



**Department of Defence**

**Defence Reserves Support Council Review**

**FINAL REPORT**

**May 2019**

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## **Contents**

1	Executive summary	3
2	Recommendations	6
3	Scope	6
4	The opportunity for change	7
5	The future DRSC	10
5.1	Delivering value and supporting capability	10
5.2	Vision	10
5.3	Strategy	10
5.3.1	Industry insight and enhanced partnerships	11
5.3.2	Inform Defence policy development	12
5.3.3	Enhance access to part-time capability	12
5.4	Operating model	12
5.4.1	Industry and employer engagement	15
5.4.2	Advisory body	15
5.4.3	Service delivery	16
6	Conclusion	17
7	Addendum	18
7.1	Data collection and management	18
7.1.1	Opportunity to improve consistency of data and data collection	18
7.1.2	Opportunity to improve DRES stakeholder data management	19
7.2	Communications and engagement	19
7.2.1	Opportunity to clarify communication goals	19
7.2.2	Opportunity to leverage Defence public affairs activities	19
7.2.3	Opportunity to utilise paid and earned media	19

# 1 Executive summary

Extensive work has been done in recent years to examine perceived issues associated with the Defence Reserves Support Council (DRSC) and its effectiveness. In particular, current DRSC national chair Jane McAloon, and the national executive, have been working closely with the Department of Defence since commencing their terms to initiate a review and reform process. The national chair commissioned an exploratory piece of research in 2018, which was undertaken by Captain [REDACTED] RAN. Captain [REDACTED] conducted consultations with reservists, employers of reservists, and permanent Australian Defence Force (ADF) members to understand the challenges facing each of these groups regarding reserve service.<sup>1</sup> Captain [REDACTED] key findings were:

- there is a lack of clear lines of communication between the three stakeholder groups
- there is a general lack of awareness of the DRSC, or its role and purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Captain [REDACTED] made a number of recommendations regarding the future of the DRSC, which were considered over the course of this review but found to be unfit-for-purpose in the context of enhancing support to Defence capability.

A number of DRSC members have also undertaken extensive work and thought leadership on opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the council.

## **KPMG review**

In February 2019, Reserve and Youth Division (RYD) of the department engaged KPMG to review the DRSC, as well as any subsequent resourcing or capability implications for the Defence Reserve and Employer Support (DRES) section of RYD. The review forms part of a broader suite of assessment and reform being undertaken by RYD, which includes an examination of the support provided to the DRSC by DRES.

KPMG's review comprised an analysis of the current state of the DRSC, development of options for the future DRSC, and a plan for implementation of the preferred option. A number of DRSC council members were consulted during the review, and all were generous with their time and able to provide valuable insights into the council.

## **Review observations**

The initial stages of the review raised two key observations:

1. The DRSC in its current state presents a risk to the Commonwealth
2. There is an opportunity to realign the DRSC's vision and strategy to take advantage of continuous change in the ADF's operating environment, in particular its shift to the Total Workforce Model (TWM) and the part-time workforce.

The risk to the Commonwealth is not caused by individual DRSC members, who are committed to supporting the capability of the ADF. Rather, it is a result of:

- the lack of a clearly articulated purpose for the DRSC, which means members could be advocating an inconsistent message on behalf of the ADF and the Department of Defence

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<sup>1</sup> [REDACTED] *Issues Affecting Reservists, Employers of Reservists and ADF Members Working with Reservists*, July 2018.  
<sup>2</sup> [REDACTED] *Recommendations for the Role of the Defence Reserve Support Council*, August 2018.

- the long list of objectives and stakeholders for the DRSC, which creates circumstances where DRSC effort is not cohesively or effectively applied to enhance ADF capability
- a lack of recording of outcomes, making it difficult to demonstrate a return on investment
- no mechanisms for members to demonstrate delivery of or be held accountable for outcomes.

Implementation of the second observation – the opportunity for DRSC realignment – mitigates current risk.

This opportunity has been identified in the context of constant, rapid change in our strategic military environment. Accessing a wide range of skill sets to ensure Defence is prepared to meet this change will be more important in the coming decades.

The challenge for Defence is accessing priority skills required to deliver defence capability at a time when the Australian workforce is facing a skills shortage. Over the next decade the number of people leaving employment will be much more than the number of people joining the workforce, creating strong competition for people.<sup>3</sup> The ADF TWM has been developed to meet this challenge; to attract and retain the people needed to support and enable Defence capability. The TWM is a step change in how Defence conceives of and utilises its workforce, by introducing more flexibility across a number of service categories (SERCATs), offering a spectrum of options for service, rather than the reserve/permanent model.

