

**2024 Air and Space Power Conference
Transcript – Panel – Building Ready and Resilient People**

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JO BRICK: Thank you very much, Michael. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am very, very privileged to share the stage with an esteemed panel today, who are going to take us through, I think, one of the more interesting topics we'll talk about, because we do talk about hard metal and things all the time in our service, but the people definitely are the most interesting, as we see on a daily basis! I would like to introduce Lieutenant-General Natasha Fox, the Chief of Personnel, Warrant Officer Ralph Clifton, of the Air Force, Warrant Officer Dan Hickey, at the First Space Surveillance Unit, and Squadron Leader Bec Trembath, who was doing amazing work in human performance and is currently a student at the Australian War College. Ma'am, Bec, and gentlemen, this is a really interesting topic for me. I have skin in the game. I have a very young cadet Flight Sergeant who would love to be in our community one day. So, handing over to you.

NATASHA FOX: Hi, everyone. It's great to be here, talking about a topic that is

relevant for Australia but for all international countries here in terms of people and how do you grow, in our case, an Australian Defence Force where we have been given some specific requirements from Government under the National Defence Strategy to grow and pivot and grow a different nature of workforce as we go. So, my role as the Chief of Personnel, stood up on 1 July last year, that brought together recruiting, all the career management requirements and career management support and transition aspects for the Australian Defence Force. And that is a whole-of-life, or a whole-of-career-life, military-life view of people. So, in career, and everyone leaves the military at some point, and therefore are transitioned into the next adventure that we all have. In the military personnel organisation, I also bring together the Health Command, which is all of our garrison health arrangements, but also morphing into operational health requirements as we start to look at Australia in the theatre, and what does that mean for all of our health networks? I bring together a new division that I have created, the Reserve and Cadet Support Division, that looks at all of our youth development opportunities - so, our gen alphas, and Flight Sergeant cadets - and we have around 30,000 cadets across Australia and over 4,000 adult volunteers for a fantastic youth development pathway that could potentially lead to a career in the Australian Defence Force. And it brings work experience. I also have engagement with Reserve employers around our fabulous total workforce system and how we make Reserve service easy for people in Australia. I also bring in the Australian Defence College, which is all of our professional military education and training, to enable a military career. That's the education component of that. So, for guests in the audience, we have people at the Australian Defence Force Academy, the War College - so, high Defence college and our mid-career colleges - as well as language schools, international training centres, peace operations training, that brings together a whole raft of international engagement opportunities where we can be stronger together. I also then have a new division that we've created with a new unifying concept. It was previously in Joint Capabilities Group and it had a number of different functions. I've recrafted that division to still be Joint Service Support Division. It has a unifying concept of support services to the commanding officers, the

member and the families, and it brings together all support services into one division to support a military career. And that's headed up by Air Vice-Marshal Lara Gunn, who has a huge task to bring that together and pivot it so that if the career is vertical, the support services are horizontal and always, it doesn't matter at what part of the career we're in. That's my role and what I'm bringing together to have a force for Australia. Thanks.

JO BRICK: Thank you, ma'am.

RALPH CLIFTON: Thanks. Good morning, thank you very much for having me today. It really is a pleasure to be here. I was recently presenting on a senior enlisted leadership course. One of the participants made a really interesting comment - somewhat controversial - the current generation that are coming through are lacking resilience in every way. Unsurprisingly, I was somewhat taken aback. It took me a couple of minutes to respond, if I'm to be honest. I responded with, "Assuming your assumption is reality, as a senior leader, what are you doing to improve their resilience?" As an Air Force, it's absolutely critical that we set up our aviators for success - success in service to their country, in the profession of arms, and their professional mastery. Only then will we realise the potential of our greatest capability - our people. Personal and professional resilience is a key factor in this success. We cannot go forward with an assumed level of resilience into the mission, however. This resilience journey for our aviators starts literally at the start. Negotiating the challenges of the recruiting process, stepping into recruit school basic training, dealing with the completion of initial employment training, and then on to their primary roles. Subsequently, evolving and advancing through the Air Force thereafter. I can assure you that 16-year-old apprentice Clifton, on day one in the Air Force, brought with him the resilience afforded him of just a few short years prior. Over my 38 years in Air Force, it's been the experiences - good, bad and otherwise - that have all, in their own way, shaped and added to what I would describe as my "resilience framework". This is a place that I go within myself when seeking resilience, and thankfully to date it has not let me down. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, it's largely been those that I've admired - my leaders, both good and bad -

