



**Australian Government**

**Australian Civil-Military Centre**



# Australian Deployed Women

A study commissioned by the Australian Civil-Military Centre  
and conducted by the Institute for Social Science Research  
at the University of Queensland

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**ACMC**

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“...as a country we still debate, should women be allowed to serve on the front line? Well (a) there is no such thing as the front line anymore and (b), look at contemporary warfare and ask yourself, what really do you require of your soldiers? Is it the ability to carry 50 kilograms on their back and walk 20 kilometres or is it ... being able to operate within the human domain, influence people, gain information from people, shape how they’re going to behave, improve stability, communicate effectively with different cultures.”

(Australian deployed woman, research participant)

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## Foreword

My professional military life has many similarities to the findings of this report. From commissioning as an officer in 1985 to my current appointment as Force Commander, United Nations Forces in Cyprus, my gender has not influenced the way that I do my job; however, it is inextricably relevant to who I am as a person. Contemporary operations will inevitably include ever more women – a progress that is marked by this report and by my life experience

From my perspective as a commander, we need an evidence-based approach to gender analysis and gender-sensitive policy approaches. We need to move beyond relying on anecdotal assumptions about the role of women. We will always need excellent research and data to assist in changing policy and behaviour.

I was delighted to be asked to write the foreword to this report as my experience, particularly here in Cyprus, has demonstrated that greater diversity within complex operations is essential to successfully deliver on our mandates. The performance of the deployed force and the credibility of the mission is enhanced when we represent the people we support and protect.

As someone who was privileged to serve as Commandant of the Australian Defence Force Academy, this report provides a valuable starting point for our future development of leaders across Defence, Police and the Civilian Sector with an equal focus being applied to both women and men. Our responsibility to guide and mentor the next generation

of emerging leaders, at every level, requires a clear-eyed appreciation of where we have been, current challenges, and what we have yet to do.

I want to endorse the specific conclusion of the report that ‘what is required is a kind of gender diversity that values difference and recognises its strategic value, enabling personnel to operate without limitations of gender constructs’. As a recent policy brief by Nina Wilén concluded; ‘Rather than focusing attention on women’s added value, we should direct our attention towards recruiting and training female and male leaders to value diversity and inclusion, on setting good examples, and on upholding standards’.<sup>1</sup>

**Major General Cheryl Pearce, AM**





## Executive Summary

Australian deployed women are excelling in a multitude of ways and the importance of their contribution to peace and security operations should not be underestimated. This report by The University of Queensland examines deployment experiences from the perspective of women, and cross references them with the accounts of men. This research involved the participation of 352 Australian female and male personnel with deployment experience from within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police across a 25 year period and within diverse peace and security contexts. The report details Australian deployed women's contribution to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, in addition to achievements and strengths in other aspects critical to operational success.

This report's findings show that Australian deployed women demonstrate a wide range of important capabilities in areas unrelated to the WPS agenda. This includes negotiation, innovation and leadership, intelligence gathering and analysis, capacity building of local counterparts, and flexibility and aptitude in peace operations. It was found that many of these capabilities have gendered dimensions to them but are not regarded by personnel as feminine traits, instead they are regarded as strengths that women have

consistently shown an aptitude for developing. Recommendations are made as to how these identified strengths can best be understood and developed in both female and male deployees, to the advancement of operational goals and WPS priorities. The report provides an account of historical and ongoing barriers faced by deployed personnel. To a large extent these barriers are related to misperceptions of gender, limiting gender constructs, including harmful masculinities, and problematic gender protection norms.

The findings in this report are of critical significance to Australian security forces regarding future policy and planning on gender. Recommendations are made regarding training, institutional reform, and potential research to further inform action. There are practical implications for personnel protection, recruitment, promotion, and support. If Australian security forces can foster meaningful gender diversity and enable its personnel to operate by avoiding the limiting aspects of unhelpful gender constructs, there will be far reaching benefits at operational and individual levels. For men, there is the potential to move away from harmful masculinities, as well as develop previously undervalued skills and abilities. For women, they may see the recognition of the full range of their contributions to peace and security operations.



# Introduction

## Background to study

The importance of incorporating gender perspectives in peace and security operations has gathered increased attention in recent decades, aided by the work of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. However, there is limited evidence of the potential benefits accrued to such operations by deploying female personnel, including a lack of research on the experiences and contributions of Australian deployed women. This study seeks to contribute in addressing this gap. It explores the important contributions that Australian deployed women make to peace and security operations, as well as the challenges they face. It offers important insight across a spectrum of themes relevant to the WPS agenda. The findings are significant in terms of establishing pathways for potential reform and further exploration concerning gender in Australian security forces.

The research for this study was commissioned by the Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) and conducted by the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland. Acknowledgments to Bryn Hughes, Lesley Pruitt, Sarah Shteir, Francisco Perales, Abdullah Mamun, Sean Mitchell, and Joelle Moore for their contributions to earlier stages of the work.

## Aims of the study

In the interests of capturing the nuanced and complex experiences of Australian women deployed into conflict and peacekeeping environments, and to learn from this experience in order to inform future policy and planning, this study has the following aims:

1. To develop an evidence base documenting the experiences of women during their deployment;
2. To contribute to the wider, ongoing discussions and research about whether – and, if so, what – benefits accrue by deploying female personnel in peace and security operations; and
3. To contribute to the development of Australian government policy and training guidance.

## Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda

The United Nations' Security Council resolution 1325 of 2000 affirmed the essential roles that women play in preventing and resolving conflicts and the need to integrate gender perspectives into peace and security efforts.<sup>2</sup> Since 2000, another nine resolutions concerning gender and conflict have built on resolution 1325, and together make up the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Concerned with the impact of violent conflict on women and girls, the agenda is an important international normative and policy framework. It includes four pillars: Prevention, Protection, Participation, and

## The Four WPS Pillars

**1. Prevention:** Relates to incorporating a gender perspective in conflict prevention activities and strategies, as well as recognising the role women play in preventing and reducing conflict. It acknowledges that women are disproportionately exposed to particular forms of violence in conflict and aims to target the prevention of such violence.

**2. Protection:** Focused on protecting women and girls from violence, including sexual violence, which spike during conflicts. It recognises that women and girls can experience rights violations at the hands of different actors in a conflict, including those associated with the State, non-state and peacekeeping forces.

**3. Participation:** Concerned with increasing the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as broader peace-building agendas. It acknowledges the roles women play in peace-building, including in leadership positions. This pillar recognises that women need to be involved in the creation of mechanisms designed to serve or protect women.

**4. Relief and Recovery:** Concerned with ensuring that a gender perspective is central to relief and recovery efforts. Post-disaster and post-conflict environments present significant risks for women and girls and it is recognised that relief and recovery efforts affect them differently to men and boys. This pillar includes peace-building and future stability, which must incorporate gender policies and the inclusion of women in decision-making.

