

28 June 2024

Re: Working together with State and Territory Governments to support ADF Family Employment

Dear Premiers and Chief Ministers,

The Defence Families of Australia (DFA) team urges State and Territory governments to consider the unique needs of the families of serving members in their public sector employment programs.

As the official Australian Defence Force (ADF) families advisory body to the Minister for Defence Personnel and Chief of the Defence Force, DFA advocates for ongoing improvement in policy and practical support.

We acknowledge we cannot remove all potential challenges faced by Defence families. Through our advocacy and by providing advice to key decision makers, DFA aims to reduce the height and frequency of hurdles, prepare families to overcome them, and where possible, remove them completely.

Veteran employment programs have been implemented by all states and territories across Australia. Notably, Victoria recently announced that it would be extending its program of employing veterans in the public sector, after repeatedly reaching targets ahead of schedule. Noting that the families of serving members face significant challenges in their employment, DFA asks that similar programs be implemented for Defence families.

Defence partners are more likely than the general public to be tertiary educated, yet also more likely to be unemployed¹. With approximately 43,000 partners of ADF (Permanent) members in Australia (2021 Australian Census), the under-optimised sector of the labour market represented by Defence partners alone is significant.

We posit that ADF family employment is a gendered issue, from the fact that most recognised adult ADF family members are women². We believe in the current climate for women, particularly with the focus on the gender pay gap and women's safety, that taking steps to ensure the economic security of the mostly female population of Defence partners is critical to ensuring their continued safety.

We must also consider the employment and tertiary education challenges of other recognised family members, including teenage and young-adult children of military personnel, who may

¹ 2019 Defence Census - 8% of Defence partners were unemployed and seeking work, a further 11% were unemployed and not looking.

² 2019 Defence Census - 90% of ADF(P) members are attracted to persons of a different sex. Approx 80% of serving members are male. Male serving members are more likely than female serving members to be in a recognised relationship.

experience disruption of their education, challenges in maintaining trade training, and other hurdles related to entering the workforce while their parent is serving.

While veterans may face one major life transition which significantly impacts their employment, the civilian family's employment is impacted throughout the entire Defence lifecycle. This includes the member's transition from service, when the cumulative effect of all of the family's career sacrifices result in lower superannuation balances, fewer career progression opportunities, loss of seniority and general economic security challenges.

Families are a cohort with unique needs, challenges and strengths to the veteran community; however, they have significant transferable skills gained through a life of supporting service, which make them quality employees. It is critical that any program designed for Defence families considers the unique needs of supporting service³. A successful Defence family employment program would foster opportunities for families that include flexible work arrangements, as well as remote working for those located regionally, and the option to retain positions upon relocation.

We are grateful for your consideration of the unique challenges of the Defence family, particularly in regard to their employment. DFA's lead for family employment advocacy is Ashley Smith, our Victoria and Tasmania National Delegate. You are welcome to contact her, or your local National Delegate if you require any clarification of DFA's role, or if you would like to discuss issues concerning Defence families further.

Yours Faithfully,



Monique Sutera

National Delegate – Southern
Queensland
0418 939 675
sth.qld@dfa.org.au



Melody Song

National Communications Officer
0419 781 079
communications@dfa.org.au



Larissa Ostermann

National Delegate – Northern Queensland
0418 796 561
nth.qld@dfa.org.au



Samantha Cooper

National Delegate – Northern
Territory and Kimberley
0418 807 548
nt@dfa.org.au



Mike Wall

National Projects Officer
0434 058 293
projects@dfa.org.au



Tracey Nutt

National Digital Communications
and Marketing Officer
0438 821 717
marketing@dfa.org.au



Kerry Prier

National Delegate – South
Australia
0439 315 973
sa@dfa.org.au



Ashley Smith

National Delegate – Victoria
and Tasmania
0419 668 495
vic.tas@dfa.org.au

³ Defence members are more likely than any other profession to relocate, more likely than the general population to be away on any given night, and more likely than the general population to work over 50 hours per week (2021 Australian Census)