This is an opportunity for the future DRSC to reconsider how it can now best support Defence capability.

### **International models**

Reserve support in the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada were considered as part of the DRSC review. Two key components of the UK case study are relevant for Australia:

- *Tailored and focussed relationships with employers depending on their size and sector, built on predictability and mutual benefit.*
- *The establishment of 'joint employer' partnerships, where civilian employers communicate the benefits of and support their employees to undertake reserve service.<sup>4</sup>*

These lessons align closely with the preferred option for the future DRSC, in that they prescribe targeted relationships and partnerships with employers to achieve mutual benefit from sharing a skilled workforce. The remainder of the UK model was not relevant in the Australian context, as it was developed and implemented in response to a declining reserve force. This has not been identified as an issue in Australia, and Defence is already undertaking the majority of the measures identified in the UK case study, such as employer support payments and recognition.

This was also the case with the Canadian model, which was reformed in recent years in response to a high attrition rate among reservists. In response to this issue, the Canadian Forces Liaison Council (CFLC) posted senior officers to oversee its operations. This is not possible in the Australian context due to resource constraints and the lack of an identified issue in the part-time contingent. The CFLC uses a customer relationship management (CRM) system to track its engagement with

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.defence.gov.au/ADF-TotalWorkforceModel/>

<sup>4</sup> *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued*, pp. 41-58.

industry, which is a requirement of the future DRSC. The remainder of the measures delivered by the CFLC mirror those delivered by RYD.

The future DRSC detailed below incorporates targeted industry partnerships and the introduction of a CRM to enhance stakeholder engagement activities.

### **The future DRSC**

The future DRSC has been designed with a view to supporting the ADF transition to the TWM, focussing particularly on part-time capability and a shared workforce with civilian employers. The future DRSC will work to gather information from industries, and to understand the challenges, barriers, and opportunities experienced by industry sectors. Both of these activities will form the basis for the future DRSC's input into policy development.

A new vision, strategy and operating model for the future DRSC are outlined in this report. The vision statement is:

*RYD will enhance Defence capability through partnerships with priority industry sectors and employers.*

The new strategy is in three streams:

1. Industry insight and enhance partnership
2. Inform Defence policy development
3. Enhance access to part-time capability.

The new operating model will support Defence to deliver on this vision and strategy. The operating model will transform the DRSC into a small advisory board of industry experts and relevant Defence representatives. The aim is to draw on the knowledge and experience of industry leaders – who will be drawn from industries and locations around Australia where the skills required by Defence reside – to deliver short-term investigative projects to address contemporary capability challenges. This would be complemented by Employer Support Awards (ESAs) targeted at industries with priority skills. Engagement and partnerships with employers and industry, which was formerly tasked to the DRSC, will become the responsibility of the department.

This report presents the recommendations and case for change, describes the new vision, strategy and operating model in more detail, and addresses in an addendum a number of identified issues from consultations and analysis that are out of scope for this report.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the contribution and commitment of all DRSC members over the past four decades has been invaluable to Defence, reservists and employers. There is no doubt that the work of the council has been a factor in the high standing of reservists in the Australian community today.

## 2 Recommendations

1. The structure of the DRSC should be changed to an appropriately titled business unit within the Department of Defence.
2. To become more flexible and responsive to emerging workforce trends, and as there is no requirement for an independent oversight function, the new body should no longer be subject to ministerial approval processes. The responsible minister would be briefed on advisory body activities through departmental channels.
3. The Department of Defence should be responsible for developing and maintaining partnerships with industry and employers to enhance access to part-time Defence capability.
4. The new body should provide policy advice to the development of Defence part-time capability.

## 3 Scope

In February 2019, RYD engaged KPMG to review the DRSC and any subsequent resourcing or capability implications as a result of the review for its DRES section.

Specifically, KPMG was engaged to:

1. Review the existing structure and objectives of the DRSC, examine its method of operation including the outputs it currently provides compared to the expectations and current requirements of the ADF, reservists and their employers
2. Develop a proposal for a new DRSC structure and method of operation that provides the outputs and support that reservists and employers expect to ensure reservists are able to contribute fully to the delivery of ADF capabilities now and in the future
3. Consider contemporary reports and overseas models (e.g. the UK, Canada and the US) of organisations similar to the DRSC.

