

DFWA Submission dated 18 August 2021

To:

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

**DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION
(QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED)**



**SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION AND
LONELINESS IN QUEENSLAND**

John Lowis
President

18 August 2021

DEFENCE FORCE WELFARE ASSOCIATION – QUEENSLAND INCORPORATED (DFWAQ)
SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN QUEENSLAND

Introduction

1. DFWA was formed as the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association in 1958 at the urging of federal parliamentarians as there was no organisation representing the interests of serving ADF members and their families to government. At that time, the standing Army had recently been created and legislation changes concerning superannuation pensions, affecting serving members and obviously affecting them after service, were being introduced. There was no organisation addressing the welfare of those leaving the regular forces or protecting the conditions of service of those serving. At that time, existing ex-service organisations (ESO) such as the RSL were concerned with “returned” servicemen and Legacy was concerned only with the widows and dependents of those who did not return.
2. Ministerial approval was given to form the Association and the word “welfare” in the title was crucial for that decision. The term “Regular” was dropped from the name in 2007, in recognition of the changed circumstances in which regular full time and reserve members of the ADF now serve.
3. **Our Purpose.** The DFWA purpose is to support the interests and wellbeing of both serving and ex-serving members of the ADF and their families. We have official ADF and Defence recognition for this role.
 - a. We are an Authorised Intervener at Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal on Pay and Conditions of Service hearings. For example, we represent the interests of currently serving ADF members, especially on the Workplace Remuneration Arrangement hearings every three years.
 - b. We are the official ADF Member representative on the national Emergency Services Industry Reference Committee managing recognition of training across the industry. Other members are emergency service unions and emergency services employer and the Defence employer representatives.
4. DFWA is also a founding member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organizations (ADSO) and has acted as the spokesperson for the 18 Ex-Service Organisations making up ADSO, all with members in Queensland¹.
5. While we provide some veteran services at an individual level, our focus is advocacy: making submissions at the political level, to judicial, administrative and government entities and inquiries, and the media. We are on DVA working groups looking at legislation changes now initiated by the Productivity Commission. Along with Legacy, we were on the DVA working group that was involved with the introduction of Veterans’ Covenant legislation at the national level. We work directly with the bureaucracy and are members of ministerial consultative forums. We also give evidence regularly at Senate committee hearings. We have had three this year. As a result, we have early notice and input

¹ ADSO comprises The Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA), Naval Association of Australia (NAA), Air Force Association (AFA), Royal Australian Regiment Corporation (RARC), Australian Special Air Service Association (ASASA), the Australian Federation of Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Ex-Service Men and Women, the Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia, Partners of Veterans Association of Australia, Royal Australian Armoured Corps Corporation (RAACC), the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia (NMBVAA), Defence Reserves Association (DRA), Australian Gulf War Veterans Association, Australian Commando Association, the War Widows Guild of Australia, Military Police Association Australia (MPAA), the Australian Army Apprentices Association, the Women Veterans Network, and the Combat Support Association.

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into veteran and serving ADF initiatives related to the wellbeing of many of those veteran communities in Queensland and the possible interactions of those activities with state and NGO provided services.

6. DFWAQ welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry (the Inquiry) by the Community Support and Services Committee into Social Isolation and Loneliness in Queensland. DFWAQ regards this as an important Inquiry for current and former members of the ADF and their families and has worked in collaboration with RSL Qld in preparation of our submissions. DFWAQ does not provide the range or depth of services which are relevant to social isolation and loneliness that the RSL does. The number of RSL Qld sub-branches and members throughout Queensland, especially remote and rural locations, enable the provision of veteran services across the state. Importantly for this Inquiry, it enables the provision of valuable lived data of government and non-government services availability in Qld communities and the factors impinging on social isolation and loneliness. DFWAQ fully supports the RSL Qld submission.

7. DFWAQ Submission Outline. The submission is made in two main parts:

a. Currently Serving ADF and Families

- i. ADF Families as a Distinct Group
- ii. The ADF Posting System
- iii. The Challenges for the ADF Family Moving to a New Location, often Interstate
- iv. Leveraging Government Entities' Activities and Practices to Address Social Isolation and Loneliness
- v. Annex A: State Department Submissions and Defence Leverage Opportunities and Challenges Table.

b. ADF Members and Families Who Have Transitioned

- i. Available Services
- ii. Service Awareness and Access
- iii. At-Risk Veterans
- iv. Recommendation

CURRENTLY SERVING ADF AND FAMILIES

8. Veterans are representative of the general makeup of the Queensland population. While those still serving are generally looked after by the ADF, their families generally are not. Often the families will access state provided services. Because of the moving around, families can bear the brunt of loneliness and social isolation and often are not aware of or able to access the significant level of support available through state provided services.

ADF Families as a Distinct Group

9. ADF Families face the same issues in life as do other families in Australia and, of course, Queensland. In most studies related to social isolation and loneliness, and in submissions by the various Qld Government Departments, certain groups have been identified as being vulnerable, and at risk. These included² those:

² For example, Queensland Youth Strategy, Page 5. and in several departmental submissions

