



LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY GROUP INQUIRY INTO MILITARY SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE

Participant Information Sheet

Before you begin

Please read this Participant Information Sheet before completing the Application Form. [Open Application Form – Fill out form](#)

This Participant Information Sheet contains 13 Sections:

1. About this project
2. Why a MSV Inquiry Lived Experience Advisory Group is being established
3. Lived Experience Australia is managing the Group's establishment
4. Group composition overview
5. What membership of the Group involves
6. How members will be appointed to the Group
7. Eligibility, selection criteria and assessment process
8. Confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations
9. Current or prospective participation in the Class Action
10. Privacy and confidentiality
11. Safety and wellbeing
12. Questions and Lived Experience Australia contact details, and
13. Consent.

If you have any questions at any stage of this process, please contact:

Sharon Lawn, Executive Director, Lived Experience Australia

- Email: slawn@livedexperienceaustralia.com.au
- Phone: 0459 098 772

Section 1: About this project

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission (DVSC) has been asked by the Australian Government to undertake an independent Inquiry into Military Sexual Violence in the Australian Defence Force (the Inquiry). This Inquiry will deliver on a key recommendation from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (the Royal Commission) i.e. to conduct an independent, expert inquiry into military sexual violence which makes public recommendations for improvement. The Inquiry Terms of Reference are available on the DVSC website: www.dvsc.gov.au/inquiries/MSV.

Natasha Stott Despoja AC has been appointed as the Military Sexual Violence Inquiry Deputy Commissioner to lead the Inquiry. The Inquiry will formally commence later this year. The aim of the Inquiry is twofold:

- to provide a holistic understanding of military sexual violence in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and
- to provide advice to Government on reforms to prevent, manage and respond to military sexual violence in the ADF.

The Inquiry will assess the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations 14 to 24. It will also inquire into six thematic areas:

- prevention and early intervention
- reporting
- supports
- responses
- justice processes, and
- sexual violence terminology.

In doing so, the Inquiry will seek to identify gaps and opportunities and make recommendations to:

- make cultural and workplace changes in the ADF to aid in the prevention of sexual violence
- improve workplace protections for victim-survivors of military sexual violence
- ensure that systems are in place to effectively hold perpetrators to account, and
- advance a victim-survivor centric approach.

Section 2: Why a MSV Inquiry Lived Experience Advisory Group is being established

Lived experience testimony to the Royal Commission, alongside international research, demonstrated a devastating link between military sexual violence and trauma and suicide and suicidality. The establishment of the MSV Inquiry Lived Experience Advisory Group (the Group) is an important element of the Inquiry Terms of Reference. The Group will help inform the Inquiry's work in a meaningful way. This may include:

- understanding the systems and culture that lead to military sexual violence and hinder disclosure and reporting
- identifying what makes it more likely for someone to experience sexual violence in the ADF, and
- informing decisions about improving system responses, services and outcomes for people who have been affected.

Section 3: Lived Experience Australia is managing the Group's establishment

Lived Experience Australia (LEA) has been engaged by the DVSC to recruit and onboard the Group to inform the Inquiry, and to do so in a way that is trauma-informed, transparent and respectful of the expertise and courage it takes to participate.

LEA is a national lived experience mental health advocacy, research and capability building organisation. LEA's Board Directors and staff have their own lived experience of mental health challenges as consumers, family carers, or both. LEA's approach to all lived experience engagement is guided by a commitment to confidentiality, trust, co-creation, peer support, and a trauma-informed, transparent approach. These principles guide every aspect of how we work with you.

Section 4: Group composition overview

The Group will comprise 6-10 members, who are:

- current and former-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members with lived experience of military sexual violence;
- family of ADF members with lived experience of military sexual violence, or
- ADF members who have witnessed military sexual violence.

Note: the DVSC will engage with representatives and advocates through other avenues during the Inquiry.

The Group aims to reflect a diversity of members, including:

- Gender diversity: including women, men, and gender diverse people
- Service diversity: experience from a range of service branches, ranks, service periods and service types (ex-serving and currently serving)
- Diversity of lived experience: recognising and valuing the perspectives of people with lived experience of military sexual violence, whether personally or through a family member; reflecting a range of experiences across different periods of service and varied post-incident/s responses, supports and outcomes.
- Geographic diversity: international (e.g. on deployment), metropolitan, rural, regional and remote representation where possible
- Cultural diversity: including First Nations community members, and people from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds
- Age diversity: across age ranges and service generations
- LGBTIQA+ representation, and
- People with disability.

Section 5: What membership of the Group involves

As a Group member, you will be invited to:

- Participate in face-to-face and/or online meetings with the DVSC's Inquiry team.
- Share your perspectives and expertise to help shape the Inquiry, including advising on participant engagement.
- Review and provide feedback on Inquiry materials, where relevant.
- Contribute to a safe, inclusive, respectful and collaborative group environment.