An additional piece of work was commissioned to support the findings of this review:

4. Evaluate whether the DRES section of RYD has the workforce necessary to effectively support the DRSC.

## 4 The opportunity for change

The DRSC began as the Committee for Employer Support of Reserve Forces (CESRF) in 1977 with the purpose of supporting and promoting ADF reserve service in the Australian community. It has since undergone several reforms of name and purpose to become the DRSC, now more focussed on educating employers about the benefits of reserve service.

Since its inception and most recent reformation, the composition and context of ADF operations have changed substantially.

Our strategic military environment is in a state of constant, rapid change. Accessing a wide range of skill sets to ensure Defence is prepared to meet this change will be more important in the coming decades.

The ADF generally enjoys positive support in the Australian community, and there are no widespread issues with accessing existing part-time service members. Defence has a strong system in place to provide assistance to both part-time service members and their employers should any issues arise, through the reserve service protection and employer support functions within DRES.

The challenge for Defence is accessing the priority skills required to deliver defence capability at a time when the Australian workforce is facing a skills shortage. Over the next decade the number of people leaving employment will be much more than the number of people joining the workforce, creating strong competition for people.<sup>5</sup> The ADF TWM has been developed to meet this challenge; to attract and retain the people needed to support and enable Defence capability. The TWM is a step change in how Defence conceives of and utilises its workforce, by introducing more flexibility across a number of SERCATs, offering a spectrum of options for service, rather than the reserve/permanent model.

Many of the individuals who possess the skills required to deliver Defence capability work in civilian environments, and it is not practical or possible for Defence to use their highly specialised skills full-time. For example, medical professionals bring much-needed capability to Defence operations for short-term periods, but require long-term, day-to-day opportunities to practice and enhance their skills.

This presents an opportunity for the future DRSC to reconsider how it can now support the ADF, with a particular focus on part-time capability and a shared workforce with civilian employers.

Additionally, Defence is continually evolving its policies and programs to work in partnership with industry and is making progress in this area. Historically, Defence and industry had a customer and provider relationship, and industry was often uncertain of Defence priorities and channels for engagement. The Department of Defence now engages more closely with industry than at any point in the past. Ongoing efforts to advance the relationship include the maintenance of a variety of channels to engage directly with defence industry (which is a considerable employer of reservists). Some of the mechanisms to do this include:

- Defence Innovation Hub
- Next Generation Technology Fund
- Defence Policy for Industry Participation

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.defence.gov.au/ADF-TotalWorkforceModel/>

- Implementation of Smart Buyer.

Adapting to this combination of circumstances is an ongoing process for Defence. To optimise part-time members' contribution to capability, Defence will have to work in partnership with their civilian employers. The approach must be a cooperative ongoing dialogue about the needs of all three groups – Defence, employers and the part-time (reserve) workforce – to enable each of them to benefit and contribute to capability.

### **Part-time members (formerly reservists)**

One of the steps toward enhancing the contribution of part-time members is through the adoption and ongoing transition to the Defence TWM.

At a policy level, the TWM creates flexibility for full- and part-time members across a number of SERCATs, offering a spectrum of options for service, rather than the reserve/permanent dichotomy.

At an operational level, the responsibility for career planning, pay and conditions, and service protection for part-time members belong to the services and the Department.

At the unit level the Services are responsible for effective management of part-time members, including working with the member to acknowledge and respond to the requirements of the member's civilian employer. For example, provision of sufficient notice to the member and their employer of service requirements will facilitate productive relationships between Defence, part-time members, and their employers.

### **Employers and industry**

The transition to the TWM is a work in progress, and will require the support of all stakeholders to be successful. This creates a window of opportunity for the future DRSC to focus on the needs of employers and industry in the context of the TWM and reliance on part-time members to deliver Defence capability, through:

- acting as a channel for industry to inform Defence of their strategic workforce needs and circumstances
- advising Defence on how best to overcome barriers and seize opportunities identified through industry research in order to access priority part-time skills
- supporting employers in target industries to develop partnerships with Defence.

The future DRSC will enable industry to communicate with Defence on their priorities, barriers and opportunities where there is a demand for skills from both groups. This will enable Defence and industry to build mutually beneficial partnerships, and support the effective sharing of a part-time workforce to deliver defence capability.

Supporting the development of these partnerships will be a dedicated, professionalised industry engagement and communications capability residing within the Department of Defence. The benefits of this will be twofold: firstly, employer and industry relationships will be targeted according to Defence skill priorities, and secondly, the partnerships will be Defence's responsibility and are an asset that will be retained within the department.