throughout the years that have facilitated this resilience framework. So, on that day, I challenged the course participant to actively seek ways to build upon the perceived lack of resilience in those aviators by being an active leader, a bold thinker, and a proactive mentor, and influence both up and down the chain of command. Don't wait for the answer to be provided or the organisation to step in, in some way. Simply lead your aviators to the success demanded by Australia. Of course, the organisation has a part to play here as well. Ensuring our aviators have a baseline of resilience, provided and developed through recruit school in the first instance, and then ensuring that that baseline of resilience is continually refined, built upon, and tested throughout every stage of an aviator's career. As an Air Force, I believe we have a reasonable, but ever-evolving, idea of what we need from our aviators. How, though, do we measure that? How do we test it? And how do we ensure that it's enduring, no matter what situations or environments we find ourselves in, in the future? These are questions that we need to explore right now. Because if we don't, I have concerns that we're not setting our aviators up to succeed as we need them to. Adversity, lived and shared experiences, relationships, leaders, and indeed just life are but a number of the multitude of facets that combine to shape a person's resilience framework. As an Air Force, we need to recognise that in a dynamic, strategic time, such as these, we need to actively work on the resilience frameworks of our greatest capability. Somewhat pleasingly, I'm increasingly seeing this recognition turned into tangible actions. Some of these actions are organisationally instigated. However, importantly and most pleasingly, others are instigated by some of our amazing leaders that have strategic vision and strive every day to develop their aviators at every level. As leaders and leadership teams at every level of the organisation, we must strive to foster, nurture, and grow our aviators' resilience. So, I challenge every one of you in the room - what are you doing to improve your resilience? And, subsequently, the resilience of those around you, both up and down the chain of command? It's potentially a fairly difficult question, and for some it might even be a little bit confronting. However, we cannot wait for the magic resilience dust to be sprinkled amongst us. We need to evolve our training, develop our culture, assure our purpose, be curious and active and

empower leaders at every level. Maybe consideration should be given to studying and seeking inspiration from well-developed, high-performance teams, be they sporting, industry, peer defence, or otherwise. By recognising and acknowledging the challenges we face, being proactive leaders, and empowering leadership at every level, we will ensure that our aviators are ready, resourceful, and critically resilient. Thanks.

JO BRICK: Thanks, Ralph. Handing over to Dan.

DAN HICKEY: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Before I get started, I just want to say what an honour and a privilege it is to be sitting up here with present company and in front of you all. So, I have been asked to provide a perspective on the topic from a technical viewpoint. So, with that in mind, this is what I think is important in order to build readiness and resilience in our people.

Everyone builds resilience differently. Some develop it as part of their individual upbringing and bring that with them into service. For others, it must be cultivated through deliberate and a conscious effort. Education is the foundation upon which resilience is built. This can be achieved through direct experience or indirectly through knowledge passed on by those with experience. When providing the opportunity for direct experience, we have to be comfortable with failure and taking risks. I know that's the F-word that we don't like to use, or some don't like to hear, but that's OK as well. So, I have two young children and they do what young kids do and take risks. So, for those parents in the room, I'm sure you can relate when you see your child about to do something questionable or sketchy. You assess the situation, maybe apply some of your military training, perform a risk assessment. It comes back low, so you let it ride. You could intervene and stop your child from potentially failing, but you don't because you know and understand the value or the inherent value of experience. Taking measured risk that allows our people to fail, get back up again, and try again builds confidence, builds resilience. A contextual example I can provide on this from within Space Operations is the missile warning mission. I'm just going to choose my words carefully, noting General Saltzman was here and I don't want to undo any of the security classifications walls he's bringing down at the moment. A type of missile warning that we provide is, by design, not perfect.

The emphasis in this case is placed on timeliness, simply due to the relative short flight time of the potential threat, the priority is providing timely warning with an accepted level of error as risk. Now, take this mindset and apply it in an escalated conflict environment. Are we going to make mistakes? Sure, you bet. As you can imagine, in the missile warning business, every second counts, so the decision-maker at the tactical level cannot afford to hesitate due to fear of failure. A situation I observed with one of our guys - complex missile event occurred, which resulted in mission failure, or what we could constitute as mission failure. The supervisor on duty at the time really struggled with what had happened, and their confidence took a fair knock. It was some time... The individual eventually re-engaged, but it was some time before this was the case. That operator now has firsthand experience in how things can go wrong and is arguably better mentally prepared, and ready, in executing that mission set. This example might be lost on some, but what's important to understand is our organisation is made up of professionals, and as professionals, they understand the consequences of mission failure and the potential of lives lost down-range as a result of this failure. Mentally, we have to be prepared for failure. How we get back up again and re-engage ultimately defines our resilience as an individual and as a collective. When we look for solutions to problems we're faced with today, it's wise to look to the past. So, with that in mind, I want to take the opportunity, if I may, just to share a brief history of my grandfather - or Pop, as we called him. So, Pop served with the Second Australian Imperial Forces in the final years of World War II. He later joined the Royal Australian Air Force in the early '50s through to the mid-'50s, and then again re-enlisted, this time in the Australian Army, to fight in Vietnam in 1969. He was 42 years old at this point - coincidentally, same age as I am now. Pop deployed to Vietnam as a trained signals operator. However, ended up as a door gunner on a US Army Iroquois. That's a short story but essentially he wanted more action. His US counterpart wanted less action, so they had a gentlemen's agreement and swapped jobs. (LAUGHTER) I can't imagine that happening today, but it worked!