As a Group member with lived experience of military sexual violence, you **will not** be asked to share your personal experience in detail or relive difficult events. A qualified health professional will be present during each Group meeting and available for a group debrief after each meeting. All Group members will also have access to 1-1 support. Group members have choice over whether they use this service or not. Your involvement is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time and for any reason, without any impact on your relationship with LEA or the DVSC. Individuals appointed to the Group will participate in an individual capacity, not as a representative of an organisation or network.

It is anticipated the Group will conduct up to 6 face-to-face and/or online meetings in 2027, with specific dates to be confirmed. Meetings will typically be 90 minutes in length. The meeting schedule will be set to align with Member availability and Inquiry work.

Members will need to be available to:

- attend the first meeting in mid-late January 2027 (date and time to be determined based on availability)
- complete pre-reading for some sessions, and
- provide out-of-session feedback on occasion, when mutually agreed.

Members will be remunerated for their time in line with the rates set out in the [Remuneration Tribunal \(Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-time Public Office\) Determination 2026](#) (despite not being public office holders).

Section 6: How members will be appointed to the Group

Appointment to the Group is through an application process.

The application process is:

1. Applicants complete the Application Form via this link [Application Form – Fill out form](#)
2. LEA will assess all applications against the eligibility and selection criteria ([Section 7](#) refers).
3. Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for a brief, informal conversation (approximately 15–20 minutes) to learn more about you and answer any questions you may have.
4. The DVSC will make the final selection of members to be appointed to the Group, having regard to the Group composition outlined in [Section 4](#).
5. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application, whether or not they are selected, as promptly as possible.
6. Feedback can be provided if you request it.

Section 7: Eligibility, selection criteria and assessment process

i) Eligibility

- To be eligible for consideration, applicants must meet the following criteria:

Criterion	What this means
Age	Aged 18 years or over at time of application.
Lived experience	Have lived experience of military sexual violence in the ADF, personally or as a family member of someone affected by military sexual violence.
Availability	Available to participate in a series of up to 6 face-to-face and/or online meetings in 2027 with specific dates to be confirmed. Meetings will typically be 90 minutes in length. Applicants will need to be available to: • attend the first meeting in mid-late January 2027 (date and time to be determined based on availability) • complete pre-reading for some sessions, and • provide out-of-session feedback on occasion, when mutually agreed.

Criterion	What this means
Communication <i>Note that reasonable accommodations will be made to ensure communications within the group are fully accessible to members.</i>	Ability to: - communicate ideas - actively participate in discussion - provide feedback on documents, and - participate with care, safety and respect within a group to discuss military sexual violence.
Consent and voluntary participation	Understand and agree to the terms of participation as outlined in this Participant Information Sheet, including that participation is voluntary.
Conflict of interest	Have no undisclosed conflicts of interest that would prevent impartial participation in the Group's advisory role.

ii) Selection criteria

- Applicants lived experience expertise will be assessed against the following criteria:

Criterion	What we are looking for
Lived experience	Personal experience of military sexual violence as a serving or ex-serving ADF member, or family member of someone with personal experience. This may include experience of sexual harassment, sexual assault, witnessing sexual violence towards serving members, or the psychological impacts of these experiences within or as a result of military service.
Insight and reflection	Demonstrated ability to reflect on personal experience in a way that can inform the Inquiry and to think analytically and broadly about systems, processes, impacts and solutions.
Readiness	Demonstrated sense of readiness to engage safely and with respect for others with this topic in a group setting. This does not mean the person must be fully 'recovered' or have no ongoing impacts – it means they feel they have sufficient support in place and are choosing to participate because they want to.

iii) Assessment process, scoring and feedback

- Each application will be reviewed by two LEA assessors using the eligibility and lived experience selection criteria above. Applications will be scored as follows:

Score	Meaning
3 — Strong	The applicant clearly and compellingly demonstrates this criterion.
2 — Adequate	The applicant demonstrates this criterion with some depth or clarity.
1 — Partial	The applicant partially demonstrates this criterion, or there is some uncertainty.
0 — Not demonstrated	The criterion is not demonstrated, or there is insufficient information to assess.

- Where scores between assessors differ by more than one point on any criterion, they will discuss and reach a consensus score.

- Where an application is not clear, a brief screening conversation (15-20 minutes) may be offered to clarify the application.
- All assessment decisions will be documented in the selection brief provided to the DVSC who will make the final decision about the Group's membership.
- Where applications are not successful, applicants can seek feedback ([Section 12](#) refers).

Section 8: Confidentiality and non-disclosure obligations

Settlement agreements can contain confidentiality clauses, non-disclosure or non-disparagement obligations (collectively often referred to as NDAs), preventing individuals sharing details of their experiences. People may sign a confidentiality clause as a way to protect their own safety when there are limited options to seek help or to find peace.

In July 2026, the Government announced that it will not enforce 'NDAs' (including any non-disparagement requirement) between the Commonwealth and current or former ADF members in relation to sexual violence, if they wish to speak about their experience with the Inquiry or make a submission to the Inquiry.

If you are subject to an NDA, you can apply to the lived experience advisory group and disclose information about your experience (to the extent you are comfortable) in your application. However, please do not disclose in your application any detail about the settlement, legal advice or communications with lawyers.