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- a. of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin,
 - b. living with disability,
 - c. carers, and
 - d. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex.
10. Families of serving ADF members posted to and serving in Queensland would include people from all these groups in about the same proportion as the rest of the population. They would logically also be at risk of those non-ADF in those groups, as would the family accompanying an ADF member posted an ADF unit in a remote and rural area of Queensland.
11. By the nature of ADF postings, a family relocating into a new area, starts off already socially isolated from the receiving community:
- They start out as vulnerable.
 - They are strangers.
 - They are only going to be in the area for a short time.
 - They face the challenge of not only physically settling into the community and accessing normal services, but also being accepted, welcomed to be a valued part of that community, before being moved on, yet again.
12. This added factor of vulnerability and consequent risk applies to all members of the ADF family; it would only increase the vulnerability and risk to those members in the previously mentioned groups already recognised as being at risk.
13. The unique nature of military service and the families which support that service has been recognised in the Australian Veterans' Recognition (Putting Veterans and their Families First) Bill 2019 which presents the Australian Defence Veterans Covenant³. The Covenant provides the framework that enables veterans and their families to better connect with their community. The need for more informed support of the veteran and family was recognised in the latest census, which seeks data about ADF service, as well as data from other at-risk groups.
14. However, there are still significant politico/cultural barriers to ADF Families being brought into the umbrella of this Inquiry. In discussions, the following views have been expressed:
- a. *Serving ADF are a Federal responsibility, and the Commonwealth should bear the expense and responsibilities for families. It is not a Qld state responsibility. ADF families just have to fit in with state provided services. We can't adjust to suit them. They are not disadvantaged. ADF are well paid and get lots of benefits.*
 - b. *Serving ADF Families are only in Qld location for a short period, they are not long term residents, so State has no long term responsibilities for them now or in later life. They are not really Queenslanders.*
 - c. *Defence will not be making a submission to the Qld Inquiry. We have The Defence Community Organisation which looks after families in all states and have programs to welcome new arrivals.*

³ <https://recognition.dva.gov.au/>

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We can't enter into special arrangements just with Qld. Anything we do has to be done by Canberra with all state governments. Therefore, the Qld Inquiry is irrelevant to Defence.

- d. There is no point in getting transient ADF families involved in community organisations or on committees as they are only here for a short time and don't know the ropes so cannot add value or make a long commitment needed for those organisations.*
- e. Any expense and resources used to address inclusivity problems and get ADF Families being included in local/state communities are wasted, as the family will be moved on and therefore no long-term inclusivity of individual families with that community is possible. Their moving away will be disruptive to the community organisation. That's their life, they chose it.*

15. There are many counters to those views. However, just the expression of and acting on such views only contribute to feelings of social isolation. ADF Families are Qld residents. They pay taxes, including stamp duty on home purchases and are heavily penalised if they are posted and have to sell before the stamp duty concession period lapses. They contribute to local government rates. They vote.
16. A bit of understanding of ADF Family life experience and challenges faced, and which can contribute to feelings of social isolation and loneliness of ADF members, partners and their children, would assist the Inquiry considerations.

The ADF Posting System

17. Serving ADF members are moved frequently to new jobs as part of gaining experience and for career progression. While members may express interest in a particular next job and location, the decision rests entirely with the ADF "system". Any posting is compulsory. The needs of the service take priority over individual interests. A posting cannot be refused by the member. When the member is moved, the ADF relocation service covers the cost of moving the member and his or her family to the new location. The posting normally occurs in the December-January period. A notice of posting of 6 months is about average, giving time for planning, however as little notice of a couple of weeks, is not uncommon.
18. The ADF family may choose to stay in the old location. This is a personal decision as it involves separation of the family unit. It occurs most frequently, when a move would disrupt children's education, especially an interstate move in the latter years of secondary school and apprenticeship/TAFE/university courses. Other factors influencing such a decision is the ADF member's partner's employment or education plans. The "staying" partner becomes for much of the time a "single parent" and all that entails. Such a family separation can obviously contribute to social isolation and loneliness.

The Challenges for the ADF Family Moving to a New Location, often Interstate

19. The following scenarios show the challenges faced by ADF Families which can lead to long term disadvantage. The ADF Member moves into a new job and will be absent from home for varying and unpredictable tasks away. The Member's partner and their children may be on their own. The partner and the family are without the extended family support, have no connections in the local community and may have no established connections in the local ADF community. There is social isolation and the ill-effects of this are exacerbated in "many little ways". Akin to death by a thousand cuts.
20. **Family Accommodation.** While Defence Housing provides some Married Quarters, not all families are catered for, and many would prefer not to be involved with Defence Housing. Many families, often with

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the ADF member away, face the prospect of finding rental accommodation in the new location/state where often the rules and practices differ from their previous experience. Common difficulties include:

- a. providing references for agents, when they have not rented privately before;
- b. last addresses being interstate;
- c. a sometimes “stigma” of unruly “military” as bad tenants;
- d. the need to be able to break a lease without penalty if the ADF suddenly posts the ADF member to a new location; and
- e. finding areas providing schooling suitable to family needs, including continuity with previous curriculum, subjects, or special needs.

21. Education of Partner and Children. Common difficulties include:

- a. Children with Special Needs, which were being addressed in the family’s previous location, may require re-assessment in the new school or state system, but find that the assessments for the coming year have been completed and fund/resources are already allocated for that school.
- b. Changing schools, especially in secondary schools, the subjects available may not be same as in previous location. While some schools have employed Defence School Mentors (DSM), funded by Defence, DSM are not available at all schools with ADF family students.
- c. Technical and Apprenticeships. The training available and the requirements for apprenticeships and trade qualifications can vary between states. While there is general recognition of completed qualifications in each state, the situation is less certain for incomplete qualifications and subject recognition.
- d. Staying Put. Often, to avoid disruption to education, the ADF member may be posted away, but the family remains in situ so as not to disrupt children’s or partner’s education. This can exacerbate social isolation.

22. State and Local Government Provided Services. Apart from education, families are also dependent on state provided services.