One of my favourite parts of that story is learning of the motto of the 135th assault helicopter company he flew with: "Get the bloody job done." I think that's a very fitting motto, considering the topic that we're talking about today. And a motto that I'm confident my pop carried with him for the remainder of his

life. Knowing the hardships Pop experienced growing up as a child, and those that he carried throughout his adult years, there's no doubting where his resilience came from. Upon reflection on this, what also became clear was the fact that he didn't go through all of his struggles alone. This is where the principle of shared hardship and the bond or connection with others is forged. The power of experiencing shared hardship cannot be overstated. Going through tough times with someone - be it simply doing life with your partner, carrying out the mission with a colleague at work, two units coming together to execute a common tasking, multiple services forming a joint force operation, or between allied countries, fighting as a coalition alongside one another in the operational theatre. Shared hardship at all levels has the ability to unite people, creating a special bond, which in turn generates an enduring resilience. As we think about building readiness and resilience in our people, remember that resilience is not the absence of hardship but, rather, the capacity to bounce back from it. It's forged in the crucible of adversity. It's imperative we think about how to foster the resilience of individuals.

JO BRICK: Thanks, Dan. I love that - get the bloody job done. I think I'm stealing that for my directorate! Bec, handing to you.

BEC TREMBATH: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you, sir, for having me. I'm actually super excited because I get the opportunity and pleasure to shine a bright spot on different parts of the organisation. And I'll share that through the story of RAAF Security and Fire School and how it transformed its training through human performance optimisation to produce some really outstanding force generation results. So, I was the chief instructor for the previous three years. The school, it's a through-career school, so it delivers initial employment training and post-initial employment training for security forces' families, so enlisted officers, and also firefighters, but it is joint so it offers training to combat rescue operators in our fire training programs, as well as army military police for military working dog handlers. So, it's quite dynamic. In 2021, human performance optimisation was introduced to the school by a previous

commanding officer, Group Captain Craig Nielsen, affectionately known as "Neelo". This was from the Director of Performance and Safety, also known as A9 in Air Command. They started us with one amazing senior sports and conditioning coach, and he literally set our world on fire. And so - not literally! (LAUGHTER) But he energised us to look at how we do things differently. And this cascaded to an integrated team of, you know, experienced specialists that come out of elite sports at Olympic level, and included a suite of part-time staff. And so we had two sports physiotherapists that shared a week across four days that gives access to our trainees and staff. We had a sports dietitian, a sports psychologist, and in recognition of the really important role that our physical training instructors do at the school, and Air Force's inability to produce enough of them for us, we hired three part-time sports and conditioning coaches that helped them to supplement their delivery and coaching of trainees. And so what we saw was almost an immediate reduction in injury straightaway. I think in the first year, it was 59% reduction, and this cascaded across the three years to produce some really outstanding results. Our graduation rates soared. The school was notorious for high-muscle skeletal injuries, medical discharges for mental and physical injuries, as well as low graduation rates. But since the introduction of the program, we had, you know, our Air Force Security Trainees saw up to 97% graduation rates. Our highly trained close combatants, so Airfield Defence Guards, came up to 95%. And really excitedly, since combat roles were opened up to females, we got to 100% of females graduating Airfield Defence Guard. So, really amazing feat since that was introduced.