### **Defence**

There is also an opportunity for the future DRSC to support Defence to meet its capability requirements. As an advisory board working within Defence, the future DRSC can provide a research and advisory function to:

- enhance Defence's partnerships with and facilitate insights into industry
- inform Defence policy development
- enhance access to part-time capability.

The future DRSC will enable Defence to develop a sophisticated understanding of the civilian workforce and the needs of employers in specific industry sectors with priority skills.

Having a clear picture of the barriers and opportunities faced by employers, industry and Defence will also facilitate cooperation and partnerships to support beneficial outcomes for each of these groups, and through that Australia's national interest and economy.

## 5 The future DRSC

The future DRSC has been designed with a view to supporting the ADF transition to the TWM, focussing particularly on part-time capability and a shared workforce with civilian employers. To best capture this opportunity, the future DRSC will work to gather information from industries, and to understand the challenges, barriers, and opportunities experienced by industry sectors. The membership of the future DRSC will comprise leaders of industry from around Australia, determined by the location of individuals with relevant expertise and access to in-demand industries.

### 5.1 Delivering value and supporting capability

In terms of delivering value and supporting capability, the future DRSC:

- is aligned to, and designed to collect data to support, the process of transition to the TWM
- has a line of influence, through DRES' participation on a number of high level Defence steering groups
- is demand-driven
- can respond flexibly to emerging part-time workforce capability needs
- recognises and captures the value created by the DRSC on engagement with industry.

### 5.2 Vision

The future DRSC will transition into an advisory body within the Department of Defence and will be guided by an overarching vision statement:

*RYD will enhance Defence capability through partnerships with priority industry sectors and employers.*

### 5.3 Strategy

The future DRSC will deliver this vision by following three strategic pathways, which are:

1. Industry insight and enhance partnership
2. Inform Defence policy development
3. Enhance access to part-time capability.

