

Selection Advisory Committee Report

Summary

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) engaged the services of Beaumont&Beaumont to assist with the selection process for the position of Commissioner, Defence and Veterans' Suicide Commission (Statutory). Beaumont&Beaumont supported the selection panel as part of this process.

The position was advertised in APSJobs on 4 September 2025, and through social media channels.

s 47E(c) , s 47F

Attachment C

Candidate Information Pack

Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner

Candidate Information Pack

Contents

- Information about the establishment of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission and the office of the Commissioner
- About the role
- Eligibility
- Selection criteria
- Terms and conditions
- How to apply
- Assessment process
- Communication
- Contact for applications

Information about the establishment of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission and the office of the Commissioner:

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission will be a new, Non-corporate Commonwealth entity created by the Australian Government in response to Recommendation 122 of the [Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide \(Royal Commission\)](#).

The purpose of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission is to provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to Government on reforms to improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members. The Commission consists of the Commissioner and their staff.

The Royal Commission considered that establishing a new entity with a dedicated and sustained focus on suicide prevention is the most significant action the Australian Government can take to address defence and veteran suicide. Chapter 30 (page 275) of the [Final Report: Volume 6](#) provides additional information about Royal Commission's rationale for Recommendation 122 and the proposed functions and powers of the new entity, which have been enshrined in legislation.

The office of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner has been created by [Schedule 9 of the Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support \(Simplification and Harmonisation\) Act 2025](#) (the Act). The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission (the Commission) will commence on 29 September 2025. Pursuant to section 5 of the Act, the [Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee](#) has conducted a review of the amendments in Schedule 9 of the Act, prior to the commencement of the Commission. The Committee reported its [findings](#) to the Senate on 29 August 2025.

About the role

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner is the accountable authority and head of the Commission. The Commissioner will provide agency leadership of the Commission to oversee reform across the whole Defence ecosystem, including managing the Commission's capability and performance, leading the planning, development and implementation of the major functions of the Commission, exercising the legislative powers and functions as set out in the Act; upholding the independence and integrity of the Commission at all times, and developing and maintaining effective working relationships and strategic partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders in the Defence and veterans' ecosystem, including people with lived experience of suicide and suicidality.

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner monitors, conducts inquiries and reports (including with evidence-based findings and recommendations) on matters relating to systemic reform to:

- improve suicide prevention for serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members; or
- improve wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members.

The Commissioner may conduct inquiries on their own initiative or on request by the Minister, as provided for in the Act. In addition, the Commissioner will be required to conduct at least 2 inquiries into the Commonwealth's implementation of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

The Commissioner is able to hold inquiries, including through public and private hearings. They can also designate an inquiry to be a special inquiry which allows the exercise of powers to compel persons to attend to give evidence or produce documents or things, and other information gathering powers.

As outlined in the Act, the Commissioner's functions include:

- to monitor, inquire and report on (including with evidence-based findings and recommendations):
 - data and trends regarding suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members
 - systemic factors relating to the Commonwealth's administration of policies, programs, systems and practices that contribute to suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members
 - the state of the defence and veteran ecosystem, as it relates to the prevention of suicide and suicidality
 - the Commonwealth's implementation of the recommendations of the Defence and Veteran Suicide Royal Commission, including progress, impact and outcomes.
- to conduct research and inquire into, and report and advise on, specific matters as requested by the Minister
- to conduct inquiries into the Commonwealth's implementation of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Defence and Veteran Suicide Royal Commission
- to improve supports for serving and ex-serving Australian Defence Force members
- to collaborate with coroners to understand issues contributing to defence and veteran deaths by suicide

- to promote understanding of suicide risks for defence members and veterans and factors that can improve the wellbeing of defence members and veterans, including through engaging with people with lived experiences and promoting that lived experience.

The functions do not extend to making findings of civil and criminal wrongdoing; making findings on the manner or cause of death in relation to the death of a defence member or suspected suicide; or monitoring or inquiring into a single exercise of a power, or a single performance of a function or duty.