- a. **Health Services, incl NDIS.** For many of these, there can be waiting lists in the state or locality. Members of the arriving family may be placed at the bottom of the local list even after being on the waiting list for considerable period in the previous location. They may even have been receiving treatment/support at the previous location, which is not available at the new location. This occurs in both interstate and intrastate moves
- b. **Medical and Other Appliances.** As with health services, there are often waiting lists. Additionally, when posted away, there may be a requirement to hand-back an appliance already provided, e.g., mobility equipment and text to voice devices.

23. Employment. While this is mainly concerned with the accompanying partner (male or female) of the ADF member, it can also apply to dependent children.

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- a. For some occupations there is a requirement to register separately in each state if one wants employment in that state, generally at a cost and often involving a period of probation, regardless on years of experience. Seniority, and remuneration, are sometimes based on length of time registered in the state.
- b. Employers are sometimes reluctant to hire ADF partners because they are regarded as short term. There is reluctance to allocate resources to train and subsequently, the ADF partner may miss out on career advancement.
- c. When competing for a position against a less transient candidate, the ADF family member tends to miss out.

24. **Social Inclusion.** Many are familiar with joining an established group, be it work, organisation, sport or social group. Cliques are common and often form a barrier to new people joining. There are jokes about people moving to a village and being regarded as a newcomer, even after 20 years. For many spouses/partners and children, it is totally new experience.

- a. For many new ADF Families, the first posting is away from where the ADF Family formally got together, where they met and the social groups they were in, and probably, where the new partner's family was located. The social infrastructure that supported them in the old location, is no longer there. They are no longer part of a social infrastructure is able to assist, advise, pass on hints, explained how things worked and where you could find a good GP, dentist or mechanic.
- b. For the family, it involves engaging with completely new people, e.g., at work, school or social settings. The civilian groups they are engaging with are well established in the community and social settings. There is often resistance to newcomers, especially those who aren't going to be permanent and will only temporarily feature in their lives. Engaging can be difficult, especially with new ways of doing things.
- c. One ADF partner lamented that ADF kids were treated differently and were often excluded at school. A sympathetic local parent explained it was not personal. She had told her kids *it was better to make friends with local kids rather than the army kids because they would be posted away and that friendship would be lost*. Apparently her eldest child was very upset when her best friend (an Army brat) left at short notice and contact had been lost, and she did not want her other kids to suffer the same.
- d. Others had reported that some established families have preconceived unfavourable opinion of ADF members and their families (and Police families.)
- e. Recent publicity concerning allegations of war crimes by ADF members in Afghanistan has affected ADF children attending schools. Other children have said words to the effect of "*your father is a murderer*". The Trials concerning the alleged war crimes will last for at least five more years,

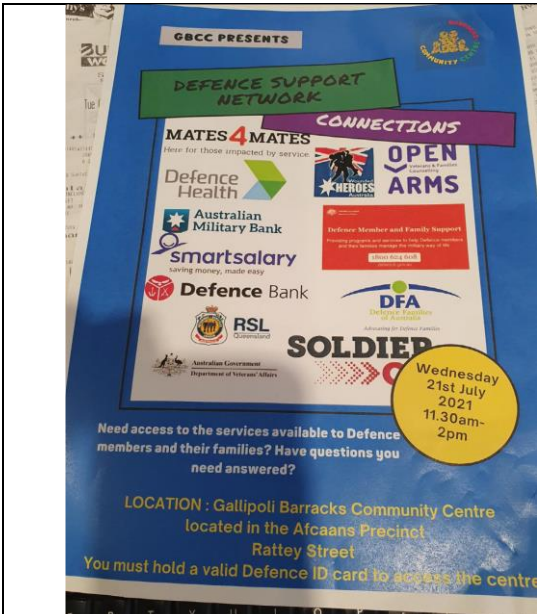
25. While many of these issues are in themselves small, they are encountered to a greater or lesser extent when the ADF family is relocated intra- or interstate, These issues are not generally encountered by the comparatively static established communities. The issues or similar, are frequently experienced by all transient families and contribute to social isolation and loneliness and the issues that spring from it.

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26. While the ADF/Defence has made attempts to address many of these issues, most are related to state service delivery and local government type services provided to Queensland residents and local communities generally. Co-ordinated and complimentary work by all levels of government is required. In some areas, this has been addressed, e.g., Defence provides funds to schools with a high ADF children population to enable the school to employ a Defence School Mentor, to assist in educational issues of the transient (often interstate) ADF children moving from school to school.
27. These issues are not raised to present the ADF member and the ADF families as needy victims. They are presented to reveal the sort of challenges that the ADF families face that are not normally encountered so frequently by the “normal” community. The support that is provided is identified where possible.

LEVERAGING GOVERNMENT ENTITIES' ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

28. **Serving ADF Families.** While the ADF's *The Defence Member and Family Support* (formerly Defence Community Organisation) does provide support, these tend to be addressed bureaucratically. There may, in some areas be a “welcome to district” event organised by Defence, and this is often, more a welcome to the Defence community in the area, not the broader community. There may be a sizeable local ADF community, where such events can bring numerous organisations together with a sizeable number of new ADF Families arriving. e.g., Townsville and Ipswich, or the ADF Family numbers may be very small, e.g., in remote areas such as Weipa. Also, many families today prefer a broader engagement with the general community, especially for their children, rather than living and breathing “defence” 24/7 in a largely ADF enclave or social circle.
29. In large ADF population areas, there are sometimes periodic events organised by Defence to assist ADF Families make contact with community services. But the events often exclude those community services outside the Defence wire. See below.