And so, importantly, we had no medical discharges of our trainees since human performance optimisation was introduced. It's a massive change in where the school had come from. And I don't think this was due to - the past was due to any ill regard, but rather in recognition that the training that was required to put trainees through, it was dangerous, it was arduous, and the environments, you know, were difficult. And so this talks to human performance optimisation more broadly, that it works to optimise aviators to their biological limits. So, it's doing smarter - it's doing training smarter with what an individual has, and not necessarily training them harder. And so we didn't remove any difficult training,

as I mentioned, but what we knew is we learnt how to prepare them better, manage them through training, and, of course, recover them all at an individual, a team, and a cohort level. So, you could say we adapted our training system to support a human-centred approach. And so RAAF Security and Fire School didn't apply a one-size-fits-all. Quite the contrary. Across the 27 different courses that the school offers, you know, a bespoke approach was required to meet the occupational and operational roles of our aviators and soldiers. And this was to either improve performance, survivability, or lethality, or a combination of all three. So, we overhauled our training program, our design, our sequencing of load, understanding both cognitive and physical, and we adopted an agile trainee and course management approach. And what it did, it actually freed up our instructional SMEs to really hone in on the tactical and technical war-fighting capabilities to produce some really high-quality graduates. And this speaks to the directorate more broadly now, human performance and safety directorate. Human performance is not new. It's actually been in Air Force since 2018. It grew out of a stove pipe of excellence out of Air Combat Group, who also sought to reduce the muscle skeletal injuries of their combat fighter pilots. Luckily for Air Force, it's now rolled out across 22 different programs, 8 different bases, with a number of specialists dispersed throughout Australia.

Air Force has a Human Performance Framework that focuses in on improving the survivability, the availability - very important - and also the war-fighting capabilities of individuals, teams and the force. And I know last year Air Force became a finalist in the Comcare Awards and was awarded a High Commendation for its program, so it's really outstanding success. And so the best thing for the aviators and soldiers that came through the school, they're actually connected into a continuum that's supported across their career. There's programs running at training schools through to IET and PI schools, or trade schools like ours, and connected to operational squadrons, so 1 and 2 Force Squadron also having their bespoke human performance optimisation program that builds ready and resilient aviators and soldiers.

And so now that I've left the school and I sit back and I, you know, reflect on the bigger picture, and think about this, Air Force is really future-proofing its

force, not just to be fit to fight now but to be fit to fight later and for longer through career. You know, the directorate impacted, just during my time, 2,500 trainees, over 200 staff. They've all posted into operational units now, and taking with them the knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours, but most importantly a high-performance team mindset into their own teams and units. I just can't overemphasise the brilliance that human performance optimisation had on our school, our staff, and on our trainees. And I know under the current leadership of Commander AFTG, human performance optimisation continues to be a leading training concept. Thank you.

JO BRICK: Thank you very much. So, ladies and gentlemen, we get to the really fun part, which is the question-and-answer session. Fun for me, but probably not for you guys! I think we have covered really wide gamut of issues as it pertains to the workforce, going from the individual sense of resilience, but how the organisation also creates an environment for resilient personnel. And I might start at the organisational level, if I may. And this is one for General Fox, from the audience. And the question is - if I can find it, my apologies - "How do you aim to break down our individual silos of excellence to generate long-term development of physical and mental resilience?"

NATASHA FOX: (LAUGHS) That's an excellent question. So, to set up a military personnel organisation at pace in the pivot that we had to do, you have to take a systems view of how it all fits together. Now, the generation of people system, I explained it quite quickly, but there are the intersecting parts, right, starting at force design, target-setting for future force, who we're recruiting, through to the policies that sit around that, and then the management of people inside the system. So, to take a view of breaking down outstanding work that was done in silos of excellence, but turning that on its side so it enables a greater effect for the whole force, given that we're an integrated force and we deploy together, train together, work together, how do you benefit the whole force from the great activities that are being undertaken? It's taking a military people organisation, understanding that we're enabling and turning it on its side - and I've said that

twice now - so that we work horizontally. Now, we organise vertically for resourcing, accountability, but we operate to support people without silos of borders. So, having a mindset shift on how you support people - similar to human performance optimisation - is a change. And what we're doing is cultural change in a people system. At a point in time when we have environmental pressures, such as the NDS is telling us to pivot faster, we don't have time warning. At a point in time when the population is - we're at 3.8% employment, or full employment, essentially - 3.8% unemployment. That's fantastic for Australia. It means the Australian Defence Force has to compete much more heavily in and amongst our population to recruit people into having a career in the Australian Defence Force. And having a career might mean many things to people, many different people. Is a career four years, 10 years, 20 years? Is it in and out? How do we enable service rather than put barriers into our population for service? So, that's a couple of different themes there, thinking across a system and removing barriers and operating to support people across a career is what we're doing, and that is a substantial cultural shift right at a point in time when most people are at capacity. So, when you're talking resilience and capacity, the capacity for people to change when they're already busy - I don't like the term "busy" - but when they're already working really hard to deliver support to people, because they've all heard the message, they're reading the NDS, they understand that we are short just over 4,000 people, and we know that brings stress into all of the organisation, but how do we collectively move to support one another? A couple of small examples. We stood up a Space and Cyber Career Directorate very quickly last year. And even now, that's starting to deliver. And it's minute but it's starting to deliver. We had to get a ship to sea. The ship couldn't get to sea because it didn't have enough cyber operators in it. So, having one person looking at space and cyber was able to say, "Well, I can help you with that. Who ee can we actually put on to the ship, I think it's an Air Force and Army operators," and the ship went to sea. So, a small approach by thinking a systems view, not a silo view of excellence. We got a ship to sea that wouldn't have got to sea otherwise. So, that's one step. We're doing it more and more regularly in and around our joint forces that train the same way, and young people who are training together in a joint sense, at