(UN Women 2015; Davies and True 2019)

Relief and Recovery.<sup>3</sup> The WPS agenda is integral to Australia's policies and practices concerning peace and security. The Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018 included five key strategies:<sup>4</sup>

1. Integrate a gender perspective into Australia's policies on peace and security.
2. Embed the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Australian Government's approach to human resources management of Defence, Australian Federal Police and deployed personnel.
3. Support civil society organisations to promote equality and increase women's participation in conflict prevention, peace-building, conflict resolution, and relief and recovery.
4. Promote Women, Peace and Security implementation internationally.
5. Take a co-ordinated and holistic approach domestically and internationally to Women, Peace and Security.





## Findings related to the Women, Peace and Security agenda

Prior to this study, a review of literature related to the WPS agenda was conducted. The review found several operational benefits commonly attributed to the deployment of female personnel.<sup>5</sup> These common assertions in the literature provided parameters for the study to focus on the experiences and contributions of Australian deployed women and a framework to analyse and present the data related to the WPS agenda.

### Common assertion in the WPS literature

Female personnel help make an operation more acceptable and approachable in the eyes of the local population.

Both the women and men included in this study assert that Australian deployed women put local populations at ease and increase levels of trust. According to the research participants, Australian deployed women excel at developing local

connections; demonstrate empathy, emotional intelligence and offer critical insights for engaging with local people. The women are at times reportedly treated as a 'third gender' by the local population, enabling them to operate outside of the constraints of local gender norms. This can include the effective navigation of both women's and men's spaces as they interact with local populations. Male counterparts and superiors strategically utilise deployed women to broker relationships and normalise the presence of deployed forces. For example, the presence of female personnel is understood to diffuse situations heightened by threatening displays of masculinity from local men. The effectiveness of female personnel in this regard depends on context. The women in this study did not claim to make all operations more acceptable to all local people in all places. Nonetheless, they reported being highly effective even in cultural contexts where, based on an assumption that local men would not engage with them because they were women, they were sometimes expected to be ineffectual. Some of the women expressed frustration with this assumption and described the preparedness of local men to speak frankly with them, sometimes despite their gender and occasionally because of their gender.

Australian deployed women included in this study described the importance of their contact with local women in their work. Local women may be victims in a conflict, combatants or peacebuilders – sometimes, they are all of these things. Deployed women can search local women for weapons, enter private spaces, talk to children, take statements regarding sexual or gender-based violence, gather intelligence, negotiate with, and more effectively include women in the peace process. Some research participants explained how male personnel are limited in their ability to engage with women, due largely to cultural boundaries and the risk of offence. The men agreed that their female colleagues have this comparative advantage. Survey respondents agreed that local norms and culture allow deployed women to communicate more effectively with local women than deployed men (79 percent of women and 81 percent of men agreed).

### Common assertion in the WPS literature

Female personnel have certain 'comparative operational advantages' over male colleagues – including their ability to engage local women.

**Common assertion in the WPS literature**

Female personnel facilitate the prevention of, and response to sexual and gender-based violence.

It is understood in the WPS literature that female personnel are “the best interlocutors for addressing sexual and gender-based violence”.<sup>6</sup> Given their “greater proximity to groups at risk”, female personnel can help facilitate an operation’s prevention

and protection efforts.<sup>7</sup> Many of the deployed women in this study assert that only women have the potential to understand the security threats that local women face. Accordingly, when women are not in decision making roles there can be problems with how the security of local women is understood, planned for and managed. Some of the deployed women described important roles working with sexual and domestic violence issues, as well as child protection. Acknowledging that female personnel excel in these ways, it is also important to stress that the responsibility of preventing sexual violence is not, and should not solely be, with women.<sup>8</sup>

There is an assumption in the WPS literature that female personnel serve as role models for local women, in particular by encouraging them to join the national police or security forces.<sup>9</sup> While some of the

**Common assertion in the WPS literature**

Female personnel serve as role models for local girls and women.

deployed women in this study hoped that their presence would inspire local women to do things outside of their prescribed gender roles, such as join the forces, there was no evidence that this transpired. The deployed women did report being enthusiastically received by women already working in local forces. They gave accounts of developing relationships and providing professional examples and advice. They also, at times, directly challenged assumptions about the limitations of women held by personnel from the forces of other nations as well as local forces. Additionally, some research participants felt that Australia’s leading role in promoting and deploying women was an example for other nation’s forces to follow. Some of the women noted that when there was a lack of Australian women deployed in operations, it undermined the Australian forces encouragement of gender equity within local forces. In this way, some of the research participants noted the potential for a stark inconsistency between message and practice.

**Common assertion in the WPS literature**

Female personnel create an environment more conducive to promoting appropriate behaviour - reducing the dominance of hypermasculine attitudes and behaviours.

According to the WPS literature, female personnel promote appropriate behaviour which influences male colleagues in a way that improves the operational environment, and, in so doing, helps decrease the level of misconduct, including sexual misconduct.<sup>10</sup> In this study, some of the deployed women reported a sense of interrupting harmful

hypermasculinity and that some men seemed to appreciate this interruption. If there are enough women present it was felt by many that there is a calming effect on behaviours.<sup>11</sup> Some of the male personnel also said that having women on deployment was beneficial for men in terms of maintaining normal social behaviours. In the survey, a significant proportion of both male and female respondents indicate that women ‘enabled a feeling of normalcy, by having both women and men present’ (67 percent of women and 55 percent of men).

Some of the women spoke of occasions when they have helped male colleagues to process issues during deployment - listening to them or acting as sounding boards for their concerns. There were varied responses from the women about this perceived role. Not all the women reported playing this part or liking this role. Moreover, not all the women agreed with the idea that men behave better when women are around. A small number of participants noted a perceived sense of burden about women having to ‘tame’ the behaviour of some men.



## Other strengths of deployed women: Beyond the WPS agenda

Australian deployed women bring value to peace and security operations in precisely the manner anticipated by the WPS agenda and corresponding literature. That said, it is at least partially counterproductive to limit the understandings of women's contributions to their 'feminine' skills or attributes. There are certainly critical operational tasks that align with the WPS agenda that only female deployed personnel can do on account of being women - like entering the private spaces of local women. However, this capability should not be considered a feminine trait, as such, but rather an operational imperative that women have a strategic advantage in achieving.

Moreover, women's contribution should not be considered as limited to achieving WPS priorities only, as they consistently demonstrate other strengths. A great deal of the women's described capabilities, attributes and experiences were in areas unrelated to the WPS agenda (or at least not reported in the context of WPS). In this section, the vast range of other skills and attributes that the women themselves report to offer in peace and security operations are considered, as well as the supporting observations their male colleagues have made in this study. These contributions, while having gendered dimensions to them, are seen less as feminine traits and more as strengths that women have consistently demonstrated an aptitude and capability in developing.