The displayed flyer indicates Defence activities supporting ADF Families linking up with Community Services. Unfortunately, it is limited to Defence related entities and some ESOs which have access to the Defence area. There is information on services from the local community in which the Defence Family lives

30. DFWAQ has noted the submissions of various Qld government departments to this Inquiry. We have linked those submissions with the earlier section (para 18-20) on “The Challenges for the ADF Family Moving to a New Location, often Interstate”, where those challenges can be supported by utilising

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current activities mentioned in the Queensland Government Department submissions and our knowledge of other federal government activities in those areas.

31. In the Leverage Table at Annex A, comments and supplementary information are provided where opportunities for better co-operation and service delivery exist and may assist in leveraging existing silo and solo efforts by individual entities.

ADF MEMBERS AND FAMILIES WHO HAVE TRANSITIONED

Available Services

32. Those veterans who have transitioned from the ADF are a different matter. They may be located anywhere in the state, and they are unique in that they may be able to access services that are not available to the general population, as a result of their service. Specifically, these services may be provided through:
- a. Department of Veterans Affairs for treatment of service caused injuries and if entitled payment of pensions, children's education assistance and more. A comprehensive list of all DVA support to veterans is on their web site www.dva.gov.au.
 - b. Open Arms for counselling and mental health support as well as wellness programs. Access to Open Arms - veterans and families counselling is through their web site www.openarms.gov.au or on their 24hr crisis support number 1800 011 046. Not only do OpenArms provide counselling their web site contains numerous tools to assist veterans maintain a sense of wellbeing.
 - c. Legacy, which provides long-term social, emotional, developmental and financial support to the families of Australia's veterans. www.legacy.com.au
 - d. Queensland Veterans Portal <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/veterans> which addresses the state and federal services that may be available to veterans in the areas of:
 - i. Employment
 - ii. Family support
 - iii. Accommodation and housing
 - iv. Ex service organisation directory
 - v. Health and wellbeing
 - vi. Financial and legal support.
 - vii. Support from Ex Service Organisations (ESO).

Service Awareness and Access

33. As mentioned, veterans may reside anywhere in the state and may already be using state services. It behooves the state to ensure that those agencies that provide services to Queenslanders are aware that some may be veterans. If a veteran accesses such services such as health and mental health, transport, housing, education, employment and training, sport and recreation, community services and facilities, the state should record it and then, with a veterans permission suggest they contact an advocate to enable forensic examination of their service to find out if they may be able to access any

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veteran unique support. All veterans who have served in the ADF for more than one day will be entitled to treatment for but not necessarily compensation for mental health issues and some cancers.

At-Risk Veterans

34. The veterans most at risk are those who live in country areas although a veteran and their family in a city, who are cut off from their support network as a result of being transitioned or relocated can also feel social isolation and loneliness. They may not have any veteran specific support near them, or if they do, know how to access it. The RSL often has a presence in country towns but if the sub branch is only small they may not have the advocates to help them. (See the RSL Qld submission.) It is not reasonable for state, local government employees or other philanthropic organisations to be aware of the full range veteran unique support that may be available to transitioned Veterans.
35. If a veteran wants help it will be up to them to ask. The question is who? The suggestion is that the state government produce a brochure in consultation with DVA, RSL, Legacy and other major ESO detailing support a veteran may access if they feel a need. While it is acknowledged there is still a certain amount of angst from some veterans in relation to the RSL, the RSL do have the capability in the form of paid advocates and the ability to help remotely using meeting technology. Furthermore, both the RSL Qld and the Queensland Veterans Portal have a listing of other ESO who could help.
36. For a number of very good reasons, veterans prior to 1992 left the ADF and were subsumed into Australian society. With the exception of those that were DVA clients (approx 20% of those who transition) there was no reason for either Defence or DVA to maintain any contact. The estimate is that these veterans number in the tens of thousands. Now all these veterans are entitled, at least, to have treatment for any mental health conditions and some cancers paid for by DVA under Non Liability Health Care and if there are any conditions that are deemed to be service related they can get treatment and possibly a level of compensation.

Recommendation

37. The State Government through the Queensland Office of Veterans work with DVA and other ESO to develop a brochure detailing the unique support available to veterans and distribute it to all State Government offices that have contact with the public and any other philanthropic organisations that may be supporting the community. Consideration should also be given to putting the same information in senior magazines, local papers and social media and publicised through the Qld Veterans Portal.

Leveraging

38. There are many services provided by Qld government departments which are relevant to addressing social isolation the community generally and are equally applicable to settled veterans and transitioning veterans and their families. As illustrated above and as detailed in the RSL Qld submission, additional services beneficial for addressing social isolation and loneliness issues, are also available specifically for veterans and their families from Defence, DVA, the RSL and other Ex-Service Organisations.
39. Leveraging these Qld provided services with those services provided by Defence and DVA requires coordination at the delivery end, the local level, and with appropriate governance at Qld State level and at the Federal level. Federal funding may be required to adequately resource service delivery and coordination. Those are obvious matters for the Veterans' Ministerial Council and should be pursued for the benefit of the veteran community sub-group and for the Queensland Community as a whole. where Qld is represented from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

40. DFQAQ agrees with RSL Qld that the Office of Veterans within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) is the key connection to working together to address the issues of social isolation and loneliness impacting on the serving and former serving ADF members and their families. There are clearly opportunities for leveraging various services across Qld government departments and with veteran organisations. There is also clearly a role for the planned Queensland Veterans' Council supported by the Veterans' Reference Group.

