

Women's Health in the ADF

A model for improving care to serve the individual
and the organisation

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**AUSTRALASIAN MILITARY
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Disclosures

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- This presentation has been cleared for public release by Director General Air Force Health Services
- The presenter has no conflicts of interest to disclose.



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Women face unique health issues

- Women **at all stages of life** are at greater risk than men of mental ill-health
- Symptoms of a heart attack in women are less likely to be recognised than in men
- Women are **less likely than men to receive appropriate treatment** for heart disease
- **43%** of women have experienced mental illness at some time
- Eating disorders are the third most common chronic illness amongst young women in Australia
- Women are **1.6 times as likely** to suffer coexisting mental and physical illness
- Members of the LGBTI community experience higher levels of **depression, anxiety and affective disorders** than their peers
- Women who experience family and intimate partner violence are more likely to report poor mental health, physical function and general health than other women
- **80%** of people with incontinence are girls and women
- **25%** of women have pelvic floor disorders

National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030



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Women in Defence

Women make up 20.1% of the Australian Defence Force*

23.49%



15.11%



26.14%



*Data as of 2022



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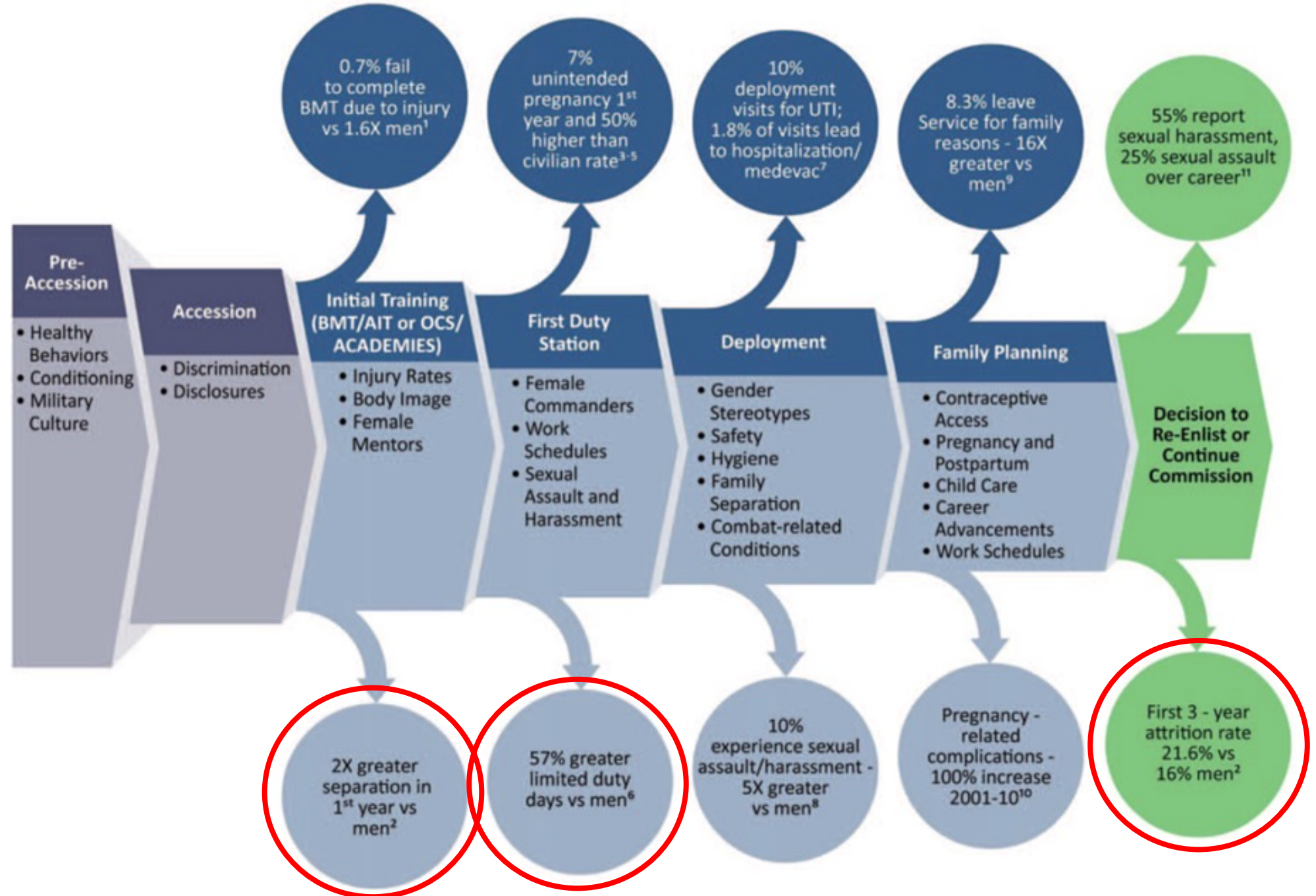


Image from Kaplan, R.S. et al. (2022) "A career life-cycle perspective on Women's health and safety," *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 64(4).



Women in conflict and disaster



Defence Gender, Peace
and Security Mandate

'From rhetoric to reality'



LTCOL Darleen Young, Field training with females at Officer Academy Afghanistan

'The GPS Directorate is responsible for implementation of the UNSCR 1325 Women Peace and Security agenda across Defence and integration of gender perspectives into mission planning and operations'.