### Negotiation, innovation, and leadership

The deployed women consistently gave accounts of their experiences in reducing conflict, normalising situations, empathising with different positions, and being able to understand and articulate the perspective of others. These attributes make for highly effective negotiation skills. The women also described how they approach things differently from their male colleagues, feel freer to think critically or "from left field", and how this leads to innovative solutions to problems. The women gave accounts of employing, and observing other women employ, leadership qualities that are different from conventional top-down models of leadership. They described the use of collaborative and entrepreneurial approaches, that include iterative problem-solving and adaptive leadership. Such approaches are well suited to contingency planning and operating in complex environments.

"I would say it's definitely ... the ability to probably defuse the situation with a different approach to perhaps our male counterparts. Look, the gift of the gab, just being able to talk in a different way or see issues in a different way. No better or worse, it's just [the] diversity of the force... I think intuition that women tend to bring [reading of non-verbal cues] ... like picking up on those signs of, "I can see this [is] not going very well. I can see this woman and her child or this woman's getting agitated. I can see the situation's about to escalate." Potentially women pick up on those signs sooner, I don't know I haven't done any study into it. Maybe males and females are the same [they can both do this]?... Just that ability to, the intuition and ability to defuse in a different manner is quite useful."

### Recommendation

Actively promote diversity in leadership styles – with an emphasis on inclusive, collaborative, iterative and adaptive leadership models.

It is recommended that the forces actively encourage strengths in negotiation, innovation and leadership by providing relevant training and recognition. Collaborative and adaptive approaches to leadership should be recognised in promotion structures. If such leadership models were to be explicitly elevated and

rewarded, this would contribute to greater diversity of leadership styles in the forces. This adaptive and collaborative form of leadership should be pursued to add value to, and not to the exclusion of, other hierarchical approaches to leadership.

### Intelligence gathering and analysis

It is commonly understood that local women are an invaluable source of intelligence and far more likely to speak frankly to deployed female personnel. This is strategically recognised by both the deployed women themselves and often their teams or superiors. What is less understood is the strength that the deployed women are demonstrating in the high level of analysis of the intelligence they gather. This strength comes from the use of empathy in their engagement with local populations, and also from understanding what they are engaging with.

“I found that women were quite willing to tell me - who was the good guys and who were the bad guys in the male group. “Oh, don’t trust him, or he’s really the boss. The other guy he just does the talking. But nothing will happen if he doesn’t agree.” So you get to actually quickly know that. Whereas the males spend a lot of time on human terrain but they only get the male point of view. It’s when you get a female point of view that the women don’t like this guy. Then you go and talk to the human terrain guys and they go, “oh, he’s not bad, we have a good conversation, we’ve got a good relationship with him.” The women are saying, “no, watch him.””

### Recommendation

Integrate understandings of gender into processes of intelligence gathering and analysis.

Given the importance of local women’s perspectives and knowledge, and the complexity of gendered dynamics locally, it is reasonable to conclude that using a gender lens to both collect and analyse

intelligence would be highly beneficial to operations. Recognising that some deployed women are already excelling in this area, it is recommended that the forces investigate ways to meaningfully integrate considerations and understandings of gender into existing processes of intelligence gathering and analysis.

### Building the capacity of local counterparts

Studies have confirmed that relationships with local personnel are key to a successful capacity development operation.<sup>12</sup> The women in this study gave accounts of highly beneficial and productive relationships with local counterparts in capacity development roles. They all reported having better and more productive interactions with their local counterparts than some of their male colleagues, because of a perceived ability to empathise, read non-verbal communication and support people to participate meaningfully in vital processes to do with peace and state building. The women also reported having a greater ability to understand the context and work effectively with cultural norms and practices.

“...I think the only way that can be effective is by properly understanding what the concerns are of the people that you’re working with and what they bring to the table and what’s the extra piece that you can help with, because your job is to help. Your job’s not to do things for them.”

The women in advisor roles promote positive and safe environments for women in local organisations and authorities. The centrality of relationships in complex state building environments cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of building on local strengths and capacities.

## Flexibility and aptitude in peace operations

The deployed women saw themselves and their female colleagues as being well suited to working in peace operations. They described a confidence in working in fragile and unpredictable environments, where flexibility and subtlety is required. They often described such environments as requiring a greater level of sophistication in strategic engagement and a vastly different skill set to warfighting. Many highlighted an aptitude for working with other cultures as important and expressed a wish to develop this skill further.

The contexts and characteristics of different peace and security operations require different skill sets and sensibilities to achieve operational goals. It is recommended that further research and analysis be conducted to help the forces to cultivate a workforce that is more effectively

tailored to specific peace operations. To do this, it is necessary to understand what capabilities are needed, and how these can be systematically developed and promoted. While it is expected, based on this research, that women will excel in many of these

Recommendation
Conduct research towards understanding how work in peace operations differs from warfighting and how the forces can tailor capabilities to operations.

areas, these skill sets are not necessarily based on feminine or masculine attributes and it is unhelpful to think about them in binary terms. Rather, any framework, should be set up to give all personnel a chance to demonstrate a vast range of sensibilities and capabilities along a spectrum that is required for this work.

“In a peace [and] stability operational environment, you’ve got to be so much more conscious of the mission. Whereas the men tend to [be] very strategic and tactical and like to achieve outcomes. But it’s usually by military force. So, we have two different perspectives on our end game. So, when we’re talking peace and security, I think the men may be a little bit more challenged because we can’t just use tanks. We can’t use howitzer guns and things like that. We’re using different equipment and a different process. ... You’re using those people who aren’t normally the glorified ones. So, our war fighters don’t know what to do in this kind operation. So, I think women definitely are just in the perfect position to contribute in so many ways.”

## Valuing women’s strengths and capabilities

While women do demonstrate aptitude for many of the skills required for achieving operational outcomes in peace operations, including WPS objectives, there is a need to stop thinking of these things as ‘women’s special contributions’ and instead recognise them as operational imperatives. If such skill sets are attributed to the ‘feminine’, they will continue to be undervalued and marginalised in the forces. Moreover, deployed men also have the potential to exhibit the strengths described in this section – the data suggests that many already are. Therefore, recognising and rewarding these contributions can promote women while also being beneficial for men.

The deployed women in this study want the full spectrum of their contributions to be explicitly valued and made more visible within the forces. However, there was some resentment about drawing attention to gender when recognising strengths and successes. Pointing out gender, when highlighting a variety of non-gender specific achievements, can contribute to an idea of exceptionalism, or the perception that if a woman is successful it is somehow extraordinary. It is recommended that internal and external communication strategies be developed that aim to normalise the idea of women being successful in the forces.

Recommendation
Explicitly value the full spectrum of women’s contributions. Develop communication strategies to actively promote the success of women without drawing attention to gender.

For the forces to take full advantage of the operational benefits brought about by the strengths that women consistently demonstrate, these strengths need to be

## Recommendation

Systematically recognise the strengths related to achieving the WPS agenda in both women and men.

systematically recognised in all personnel. It is recommended that strengths related to the WPS agenda be recognised explicitly for promotion and awards, for both women and men of all ranks and roles. This recommendation would be furthered by linking the achievement of WPS priorities to

definitions of operational success. In doing so, contributions towards achieving the WPS agenda would be elevated and understood as core business.