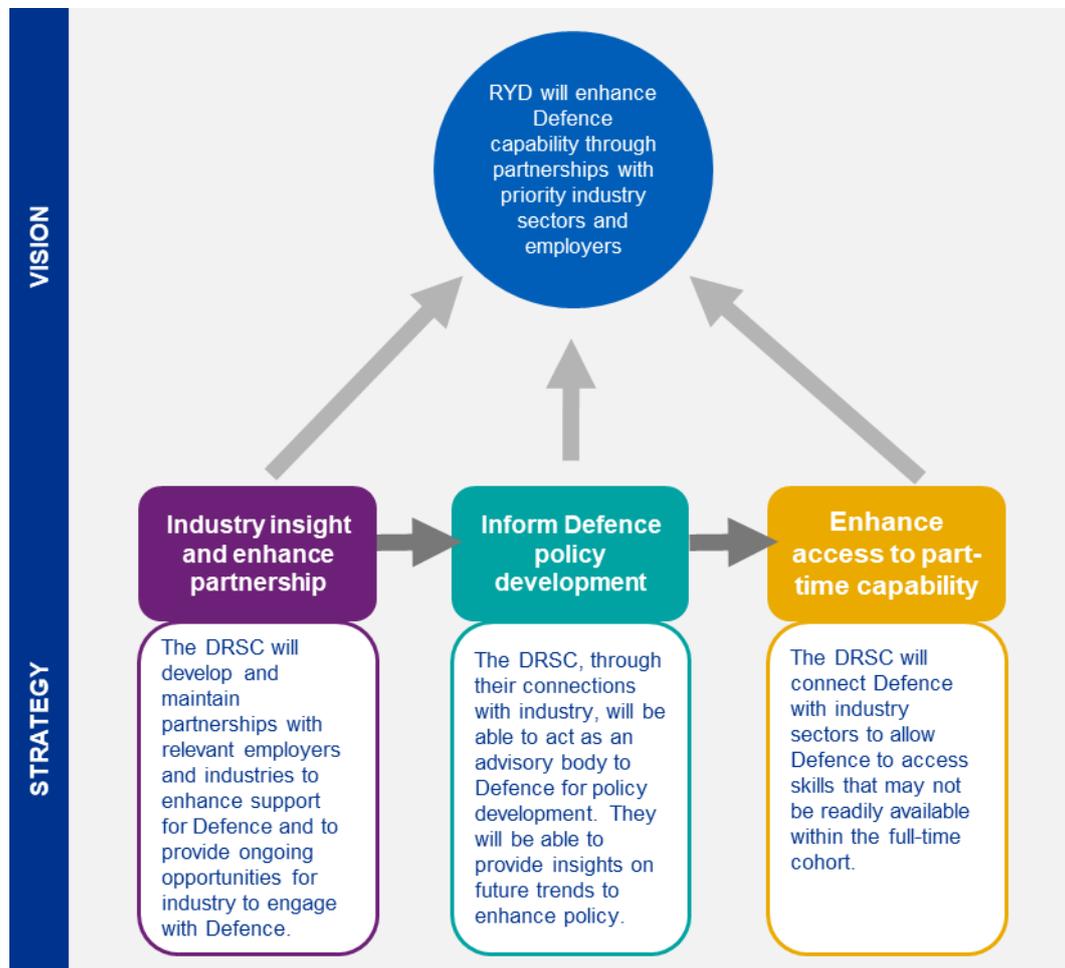


Figure 1: Future vision and strategy

The success of the future DRSC will be achieved through all three streams working seamlessly to deliver on the vision. Further information on each strategy stream is included in the following sections. The connection between the vision and strategy is depicted in Figure 1.

### 5.3.1 Industry insight and enhanced partnerships

In line with the vision statement, the Department will develop and maintain partnerships with targeted industries and employers to enhance support for Defence and to provide ongoing opportunities for two-way engagement to facilitate understanding and cooperation. The future DRSC (advisory body) will support and facilitate connections where relevant. Partnerships with industry will provide Defence with a larger pool of knowledge for policy development, and create channels of communication to enable efficient access and allocation of the part-time, skilled workforce. It is critical for Defence to understand the market their part-time service members will be operating in to provide comprehensive and relevant engagement.

### 5.3.2 Inform Defence policy development

Through an agreed program of work with RYD, the advisory body will provide evidence-based advice on matters related to the part-time workforce. The advisory body will obtain information from industry to provide targeted information on areas of priority skills, using a model similar to a parliamentary committee. The advisory body would proactively call for input from industry and other relevant stakeholders on the issues agreed with RYD, supported by a secretariat function. The secretariat would collate the material for the advisory body, which would provide advice and recommendations to RYD for input into Defence people policy.

This is an opportunity for Defence to engage closely with industry to understand their workforce challenges and opportunities in order to share required part-time capability.

### 5.3.3 Enhance access to part-time capability

Through the activities of the other two strategy streams, the DRSC will connect Defence with industry sectors to allow access to skills that may not be readily available within the full-time cohort. Defence will have a greater understanding of the needs of industry and will be able to better facilitate cooperative partnerships with employers in key industries. This will result in Defence having the ability to access part-time priority skills as required.

## 5.4 Operating model

The operating model to support the vision and strategy will transform the DRSC into a small advisory board of industry experts and relevant Defence representatives. The membership will be driven by Defence's capability needs, drawing from industries around Australia that have the specific skills required to deliver capability.

The aim is to deliver short-term investigative projects to address contemporary capability challenges, complemented by ESAs targeted at industries with priority skills. The engagement and partnerships with employers and industry function formerly tasked to the DRSC will become the responsibility of the Department.

The additional business functions established under the future operating model will be based at RYD's head office. RYD will retain its presence around Australia, however there will no longer be a requirement for state and regionally-based DRSC entities.

The new advisory body should be renamed to reflect the changed nature of reserve service to part-time service, and have a name more suited to its transformed role.

There will be an ongoing requirement for the advisory body to be reviewed as progress is made toward implementation of the TWM. It is anticipated that once the TWM is fully operational the role and structure of the future DRSC should again be reviewed and adjusted to best support Defence capability.

The high level current state and future state operating models are shown side-by-side in Figure 2 to illustrate the transformation. Discussion of the services delivered under the new operating model is included in section 5.4.3.

Additional RYD functions under the new model are:

- establishment of an employer and industry partnerships capability.

- realignment of secretariat function to support new advisory body.

Revised DRSC (advisory body) functions under the new model are:

- establishment of a parliamentary committee-style research and advisory body.

These additional functions will enable delivery against the vision and strategy of the future DRSC. The functions are described in more detail in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

The below diagram shows the proposed high level future operating model in comparison to the current state:

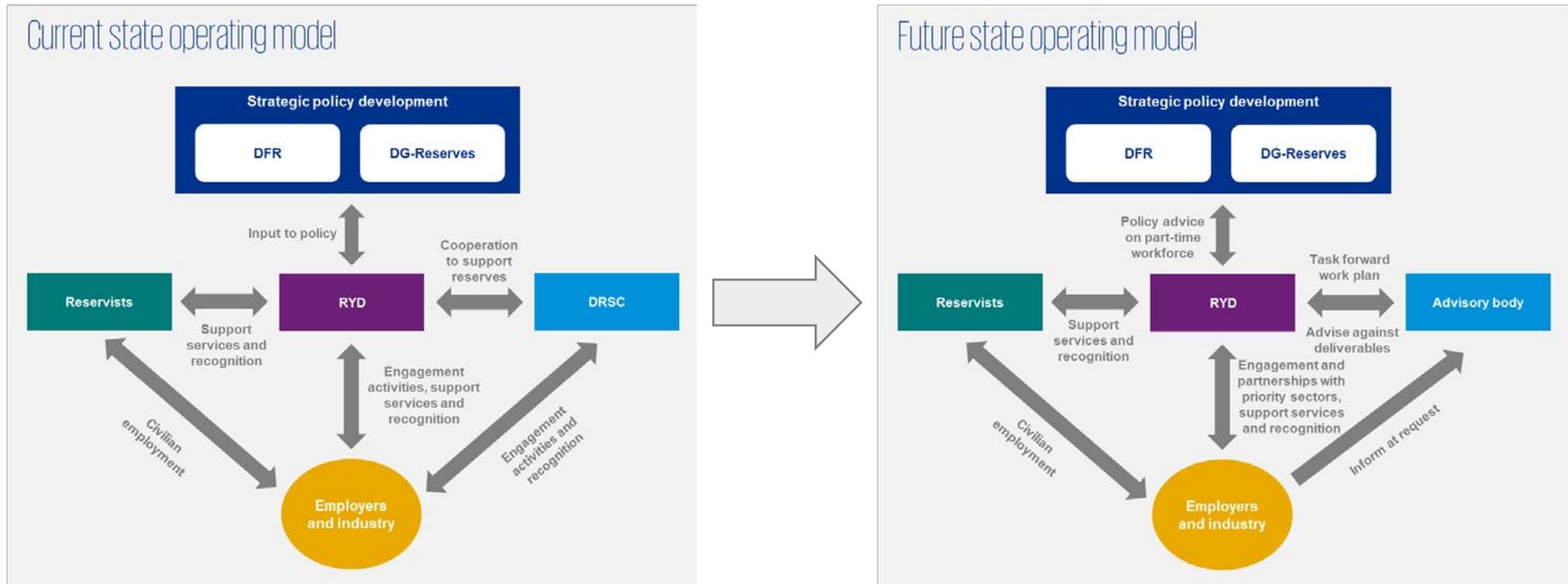


Figure 2: Current and future state operating models

#### 5.4.1 Industry and employer engagement

The first function under the new model is a targeted connection with external stakeholders through proactive industry partnerships and engagement with employers. This function sits within the Department of Defence. A critical component of this function will be the establishment and appropriate resourcing of a Stakeholder Engagement Team (SET) which will be the primary point of contact between DRES, industries and employers. Through this team, a stakeholder engagement strategy can be developed, facilitating targeted communication with relevant parties in priority areas as identified in consultation with the services. A customer relationship management (CRM) system will have to be incorporated into business-as-usual activities to best collect information on relationships between Defence, industry and employers.

#### 5.4.2 Advisory body

The advisory body function under the new model will provide advice and insight on future trends to RYD for effective policy development. The advisory body will agree a program of work with RYD determined by skill demands as established with Defence People Group (DPG) and Director-General, Reserves (DG-Res). Operating in a similar way to parliamentary committees, this function will reach out through the SET to seek information from relevant stakeholders, such as industry and academia, on issues related to priority skills in the part-time workforce. Material received from stakeholders will be collated by a secretariat function within RYD and reviewed and analysed by the advisory body. The advisory body will then provide advice and recommendations to RYD for input into Defence workforce steering committees, the services, and DPG.

The membership of the advisory body will be based on Defence's capability needs. Industry leaders in areas where Defence has a need for specific skill sets in its part-time workforce, such as cyber security and health care.

### 5.4.3 Service delivery

Under the new model, service delivery to part-time service members and employers will be enhanced. DRES will continue to provide the same degree of support for reservists and employers, while increasing their engagement with employers through a targeted approach focused on priority industries. As outlined in Figure 3, the future DRSC will adopt a more strategic advisory role, with their current engagement functions transitioned into the RYD.