ANNEX:

- A. State Department Submissions and Defence Leverage Opportunities and Challenges Table

ANNEX A

State Department Submissions and Defence Leverage Opportunities and Challenges Table

| Ser | From State Department Submission | DFWAQ Comment – Recommendations |
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| 1. | <p>Department of Education</p> <p>Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework <i>... to implement and strengthen their whole-school approach, ensuring all students learn in an environment where they feel accepted, respected, included and supported by others.</i></p> <p>Student Wellbeing Package <i>.... Identify early signs of any concerns that may negatively impact students' ability to form and maintain positive relationships and to provide support or refer to other wellbeing professionals where required</i></p> | <p>Schools should be aware that ADF students are in an “at risk” category along with other “transient” students.</p> <p>Mentors Defence provides funding for schools to employ Defence School Mentors. Usually those with high ADF Children population. e.g. Mitchelton SHS.</p> <p>Schools with ADF Children should be aware of the support that Defence can provide schools to address education problems.</p> <p>Schools with smaller ADF student population may miss out. Regional education may be able to engage Defence School Mentors to service a number of schools with only small ADF population. Schools may need to be prompted to identify where ADF children are using state education services and Regional education authorities then seek Defence School Mentor funding.</p> <p>Recommendation The department should ensure that regional offices and schools are aware of the support provided by Defence for Defence School Mentors and leverage funding to provide the necessary support for all ADF Family students in all schools.</p> <hr/> <p>Solo Defence Family Students.</p> <p>Defence has grants for older children accommodation costs for 3 years if family moves and the student is left behind to complete schooling. Solo students without adult supervision can bring risk itself and requires formalisation of this arrangement between parents and appropriate adult persons, funded perhaps as is by Defence School Mentors.</p> <p>Recommendation This matter should be raised at the Veterans' Ministerial Council. Any need for formal supervisory arrangements should be investigated. If a need is identified Qld and other states should pursue Defence funding.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Department of Seniors, Disability Services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.</p> <p><i>“... the department's objectives to promote inclusion and access to programs and services and foster safe and connected communities.</i></p> | <p>The Defence Special Needs Support Group Inc (http://dsnsq.org.au/what-we-do/) has taken on responsibility for raising awareness of the difficulties that ADF families face at a State and Federal level in dealing with family members with disabilities.</p> <p>Family Carers</p> |

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| | <p><i>All Queensland Government departments and statutory bodies must promote and support the principles of the Queensland Carers Charter, when providing services and supporting staff</i></p> <p>All Abilities Queensland: <i>Opportunities for all, aimed to address social isolation by creating an inclusive community.</i></p> | <p>The ADF member's partner is generally the Carer of a disadvantaged family member. There is anecdotal evidence that not all Qld departments regard ADF Family Carers as being included in the Queensland Carers Charter.</p> <p>Recommendations Qld Departments should apply these principles (of the Queensland Carers Charter) consistently and recognise responsibility to ADF families resident in Qld, and not "isolate" them</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Areas for Attention There are difficulties which contribute to the social isolation of those mobile, transient ADF families coping with disabilities and special needs. Areas requiring attention include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing waiting list time ADF Families moving into new area. (Early Intervention programmes, therapy services, equipment supply, respite services and post-school options). • Standardising criteria for the inclusion of children with special needs in educational settings. State to State • Obtaining standardised services from the various disability information agencies throughout Australia. • Standardising and reducing assessments from one service provider or education authority to another. • Transfer of disability equipment across State and Territory borders where that equipment is on loan from that State / Territory equipment scheme. • Enable people transferring to a different location on a long term basis to access services according to relative need rather than time spent on a waiting list. • Portability of Post-school options and respite package funding. <p>Recommendation It is recommended that these issues be addressed at the Veterans' Ministerial Council with a view for federal funding to assist state, including Qld, address these issues.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Govt and Planning</p> <p><i>The Community Hubs and Partnerships (CHaPs) program is leading the way in Queensland in delivering the SSI best practice place-based approach to social infrastructure. The expertise and</i></p> | <p>The Oasis Centre in Townsville provides a hub for current and former ADF Personnel, and Families, mainly those in transition. The veteran Community is 20% of Townsville.</p> <p>The federal Department of Veteran Affairs are also creating hubs. A Wellbeing Hub was funded for SE Qld. There has been limited consultation with stakeholders at this stage.</p> |

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| | <p><i>knowledge of the CHaPs team is assisting social infrastructure agencies to strengthen their existing practices, adopt innovative approaches, make better use of existing infrastructure and leverage new investments to deliver broader community outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>In particular, integrated services hubs can provide a place for people to make connections through 'soft entry' approaches to service delivery which focus on creating a neutral and nonthreatening environment that individuals can engage with at will, and on building foundational trusting relationships to be able to support and empower people to identify and address more complex issues as they arise.</i></p> | <p>Both state funded Hubs and DVA hubs refer to <i>integrated services hubs</i> as providing places for "soft entry" to the sometimes-overwhelming bureaucratic processes by which veterans and families attempt to access services.</p> <p>A lot of the words of this top-down approach smack of theory and "motherhood" statements without tackling nitty-gritty problems as seen by the community members at the front-line.</p> <p>The Oasis Hub in Townsville is attempting to develop a Services Directory for serving and ex-serving ADF members and families, and is collating from various service providers from National level, state level (eg Veterans Portal) and the RSL. A lot of these are collations of service providers and are hopelessly out of date and would likely add to frustration and sense of social isolation of where to turn to for support.</p> <p>Success Lesson. However, the best of these is the collations put together by Townsville District Council and cover NDIS Providers (Federally funded, state delivered and local government publicity as well as a directory aimed at current and ex-serving ADF and Families.</p> <p>The key point is that this service is put together <u>at the local government community level</u> and is directed at specific at risk groups, including ADF Families. The knowledge for community inclusivity needs is at the local level, not Canberra or Brisbane.</p> <p>Recommendation The Federal and Qld Government levels should assist in resourcing this and facilitating the development of these HUBS, led by the local community stakeholders.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Department of Corrective Services</p> <p><i>Causes and drivers of social isolation and loneliness.</i></p> <p><i>Social isolation and loneliness can be key drivers of antisocial behaviour including substance abuse and linked offending. Further, people transitioning in and out of custody experience social isolation due to loss of friends and family, loss of freedom and loss of income/employment due to their incarceration and have a higher rate of suicide than people in the general community.</i></p> | <p>There is a dearth of statistics concerning anti-social behaviour, substance abuse or offending by ADF Family member offending, compared to the community in which they live or the equivalent "civilian" demographic.</p> <p>Given that it is possible that the additional risk of social isolation of the transient ADF Family may result in greater instances of anti-social behaviour, research into this area is required and remedial action sought.</p> <p>Recommendation Statistics should be gathered and if there is a greater problem due to "ADF service" the Defence resourcing should be provided to assist to remedy the situation together with Qld state assistance.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Department of Environment and Science</p> | <p>DFWA supports the proposition that young people are at risk. It follows therefore, that the children in the ADF Families, being transient, and trying to break into already established friendship cliques at new schools and other</p> |