# Overcoming the barriers to deploying women

Many of the women in the study described barriers to do with gender that impact upon their experiences of deployment. Acknowledging that there is significant room for improvement, most women report that attitudes concerning gender are getting better. In part, this is understood to be due to a recent shift in the culture of the forces. However, past negative experiences obviously remain formative for women as they continue their careers. In addition, the views expressed by several of the male participants suggest that there are persistent misunderstandings about gender as well as problematic views about women's capabilities.

## Attitudes, intimidation and harassment

Most of the women gave accounts of having to prove themselves in the face of widespread views that women are a liability in one way or another – usually to do with physical strength or 'hardness'. In the survey, respondents were asked to think about organisational culture in the forces and to agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Women have to work harder than men to get the same recognition and rewards'. There was considerable difference by gender, with 68 percent of women agreeing, compared to just 15 percent of men.

There has been a positive shift in recognising women's capabilities. However, problematic views endure. Most of the women reported having a sense that change comes gradually and that it will come with increasing numbers of women. On the other hand, a few women were insistent that they are not treated any differently on account of being female and tended to be defensive of their male colleagues.

When asked to reflect on their deployment experiences, some of the women gave accounts that featured intimidation and harassment.<sup>13</sup> These accounts 'came up' during the interviews. This study did not attempt to survey the instances of intimidation or harassment and therefore no conclusions can be made about current or historical prevalence. The research cut across a wide timeframe of deployments - giving the women a chance to speak about experiences that may have been defining in their careers and remain formative in terms of how they navigate and perceive gender relations in the forces. Most of the highly problematic accounts were in earlier deployments. Research participants frequently noted that "you wouldn't get away with that nowadays", or comments to that effect.

"Usually the commander will acknowledge that a female's coming and they need to do something to make an area more modest – so a showering area, or an ablution area... When I was on deployment ... they were told I was coming, they didn't like the fact that I was a 'she' and I was coming. So they put some hessian around a shower – hessian is very... you can actually see through it... But then the main headquarters element was upstairs and there was a veranda outside, so they'd set up this shower down the bottom and there was the headquarters element up the top. So they'd all come out back to smoke on the veranda and just look straight down into the shower. So every day I had a shower, I had a shower in shorts and a sports bra. They'd just stand there and watch me shower, and on a couple of occasions I hurled abuse at them and told them to fuck off! They were senior – I was quite junior – they were senior people."

(Referring to their deployment experience from the early 2000s).

Some of the women told of working under men who ‘hate women’ or ‘misogynistic bullies’. One participant, working in a male dominated section of the forces, described a ten-year career of constant harassment and bullying, including being nicknamed ‘token’ and having her colleagues use a picture of her face for target practice on the firing range. Some harassment, like this previous example, was perpetuated by Australian personnel. However, most examples given in this study of inappropriate, threatening, and intimidating behaviour involved other country’s forces on joint operations and generally took place ‘inside the wire’.

In acknowledging that change was needed, some of the women were deeply concerned with the potential for distortion brought about by things like inquiries and media reports of violence against deployed women inside the forces. There was a perceived danger that this would influence the public to view the forces as a site of extreme gender inequality and abuse.

Most of the women, looking back over long careers in the forces, have the view that gender-based bullying is now less common. Additionally, both male and female participants often observed that men are calling other men out on inappropriate behaviour with increasing frequency. This is a real sign of cultural change and an incredibly important resource to build on in terms of male advocacy. Despite this perceived change, some senior women believe that young women coming into the forces are not as prepared as they were to stand their ground when faced with bullying and discrimination. There was a suggestion that junior women needed assertiveness and negotiation training.

#### Recommendation

Work with women and men to develop skills to prevent and address gender-based harassment.  
Leverage male advocacy.

It is recommended that the forces provide training to both women and men regarding gender-based harassment and develop their skills in assertiveness and negotiation. There is also a need to build on existing male advocacy. It will be important to avoid exposing men to bullying as a result of their advocacy. This is delicate, nuanced and careful work.

### Perceptions of gender

There is a public discourse and a perception that women’s presence in peace and security operations can have a destabilising effect on operations due to fraternisation, or the potential for fraternisation, between deployed personnel. Some of the research participants felt that when a small number of women are deployed this perception can potentially be amplified because of the way that those few women stand out. Several of the men interviewed for this study were preoccupied with issues to do with women’s appearances, details about relations between men and women on deployment and the ‘flirtatious’ or attention seeking behaviour of deployed women. While some of the women did comment on the problem of actual affairs and sexual relations on deployment, they were generally more concerned with the innuendo and rumours that undermine women. There were a few male accounts that indicated a considerably underdeveloped ability to relate to women in the workplace – this suggests that there is a need to get a better sense of the extent of these problems with attitude and how best to handle them.

### Masculinities

At the same time that women are expected to conform to the existing organisational culture within the forces which is highly masculinised, men are also expected to perform a certain type of masculinity, or act in a certain masculine way at the expense of their other attributes. This results in the potential for all personnel to suppress tendencies that do not conform to dominant expressions of masculinity. As a result, and evident in the interviews, personnel are at risk of suffering from poor mental wellbeing. In part,

### Recommendation

Conduct focused research on masculinities in the forces.

because of the perception that ‘real’ men do not show emotion or fear, there can be no pathway for men to develop meaningful resilience, or to realise the other capabilities that are essential for peace operations. This is to the detriment of the forces and their

operations, as well as to the individuals inside them.

It is recommended that research and consultation be conducted to better understand the full spectrum of masculinities in the forces, how they impact on women and men and how positive masculinities might be promoted. A fuller understanding of masculinities can inform the development of policies to achieve greater inclusion of women that are also understood to be positive for men.

The data suggests that most women, and many, if not most men, inside the forces are open to and supportive of further gender reforms. It is recommended that research be undertaken to ascertain the best approach to messaging gender reforms. If the approach to reform is blunt and/or seems to be in any way attacking or disadvantaging women or men who do not fit a certain preferred mould, there is the potential of alienating those that would otherwise be sympathetic supporters. It should be clear that the intention of any reform is to benefit women and men.

### Recommendation

Undertake research to identify the best ways to communicate gender reforms.  
Explore ways to support and transition men through organisational change and avoid isolating individuals.

There is also a need to better understand how to support men who have traditionally benefited from harmful masculinities and corresponding structures - as they will need to transition. If they are left to feel isolated and/or disadvantaged by change they will be a source of backlash. Moreover, if men feel like they are being “blamed” as individuals for the suffering and disadvantage of women they may experience mental health repercussions that will not only harm the individuals but may contribute to gendered divisions within the forces. It is important that the messaging around reform is thoroughly researched and extensively trialled to avoid these pitfalls.

## Training in gender and WPS

Many of the women in this study feel that existing mainstream gender and WPS training is inadequate, superficial and infrequent. They point out that it does not provide the space for men to fully grapple with the importance or complexity of issues to do with masculinity and gender. The deficits in training contributed to a lack of understanding of the importance of the WPS agenda and its relevance to deployments as well as the forces generally. As one female participant noted, not much good comes from a lecture being “rammed down their throats every year”. Rather than periodically telling men what they ‘now have to do’, sustained engagement is required.

