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Evaluation of Defence Team Culture Summary

Purpose and Scope

Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) conducted an evaluation of culture across the Defence Team to assess progress toward long-term culture change objectives. The evaluation focused on understanding whether culture change is occurring in practice, how it is experienced by Defence Team members, and what factors enable or inhibit sustained change.

The evaluation examined Defence Team culture over a 10-year period (2015–2025) and assessed evidence across four core culture change themes and culture-related data collection gaps, aligned with existing Defence Team culture measurement aspects. Evidence was triangulated to assess patterns in lived experience and to identify areas of progress, stagnation or decline.

Key Findings

The evaluation finds that the Defence Team has made meaningful progress in several areas, including increased awareness of professional conduct expectations, reduced tolerance for overt misconduct, and advancements in DEI—particularly, improved acceptance of women. However, outcomes remain uneven and fragile.

- Culture change is driven primarily by leadership behaviour and middle management engagement, rather than by policies or initiatives alone.
- Psychological safety continues to be undermined by subtle behaviours.
- Confidence in accountability remains low despite improved awareness of reporting mechanisms. Training is perceived as high in volume but low in impact.
- DEI outcomes vary significantly across units and leadership contexts, with persistent barriers for individuals with intersecting identities.
- While organizational culture cannot be assessed through a single metric, culture change impacts can be meaningfully assessed through lived experience evidence supported by quantitative indicators. The key challenge is not measurability but the integration and sustained use of existing evidence to inform leadership decisions and strengthen accountability.