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Nicole Quinn
National Convenor

CP2 –1-11
Campbell Park Offices
Canberra ACT 2600

1800 100 509
convenor@dfa.org.au

From the Desk of the Convenor

The purpose of the Defence Families of Australia Annual Conference is to provide feedback to Government and the Defence Department on issues effecting ADF families and to discuss concepts and ideas on improving and assisting them.

Please find below a summary of the issues that you, as ADF families raised. Please note individual cases or examples were also discussed but we endeavoured to present national trends through our briefing paper. Our next E-bulletin will address discussions and outcomes of the conference.

Thanks again for your interest and feedback -

Regards

Nicole Quinn

DFA National Convenor

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Summary of Issues Raised by You – Defence Families

a. Childcare

Central themes consistent with childcare are:

1. Access to genuine occasional care facilitated through the ADF for 'respite' and 'emergency' service related circumstances.
2. People would like paid childcare or a heavily subsidised program



b. Education

Central themes consistent with education are:

1. Call for national education system, consistent starting age etc
2. Dependant's schooling be considered in housing allocation
3. Overwhelming support for REDLO, continued DSTA positions and access to tutoring assistance on posting.

c. Housing

Allocation of a Home:

A new trend for this year is the discontent expressed by many families that the 'NHCP' means Member's are paying different amounts (due to rank) for the same type of housing, and service commitment is not reflected in housing allocation.

Central themes consistent with Housing are:

1. Cleanliness of House when families arrived – carpets, ovens & gardens were raised in numerous locations, contractors not completing work.
2. Communication – perceived lack of customer service, empathy & case management, not informing the family of updates/changes and not returning phone calls was a consistent message of frustration from families
3. Desire for environmentally sustainable homes, with rain water tanks, solar, native gardens, synthetic turf, and a shed to meet community standards, reflects drought, storage & maintenance requirements.



Maintenance

Maintenance in some areas, especially in remote localities, was raised as an ongoing problem.

Central Themes consistent with maintenance include:

1. Contractor not completing jobs, or in timely fashion.
2. Particular problem with maintenance not completed when home vacant.
3. Lack of response and communication on job status.

d. Removals

Central themes consistent with removals include:

1. People requesting transport assistance when first arriving in location
2. Lack of communication when there are problems or delays in the removal cycle esp. from contractors.
3. Case management not consistent to ensure accommodation bookings etc



4. Request for a two day down load to remove the pressure to unload and unpack an entire home on one day.

e. Community Engagement

Separate to the Community House Review a continuing theme is the way in which a family is welcomed to a community when first arriving in location.

Central themes consistent with Community engagement include:

1. Families being managed by Government with no empathy for ADF exigencies but an expectation by Gov that Defence families can engage
2. More information on location before arriving. Pro active planning.
3. Welcome information and contact from Defence when arriving in location

f. Absent from Home Support

Families overwhelming request for more communication – not from their loved ones but from the unit/chain of command and base while away.

Central themes for 'Absent from Home' Support:

1. Perceived lack of communication from Command on deployments/ units operations while away to families.
2. MWD(U) – the opportunity to access this entitlement was seen as a acknowledgement of providing respite to families, but the opportunity to chose a 'third location' was requested consistently.
3. Families very supportive of a 'respite' flight option during the deployment & 'absent from home' cycles. Not just for isolated communities but for all families away from extended family/friends. Especially popular for those who did not want to live MWD(U).

g. Defence Health Services

The announcement by Government to provide free health and dental cover to families was well received by ADF families in general.

Central themes for providing Health cover:

1. Families were confused on how the proposed structure could equitably address current access issues, especially in remote or isolated areas.
2. Families were skeptical on how Government would manage cost, tax & treatment definition issues, especially in remote localities.

g. FBT Reportable

Families are concerned that the entitlements and allowances allocated to families to recognise ADF life are eroded through the FBT reportable implications.

Central themes of the impact on FBT reportable:

1. Perception 'give in one hand and take in the other'
2. FBT inclusions nullify the intent of the actual policy goal.
3. Increasing negative impact on the current family of serving Members who have shared parental responsibility from a previous relationship

Conclusion

Many individual regional cases were also raised, including support for non-custodial parents, but these formed the basis of our Conference discussions. Please contact your regional ND if you would like to add to any of the above issues as we will be conducting post conference meetings with Defence and its stakeholders, including the newly appointed Service Chiefs.

Family Deals



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