"Women's rights are human rights"

Hilary Clinton, Beijing World Conference on Women 1995

UNSCR 1325 2000 – **Impacts of conflict on women & girls**; identifying that the empowerment of women is a **matter of international peace & security**

UNSCR 1820 2008 – sexual violence is a tactic of war & creates **implications for the military response**

UNSCR 2122 2013 – development of **gender expertise** within peacekeeping missions



Afghanistan Non-combatant Evacuation Operation 2021

LOCATION	DIAGNOSIS	NEEDED	TO FLY
	6/12 PREGNANT	WOUND SWAB ✓	✓
	? PAINFUL LESION - LEFT NECK	AMOXI FLOXACILLIN ✓	✓
	Headache / HT	FOLLOW UP	✓
	UNTREATED HT	DOCUMENT BP	✓
	PREGNANT ON ACTOVAR	? SILEN MERS ? WHY	✓
	Broken bones (wounds)	CHECK RAIN PUNCTURE	✓
	PREGNANT 34W 22D	BCL BP ✓	✓
HOSPITAL	GIVEN BIRTH	Delivered 26/8 22 weeks	✓
	7M PREGNANT	BP, BCL + UA	✓
	33W PREGNANT	BP, BCL + UA	✓
	NECROTIC TISSUE	REPAIRS + INJECTION	✓
	FOOT PAIN (on 1st floor)	FOR	✓
	dentist pain	NEEDS NYSTATIN	✓
	12 66	FOR REVIEW, BCL	✓
	UNSTABLE ANGINA	FOR TREATMENT	✓
	6M PREGNANT	BP, BCL	✓
	7M PREGNANT	BCL, BP, UA REVIEW	✓
	5M PREGNANT	FOR U/S ✓	✓
	2M PREGNANT	BCL UA BP	✓
	5M PREGNANT	BCL UA BP	✓
	21M PREGNANT	UA BCL BP	✓
	5M PREGNANT	BCL BP UA	✓
	FOUND MEDICAL SUPPLIES	REVIEW	✓
	2M PREGNANT	REVIEW / OFF	✓
	9M PREGNANT	Delivered 25/8	29/8
	9M PREGNANT	Delivered 26/8	29/8
	INTERED MEDICAL SUPPLIES	REVIEW	30/8





Afghanistan Non-combatant Evacuation Operation 2021





Women's health in the ADF now



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Garrison Health



- Accessing Women's Healthcare is varied across JHC health centres
- Over-reliance on referral to specialists with limited understanding of Defence Health Policy
- Significant gap between specialist and Garrison health care





Women's and Sexual Health Clinic RIC

Women can be seen in the clinic for:

- Cervical Screening (formally pap smears),
- Breast screening
- Contraception
- Fertility advice
- Family planning
- Antenatal care (especially newly pregnant)
- Post-partum review and follow up after giving birth
- Patients who have concerns regarding hormonal and/or period problems,
- Unplanned/unwanted pregnancy
- Vaginal and pelvic floor issues
- Menopause management

Men and people of all genders are very welcome in the clinic for:

- STI/STD testing and treatment
- Sexual/Erectile dysfunction
- Sexual Concerns
- The prescribing and monitoring of PrEP.





Women's Health Clinic Robertson Barracks Health Centre



Established in 2021, the WH clinic provides health care to women and gender diverse patients from all three services from surrounding bases.

- Screening and management of STIs
- Cervical and breast cancer screening
- Contraception advice and management including IUD insertions
- Fertility advice and family planning
- Antenatal care including GP Shared Care
- Post-partum care
- Management of pelvic floor dysfunction and return to work
- Medical management of unplanned/unwanted pregnancy
- Common gynaecological presentations such as abnormal uterine bleeding, infections, vulval disorders, menstrual disorders, menorrhagia, endometriosis, and PCOS.
- Diagnosis and management of menopause



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Amberley Health Centre

- **6,895** O&G referrals since 2019
- **1,039** referrals in 2023 (~6/day!)

This leads to:

- Multiple appointments
- Missed opportunities for preventative care
- Decreased productivity due to off-base appointments





What is the solution?



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MML3A – Another Pathway

- Current MML3A
 - FRACGP with advanced GP qualification
 - FACRRM with AHPRA Specialist – General Practice
 - FRACGP/FACRRM and DipAvMed
 - DipAvMed and FACAsM
 - Recognition as SAVMO by CO IAM
- Employment streams
 - Additional training
(e.g., Public Health, Occupational Medicine or Medical Administration)

Women's Health as another employment stream?



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MED Retention and Professional Development

- Improved clinical competence of our MED and more rapid progression to MML3
- After initial ROSO (1-2 postings), MED will seek professional development and career progression
- Opportunity for retention of our experienced MED with an interest in Women's & Sexual Health





Where to start...

- **Posted positions within JHC** to build and run Women's and Sexual Health Clinics across Garrison Health
 - Accessible, relevant healthcare for our members
 - Reducing burden and cost of referrals
- **JHC positions** – senior clinicians with expertise in women's or sexual health to provide:
 - Much needed support to junior health personnel who are learning Defence Health Policy at the same time as completing PIETs
 - Additional avenue for career progression for experienced health officers





Into the future...

- Women's & Sexual Health Clinics across JHC health centres
- Tri-service network of WH care providers
- Training for MED, physios, NURS, PSYCH, PHARM to enhance their ability to provide up to date care to ADF women at all life stages
- Influence updates to Defence Health Policy to reflect unique challenges in Women's Health
- Research around Women's Health in the ADF
- Education, resources and advice for contracting doctors as well as MED in deployed environment
- Education for serving women regarding their health care within the ADF





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QUESTIONS???



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