RAAF Salt, for example, the PCS's and Army ECM150 clerks are doing the same training. We have the same HR system, the same conditions of service manual. So, how we are able to contextualise environmentally is slightly different, but training together, educating together means that we can be integrated together and move to get capability versus a silo. So, that is a mindset shift and that's what an integrated force is, and that's what we are doing in the people system with a training element to do that. And I was very privileged - thanks, Kath, for enabling my visit to RTU and Squadron Leader Mason, thank you for excellent hosting, it was outstanding down there for a few days. And I can absolutely talk to the great work that the team are doing down there in terms of human performance. We are a volunteer organisation, as in the Australian Defence Force. Removing barriers to service and enabling people to serve their country is incredibly admirable to do. That means who turns up to serve with us at any point in time? Yes, we do all our safety checks around that, but they volunteer to serve. And how we train in - which is what we're doing - is really critical. And I think the mastery that the trainers bring is very powerful for that.

JO BRICK: Thanks, ma'am. I'll move now to slightly organisational but also individual resilience, and it relates to the culture we have in our organisation and how that impacts on resilience. Resilience and vulnerability are two sides of the same coin, and yesterday we talked about the F-word and how we don't like it. But kids learn through play. They call it "play" and they learn through those things. And failure and risk, as Dan identified, are ways for us to build those muscles that we didn't know we actually had, and it took a stumble for us to learn that we actually had them. So, as leaders, can you talk about some of the things that you've done, or examples that you've seen, where people have actually tried to create that culture for safe failure to build resilience?

RALPH CLIFTON: I will go. Deathly hush, don't you hate that? I think it comes down to the fundamentals of leadership, where we need to empower our people. We use failure as an F-word. I think we should actually embrace it. Experiences may differ slightly. The ability to fail means that we learn. And unless we learn, we don't evolve. And that's both professionally and personally. We see that in

everyday life. You're right, when kids are playing, that's how they're learning. Ride a bike, fall off, hurt yourself, don't do that again. Similar principle, I think, goes throughout life. The human optimisation training that's occurring is truly next-level. And I see that as a simple facet of the overall ability to fail, work out what it is that's gone wrong, and then move forward from there. So, at the end of the day, it still comes down to leadership, to a degree followership as well. But we have to be willing to embrace that - learn, move on and be a better force as a result.

BEC TREMBATH: Yeah, I can probably add some things to that. Definitely at the school, it's built in. What we learned through human performance optimisation and what the A9 Directorate brought with their specialists is that you really need to start picking it apart. Why do some trainees fail at some things, physically or mentally? Why do they freeze? You know, the specialists that came in, our sports psychologist, dietitian, physios, all there to provide an absolutely new perspective. I think there's a mindset around, "Oh, you didn't get through. You didn't have the physical rigour that day." We make assumptions about those "failures". But, actually, when you start to look at it in a holistic way and you start to look at the individual and their biological limits, and you break down what is occurring for them, you get a new appreciation. And I don't know if "failure" is the right word. I would prefer "learning". Yeah, and I think it's not just understanding that from a training perspective with a school, but for individuals, you know, understanding that about themselves, so increasing that self-awareness around, you know, their cognitive load, when they're starting to freeze, what strategies can they do, how do they apply that to war-fighting capability? But then also with their team. So, for our senior enlisted that will come back through the school for their promotion courses, you know, providing them with the knowledge and skills from those specialists around understanding their people so that they can build a culture of resilience and teach their people the techniques and the - you know, just all the things that were provided by those specialists to get after it, I think. There's so much more work that can be done, I think. Yeah, but we've come from a place where tough is good. Yeah,

tough is good, but, you know, we need to understand what "tough" is.

JO BRICK: Thanks, Bec.