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| <p>.... <i>encourage the Committee to consider young people as a vulnerable and disadvantaged group at significant risk. Loneliness is increasingly identified as an emerging issue for young people, with the pressure of high expectations for strong social networks but weak social connections. Social isolation and loneliness are related to negative outcomes, particularly in relation to overall mental health and wellbeing.</i></p> <p><i>The Queensland Youth Strategy sets the Queensland Government's vision for young people to thrive and actively contribute to Queensland's economic, civic and cultural life. The Youth Strategy includes key priorities to address important issues facing young people including mental health and housing. It also includes an overarching commitment to meaningful and purposeful engagement with young people to hear their voices and actively involve them in shaping policies, programs and services that impact them.</i></p> | <p>local organisations are likely placed at higher risk of social isolation and loneliness than that the less mobile cohort.</p> <p>The Premier, in the introduction to the Qld Youth Strategy, states: <i>"We look forward to continuing to work with our state's young people, as well as community organisations, businesses and local government to ensure young Queenslanders are given the chance to realise their full potential."</i></p> <p><u>Question for the Committee to Answer</u></p> <p>Does the Qld Government really regard the young people in ADF Families as "our state's young people" or "young Queenslanders" or are they just transient non-Queenslanders who just have to fit in with what the state provides and the addressing of any additional or different needs is the responsibility of the Federal Government?</p> <p>It is noted in the Qld Youth Strategy, various other social at-risk groups have been identified and consulted. Nowhere are any identified as members of ADF Families or Veteran Families, even in areas such as Townsville where they comprise 20% of the population.</p> <p>Of course many youth in those ADF families, would also be in the other, at-risk sub-groups identified.</p> <p>Qld has the highest numbers of serving and ex-serving ADF members and families than all states and they face the additional risks associated with the unique nature of the mobile ADF service. The fact that they have not been recognised as worthy of consultation increases the risk of social isolation and loneliness. It is acknowledged that other youth of other groups are similarly mobile and deserve consideration, e.g. some state employees, police etc, however ADF means interstate mobility and no choice.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Queensland Youth Strategy should seek statistics of numbers of ADF youth in Queensland, and ensure any needs are identified and addressed and the strategy modified as required. • Further consultations with youth, especially in high ADF areas, should include representation from this sector. • The results of the 2021 statistics where the veteran community can be more readily identified, should also be used. • The Qld government should seek Defence and appropriate federal support to address any needs, related to the unique nature of ADF service, and affecting youth in the ADF families. |
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| <p>6.</p> | <p>Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy</p> <p><i>The purpose of the department is to improve the lives of Queenslanders by increasing social, economic and digital inclusion.</i></p> <p>The submission notes:</p> <p><i>Loneliness is also increasingly identified as an emerging issue for young people.</i></p> <p><i>young people, and people from diverse background at risk.</i></p> <p>Community Services - Support communities to thrive through investing in quality community services that are connected and support the social and economic inclusion and wellbeing of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds</p> <p>Volunteering provides a wide range of opportunity for meaningful connection, participation and contribution to community, as well as provision of practical support and social connection to vulnerable Queenslanders.</p> <p>Social Cohesion grants funded 'Create, Connect and Contribute' project focussed on creating a safe and welcoming social connection hub for women of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds. Informal connections have been made between women leading to new friendships. Women who were disengaged and came alone have now made friends, connected with others, grown in confidence and are now regular participants at other events and programs.</p> <p>Neighbourhood and Community Centres (NCCs) provide critical social infrastructure to communities across Queensland, providing a place where people feel safe and are able to connect to other community members, groups and services.</p> | <p>It is noted that there are several programs which address improving access to services and provide activities promoting social cohesion to overcome isolation.</p> <p>Observations such as “regularity of contact with family and friends (in person and via technology), and the availability of family or friends to confide in” as factors in this Inquiry, are particularly pertinent to young ADF Families, raising children away from their “home” location.</p> <p>With appropriate engagement with and input and support from Defence/ADF, these Qld programs could be leveraged to address these issues with the ADF Families and support their becoming part of the location community.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Volunteering. It is recommended that Qld State support of Volunteering initiatives should specifically target ADF Families in high ADF Areas to capitalise on range of new capabilities presented and to assist in social connection of the ADF Members into the community.</p> <p>Social Cohesion. It is recommended that Qld Programs for social cohesion should ensure participation of ADF Families in the locality by specific engagement with and support from the Defence authorities.</p> <p>Neighbourhood and Community Centres. It is recommended that NCCs should specifically ensure participation of ADF Families in the locality by specific engagement with and support from the Defence authorities.</p> <p>Other Programs.</p> <p>There are other Programs related to Gambling Addiction, public intoxication, housing etc, where the ADF Family may require support. Where the ADF Member has the problem, he or she is also subject to ADF disciplinary or administrative action which could result in state support requirements for the ADF Family in that location.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>It is recommended that mechanisms for close liaison with ADF authorities should be established to assist in co-ordinated intervention and support and facilitate early identification of the issues.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (</p> | |

