian workforce.

### Veterans can give your business a competitive advantage

Veterans have an extensive range of skills, abilities and attributes that make them valuable employees. In an increasingly competitive labour market, access to experienced and highly skilled candidates is an advantage.

#### **Veterans are values-driven**

Veterans are known for having integrity, loyalty, self-discipline, perseverance and demonstrating a dedicated work ethic.

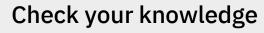




### Q. Which of the following statements are true?

A Leaving the ADF usually occurs via two pathways.

**B** The majority of ADF members transition voluntarily.





**A** Leaving the ADF usually occurs via two pathways.



False.

Moving on from the ADF occurs via **three** pathways:

- voluntary
- medical
- administrative.

B The majority of ADF members transition voluntarily.



#### True.

The majority of ADF members transition out voluntarily and this can be for a range of reasons.

While there are some common aspects of transition, each veteran will have a unique experience of moving on from the ADF, with most navigating this change smoothly.



### Working with veteran colleagues

### **Learning goal:**

This section is designed to help you translate your knowledge into practice.

#### This section will explore:

- ways you can support veterans in the workplace
- where to go for further information.



### How closely do your beliefs align with these statements?

Veterans can make a significant positive difference in the workplace.

All veterans have different experiences, strengths and needs. Workplaces should endeavour to understand the veteran experience, take full advantage of their strengths, and provide support where necessary.

It is important to consult with your veteran employees when developing veteran initiatives in the workplace.

Workplaces can take practical steps to improve how they support veteran employment.

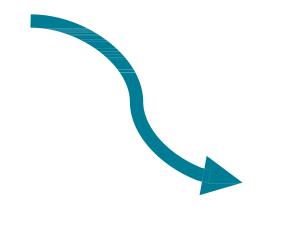
Veteran employees' valuable skills and experiences can be overlooked in the civilian workplace.





1

Know your organisation's veteran support programs, policies and practices.



2

Commit to continuing to build your knowledge and understanding.

1



### Know your organisation's veteran support programs, policies and practices.

Reflection

#### Does your organisation provide any veteran supports?

These programs might relate to:

- on-boarding
- mentoring
- developing social connections.



Knowing what programs your organisation provides means you can refer colleagues or employees to them. Depending on the program, there may also be ways you can get involved.





### Know your organisation's veteran support programs, policies and practices.

**Activity** 



Take a moment to locate your organisation's veteran-specific policies.

These policies may relate to:

- leave and working arrangements
- health and wellbeing
- commemoration.



Knowing your organisation's veteran-specific policies and how they relate to your role is important for being able to effectively support veteran employees.



### Commit to continuing to build your knowledge and understanding.

To create and maintain a supportive work environment for veteran employees in your organisation, it is important to be open to learning more about the ADF and the experiences of veterans.

#### This might involve:

Reflection

- collaborating with veteran employees
- having guest speakers at commemorative events
- establishing opportunities for staff to learn more about the veteran experience.



What connections does your organisation currently have with the veteran community?

#### **Understanding commemoration**



Commemoration plays an important role in the lives of currently serving and ex-serving individuals and families.



- Commemoration is the practice of taking time to reflect upon the service and sacrifice of ADF members.
- Opportunities for the community to participate in commemoration include two major days in the Australian context



- Anzac Day (April 25th)
- Remembrance Day (November 11th).

The Veteran Employment Program provides advice on commemorating service in the workplace.

www.veteransemployment.gov.au/employers-how-support-your-veteran-employees/commemorating-service



Supporting veteran employees to attend or participate in commemoration demonstrates your support for the veteran community.

### How you support veterans can look different depending on your role in your organisation.



**Human Resources staff** 

Human Resources staff can draw upon their knowledge of the ADF and veteran experiences when advertising roles, recruiting new staff and providing ongoing HR support to veteran employees.

**Supervisors** 

Supervisors can draw upon their knowledge of the ADF and veteran experiences when organising mentoring opportunities and managing teams.

**Colleagues** 

Employees can draw upon their knowledge of the ADF and veteran experiences to contribute to a supportive working environment and interact respectfully with veteran colleagues.

### Here are some simple ways you can support veteran employees in the recruitment phase.



### Job advertising

Making your job advertising more veteraninclusive can help you attract veteran talent.



To target job advertisements at veterans, you should refer to ADF capabilities and attributes in job advertisement and descriptions.

### Job application

Tailoring your job application processes to veterans will show you value veteran applicants' skills and experience.



Staff members who assess job applications from veterans should consider their ADF background when translating their experience into the organisational context.

Ask clarification questions where needed.

#### **Interviewing**

Using veteran-friendly techniques when interviewing a veteran can assist them to showcase their skills and strengths.



Staff members who interview veterans for roles should consider their ADF experience and skills. Some may not be experienced in civilian interview processes so reframing questions or asking additional prompts can help.

### Here are some simple ways you can support veteran employees in the support and retention phases.



**On-boarding** 

Focused and structured support during on-boarding can be beneficial for veterans.



Those involved in on-boarding veteran employees should have a general understanding of the ADF and veteran experiences to allow them to tailor on-boarding processes as needed.

Career development

Tailored mentoring and career development opportunities can support veterans as they build their civilian career.



Supervisors and career mentors can consider tailoring guidance and opportunities based on their veteran employees' capabilities and experience.

Commemorating service in the workplace

Commemorative activities demonstrate recognition of service and support for the veteran community.



Staff organising commemoration in the workplace should be aware of the history and culture of the ADF plus the veteran experience. This knowledge supports staff to be respectful and considerate. Veterans should be consulted where possible.

### Other ways you can build a veteran inclusive workplace:



Connecting with veterans

Developing a veteran employment strategy

Veteran-friendly policies and practices

Demonstrating leadership and forming partnerships

Evaluating your veteran employment initiatives

For more information about recruiting and supporting veterans

visit the Veteran Employment Program website <a href="https://www.veteransemployment.gov.au">www.veteransemployment.gov.au</a>