RALPH CLIFTON: I think too you spoke about culture there. And nothing makes me prouder than Air Force culture, I'll be honest. I love the fact too that, from our Air Force culture, we see a culture of a team as well. So, whether it's failure or learning, it's always really nice to see the team take responsibility for that, to build each other up. And we see that happen quite regularly, where an individual might maybe not perform quite as they would hope they have - generally, it's the team that will get around them, and I think Air Force culture actually enables that. It makes me proud every day.

DAN HICKEY: Thanks, ma'am. Yeah, I could probably just re-read my opening remarks, but from a contextual example, I won't. I think really we're probably doing it already in some aspects. Whether it's conscious or not is probably the question. But shifting the mindset to make it a deliberate effort on creating those situations or those scenarios, putting our people under those stressors for what future conflict might look like or eventuate to, so that when we get there, we're not learning, we're not paying the price, the tough price, in the moment. But, yeah, it's a collective effort, of course. But pushing people outside their comfort zones, that's what we're really talking about. And them discovering themselves what their limits are, and taking it to a breaking point but in a controlled - when we have the luxury of making it in a controlled environment and we can control that situation. So, yeah, I think that's what's really important, just recognising those opportunities and looking for them where we can.

BEC TREMBATH: Ma'am, can I jump in? Just one extra thing as I was listening to the other panellists, is the concept of accumulation. So, throughout a career, you know, you will go through different deployments, you will have sporting injuries, a whole bunch of things will happen in the family space. And things accumulate. And this is where I think human performance optimisation works hand-in-glove with our medical services that, you know, take on those people to help them transition out.

And so it's a point to understand what does accumulation look like for an individual or a team? We need to do better with that and appreciate where people have come from. Because it builds up. And when you get to the intervention stage, it's probably too late.

JO BRICK: Thanks, Bec. It's a really good segue into looking at the support systems that individuals have, primarily families. There are a lot of questions here about what we are doing for families, particularly, as the Chief mentioned yesterday, we're looking at agile operations, going up into our north into very remote areas. What sort of strategies are around to support our families, who then support our aviators?

NATASHA FOX: I guess I'll start that one! I'll just build off your last question, though. It was great to hear... When you said the F-word, I went, "Oh, my gosh, what F-word were you talking about yesterday?! "It reminded me, I was in an elevator with one of our great public servants, who is in the disability scheme that's working, and they were telling me they wanted to say the C-word, and their assistant was saying, "You can't say the C-word yet." I was thinking, "Oh, my goodness, what's the C-word?" And the C-word was "Christmas". So, for everyone, when you said the F-word, I'm like, "What's the F-word?" So, that's, for everyone, that's a point of reflection. Our lens and how people receive in learning is quite different, and the cognitive development, we've got to remember how people receive. And generationally, they're receiving differently because of their experiences and accumulated to the point of being 16, 17, 18, versus our accumulated experiences are very different, to give you baseline understanding. So, moving into family support services, we have just under 50% of the force who have families of any dimension. And I say it that way because we've recently stopped calling people dependents in our policy. They're families or unaccompanied families, residential families. And a family can be of any dynamic. And it's been broadened much more deliberately. Only a few years ago did we incorporate families enabling military service into what is our framework of the unique nature of military service, because our families enable us

to serve. And so the support services available in and around families are being built on, gradually over time. We had an organisation called the Defence Community Organisation and people thought that organisation was external to Defence and didn't want to use it because they didn't trust it because it was external to Defence. It changed its name to Defence Member and Family Support Branch, essentially, because people needed to understand it's in Defence and you can access those services. It went to a 24-hour helpline staffed by social workers and psychologists and trained counsellors, so that if anyone calls needing assistance, there can be some emotional support through that, some really informed support in how to deal with certain circumstances, and triaged into other support services that might be needed as a civilian. We've worked with the NDIS scheme so that any military family that has a family member with special needs is flagged in the system so that, when they're posted, they don't necessarily have to start again in the NDIS scheme. And we're continuing to refine that. So, it's about family and how we're moving, and where housing is built, the nature of housing. And it changes depending on the generational life cycle we're in. So, we're broadening different housing policies to support the different make-up and needs of families. We are increasing support into Defence Member and Family Support Branch in and around education supports for our children in schools, or our partners maintaining professional qualifications when they post. We are asking, through Government - and, of course, through the Royal Commission - that when we post, one of the biggest stressors on posting that I actually want to remove out is for families with children in school, not being constrained by the house where you can enrol children. Because we've made the house there. So, enabling the whole of the Australian Government system to support us. So, that's a work in progress. That's not in yet. But that removes any instant stress on posting. So, how do you remove stressors to support families supporting military members? And that's the focus that we're doing, and trying to build communities in and around our families, reaching out. We do it with Defence Families Australia, who are our advocates, who are in communities, working with different commanders across the system, who come in and talk to us separately, then through DMFS, about what else might be needed so we can advocate for