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| | <p>... studies generally show that young people transitioning out of care often lack networks of social support and this isolation and forced independence impacts the transition into adult independence”</p> <p>To ensure the voices of vulnerable cohorts of people from CALD backgrounds are heard through this inquiry, DCYJMA recommends the Committee develops a comprehensive communication and engagement plan to reach people from CALD backgrounds across the state to give them opportunities to provide input or make submissions.</p> <p>Welcoming Cities and Regional Partnerships Projects show that communities need to be proactive in building social connections and opportunities for local participation for new arrivals to feel safe, productive and welcomed.</p> | <p>Likewise, ADF Children transitioning from another school/ or state lose their previous networks of social support and are at risk of social isolation.</p> <p>DFWA supports that <i>voices of vulnerable cohorts of people from CALD backgrounds are heard through this inquiry</i>, however, as raised earlier, ADF Families, especially when initially moved into the new community, start off as socially isolated and are therefore already vulnerable.</p> <p>Recommendation DFWA recommends the Committee develops a comprehensive communication and engagement plan to reach ADF Families across the state to give them opportunities to provide input or make submissions, and that the support of Defence/ADF is sought for this to occur.</p> <p>DFWA supports Welcoming Cities and Regional Partnerships Projects events, especially in areas of with a high ADF/Defence population. One of the problems of similar events organised by the Defence Member and Family Support is that they tend to be held in Defence facilities which, due to security requirements can limit the participation of local community organisations. (See earlier footnote flyer)</p> <p>Recommendation DFWA recommends that initiatives outlined by DCTJMA be leveraged with the Defence Member and Family Support organisation to develop projects and events that support inclusive communities and include both Defence and general community participation.</p> |
| 8. | <p>Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) <i>DESBT delivers programs and initiatives that focus on improving employment outcomes, increasing skill development, and ensuring a strong business sector that contributes to the Qld economy.</i></p> <p>Specific mention is made of the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Employment and having necessary skill gives confidence and individual participation in the workforce and the community, promoting better health outcomes aided by social inclusion and addressing loneliness</i> • <i>Target groups include young people, mature age job seekers,</i> | <p>The work of DESBT, particularly in recognising ADF veterans as a target group, is supported. It is noted that the Office for Veterans and the Veterans’ Employment Pathway program assist in their transition to civilian employment also contribute.</p> <p>However, it is also noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ADF Families (as distinct from Veterans) may include young people, mature age partners, disabled, women re-entering the workforce and First Nation peoples – all target groups in their own right. • These projects address only Veterans, not the families, the Veteran’s partner and other family members who are facing the same challenges without the specific support provided to the veteran. • These projects are targeted at transitioned veterans who are no longer “transient” and will be permanent in the new community. |

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| | <p><i>First Nation peoples, those with disabilities, women re-entering the workforce, ADF veterans and other groups.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These projects do not address the jobseeker needs of the family of the still serving and mobile ADF member. <p><u>Recommendation</u> DFWA recommends that the all family members of still serving ADF members and of those veterans transitioning, be included in as a discrete target group for support and that Defence and DVA be engaged to assist in addressing the needs of this group.</p> |
| 9. | <p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p> <p>The DGAJ submission makes links between social isolation and loneliness with domestic and sexual violence and problem gambling.</p> <p>It also indicates responsibility for coordination and development of related strategies involving the two divisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office for Women and Violence Prevention; and Liquor and Gaming and Fair Trading, involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Domestic and Family Violence Corporate Roundtable - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Group - the Disability Consultative Working Group and Queensland's Responsible Gambling Advisory Committee | <p>Both Defence and DVA have a Family and Domestic Violence Strategy that aligns with the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.</p> <p>The next National Plan to the Women's Safety team in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is also being developed.</p> <p>For those serving there is a Defence Member and Family Helpline.</p> <p>From the DJAG submission, it is not clear who some of these consultative groups and roundtables consult. Is it just public servants from other departments discussing stuff or is there broader stakeholder representation?</p> <p>It is likely that a Defence Family member affected by domestic violence or problem gambling, may make contact with relevant Qld state helpline or authorities, rather than the Defence system/.</p> <p>There are obvious complexities with Defence Members being subject to both the Defence Force Discipline Act and state law and Family members being dependent of Defence for much support. On the ground, there are distinct risks to vulnerable people due to unintended impacts of "corrective or helpful" actions by different authorities.</p> <p>There is no indication that ADF/Defence have been consulted, both to reduce risk of uncoordinated harmful actions, or to leverage for better outcomes.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u> To avoid risk of actions on the ground increasing risk to vulnerable people due to and increasing social isolation and loneliness, it is recommended that in each of the identified DJAG areas, consultative mechanisms with Defence are established.</p> |
| 10. | <p>Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport</p> <p><i>The Department recognises that participation in physical activity or through volunteering in the many sport</i></p> | <p>The DTIS submission indicates that <i>the Department is collaborating across all levels of government, industry, and key stakeholders to deliver a range of initiatives that will lead to more opportunities for Queenslanders, of all ages and all abilities, to be physically active.</i></p> |

