



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

## **Businessline**

**Action Required:** Staff to note and implement the use of the agreed cross-agency definition of 'transition' which provides the foundation for more effective service design and delivery, and clear and consistent communication to veterans' and veteran families.

**To:**

All Deputy Secretaries

All First Assistant Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Divisional Coordinators

**For information:**

Secretary

Repatriation Commissioner

Veteran Family Advocate Commissioner

Deputy Commissioners

**SUBJECT: Transition Definition**

**Purpose:** To inform all staff of the agreed cross-agency definition of 'transition' for use when referring to military to civilian transition, Australian Defence Force (ADF) separation and/or ADF transfer.

**Key Points:**

- National and global research has clearly established that transition is more than the process of ADF separation or transfer. Transition is a journey of an ADF member (and their family) from a predominantly ADF service-centred life to a predominantly civilian-centred life.
- Transition includes a journey of identity and renewed sense of purpose, a series of emotional and cultural adjustments, and is a time of stabilising familial and social relationships.
- Transition also requires veterans to meet a series of practical needs, including civilian housing, employment and health care.
- ADF separation or transfer from permanent military service is an event occurring during the longitudinal journey of transition.
- On 6 March 2024, the Joint Transition Oversight Panel (JTOP) discussed the importance of all organisations involved in supporting the transition journey having a shared understanding of the longitudinal nature of the transition journey.
- JTOP members, comprising senior executives from Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), Department of Defence (Defence), Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC), Department of Health and Ageing and Services Australia, agreed to the use of common language across government when referring to military to civilian transition.

- The key terms agreed by JTOP are consistent with those included in the updated ADF Transition Manual:
  - **Transition** – the journey of an ADF member (and their family) from a predominantly ADF Service-centred life to a predominately civilian-centred life;
  - **Separation** – the cessation of all forms of ADF service; and
  - **Transfer** – an ADF member moving from the Permanent Forces to the Reserves.
- Staff are asked to use this agreed common language when referring to military to civilian transition, ADF separation and/or ADF transfer.

### **Background:**

- Transition terms for use in the ADF context were discussed and agreed, in consultation with DVA and CSC—agency partners in the Joint Transition Authority (JTA), as part of an update of the ADF Transition Manual led by the JTA in 2021 and 2022.
- Further to this, in April 2022, the JTA Steering Group (then a cross-agency group comprising primarily SES Band 1 or equivalent representatives from Defence, DVA and CSC—agency partners in the JTA) endorsed these terms for use in the ADF context.
- Use of these definitions were reconfirmed at a joint JTA/DVA transition roundtable with the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide on 12 October 2023.
- Research indicates that the term ‘transitioning’ resonates with veterans as expressing the ongoing adjustments and adaptations required in the military to civilian transition<sup>1</sup>.
- To date a ‘good’ or ‘successful’ transition remains undefined. International research has proposed a range of definitions, which emphasises the nature of transition is not only the administrative process of separation or transfer, nor the process of seeking post-service education, employment or health care – but is inclusive of psychological and emotional resilience that culminates in a renewed sense of purpose<sup>2 3</sup>.

Alison Hale  
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 Transition Branch  
 24 May 2024

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<sup>1</sup> Kerr, N. C., Lane, S. J., Plotnikoff, R. C., & Ashby, S. (2023). The “Transition” to Civilian Life From the Perspective of Former Serving Australian Defence Force Members. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 9(1), pp. 129–142. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v9i1.407>.

<sup>2</sup> Forces In Mind Trust. (2013). *The transition mapping study: Understanding the transition process for service personnel returning to civilian life*. <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/transition-mapping-study.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Transforming veteran’s experiences during military-to-civilian transition – Gaps and Opportunities, US Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Center for Innovation.