families. And they are able to do that out and direct into government as well, into the minister. So, we are enabling a multitude of different activities for families and working much more closely with DVA. We have a family strategy we're working up with DVA, so that families in Defence and how we then transition and may leave Defence, how DVA keeps supporting with family policies, and what does that mean? So, that's a through-life approach to family support for a military career. A lot of this is work in progress and will be subject to a number of different recommendations, but we have education officers, we have family liaison officers, we have programs in DMFS. And if you have command chains, the biggest thing I would encourage you to do is to reach out to DMFS and actually get briefed on what can be offered so that you can actually access them. What I find is most people don't realise these programs are available and don't access, and that's despite the many channelled communication. So, as leaders, that's what I would ask of you to help me help our families.

RALPH CLIFTON: To take a slightly different tack on that, we care deeply about our families because we understand that our families are key enablers for our people. And that's critical beyond any reasonable doubt. When I get out to our units, I often talk to our aviators as to whether or not they're ready, are they mentally, physically, and professionally ready? I then go on to say, "Are your families and loved ones ready as well? Are you having those conversations - sometimes difficult conversations - with your loved ones to ensure that we set them up for success as much as our aviators for success as well?" Quite often, I will get out and I'll talk to families, and they'll be totally blind, even as to what their spouse's loved ones are actually doing for a job. What does that mean to them as a family group, should the worst occur? Are the support networks in place? Remarkably, we're not empowering those conversations with our families at times. So, I do my best to empower our leadership and our leadership teams to encourage those sorts of conversations. There are times when there are classifications as to what we're doing, where it might be speaking in riddles, but at the end of the day we must talk to our families. We need to empower them, we need to have those networks in place. Without that, honestly, we can't do

what we do every day.

DAN HICKEY: Yeah, great. So, I guess I'm really just backing up what was said there. It's education, at the end of the day, and getting that message out there, what's available to our families. My wife is a social worker, has a background in psychology and family support, so that's handy for me! So, I've got easy access. (LAUGHTER) But it doesn't mean I'm all good! (LAUGHTER) It means I get free access there, or convenient access. But flipping the coin, though, and turning that around for support for the families, yes, we do acknowledge the high importance that our significant others have in enabling us to do our job to go to work and feel like we can leave what's happening at home and focus on a mission set when you need that focus, and know that things are being taken care of at home in our absence, whether that's a deployment or whether that's just day-to-day. So, yeah, education, at the end of the day, I think is really - as ma'am was just saying then - we can always do better at getting that message out there of what's available, services-wise, and ways that we can better support the people that support us.

JO BRICK: Thank you.

BEC TREMBATH: Just from a leaders' perspective, when I reflect, a previous boss had a philosophy, a command philosophy - a lot of times we focus on the missions and our mates, and we lack the foresight to focus on ourselves. And when I say ourselves, I mean our families as well. As I talked before about accumulation, the families suffer that as well. And I think, as leaders, you know, when I reflect back on my time at the school, people are posting in from operational units, they're tired, they're fatigued, we have a busy schedule. But I think as a leader it's your responsibility to create the space and to ensure that they get rest and time with their families. Optimised and happy staff equals happy trainees, but it also equals happy families. So, I think it's just a simple leadership.

JO BRICK: Thank you. I might go out to the centre, if anyone has any questions.

Just over here, thank you.

>> Thanks, Warrant Officer Dave Turnbull from CASG. Thanks for the panel insights. It's fantastic to hear that we're looking after our military personnel. My question, though, is what are we doing across that broader Defence organisation, particularly around public servants, who sit beside us, they need resilience as well. What's the focus for theirs?

NATASHA FOX: I'll take that one too. So, when we created the military personnel organisation, we did it in a construct called a diarchy. So, I have responsibilities and accountabilities for a generation of military personnel element. I can't do it without my partner in that, which is Justine Greig. And for those that don't know Justine, an incredible person, an enormous amount of experience. Her first response to anything that I might raise is, "How can I help?" And so when you're working with a colleague around "How can I help?", you actually get really outstanding solutions. So, Justine has responsibility for APS capability development, professionalisation and learning, and that's a new component that's come out of the DSR. Excuse me. So, that is being built through at the moment. She is also responsible for enterprise policies and settings, so everything we do, right at the start, is, "Can this be integrated in its fullest sense across public service and military?" And that's where we start from. And then we build into what I might need to do to generate a force, which is slightly different.