“Stimulating discussion is great when you confine someone to a room and you say you can’t leave until you’ve heard me. Or when you’ve got people who are actually interested in having that debate. Then it’s up to you to be persuasive. Unfortunately, what they’re hearing are directives and they don’t understand why.”

### Recommendation

Build on existing gender and WPS training and innovate new delivery approaches.  
Connect training and learning outcomes to deployment requirements and promotion.

It is vital to nurture sophisticated understandings of gender – especially in terms of masculinities, power dynamics, and cultural change across the breadth of the forces. Specialised gender and WPS training courses currently exist within the forces, however the data suggests the need to

broaden access, increase the involvement of participants in the learning process, and to innovate with delivery. To deepen learning experiences, there is an opportunity to build on existing training content and capabilities and to trial different teaching techniques. It is recommended that the training be undertaken through mixed modalities, incorporating online learning, intensive workshops, peer-to-peer learning around real case studies, and dialogue approaches to work on attitudinal change and experiential learning. This could be followed by on the job-training, and ongoing peer support.

Participants should be encouraged to bring their own experiences into the learning process. There is potential to draw on the data collected for this study in the development of curriculum and case studies. Rather than telling personnel how and what they should think, a participatory approach to learning can give personnel conceptual tools that they can apply to relevant and real-world practice. To raise the value of expertise in gender and WPS, it is recommended that the comprehension of learning and the application of the knowledge gained should become a requirement for deployments and be attached to promotion criteria and other forms of recognition. Personnel may also see increased value in participation if they were awarded a micro-credential on completion of the training, which can then be recognised for general career advancement, or for admission or credit for tertiary level study.

Operational effectiveness demands that leaders have highly advanced capabilities in dealing with gender and diversity issues in the workforce. Accordingly, it is recommended that specific training be made available to leaders in terms of improving gender relations at an inter-personal and institutional level, mitigating against harm, promoting inclusion in the workplace, and drawing on the value of diversity in their teams. It is not reasonable to expect leaders to operate effectively without this specialised training.

### Recommendation

Require leaders to have a sophisticated understanding of the importance of gender and diversity issues in the workforce.

## Gender and security

Deployed women and men are exposed to different security threats and experience them differently according to their gender and other intersecting factors. The women in this study described how they effectively operate in highly hazardous environments as a part of their deployments. However, some of the participants felt there was a misperception in the public and from some people in the forces that women are not suited to dangerous work. Some accounts reflect the operation of a gender protection norm, in the idea that female deployed personnel need extra protection on account of being women. Some of the men did express views that revealed that there are some challenges in recognising women's ability to operate in dangerous roles.

The deployed women accept the risk or potential dangers in the external contexts of their work environments. However, internal threats to their personal security occurring on base, or 'inside the wire', are not accepted. Many of the women described feeling unsafe on account of potential and real threats from personnel on base from other nation's contributing forces. Some of the women referred to policies that have been put in place in reaction to these internal risks to safety. They described how many of the policies unintentionally point to women's safety as a 'special problem', a burden or liability to operations. Such policies resulted in the women feeling undermined and/or less safe.

"The threat could come from anywhere. But when the threat might come from your – not my colleagues, I never felt threatened by the ADF. They were always the ones looking out for me. But the other forces, you know, I was on a base with 40 other countries and many bases I went to had many other countries. You don't know these people and they've got guns and knives and you've got nothing. You know there are always rules like you can't walk alone after dark. Those aren't rules just because, those are rules because people have actually been sexually assaulted, raped, stabbed. Men and Women!"

Men also experience risks on account of gender, both outside and inside the wire. This can involve the danger posed by hypermasculine behaviours - including increased possibility of male violence against men and risk-taking behaviour. The need to conform to these behaviours can result in men experiencing physical injury and mental health problems. The women gave various accounts of their male colleagues getting into potentially dangerous and escalating situations in the interest of looking 'tough'.

"So I think there were about nine rockets that came in in fairly quick succession. I could hear them landing. I could feel them landing. After about the third or fourth I was like, I'm in a non-rocket proof space. I could walk 20 metres and go into a rocket proof space and I'll be safe. I did that and I got paid out by a lot of the guys for doing that... I'm like, yeah. I just think it's probably a sensible thing to do [laughs]...But there was that ... peer pressure ... to be tough."

### Recommendation

Reframe the existing protection norm to include a culture of protecting everyone from gendered security risks.

To avoid gendered security risks being considered a special problem only relevant to deployed women it is recommended that they be reframed in a more general sense, or from a perspective of organisational culture. The forces must move away from the notion that deployed women need

protecting, and rather, acknowledge that everyone needs protecting, women and men. The data suggests that deployed personnel, both female and male, have a sensibility of looking out for each other, or 'protecting our own', that operates both outside and inside the wire. It is recommended that the forces draw on this existing culture and expand it to include the notion of *protecting each other from gendered security risks*. The identification, management and mitigation of such risks need to be dealt with in a way that normalises their systematic consideration.

The forces are accustomed to managing a variety of other types of operational security risks. They must address gendered security threats as comprehensively as they do these other risks. It is recommended that a gendered security risk analysis be built into standard procedure, and that well-informed risk mitigation strategies be put in place.

### Recommendation

Build comprehensive gendered security risk analysis into standard operational procedure.

This will require some messaging and awareness raising about the different ways that women and men experience security risks.



# Australian Aid



## Increasing women's presence and supporting mechanisms

Increasing the number of women on peace and security deployments will bring benefits related to the WPS agenda, and help to share the burden of living up to those benefits. In addition, a higher proportion of women in the forces has the potential to help shift the organisational culture away from harmful masculinities. Most of the women gave accounts of considerable improvements, but all had advice regarding further changes that are needed concerning strategies for recruiting and selecting women, as well as systems for support.

### Recruitment

Almost without exception, the women in this study agreed that more women are needed on deployment. More than half of survey respondents, both female and male, agreed that to improve women's participation and contribution to peace and security operations 'more women need to be recruited to have more women prepared for deployment' (55 percent of women and 53 percent of men).

With the aim to recruit more women, it is recommended that the forces showcase the sort of interventions and interactions that the deployed women have reflected on in this study as being rewarding. For example, providing first aid to children in conflict affected communities; negotiating with female combatants; bringing women into the peace process; and taking statements from women regarding sexual violence. In addition, other work, not commonly associated with 'female attributes' could be profiled, such as interrogating prisoners and operating drones. A recruitment campaign which emphasises women's full spectrum of contributions—without directly drawing attention to gender—could appeal to a greater number of women, and perhaps also to a more diverse range of women.

#### Recommendation

Recruit more women by profiling the sort of work that women in this study have identified as valuable experiences.

