

National Suicide Prevention Office

Submission: Review of Schedule 9 of the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025

June 2025



Australian Government



**National
Suicide
Prevention
Office**

National Suicide Prevention Office

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The National Suicide Prevention Office (NSPO) acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present, and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of country throughout Australia. We acknowledge their connection to land, sea and community and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recognition of Lived Experience

The NSPO acknowledges the individual and collective contributions of those with a lived and living experience of suicide. People who have survived suicide attempts, cared for a person in suicidal crisis or have lost a loved one to suicide demonstrate tremendous generosity through providing their expertise and insights. Every person's journey is unique and a valued contribution to Australia's commitment to suicide prevention system reform.

A note on language

The way we speak about suicide and self-harm has a major influence on how the community understands and responds to people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviours. It also impacts on the existence and degree of stigma and shame around suicide. The National Suicide Prevention Office endorses and follows the Mindframe guidelines *Our Words Matter* and *Images Matter*.

Suggested citation

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Sources of support

Please be aware this submission contains information about suicide that may be distressing. Please take care of yourself as you read it and ask for help if needed. Support is always available. Below are options for online and telephone information and support in Australia.

Lifeline

13 11 14

[Lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au)

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

[Kidshelpline.com.au](https://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467

[Suicidecallbackservice.org.au](https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

Head to Health

[Headtohealth.gov.au](https://www.headtohealth.gov.au)

Defence Member and Family Helpline

1800 624 608

headspace

1800 650 890

[headspace.org.au/](https://www.headspace.org.au/)

MensLine Australia

1300 789 978

[Mensline.org.au](https://www.mensline.org.au)

Open Arms

1800 011 046

[openarms.gov.au](https://www.openarms.gov.au)

ReachOut

[au.reachout.com](https://www.au.reachout.com)

Beyond Blue

1300 224 636

[Beyondblue.org.au](https://www.beyondblue.org.au)

13YARN

13YARN (13 92 76)

QLife

1800 184 527

[Qlife.org.au](https://www qlife.org.au)



National Suicide Prevention Office

About the National Suicide Prevention Office

The National Suicide Prevention Office (NSPO) is a specialist office located as part of the National Mental Health Commission within the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

The NSPO is tasked with leading a coordinated, whole-of-governments approach to suicide prevention. It aims to provide robust, evidence-based insights and advice to guide and support all levels of government to take coordinated, comprehensive and consistent action to reduce suicide and suicidality.

The work of the NSPO is informed by people with lived and living experience of suicide and draws on the rich combined knowledge and expertise of individuals, communities, service providers, advocates, researchers and government agencies across portfolios and jurisdictions.

Note that the location and functions of the NSPO are currently under review. While not yet confirmed, it is anticipated that the NSPO will continue as an independent entity with functions broadly focused on monitoring, reporting, and advising.

More information is available at <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/nspo>



Submission

Response to proposed Schedule 9

The NSPO's scope of work is at a whole-of-population level, promoting coordination of suicide prevention efforts across governments. This includes providing insights and advice focused on populations disproportionately impacted by suicide, such as defence personnel, veterans and their families.

The NSPO developed the *National Suicide Prevention Strategy*, which was formally endorsed by all relevant Commonwealth portfolios and all states and territories before being launched in February 2025. The Strategy outlines a coordinated national approach to suicide prevention and includes specific reference to defence personnel, veterans and their families.

The Strategy recognises the *Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide* (Royal Commission) as providing a vital roadmap for addressing suicide amongst defence personnel, veterans and their families. The Strategy recommends the implementation of the Government's response to the Royal Commission and the NSPO is listed as a contributing organisation for recommendations 106, 107 and 108.

The NSPO notes the importance of recommendation 122, which called for the establishment of a Defence and Veteran Services Commission (the Commission). Defence and veteran communities face unique challenges compared with the broader population when it comes to suicide and its prevention – for example, increased separation from family and likelihood of relationship breakdowns, exposure to unacceptable behaviour and traumatising events, service-related injury and illness, and difficulties transitioning out of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).¹ Ex-serving ADF members are at a higher risk of death by suicide than non-veterans – ex-serving males and ex-serving females are 26% and 100% respectively more likely to take their own life than non-serving Australian males and females.² Families, carers and kin of veterans are therefore at an increased risk of being bereaved by suicide, which can subsequently increase their own risk of suicide.³ Therefore, there is a need for tailored, targeted suicide prevention efforts for defence and veterans communities and the NSPO recognises the Commission as crucial to this progress.

We emphasise the importance of the NSPO and the Commission working collaboratively to ensure Australia's suicide prevention efforts are aligned and coordinated. While the Commission will lead reforms relevant to defence personnel and veterans, their work should be aligned with the whole-of-population, evidence-based approach outlined in the *National Suicide Prevention Strategy* and the broader work of the NSPO.

The proposed functions for the Commission, as outlined in Schedule 9 of the *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2025* (VETS Act) include significant overlap with the functions of the NSPO – for example, to monitor, inquire and report on systemic factors relating to, or contributing to, suicide. For functions like this, there will be a need for the Commission and the NSPO to have authority to share data,

¹ Australian Government. Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide: Final report [Internet]. Canberra: Australian Government; 2024 [cited 2024 September 09]. Available from: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Tabled_Documents/7262

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members who have served since 1985: suicide monitoring 1997 to 2022 [Internet]. Canberra: AIHW, Australian Government; 2024 [cited 2024 November 28]. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/serving-exserving-adf-suicide-monitoring-2024>

³ Grafiadeli R, Glaesmer H, Hofmann L, Schäfer T, Wagner B. Suicide risk after suicide bereavement: the role of loss-related characteristics, mental health, and hopelessness. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*. 2021;144:184-9. DOI: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2021.09.056.



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messaging, and other relevant information with each other. We do not see this overlap as problematic, but it further emphasises the important synergies between these two entities.

Given the shared objectives and functions, there is value in formalising the relationship between the NSPO and the Commission to remove ambiguity, to ensure their ongoing collaboration, and to ensure both are well positioned to execute their roles.

This relationship could be formalised through legislation, as has been done in the *Ombudsman Act 1976*⁴ and in the *National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022*⁵. Alternatively, the relationship could be formalised after commencement of the Commission via another mechanism. The critical point is to ensure a proper and consistent approach to suicide prevention is taken, enshrined in a way that maintains cross-portfolio coordination regardless of any personnel changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. Should you require further information or wish to contact the National Suicide Prevention Office about our submission, please don't hesitate to email the office at: nspo@nspo.gov.au

⁴ *Ombudsman Act 1976*. [internet]. Canberra, Australian Government [cited 30 June 2025]. Available at [Ombudsman Act 1976 - Federal Register of Legislation](#).

⁵ *National Anti-Corruption Act 2022*. [internet] Canberra, Australian Government [cited 30 June 2025]. Available at [National Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2022 - Federal Register of Legislation](#).