RALPH CLIFTON: That's a really good question, Dave. I think the APS are key enablers for us. We recognise that, we understand the capability that they bring. I think as a military leader in those sorts of situations, CASG is a great example. Ensuring that our APS have that really firm grasp of what their purpose is. I think if they understand their purpose, they understand their mission, that's part of that resilience framework. So, as a military member in those sorts of situations, I think you're a key enabler in ensuring that they have the right tools to do their job.

JO BRICK: Thank you. I might just change it up a bit and go back to the nature of space and cyber and modern warfare, I guess. One of the things we haven't really touched on is some of the mental health challenges that our people might face in a very different way of fighting, and that is doing it from a distributed place, not being in the actual area of operations, as we traditionally know it, where they are delivering cyber or space effects remotely, and they bring that with them back home, for example. Is that something we have addressed adequately? And if not, what do we need to get at that issue?

NATASHA FOX: I will take that one too! I think we have nascent capability in there, but we've got experience there. If I think about vicarious trauma, we have a lot of information around vicarious trauma, and it might not be direct but it's being absorbed. So, how do we recognise the nature of new operations and new experiences? And it's not just space/cyber domain. What does border protection mean, peacekeeping mean when you're being exposed to vicarious trauma? It's not just thinking war, like traditional. We have a lot of experience. It's how do we bring that together to understand how it's applicable in new domains? So, I think we have it nascent, we have an understanding. It's then how do we scale up for what will be a space and cyber force? And I'm sure our colleagues in other countries have experience in that respect as well.

JO BRICK: And it goes a bit back to - someone raised yesterday the moral and ethical piece. You know, understanding the moral hazards of what the modern battlefield actually demands. And particularly, Dan, in your space, I'm interested in your view, given the nature of what you described in the missile warning space?

DAN HICKEY: Yeah, you're right, ma'am. So, I guess it's just understanding, as capabilities grow as well, understanding, "Hey, what does that then mean our people are being exposed to on the forefront?" And not sort of realising that real-time and having to react. So, we can, I guess, take lessons learnt from our

allied partners in many aspects. But, yeah, it's definitely a consideration and not always considered.

RALPH CLIFTON: I think it sort of goes beyond Space and Cyber as well. So, for the Royal Australian Air Force, we're at the moment starting up a remote-piloted capability. It's something which we're aware of but something where I think we're gonna have to put a little bit of work and effort into it, certainly leverage off our strategic partners in that space. And the experiences that have been afforded to some of our people in the lead-up to us acquiring those capabilities as well.

NATASHA FOX: I will just tie that down. Warfare, conflict, it doesn't matter where it is and what domain it is in, is ultimately a human endeavour. So, it's the humans in that endeavour that we are responsible for, and it doesn't matter in, around, or outside, or in another country, that's how we need to look at it.

JO BRICK: Thank you. Alright, I think Sleemo is going to come down here in a second. But this is really an interesting - workforce is always an interesting topic. But as a closer, I'm going to ask each of you, if there was one thing that you would recommend as a way for enhancing resilience - either for individuals, families, or the organisation - what would that be? I'll start with you, Bec.

BEC TREMBATH: I think you know my answer! Yeah, obviously human performance optimisation. I've seen that it works. And it can be applied to any domain space. Yeah, and I think we need to open our minds to bring in other specialists to help us view things in a new light, to produce novel solutions.

DAN HICKEY: Yeah, for me, we didn't really unpack this too much, but I think it's linking it to culture, and understanding really the purpose for our people. I think that's key and critical is, yeah, really clearly defining what our people are doing so that they know what they're stepping into, what they can expect.

RALPH CLIFTON: Yes, I agree with Dan. I think culture is key. I think, as an organisation and as a military, we are a fundamental team. And it's that team and

that community that I think that truly holds the secret sauce for our resilience going forward, particularly in such dynamic times at the moment.

JO BRICK: We talk about this constantly, Ralph.

RALPH CLIFTON: We do!

NATASHA FOX: I would say enable learning. So, enable learning. Enable people to try and not be scared of trying because they think they're going to fail. So, enable a learning context around that. Dan, to your point, so people are ready when we need them to be ready. And remember that it's a bit of a marathon, and so take the marathon and only surge when we need to surge in that sense. And my final point - and it might sound contradictory to the warfare human endeavour - it's OK actually to be kind to one another and to help one another. So, I would add that to the mix, to enable that learning environment.

JO BRICK: Thank you, ma'am. And, ladies and gentlemen, we had an impossible task this morning - in one hour, to talk about workforce challenges and resilience. And I'd love for you to join me in thanking our panel. (APPLAUSE)