Selection Criteria

To be a strong contender for this role, in addition to meeting eligibility requirements and in accordance with the [Government's merit and transparency policy](#) on transparent and merit-based assessment in the selection of statutory office holders, applicants will need to demonstrate their capability against the following criteria:

1. Demonstrates high-level leadership and vision
 - sets a strategic vision and inspires others to achieve this
 - innovative in dealing with issues
 - articulates a clear direction for their organisation
2. Manages large and/or complex operations
 - achieves results within the context of organisational and/or Government policy
 - strong people management skills
 - strong financial management, ensuring efficient, effective and ethical use of resources
 - understanding of and commitment to quality organisational governance
3. Works with others to meet objectives
 - operates collaboratively with others to meet organisational objectives
 - cultivates productive relationships
 - listens to people and values different perspectives
4. High level of judgement
5. Demonstrates a high standard of professional and personal integrity and capacity to promote these in an organisation.

Knowledge or experience in the following areas is also highly desirable:

- Understanding, or an ability to develop an understanding of the Defence and veterans' ecosystem
- Understanding, or ability to acquire an understanding of government and Parliamentary processes and protocols
- Understanding, or an ability to develop an understanding of suicide and suicidality in the Defence and veteran ecosystem
- Ability to effectively and impartially lead an independent, oversight agency.

- Ability to lead complex inquiries or reviews involving the use of significant powers and sensitive information
- Sophisticated engagement skills, and a personal style that engenders trust and respect, including the ability to embed a trauma-informed approach to the work of the Commission
- A focus on enabling and fostering high-performing staff where people are supported to deliver and give their best, including uniting people behind a strategic vision.

Eligibility

To be eligible for appointment as the Commissioner, applicants must satisfy the following:

- Have suitable qualifications, training and experience
- Be an Australian citizen
- Willingness to disclose all interests, pecuniary or otherwise, that may conflict with the performance of the duties
- Ability to travel interstate as required
- Has not been a serving member of the Australian Defence Force in the past five (5) years
- Have, or be able to obtain and maintain any necessary Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration(s)
- Have, or be able to obtain and maintain a security clearance at Negative Vetting 1 level. To be eligible for an Australian Government security clearance an applicant must be an Australian citizen and be willing to disclose all relevant and required information. Applicants must have a checkable background for at least the preceding 10 years. Further information on the security clearance vetting process is available on the [Australian Government Security Vetting Agency \(AGSVA\) website](#).

We encourage and welcome applications from people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and mature age people.

While no specific qualifications are required for the role, it is anticipated that competitive candidates will bring extensive leadership experience and/or qualifications in disciplines of relevance to the work of the Commission, for example, law, suicide prevention and mental health, public administration, and inquiries/ investigations.

Terms and Conditions

The successful applicant will be appointed as the Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner on a full-time basis and for a period not exceeding five (5) years. The Commissioner may be eligible for reappointment.

Remuneration and allowances for the position are set by the Remuneration Tribunal: [Remuneration Tribunal Amendment Determination \(No. 4\) 2025](#). The Remuneration Tribunal has set a determination for a total remuneration of \$486,400pa. The position and the Commission are based in Canberra, however reasonable remote workplace arrangements for the Commissioner within Australia may be considered.

How to apply

Applications must include:

- A written statement of no more than 1,000 words outlining your background, skills and experience and how they relate to the eligibility and selection criteria of the role
- A resume of no more than 4 pages outlining qualifications, experience and expertise.
- Names and contact details of at least 2 referees who have recent, direct and relevant experience of the applicant's work.

Applications must be submitted using the online recruitment system:

<https://www.beaumontandbeaumont.com.au/11531> by 11.30pm AEST on Wednesday, 1 October 2025.

Please include any reasonable adjustments you may require for this process.