Your NDA obligations may still apply in relation to any third parties to the NDA (i.e. where the NDA was signed not just by the Commonwealth and yourself). Third parties are still entitled to enforce the NDA obligation. Regardless of NDA obligations, you may be subject to other legal obligations that prevent you from sharing your experience with the Inquiry, such as the *National Security Information (Criminal and Civil Proceedings) Act 2004*.

Section 9: Current or prospective participation in the Class Action

In October 2025, a class action was filed in the Federal Court of Australia against the Commonwealth of Australia. The Class Action involves allegations of sexual harassment, harassment on the ground of sex, sex discrimination in employment and victimisation of women in the ADF serving at any point between 13 November 2003 and 25 May 2025.

Being part of, or wanting to be, a part of the Class Action does not prevent you from taking part in the Group. In the course of your work with the Group, you will not be asked about the Class Action. You may, however, wish to seek independent legal advice about your engagement in the Group.

Please do not share information about your participation in the Class Action in your application. Further information about the Class Action, [can be found on the Department of Finance website](#).

Section 10: Privacy and confidentiality

We take your privacy seriously. Here is how your information will be managed:

- LEA is collecting personal information, including sensitive information, as part of the application process. It is conducting this on behalf of the DVSC.
- Your personal information is collected for the purposes of assessing applications and engaging members for the Group that will support the Inquiry's work. Providing this information is voluntary, however, we may be unable to assess your application if it is not provided. By submitting an application, you consent to LEA collecting, using and disclosing your personal information, including sensitive information, for these purposes.

- Please do not disclose other individuals' personal information as such information cannot ordinarily be collected, used or disclosed by LEA or the DVSC without their consent.
- If you are recommended or shortlisted for appointment to the Group, your information will be disclosed to the DVSC for use and disclosure in establishing and facilitating the Group.
- LEA or the DVSC may also need to disclose your information to other parties for the general purpose of establishing and facilitating the Group (for example, but not limited to, professionals that work in fields like mental health, healthcare, ethics or social work).
- LEA will use Microsoft Forms to collect your information. Data submitted through the form may be transferred, stored and processed in the United States or any other country in which Microsoft or its service providers maintain facilities.
- LEA will take reasonable steps to ensure your personal information is collected and handled in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), the *Archives Act 1983* (Cth), and its [Privacy Policy](#).
- LEA's [Privacy Policy](#), explains how LEA manages personal information, including how you can access and correct your information, how to make a complaint about a breach of your privacy, and how LEA will deal with such a complaint.
- Your personal information will be stored and managed in accordance with applicable record-keeping requirements, including the *Archives Act 1983* (Cth) and disposal restrictions.
- Your personal information will not be shared publicly without your consent. If you are selected for the Group, you will be provided with further information and asked to confirm your preferences regarding any public acknowledgement of your participation.
- Where your information is disclosed to the DVSC, it will be handled in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), the *Archives Act 1983* (Cth) and its [Privacy Policy](#). Information held by the DVSC may also be subject to release under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) and will be managed in accordance with that Act.

Section 11: Safety and wellbeing

We recognise that this topic may bring up difficult memories or feelings. Your wellbeing is our priority throughout this process from the moment you read this Participant Information Sheet through to the end of your involvement. LEA will have a support person available throughout the application process. Please see LEA contact details below ([Section 12](#) refers). The DVSC will ensure that a qualified health professional is available to Group members throughout the Inquiry, including during Group meetings, and will be made available for a post-meeting optional group debrief.

You do not need to be in crisis to reach out. If at any point the application process or participation raises anything for you, please reach out to your trusted support network or one of the services (available 24 hours a day / 7 days a week) below.

Service	Phone	Online
Open Arms (Veterans and Families)	1800 011 046	openarms.gov.au
Lifeline	13 11 14	lifeline.org.au
1800RESPECT	1800 737 732	1800respect.org.au
13YARN (First Nations)	13 92 76	13yarn.org.au
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636	beyondblue.org.au
Suicide Call Back Service	1300 659 467	suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Section 12: Questions and Lived Experience Australia contact details

You are also welcome to call or email us simply to have a conversation before deciding whether to apply. There is no obligation to proceed. If you do have any questions about the application process, your application, or what Group involvement would mean for you, please contact:

Sharon Lawn*, Executive Director Lived Experience Australia

- Email: slawn@livedexperienceaustralia.com.au
- Phone: 0459 098 772.

** Available each day and evenings up to 9pm AEST throughout the application period*

Section 13: Consent

By completing and submitting an application, you are confirming that:

- You have read and understood this Participant Information Sheet
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and, if you have asked questions, you have had them answered to your satisfaction
- You understand that your participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time
- You consent to LEA collecting and using the information you provide for the purposes of assessing your application and, if selected, managing your participation in the Group
- You understand that your information will be shared with the DVSC for the purposes of final selection and, if selected, your participation in the Group, and
- You understand the limits of confidentiality described in this document.

If you are selected for the Lived Experience Advisory Group, you will be provided with a formal member briefing that outlines your rights, responsibilities and the terms of your participation in more detail. Thank you for your time.