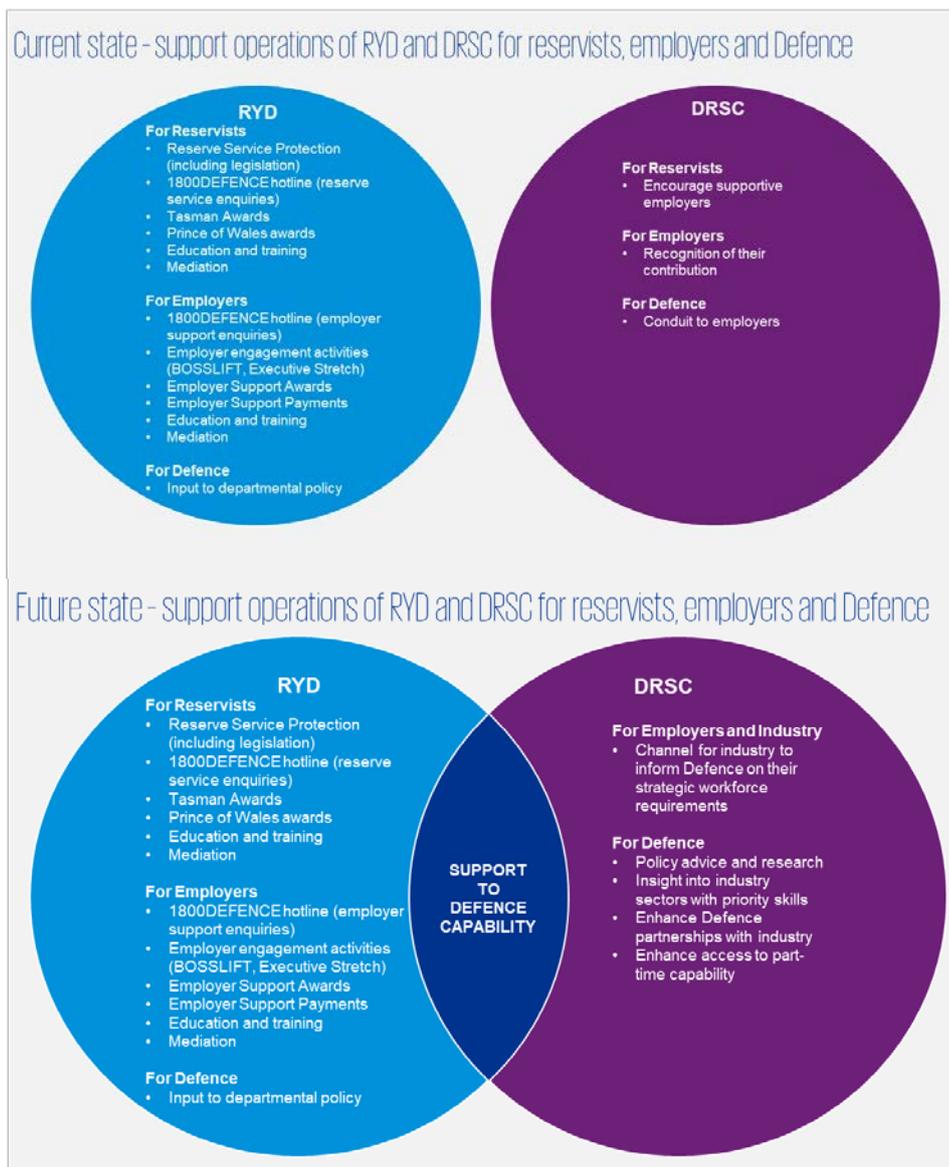


Figure 3: Current and future state service delivery operations

## 6 Conclusion

This review presents the case for change for the DRSC and proposes a new structure and operating model to utilise the opportunity to support Defence's transition to the TWM.

Over the past forty years the service and commitment of all DRSC council members has been an invaluable contribution to Defence, reservists and their communities. Major changes to Defence and the community since the DRSC was established have created an opportunity for a transformation of the DRSC following this review. Council members' support for and contribution to this review is also to be commended.

In the future, Defence must work to take responsibility for owning relationships and delivering capability. This review makes a series of recommendations to transition the current DRSC to a business unit that is more flexible and responsive to emerging workforce trends and provides policy input to the development of Defence part-time capability. This transition will allow Defence to enhance partnerships with employers and industry in the future, as an acknowledgement of their importance as an input to capability and the TWM.

The proposed future DRSC structure has an advisory body function to provide evidence-based advice on matter related to the part-time workforce and an employer and industry partnerships and engagement function to facilitate direct engagement with relevant stakeholders. These functions are guided by an overarching vision statement, which is delivered by three strategic pathways. It is important to note that under the new model there will be no loss of service delivery for part-time service members or employers.

The transition into the proposed future DRSC structure will improve Defence capability and provide valuable insights into employers and industries into the future.