### Promotional opportunities

As well as having more women in the forces, there was a consensus that there should be more women in senior roles. This was based on a perceived need for diversity of thinking at high leadership levels. Many of the participants want to see increased consideration and planning for gender and WPS across operations, and they feel that having more women in leadership positions at all levels will help to make this possible. They also commonly felt that there was a need for greater diversity generally. That is, that the complex operating environment of peace operations required diversity in thinking.

#### Recommendation

Increase the representation of women in leadership roles in all levels of the forces by critically examining selection strategies.

To determine the best way forward to increase the number of women in leadership roles, it is recommended that the forces conduct well-informed, inclusive discussions that examine selection strategies. The

women suggest that selection frameworks should be based on merit, but that this framework take seriously the skills and strengths that women bring, as well as acknowledge the disadvantage women experience due to gender bias.

## Selection processes

There is trepidation about positive discrimination. Some women denounced quotas in strong terms, citing various reasons including stigma and unintended negative consequences on career progression.

One of the greatest anxieties of positive discrimination was that women selected due to their gender be considered not 'up to the task' or unable to 'match it with the men'. Several women made it clear that when you make opportunities available only to women there will be a backlash and therefore suggested soft-quotas, or selection opportunities that disproportionately benefit women but are nonetheless open to men.

There were a few strong voices in favour of positive discrimination, and they offered compelling reasoning based on a frustration in the lack of understanding about the barriers that women face and the privilege that a significant proportion of men enjoy. They pointed out that there are currently systems in place to ensure that selection and promotion is based on merit, but that they believe that gender bias and the collusion of male networks still influence the final decision-making to the disadvantage of women. Seeing no way to overcome these disadvantages in the present system, some women feel that there is a need to deliberately make room for women in the form of quotas or other forms of positive discrimination.

Some positive discrimination and quota tools are already being used inside the forces. While this study does not discount the potential value of implementing quota systems, it highlights that the use of quotas was viewed with apprehension or outright rejection by many of the women in this study. The reasons for the mixed opinions on positive

discrimination are complex and varied. It is recommended that a targeted study on this question of quotas be undertaken. The suggestion that soft quotas or non-published gender targets be used within selection processes to get around the

problem of stigma, should form part of this further research. As one of the key stakeholders cautioned, however, this study should consider the risk of non-published targets becoming known and creating more speculation and tension.

## Expanding on successes

Female respondents indicate that in some areas of the forces there is a higher proportion of women - for instance, medical, logistics and civilian political advisers. The women in these areas report greater acceptance of their involvement and a normalisation of their presence and leadership - which they often attribute to the greater balance in the number of women and men in these areas. This balance was considered a positive outcome. However, there was a strong caution from participants against expecting the forces in general to reach an equal male/female ratio anytime

"...and see this is where I get torn. I am very anti 'front bum assist', very anti. I despise women being promoted because of their gender. I despise favourable treatment. I despise everything about that!"

"...one of the things frustrating for me is that when people talk about my career progress, it's always along the line of, congratulations you're one of the few girls who really deserves this. So, a little bit of me is proud and flattered. What irritates me is that when the entire organisation is set up to support a pathway to promotion that was designed for men by men and is unable to recognise talent in people that sit outside of that narrow window of humans. Both men and women. You've got to break the barriers somehow."

### Recommendation

Conduct focussed research on the question of quotas.

soon. Rather, it was suggested that the makeup of the forces will inevitably be dependent on the gender constructs of the society that they recruit from. Generally, girls and women are still not encouraged by society to take up employment that is considered masculine, as is the case with many of the jobs within the forces.

It is recommended that small case studies be conducted towards understanding why some parts of the forces have been successful regarding higher representation of women and what could be learnt from the gender dynamics of these positive examples.

#### Recommendation

Gain insight from areas within the forces that have higher representation of women.

### Career progression

According to the accounts of several participants, women experience significant slowing of career progression when choosing to have children. When they become mothers, they are often on the verge of promotion or in the process of accumulating necessary work experiences and training to enable promotion. For some of the women, taking maternity leave has resulted in a significant interruption to those processes.

#### Recommendation

Establish an equalising mechanism that compensates for parental leave when considering men and women for promotion.

It is recommended that the forces develop a system that allows for comparison commensurate to opportunity when considering women and men for promotion. In establishing a formula, it could be possible to transparently compare the achievement of parents, or those

with significant caring responsibilities, with other applicants on the basis of actual opportunity. This formula would then compensate for time spent away from work for caring responsibilities and allow for fast tracked acquisition of necessary experience and/or training for those that have missed out due to such responsibilities. Such a measure would give men wanting to be more involved in parenting an incentive to do so - which would result in the increased normalising of shared caring responsibilities in the forces. For women who are partnered with other service personnel this would increase the pool of women available for promotion and deployment.

### Peer support systems

Some of the women found peer-to-peer buddy systems beneficial for sharing strategies and finding out what services are available to them and their families as they prepare for deployment. Some of the women also gave accounts of effective networking and mentoring programs that exposed them to learning opportunities both as mentees and mentors. One woman highlighted the value in women being in senior mentorship roles for male colleagues. This had to do with exposing men to potentially different leadership styles and ways of thinking.

"I'm part of a mentoring program at the moment... I've been partnered up with a woman who has just had a baby. She's been on maternity leave for the last few months, she's just about to get back to work, and I've been her mentor for that. I'll occasionally send her emails or I'll just send her a text - how are you going, how's the baby? She'll send me photos, it's just knowing that you've got that connection back to Defence.... My mentee is getting one-on-one. She knows that she's got that connection, and that gives her the confidence... if she needs to speak up, she can just come to me and I can advocate for her."

However, it was pointed out that some support programs can be alienating for some women. It was suggested that a certain 'type' of woman can be attracted to women's networking programs, and that this can be isolating for other women that do not fit this mould. Furthermore, some women felt it would be damaging for their relationships with others in the organisation if they were to associate with this 'type' of women. These comments relate to the strongly differing views regarding positive discrimination and women's activism inside of the forces.

### Recommendation

Map existing strengths of women's support systems and scale up useful models.

Informal and formal women's support systems enjoy varying degrees of relevancy and success. It is recommended that the forces engage in a mapping exercise to identify and build on existing strategies.

First, it is necessary to identify the range of current and historic support activities. A consultation process would then be needed to ascertain their effectiveness. The most useful models could be expanded, replicated or scaled up across the forces.

### Family support

All the women who spoke on the subject report a significant improvement in the way the forces support families and how women feel able to juggle work and parenting. However, there are some accounts of bad experiences related to deployment and family support. Most of the women report that they were typically the primary carer and that this can cause problems when they deploy. Some of the women described family and friends being unsupportive and judgemental of a 'mum' being deployed, and of being shamed about leaving children behind. Generally, the deployed women with children had to organise domestic help themselves and pay for this privately. There did not seem to be any significant support to cater for this extra domestic help.

"That first deployment, for me, was an interesting experience because I suffered from quite serious depression the year after I got back from that deployment... not associated with the deployment itself, but associated with my role as a mother and as a care giver, and the way in which people - including my extended family treated me for abandoning my children...

