

My name is _____ and have been working for Defence since February 2000, as a

My first position in the APS was in the Instrumentation section at Proof and Evaluation Establishment at _____. My main role was to service, calibrate and repair the various instrumentation and plant required to safely test and record both dynamic and static testing of Explosive Ordnance as per ADF requirements and instructions.

I am now _____ a Technical Officer supporting both OPSTAR and developmental trials for new and novel Explosive Ordnance.

I completed my apprenticeship as a _____ in 1988 _____. The technical training that I received at _____ has given me the opportunity to work and train in the UK, USA and Finland, and for the past 16 years, Australia. This has enabled me to apply my technical training and expertise in many various applications, ranging from thin film production, paper making; power generation and now the testing of explosive ordinance.

I have also witnessed too many times, the short term solution of reducing costs by getting rid of staff instead of investing for the future sustainment of the company in question. Unfortunately ultimately leading to the closure of the business, instead of ensuring its future sustainment for both employees and customers. This is NOT a solution that any ration organisation, especially a government, should be undertaking.

I would like to ask why is the Government hell-bent on removing APS staff to reduce costs and still expect our Service Men and Woman to be deployed, in various hostile environments, with equipment that has not been evaluated for that particular environment? Due to the complexity of modern warfare "One size fits all" is not a viable option.

DST Group has a range of specialised Scientists, Engineers Technicians and trades people to ensure that the ADF has the upper hand on the battle field; in the air; surface and under water. I get really frustrated when as a group, we get numerous amounts of praise for being able, to investigate, improve or modify the vast range of ordinance that is required to support the ADF both here and abroad. But then get informed that we have no integrity when refusing to accept the current miniscule pay increase, along with the substantial reduction in conditions on offer by Defence in the latest DECA negotiations. Please refer the latest Deca news bulletins for the exact wording and statements from both sides of the table.

What is the Government trying to achieve with this insult of a pay increase, other than the obvious cost savings on the APS head count and wage bill? Is it not prudent ,that the Government ensures that our service men and women come home safely from deployment, primarily due to their word leading equipment that has been developed, validated, modified and improved in house. Ultimately giving the ADF the upper hand whilst on deployment.

I feel that this pay/recruitment debacle is also turning away potential technical staff recruitment at all levels. We have had numerous internal and external reviews, over the past couple of years. For some strange reason they all come to the same conclusion. Defence needs to recruit and train new staff to keep up-to-date and future proof our scientific and technical support to the ADF.

Why is the government willing to let this specialised technical expertise fade away ? I feel that the government seems to think that contractors are the way to go when futureproofing technical support required to succeed in the modern theatre of war.

Is this the Government's position on recruitment and training of technical staff? That is, eliminate technical FTE but recruit short term contract staff as and when required?

Call me cynical, but I feel that the government keeps requesting these reviews I the naive hope to get the one they want that will recommend to completely out-source the technical support provided by the APS. Unfortunately for the government, time and time again these review reports recommend the opposite. Most of them emphasise that there should be greater investment in the APS to help provide the very necessary technical support that can only come from an in-house technical body. Again, I feel this is being significantly compromised by the latest pay offer

The section that I currently work in recently had yet another Technical review by independent specialists in May 2015. The review team were Dr Adam Cumming (UK), Dr Dennis Nandlall (Canada), Brigadier Phil Winter(Australian Army), Dr Andrew Pearce (Australian Federal Police).

The review covered all the staff in the LWSE and EMS MSTC's. Their final summary stated the following:-

"In summary the MSTC's reviewed by the panel were seen as an important, indeed essential capability, probably best managed within government with some areas of concern which should be addressed"

The review documentation is the "LWSE External Review & Technical Benchmarking" 4-14 May 2015

The areas of concern included future proofing our technical knowledge. The review also stated to achieve this, there needed to be carefully targeted investment to meet agreed Australian priorities.

Only last week, 1st October 2015, we were informed that DST Group would no longer support and maintain small calibre weapon and kinetic projectile evaluation. Effective immediately. OPSTAR work would only be considered on its priority, when required. The Scientists, Engineers and technicians in this specialised group ARE the Australian experts in this field. How can we maintain the best technical knowledge when nobody is current with this vital understanding our own small calibre weapons? Never mind the knowledge gained, when testing and comparing other weapons, against our own, that the ADF will encounter on deployment.

Another issue is whilst reducing staff numbers the remaining staff have slowly been given extra duties. These include booking your own accommodation and travel arrangements when on course, and trials when support tasking at the various facilities around Australia. Procurement of plant, spares and even contractors. There is a high level of Defence Instructions, complex fiscal instructions and governance with these types of transactions. All to ensure that no public monies are miss-spent. Technical jobs are becoming less n lees about the knowledge to investigate, develop and keep up with the latest technology available, and how to integrate it in support of the ADF. But more about ensuring we keep to the travel/training budget. To my knowledge very few technical people live for fiscal spreadsheets. I haven't met an admin person that can set up and use a high speed data acquisition system to measure the pressure wave that is generated when a 155mm shell functions.

In conclusion this idiocracy must stop now! Invest in technology and the people required to ensure it works first time, every time. Two way rifle ranges are not the most forgiving test and evaluation environment to suddenly find out that your equipment has a fundamental flaw. Especially when it's the only thing that can get you and your mates out of a potentially terminal situation.

Thank you for your time