Assessment process

Applicants will be initially assessed by a panel on their written application and resume. Shortlisted applicants will be further assessed by the panel at interview.

Communication

All advice and communication will be sent to applicants via email. Please ensure the email address provided is correct. We recommend you use an email address that ensures you do not miss relevant updates or invitations – and please regularly check your junk or spam folders.

Contact for applications and enquiries

If further information is required after reviewing the documentation, please contact:

Lionel Riley (Principal Consultant)

Phone: (02) 6126 4500

Email: PMC@beaumontandbeaumont.com.au

Link: <https://www.beaumontandbeaumont.com.au/11531/>



MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Departmental No. 120 of 2026

Executive Council Meeting No. 9

Approved in Council

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sam Mostyn AC
Governor-General

30 April 2026

Filed in the Records
of the Council

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Secretary to the Executive Council

Minute Paper for the Executive Council

Appointment of Commissioner

Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026

Defence and Veterans' Service Commission – Defence and
Veterans' Service Commissioner – Appointment 2026

Recommended for the approval of Her Excellency the Governor-General in Council that, by instrument in the attached form and under subsection 72(1) of the *Defence and Veterans' Services Commissioner Act 2026*, she appoint Penelope ('Penny') McKay as the Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner for a period of five years, beginning on 1 June 2026.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Hon Matthew James Keogh MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel



Defence and Veterans' Service Commission – Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner – Appointment 2026

I, the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, acting with the advice of the Federal Executive Council and under subsection 72(1) of the *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026*, appoint Penelope ('Penny') McKay as Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner for a period of five years beginning on 1 June 2026.

Dated

30 April 2026

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sam Mostyn AC
Governor-General

By Her Excellency's Command

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

The Hon Matthew James Keogh MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

Minute No. 120 of 2026 - Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Subject - *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026*

Defence and Veterans' Service Commission – Defence and Veterans'
Service Commissioner – Appointment 2026

The proposed instrument would appoint Ms Penelope ('Penny') McKay as the Commissioner of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission under section 72 of the *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026* for a period of five years commencing on 1 June 2026.

The *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026* (the Act) establishes the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission (the DVSC), provides for the appointment of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner (the Commissioner), and sets out the Commissioner's functions and powers. Subsection 72(1) of the Act provides that the Commissioner is to be appointed by the Governor-General by written instrument.

Subsection 72(2) of the Act provides that a person must not be appointed as the Commissioner unless the Minister is satisfied that the person has suitable qualifications, training or experience, and that the person was assessed by a panel as suitable for the appointment. The assessment process conducted by the panel must be merit-based and include public advertising of the position. Subsection 72(3) provides that a person must not be appointed as the Commissioner if the person has been a member of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in the last five years. Subsection 72(4) provides for the Commissioner's appointment on a full-time basis. Subsection 72(5) provides that the Commissioner holds office for the period specified in the instrument of appointment, and the period must not exceed five years.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (the Royal Commission) recommended that a new entity be created to address a gap in the system-wide oversight of the defence and veteran ecosystem. To address this recommendation, the DVSC was established, with the Commissioner as Accountable Authority and head of the agency. The Commissioner and the DVSC are independent from all other government and non-government entities in the Defence and veteran ecosystem, including the ADF, the Department of Defence, and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

There are three key functions performed by the Commissioner. The first is monitoring, inquiring into and reporting on matters including trends regarding and systemic factors relating to suicide and suicidality among serving and ex-serving ADF members, and the state of the Defence and veteran ecosystem as it relates to the prevention of suicide and suicidality. The second is to oversee, inquire into and report on the Australian Government's implementation of the Government's response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The third is to promote understanding of suicide risks for Defence members and veterans, and factors that can improve their wellbeing.

The Commissioner cannot make findings of civil or criminal wrongdoing, make findings on the manner or cause of death in relation to a death of a defence member or suspected suicide, or monitor or inquire into a single exercise of a power, or a single performance or duty. In practice, this means the DVSC cannot inquire into individual matters. This is to ensure the DVSC remains focused on system-level reforms as envisaged by the Royal Commission.