...it's not just deployment, it's all parts of service life, whether it's moving or being away or being at work for long hours. The challenge as a mother is always on working out how that fits in with your family, the impact on your children and all of those pressures that society - or the stereotypes that society puts around what they expect you to be and do as a mother."

Some of the research participants noted that the family support networks were historically set up for heterosexual couples, to support wives while husbands were away. While the problems in marriages were complex and multifaceted, a failure to properly provide support to husbands being left behind certainly contributed to some family problems and breakdowns. These were not so much about the absence of the 'wife' as much as they were about the absence of the 'mother'. That is, they were in part caused by the stress experienced by the father left to take on caring responsibilities at home. On the other hand, other women gave glowing accounts of their male partners taking on caring roles in their absence and strengthening relationships with their children.

### Recommendation

Continue expanding family supports and flexibilities that benefit both women and men - including same-sex partners and parented families.

It is recommended that the forces continue to expand family supports to the benefit of both women and men. Supports should fill the gap, at least in terms of labour in the home, normally fulfilled by the deployed person, be they female or male. It may be important to reduce family reliance on privately organised

or informal arrangements, and instead to support families through institutionalised mechanisms that attempt to fulfil the role of deployed personnel at home. For instance, with the provision of childcare support and other domestic support around cooking, housekeeping and maintenance, as well as mental health support for children and spouses (such programs for children were highlighted by participants in the study). Such supports should be offered to the family and partners of all personnel, including same-sex partners and parented families, according to self-identified need through a facilitated process of deployment planning.

Some of the women brought up the issue of maternity leave. Several talked about the importance of ensuring men were given the opportunity to be primary or equal carers, and that this be reflected in leave entitlements across the board. This is particularly helpful when both parents are in the forces, because it allows the woman to be more available for work - but it is also helpful for changing gender norms within the forces.

It is recommended that, where possible, special conditions that are being offered to attract and accommodate women should also be offered to men. For example, because women are more likely to be primary carers, a policy that gives flexibility to accommodate parents, including flexible

working hours and working from home after school hours, will likely benefit more women than men. However, making it available also to men, ensures the policy is more broadly received and may have the effect of promoting positive male parenting role models that would benefit both women, men and children. Ensuring that men can access the same benefits as women helps to alleviate resentment and the perception that women are somehow an extra burden and allows men to see the benefit of reforms.

Recommendation
Give men the chance to take advantage of measures and policies that are put in place primarily to benefit women.

### Deployment requirements

The mothers among the women in the study are generally ready to deploy, provided it is on their own terms and when they and their children are prepared for the separation. One woman confided that she would never again deploy now that she is a mother. Some of the women reportedly had no hesitation in deploying early in the lives of their children. Others detailed a process of becoming ready again once their children had grown to a certain age. One woman exemplified this in saying that when she was first faced with being deployed when her children were very young, she struggled enormously and reported thinking to herself “I don’t think I can do this”. For other reasons, this early deployment did not eventuate. On a later deployment, when she was ready, she described her confidence in knowing it was time to go and how this made her immune to social judgements about leaving her children.

Mothers that feel compelled to leave their children before they are ready can experience significant repercussions. This includes mental health problems for mothers but it may also present risks for children as well, in terms of the impact of separation.<sup>14</sup> Currently, it appears that arrangements for managing this issue are ad hoc and can cause resentment for those that do not opt out of deployments due to parenting commitments. Some women feel that there should be a more transparent way to manage deployments to make sure that the forces are utilising those personnel that are willing to deploy and that there is flexibility for women and men who, due to family obligations, are required to stay home.

Recommendation
Develop equitable, transparent, and systematised deployment requirements that allow for flexibility around caring commitments.

It is recommended that the forces work to develop minimum deployment requirements tailored to positions or roles. All personnel could be invited to establish detailed deployment availability plans. These would allow parents (women and men) to declare themselves unable to deploy for periods of time to meet family commitments,

while ensuring they are available for minimum deployments over a determined period. There may be possibilities of transferring personnel that consider themselves to be permanently unable to deploy into positions that do not have a deployment requirement. These suggestions are highly contestable and may not be possible given the conditions of employment. They are offered as a starting point for discussion and

further consultation. Expanding family support and clarifying deployment requirements is likely to have the flow on benefit of attracting more female recruits. The assurances that these mechanisms would provide could help women feel more confident in choosing a career in the forces.





## Conclusion

The experiences of the deployed personnel in this study confirm that Australian deployed women are accruing benefits to peace and security operations in ways that align with the WPS agenda. Deployed women increase levels of trust with local populations and have a comparative advantage in engaging with local women. They have the potential to better understand, plan for and manage security threats faced by local women. As well as providing professional examples and advice to women in local security forces, deployed women directly challenge misperceptions about the capabilities of women. Finally, the presence of deployed women has positive and normalising social effects on male personnel, including in reducing potentially harmful hypermasculine attitudes and behaviours.

The study also reveals that deployed women consistently demonstrate other critical strengths beyond those related to the WPS agenda. They excel in negotiation and innovative problem solving and have an aptitude for using adaptive and collaborative leadership techniques. A high level of skill and understanding is evident in their intelligence gathering and analysis. They bring operational advantages in terms of their ability to build the capacity of local counterparts, and their flexibility in strategic engagement is well suited to complex peace operations. There are gendered aspects to these strengths, however they are not considered as feminine traits.

It is evident that the capabilities and strengths shown by deployed women bring significant benefits to operational outcomes, including those related to, but not limited to the WPS agenda. However, in understanding them as 'feminine' traits or pertaining to 'women's special contribution', these strategically important capabilities and strengths will continue to be undervalued and marginalised in the forces - to the detriment of operations and WPS priorities. To capitalise on the full range of contributions made by deployed women, the capabilities and strengths discussed in this study must be recognised as operational imperatives and systematically rewarded in all personnel, both female and male.

There is a need to move beyond rewarding certain gendered behaviours to the exclusion of others. Women can exhibit traits traditionally understood to be masculine and men can exhibit traits traditionally understood to be feminine - all personnel can have traits and display behaviours that are anywhere along the gender spectrum. What is required is a kind of gender diversity that values difference and recognises its strategic value, enabling personnel to operate without limitations of gender constructs. For women, this involves the recognition of the full range of their contribution to operations. For men, this concerns the ability to move away from harmful masculinities, as well as the possibility of developing previously undervalued skills and abilities.

The study has highlighted some of the enduring barriers to effectively deploying women. Attitudes and behaviours concerning gender are reportedly improving within the forces, nonetheless, problems persist relating to intimidation and harassment, as well as potentially harmful assumptions and misperceptions regarding gender. To empower and protect all personnel in their deployments, there is a need to innovate in

gender and WPS training and awareness across the forces, as well as reframe gendered security risks as concerning all personnel, not only women. Moving forward, a better understanding of masculinities in the forces will be essential, as well as further insight into the ways that gender policies and reforms can best be communicated.

