Chapter 4. Military Advocacy Ethos

4.1 Introduction
Ethos is defined at the ‘spirit of an organisation’, or ‘the characteristic spirit of community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations’.

For the profession of military advocacy, it is:

• the ‘sense of purpose’ that drives each member;
• the ‘glue’ that holds military advocates together as a group committed to service to the ‘Defence Family’;¹ and
• the sum of each individual advocate’s professional ethic, with the ‘force multiplier’ of them working together for a common purpose.

4.2 Systems Approach
The first step in the development of an ethos is advocates’ recognition that they are part of a military advocacy system.

4.2.1 System Focus
The DVA client is the focus of the military advocacy system. The common goal is to ensure that all DVA clients receive the full entitlements that are provided for in the relevant veterans’ legislation. To quote a former DVA legal officer:

‘Not one bit more. But not one bit less.’².

4.2.2 System Participants
Advocacy systems participants include:

• advocates,
• mentors,
• candidates,
• National Training Team learning facilitators,
• workplace assessors,
• members of the CFMG-RIG and SGB levels,

¹ What constitutes the ‘Defence Family’ is clear in MRCA 2004, s15(2); encompassing:

• the member’s partner;
• a parent or step-parent of the member;
• a parent or step-parent of the member’s partner;
• a grandparent of the member;
• a child or stepchild of the member;
• a child or stepchild of the member’s partner;
• a grandchild of the member;
• the member’s brother, sister, half-brother or half-sister

² With acknowledgement to Ted Harrison, DVA Senior Legal Officer, 2011.
OPERATIONAL POLICY LIBRARY

- VC/ESO executives and others with influence in ATDP implementation, and the Secretariat.

4.2.3 System Processes

The key advocacy system processes are:

- training and development pathways, including CPD;
- welfare and compensation advocates’ practice;
- DVA’s clients’ needs;
- rehabilitation and welfare services provided;
- compensation claims and appeals; and
- determinations/decisions by Commission Delegates and VRB/AAT Members.

4.6.3 Ethos

Emergence of an ethos will take time. It will be one of the outcomes of the culture change process outlined at Chapter 5.

Fostering an ethos of ‘Professionalism’ is one of the outcome driving ATDP. Crucially, this ethos builds directly on the century-old tradition of ‘Mates helping Mates’.

The statement that best expresses the personal and system-wide ethos that ATDP is working to inspire in military advocates is:

A deep commitment to DVA clients.

4.6.4 Characteristics of Ethos

The characteristics that CFMG and RIG Members, and ATDP learning facilitators and mentors will exemplify, and advocates will demonstrate when the ethos is mature are:

- commitment to self-directed practice improvement
- focus on the best possible outcomes
- values never compromised
- compliance with the profession’s Code of Conduct (Library 3, Chapter 9, Annex A)
- implicitly trusted by peers and DVA’s clients
- sharing knowledge and practice with peers
- collegiality and open communication
- DVA clients:
  - put first to the maximum extent practicable, and
  - receiving the services and support they need

4.6.5 Key Responsibilities

CFMG and RIG members, learning facilitators and especially mentors are the key to development by military advocates of a shared ethos.

Their key actions follow:
The CFMG will promulgate the military advocacy ethos.

The NTM will ensure ATDP learning facilitators set an example of professional behaviour and compliance with the code of conduct (see Library 3, Chapter 9).

National Training Team Learning Facilitators will ensure that candidates are:
- aware of the advocacy vision and ethos, and
- build compliance with the Code of Conduct into their practice.

Mentors will include professional conduct in advocates’ CPD programs.

Regional Managers will ensure that:
- VC/ESO executives are aware of the ethos of professionalism and the Code of Conduct, and
- are prepared to revoke an advocate’s authorisation to practice in the event of serious or repeated offences.