

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

TO

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DEFENCE AND TRADE**

REVIEW OF THE DEFENCE ANNUAL REPORT 2002-03

November 2004

RECOMMENDATION 1:

The committee recommends that in 2005 Defence should undertake another review of the conditions of service for Australian Defence Force members on the Army ATSIC Community Assistance Program (AACAP) projects to ensure that there are no anomalies in conditions of service and that they are commensurate with the work performed. (paragraph 4.24)

Government Response:

Agreed. Defence will undertake a review of the ATSIC Army Community Assistance Program conditions of service in 2005. The scope of the review will focus on whether current allowance rates appropriately recognise the arduous conditions and duration of the ATSIC Army Community Assistance Program tasks.

The Army is to undertake two further related reviews in 2005. The Army has recognised the potential inequities in relation to the remuneration rates of electricians in various Corps. This situation is scheduled for review in August 2005. The Army construction trades remuneration rates were last review in 1996. These trades are scheduled for review in May 2005.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The committee recommends that the Australian Defence Force consider developing, in consultation with relevant government agencies, programs similar to New Zealand's Youth Life Skill (YLS) and Limited Services Volunteers (LSV) programs. (paragraph 4.39)

Government Response:

Not agreed. Defence already actively supports, and makes a significant investment in, youth development through its commitment to the Australian Defence Force Cadets, the sail training ship *Young Endeavour* and participation in state and territory work experience programs for secondary school students.

The Australian Defence Force Cadets provide thousands of young Australians with opportunities to experience Service life and develop important life skills, such as self-discipline, teamwork and leadership. Defence allocates approximately \$38 million per year to support over 24,000 cadets in over 480 locations across every state and territory of Australia.

The Navy also operates and maintains the sail training ship *Young Endeavour* and the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme. The scheme provides young Australians with a unique, challenging and inspirational experience that increases their self-awareness, develops their teamwork and leadership skills and creates a strong sense of community responsibility.

Defence also participates in state and territory work experience programs for secondary school students. Opportunities exist for young Australians to seek placements at Defence establishments to broaden their perspective regarding employment opportunities and develop an understanding of the Defence environment.

In preparing this response, Defence consulted with the Department of Family and Community Services which raised a number of issues and concerns about the Youth Life Skill and Limited Services Volunteers programs, including possible duplication with existing initiatives, such as 'Outward Bound', and funding priorities in the context of existing programs. The Department also advised preliminary findings from a study of young people participating in existing youth

development programs¹ suggest that programs that have the most potential to instill positive change are those that work with young people over a continuous period of time and are strongly grounded in schools. This strongly contrasts with aspects of the Youth Life Skill model, which is based on exposure to training and values education in a camp environment over a few days.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The committee recommends that, at the start of the next Parliament, the Minister for Defence requests the committee to conduct an inquiry into the ability of the Australian Defence Force to maintain air superiority in our region to 2020. (paragraph 5.101)

Government Response:

Not Agreed. The Defence Capability Plan makes sufficient provision to maintain Australia's air combat capability at a level at least comparable qualitatively to any in the region. The Government continues to monitor regional developments and, were there a need to, the Government would adjust the Defence Capability Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

The committee recommends that, in 2006, the Government should make a statement focusing on:

- the most accurate delivery date for the replacement combat aircraft;
- the implications this date will have on the decision to retire the F-111 in 2010;
- the need to ensure that key upgrades and deep maintenance on the F-111 continues through to 2010 with the possibility of extending the lifespan should the need arise; and
- the measures the Government will take to ensure that Australia's superiority in air combat capability in the region is maintained. (paragraph 5.102)

Government Response:

Partially Agreed. The ADF New Aerospace Combat Capability is an important issue on which announcements by the Government can be expected at key milestones. Similarly, the Government will make relevant announcements relating to other air combat capabilities such as F/A-18 Electronic Warfare Self Protection, Tactical Air Defence Radar Systems, Airborne Early Warning and Control.

¹ The study, funded over three years by the Australian Government, has been completed and the report is expected to be completed in April or May 2005.