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| | <p><i>and active recreation settings available across Queensland can be a preventative factor for social isolation and loneliness and help bring communities together.</i></p> | <p>Sport is strongly supported by Defence and is an area where barriers to the ADF Member and Family integration with the civilian community can be quickly broken down. Also, given the support of Defence of sport, including funding for facilities, ADF member and family participation can provide considerable support to the community.</p> <p>Clearly, opportunities for leverage is high. It is not clear from the DTIS submission if Defence or other vulnerable stakeholder groups have been specifically consulted, except for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that Defence be consulted as a recognised stakeholder, if not already so, in the ongoing management of the Activate! Queensland 2019-2029 (Activate! Queensland) strategy to leverage opportunities to the greatest extent.</p> |
| 11. | <p>Department of the Premier and Cabinet</p> <p><i>The Office for Veterans helps support veterans to better connect with their communities. Programs being delivered by the Office for Veterans may, either directly or indirectly, reduce social isolation and loneliness for veterans.</i></p> <p>There are several Grant programs and initiatives which support the Veteran community and assist in social integration, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free training and apprenticeships for up to 300 veterans, • The Veterans' Employment Pathway program assist in their transition to civilian employment; and • Enhancements to the Queensland Veterans' Portal, a one-stop online portal that provides information for veterans and their families on relevant transition issues, | <p>The programs fostered by the Office for Veterans assist with the transition of ADF members into the community and continued support after transition helps counter social isolation and loneliness. The veteran's family members are also transitioning and also need assistance.</p> <p>The ADF Family while posted to Qld are dependent on stated delivered services, like all other Queenslanders. Because the ADF Member receives certain Defence (federally funded) benefits and support which benefit the family, there is potential that some leverage with the commonwealth could be made to reduce the risk of social isolation and loneliness of this group of Queenslanders.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that Family members also be included with any Qld transition initiative supporting Veterans and that Defence/federal funding be sought to assist with this.</p> <hr/> <p>Other Social Isolating Issues</p> <p>There is also potential for the Qld government to take some actions to reduce the risk by addressing issues which cause problems for ADF Families. Dealing with bureaucratic rules which disadvantages Defence Families creates feelings of frustration and helplessness and contributes to social isolation.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>It is recommended that opportunities to address the following areas be pursued by the Office for Veterans;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for ADF Family members in job opportunities when the ADF member is posted to Queensland. • Through the Veterans' Ministerial Council, support recognition of Family Members (other state) |

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| | | <p>professional and Technical qualifications for registration in Qld.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where ADF Family members have been receiving support for a disability or a health condition in the previous location, they continue to receive that support without going in a waiting list when relocated to Qld. Where ADF Family members were on a waiting list for a disability or a health condition in the previous location, they receive “credit” for that waiting time when relocated to Qld. |
| 12. | <p>Queensland Health</p> <p>Qld Health provides child and maternal services at Early Years Places (EYPs) which support parents and families in connecting with the community providing various support programs and, though other services provide, Family Care Programs, Community Maternity Hubs, and Home Visiting Services, but refers out for issues involving social isolation and loneliness.</p> <p>There is a focus on mental health issues and programmes,</p> | <p>Qld Health provides health care for the ADF Family accompanying the ADF Member in relocations to, from and within Qld. Qld Health is likely to be the first responder to any health emergency outside normal working hours for the ADF members. For former serving members, there is automatic DVA funding for addressing all mental health issue, including substance abuse and addictions.</p> <p>There is potential for improving health services to transitioned veterans by leveraging the federal (DVA) funding of medical treatments and, as side effect, of reducing Qld Health costs in this area. However, it is often difficult to identify an entitled veteran. It is noted however, that some hospital and health centres admission forms allow identification of the admittee of belonging to particular group.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>It is recommended that all patient admission forms in Qld Health include a question regarding ADF service, similar to that on the 2021 census.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Waiting Lists</u></p> <p>There are often lengthy waiting lists for medical treatments and appliances. A person may be receiving public treatment or on a waiting list for such treatment in one location/state and then is required to move to another location/state where they go to the bottom of the waiting list in the gaining location. This contributes to social isolation in the new community. This bureaucratic barrier put up in the new community is blatantly unfair, and there is no one to turn to.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>Where ADF Family members have been receiving support for a disability or a health condition in the previous location, they continue to receive that support without going in a waiting list when relocated to Qld.</p> <p>Where ADF Family members were on a waiting list for a disability or a health condition in the previous location, they should receive “credit” for that waiting time when relocated to Qld.</p> |

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| 13. | <p>Queensland Police Service (QPS)</p> <p>The QPS has several strategies for identifying and “<i>support members of the Queensland community who are experiencing vulnerability.</i>” This includes referral to various external service providers: Domestic and Family Violence (for both victim and perpetrator); Mental Health Intervention. Homelessness; Victim support.</p> | <p>ADF Members and Members’ families may have call on these services. While the ADF provides support for ADF Members, family members do not receive the same level of support.</p> <p>An ADF Member, who may be perpetrator of domestic violence, is subject to both civil criminal law and Defence Law. With those members, it is also likely that there are service-caused mental health issues.</p> <p>If brought to civilian criminal court, the ADF Member may be discharged from the ADF, losing an income and losing an entitlement to family defence accommodation. The Family victims of domestic violence can become homeless in a state far removed from family support. At the policy and strategy level as indicated in the comments to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General , there needs to be consultation with Defence. This also applies with the QPS and ADF at state level and also at the local level.</p> |
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