There was a general agreement in the study that more women are needed on deployments, including in leadership roles. The women discussed a range of existing mechanisms and made important suggestions as to how women's presence can be increased, supported and effectively celebrated within the forces. Ascertaining the most appropriate ways to approach recruitment, as well as selection and promotional processes, will be important future work.

Though the focus of this research was a gender analysis, the study also revealed the critical importance of diversity in characteristics beyond gender. Diversity in thinking and experience was recognised as being of strategic benefit to deployments in general, and to peace operations particularly. Cultural diversity was also considered to be a significant asset. It would be highly beneficial, therefore, for this study's recommendations regarding gender to be pursued by the forces within a broader strategic framework for diversity and inclusion. Given the benefits that have already accrued from deploying female personnel and the increased importance given to the WPS agenda by Australian security forces, it is reasonable to expect additional advantages to individuals and operations by taking the commitment to diversity and inclusion even further.

Gender is an integral component of our identities as human beings. As we prepare our people to serve in austere, challenging and dangerous environments we must continue to invest effort in understanding ourselves better.

**Dr Alan Ryan**  
Australian Civil-Military Centre



## Annex A

### Research scope and methods

The research intentionally took a broad scope to explore wide-ranging themes relevant to Australian deployed women that cut across different deploying forces, time-periods and peace and security contexts. A total of 352 Australian female and male personnel participated in the research. These personnel identified as having been deployed within the Australian security forces, including in civilian roles, between 1988 and 2014 to peace and security missions in Afghanistan, Bougainville/Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Sudan/South Sudan, and Timor-Leste. The majority of the research participants had deployed with the Department of Defence (60 percent of interview and 59 percent of survey participants) – most from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and a small number of Defence public service personnel. The next most significant number of participants deployed with the Australian Federal Police (AFP) (21 percent of interview and 29 percent of survey participants). This was followed by a smaller number from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (19 percent of interview

and 12 percent of survey participants). For reasons of data validity, conclusions are not made regarding separate agencies within the forces. Rather, the analysis is conducted using a collective interagency perspective.

The research comprised of semi-structured interviews with 81 women and 21 men (102 total). The qualitative interview data was supplemented by an online survey which had a total sample of 250 respondents (157 women and 93 men). There were two strategies employed simultaneously in the qualitative data analysis: 1) evidence was identified that confirmed or conflicted with a review of the WPS literature, regarding the claims made about the benefits of deploying female personnel; and 2) themes and patterns were identified as they emerged in the responses of the research participants and used to code the data in an ongoing reflexive process. Though the study provides insight on a range of themes relevant to the WPS agenda, the analysis is not limited to this framework. The research focus is on the experiences of deployed women – much of which goes beyond the WPS agenda.

## Annex B

### Approach to gender analysis

This analysis of the experiences of Australian deployed women and men used Michelle Dunn's (2016) 'three-legged gender stool': *gender as equality*, *gender as difference* and *gender as diversity*.<sup>15</sup> Dunn illuminates how multiple different understandings of gender operate in the WPS agenda. These understandings of gender inform this study's analysis and recommendations. Getting the balance right between these understandings is critical for gender reform within the forces and the achievement of the WPS agenda.

The analysis engages critically with the common conflation of gender and sex. It recognises that gender constructs produce, and are produced by, power

*Gender as equality* draws on liberal feminist theory. Women are equals to men. Where barriers exist due to gender norms and unjust power structures, action should be taken to remove those barriers – and those norms corrected where possible.

*Gender as difference* is informed by radical feminism. Women are different from men and this difference is their strength. They have something valuable to contribute that men cannot. Affirmative action is required to ensure that organisations and all aspects of political life benefit from the inclusion of feminine attributes.

*Gender as diversity* is informed by post-colonial feminism and intersectionality. Women are not all the same. They do not have common plights. Rather, gender intersects with a multitude of other elements of identity and circumstance, for example, ethnicity, class and context. Women do experience things differently from men, but not the same as other women. Therefore, different women have different strengths and attributes. The way that they experience discrimination and oppression will also be different.

(Dunn 2016)

relations that impact both women and men. The perspective of female research participants is prioritised. This is done in accordance to the research aim of documenting the experiences of women, and in recognition of women's experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge.<sup>16</sup> The data from the women's interviews was analysed and the identified themes shaped the findings of this report. Male participant's voices were then incorporated where the data related to the themes that emerged from the analysis of the women's data. The views of participants were not taken at face value only. There was a consideration of how gender, as a political and social construct, informed the views and experiences of the research participants.

To gain insight into the way gender operates within the context of deploying security forces, a consideration of masculinities is essential. An organisational culture that privileges or promotes exaggerated displays of harmful masculinities, or hypermasculinity, can disadvantage both women and men. When there is pressure to demonstrably conform to hypermasculine behaviours and thinking, deployed personnel are limited in their actions and attitudes regarding gender. This can manifest in risk-taking or other actions that put themselves or others in danger and is a limitation that has various operational drawbacks.





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5. The analysis of the literature does not include an exploration of the views of local populations, or how they are represented. Nor does it seek to make or validate any causal claims about the presence of female personnel in peace and security operations, or comment on contextual outcomes.
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7. UNIFEM (Development Fund for Women) & UN DPKO. (2010). *Addressing conflict-related sexual violence: An analytical inventory of peacekeeping practice*. United Nations, 17.
8. Simić, O. (2010). Does the presence of women really matter? Towards combating male sexual violence in peacekeeping operations. *International Peacekeeping*, 17(2), 188-199.
9. For example, Batt, J. & Valenius, J. (2006). *Gender mainstreaming: Implementing UNSCR 1325 in ESDP missions*. EU Institute for Security Studies, 11.
10. For example, Bridges, D. & Horsfall, D. (2009). Increasing operational effectiveness in UN peacekeeping: Toward a gender-balanced force. *Armed Forces and Society*, 36(1), 120-130.
11. If there were not many women present, the opposite could be the case – taking the form of harassment and intimidation that will be discussed in a following section as a barrier to deploying women.
12. For example, Curth-Bibb, J. (2019). Because coconuts do not grow in Canberra: Complexity theory and capacity development in Solomon Islands Police Force. *Public Administration and Development*, 39(3), 133-143.
13. The accounts made by women relate to experiences across multiple deployments and over a significant period. This makes the data no less relevant to the gender analysis. The analysis does not dismiss an experience as something historic or discrete.
14. This is outside of the expertise of the researchers and cannot be substantiated. Nonetheless, it is too important to go without mention and it may require further exploration. Similarly, the mental health and impact on parenting relationships, or mothers and fathers leaving children for long periods of time, has not been discussed here, but it is an important consideration for the forces moving forward.
15. Dunn, M. (2016). *'You will go far but no further': Applying a gendered lens to the Women Peace and Security agenda in post-conflict Liberia*. [Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Queensland]. UQ eSpace.
16. Campbell, R., & Wasco, S. M. (2000). Feminist approaches to social science: Epistemological and methodological tenets. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(6), 773-791.