## 7 Addendum

During the course of stakeholder consultation to support the review, a number of issues were raised that were outside the scope of the review, but were considered relevant to the broader work of DRES and RYD.

A summary of these issues and recommendations for future exploration are captured below. They have been broadly grouped into two categories: data collection and management, and communications and engagement.

### 7.1 Data collection and management

A lack of relevant data and constricted information flows were identified by DRSC members, Service representatives and DRES staff as major barriers to delivering effective outcomes. A particular issue cited was the lack of data about the employers of reservists, noting privacy issues impacted the ability to collect this data. Stakeholders consulted expressed the view that it was essential to address the absence of data, even if it required legislative or system change. Some council members also raised concerns about their liability when making decisions without access to data.

While some of the scenarios raised through consultation in relation to data collection and management were specific to the current operation of the DRSC, the broader issues of lack of data, constricted information flows and an evidence base to support decision-making are likely to negatively affect the new operating model unless addressed.

#### 7.1.1 Opportunity to improve consistency of data and data collection

Currently, data to inform DRSC and DRES activity is collected from a variety of sources including the individual Services, ForceNet, the Defence Census, and direct interaction between DRES staff and DRSC members with industry and employers. This means that similar data can be collected and categorised in different ways, making it difficult to achieve a complete picture of the information available.

As a first step, it is suggested that an opportunity exists to work with the various data collection and reporting points within Defence to identify required data and seek agreement to obtain data in a usable format on a regular basis.

- Data collection and management is subject to a range of Commonwealth legislation as well as Defence policies, and barriers to changing privacy requirements are high. It is therefore suggested to first canvass options for system-change rather than legislative change to address barriers to data collection resulting from current privacy legislation requirements
- Opportunity to share information.

In addition to the core data requirements identified above, it is suggested that the launch of the new operating model and supporting elements offers an opportunity to identify and articulate information requirements for the new model and to define information flows with relevant stakeholders, both within Defence and more broadly within government and industry as required.

### 7.1.2 Opportunity to improve DRES stakeholder data management

As discussed elsewhere in this document, it is recommended that DRES explore options to deploy a CRM system to support better collection and management of data to support engagement and relationship management. It should be noted that the Canadian Forces Liaison Council (CFLC) uses a CRM and is currently in the process of upgrading it.

## 7.2 Communications and engagement

During the course of consultation, some DRSC members offered suggestions to improve the approach and delivery of DRSC communications and engagement activities.

Many participants made suggestions as to how this activity could be better centrally coordinated and resourced, while other advocated for greater freedom for DRSC members to talk “on the record” to media. Given that future DRSC advisory body model removes the requirement for state and territory and regional councils, and acknowledging the risk to the Commonwealth in permitting people who are not employees to make public comment on behalf of Defence, these issues are no longer relevant for consideration.

Consultation feedback also highlighted a fragmented approach to communications and engagement activities between the national, state and territory and regional councils. Lack of consistent messaging, agreed communications priorities and evaluation metrics were identified as barriers to effective communication and engagement efforts. Suggestions to address these issues are included below.

### 7.2.1 Opportunity to clarify communication goals

The delivery of a new operating model with new members and stakeholders offers an opportunity to develop and articulate clear communication and engagement goals including messaging, target audience, channels and evaluation metrics to ensure that communication and engagement activities continue to support the work of the reshaped DRSC and DRES.

### 7.2.2 Opportunity to leverage Defence public affairs activities

Given the highly centralised nature of Defence communications, an opportunity exists to better leverage existing Defence communications resources and channels to promulgate and amplify messaging about DRES programs and to raise awareness about the role of reservists, benefits of employing reservists and to target industries representing priority capability requirements. It is recommended that DRES explore opportunities to work with Ministerial and Executive Coordination and Communication, Service public affairs units and Defence Force Recruiting to realise this opportunity.

### 7.2.3 Opportunity to utilise paid and earned media

In addition to leveraging existing Defence owned communications channels, an opportunity exists to utilise paid and earned media through a targeted digital advertising or a dedicated public relations activity targeting business media. These activities could be delivered jointly or separately as part of a ‘campaign’ approach to raise awareness and drive behaviour within a target audience.

The benefit of this approach is the ability to quickly reach large numbers of the target audience, including those who do not have existing relationship with Defence. This is a more resource-effective approach than the current model of relying on one-on-one or small group interactions between DRSC members or DRES staff and the target audience. These activities would require a commitment of resources not currently contained in the DRES budget, and would likely require development of a business case for funding.