The Minute proposes the appointment of Ms Penelope ('Penny') McKay as the Commissioner for a period of five years from 1 June 2026. The appointment of Ms McKay would be the inaugural appointment of a Commissioner following the establishment of the DVSC as an independent statutory authority on 29 September 2025.

Ms McKay has served as Acting Commissioner since 22 September 2026, where she is responsible for overseeing the statutory and corporate establishment of the DVSC. Prior to serving as Acting Commissioner, she was Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Skill Quality Authority, and prior to this Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman and General Counsel of the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity. Ms McKay has a strong background in public administration and extensive experience in regulation, policy and the public sector.

The position of the Commissioner was publicly advertised on APSJobs between 4 September 2025 and 8 October 2025. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet convened a selection panel to conduct a competitive selection process. Supported by Beaumont&Beaumont, the selection panel made assessments and conducted interviews with shortlisted candidates, which took place on 19 January 2026. The selection panel made their recommendation for suitable candidates, including Ms McKay, on 4 February 2026.

The commencement of Ms McKay as Commissioner is subject to the commencement of the Act by proclamation. The Bill received Royal Assent on 1 April 2026 and the Act has not yet commenced. Section 4 of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* allows for the exercise of powers between the enactment and the commencement of an Act, including the power to make an appointment.

Ms McKay's curriculum vitae is attached.

The Minute recommends that the appointment be made in the form proposed.

In accordance with subsections 72(2) and 72(3) of the *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026*, I confirm that Ms McKay:

- has suitable qualifications, training and experience to merit her appointment as Commissioner of the DVSC,
- was selected through a merit-based, publicly advertised process, and
- has not been a member of the Australian Defence Force in the last five years.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Authority: Subsection 72(1) of the *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2026*

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Ms Penelope ('Penny') Joanne McKay
 Residential address: s 47F
 Date of birth:
 Present position: Acting Commissioner, Defence and Veterans' Service Commission
 Qualifications: 1999: Admitted to Practise as Solicitor, Queensland Supreme Court
 1996: Bachelor of Law, James Cook University
 1994: Bachelor of Business (Management), Northern Territory University
 Relevant experience: 2025-Present: Acting Commissioner, Defence and Veterans' Service Commission
 2025: Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Australian Skills Quality Authority
 2020-25: Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman, Statutory Appointment
 2021-22: Acting Commonwealth Ombudsman, Statutory Appointment
 2020: Acting First Assistant Secretary Integrity, Security and Assurance Division, Department of Home Affairs
 2020: Chief of Staff to the Secretary, Department of Home Affairs
 2018-20: Assistant Secretary Audit and Assurance, Department of Home Affairs
 2014-18: General Counsel, Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity
 2016-17: Director Legal, Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory
 2008-14: Principal Legal Officer and Senior Assistant Director, Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions
 2005-08: Legal Officer, Criminal Law & Justice Group, ACT Justice & Community Safety Directorate
 2002-05: Prosecutor, ACT Director of Public Prosecutions
 2002: Legal Officer, Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

Current board memberships: Former board memberships:	1999:	Legal Clerk / Acting Legal Officer, QLD Director of Public Prosecutions
	1997-99:	Associate to District Court Judges, QLD District Court
	2024-Present:	Independent Member of Administrative Review Tribunal Audit and Risk Committee
	2023-25:	Open Government Partnership Forum Member
	2020:	Open Government Partnership Forum Member
	2007-08:	Member of the Victims of Crime Assistance Board (ACT)
	2007-08:	Committee Member of the Model Criminal Law Officers' Committee of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General
	2005-08:	Member of the National Firearms Policy Working Group
	2005-08:	Committee Member Domestic Violence Prevention Council (ACT)
EEO categories:	2005-08:	Committee Member Family Violence Intervention Program Coordinating Committee (ACT)
	F	