

Introduction

- 1.1 During the period July 2009 to June 2010, Defence continued its engagement in military operations around the world.
- 1.2 The Australian Defence Force (ADF) was involved in 15 operations both nationally and internationally in areas such as East Timor, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan.¹
- 1.3 ADF also assisted with a number of natural disasters in Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Indonesia, Samoa, Pakistan and Haiti.²
- 1.4 In 2010 Operation CATALYST, the ADF's contribution to the United States-led multinational effort to develop a secure and stable environment in Iraq, concluded.³

Annual Report review objectives and scope

- 1.5 The review of the Defence Annual Report is an important task and an opportunity for the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to inquire into a broad range of Defence issues as part of the process of accountability of Government agencies to Parliament. The Sub-Committee takes this responsibility very seriously.

1 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2009-10 Volume 1*. p. 3

2 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2009-10 Volume 1*. p. 3

3 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2009-10 Volume 1*. p. 3

- 1.6 The Sub-Committee took evidence from senior Department of Defence officials at a public hearing held in Canberra on 25 March 2011. The transcript of the hearing is available on the Committee's website.⁴
- 1.7 The proceedings of the hearing were webcast over the internet through the Parliament's website, allowing interested parties to watch the proceedings as they occurred.
- 1.8 The Committee advertised the inquiry and received one submission. The Sub-Committee thanks that organisation for their contribution.
- 1.9 The Sub-Committee would also like to note that the Defence environment is a dynamic one. This report covers the financial year 2009-2010 and, unless absolutely necessary, does not refer to information after this period.

Focus areas

- 1.10 The sub-committee selected a broad range of issues for examination at the public hearing. In broad terms, the focus areas were:
- Strategic Reform Program
 - Personnel
 - ⇒ People in Defence Strategy
 - ⇒ ADF Pay Remediation
 - ⇒ ADF Mental Health Reforms
 - Justice and Security
 - ⇒ Military Justice
 - ⇒ Security of Vital National Assets in the North West of Australia
 - ⇒ Border Protection Command
 - ⇒ ADF Base Security
 - Defence Materiel Organisation
 - ⇒ Reform and Procurement
 - ⇒ Projects of Concern
 - ⇒ Specific Projects.

4 See:
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/defenceannualreport_2009_2010/hearings/Official%20Hansard%20-%2025%20March%202011.pdf

The public hearing

- 1.11 Due to the size and complexity of the Defence Department, the Committee Secretariat offered to assist Defence in its preparation for the public hearing on 25 March 2011. Unfortunately, other than the Secretary, the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) and those officers representing DMO, Defence officials seemed poorly briefed and ill prepared for the hearing.
- 1.12 This lack of preparedness was compounded by the delay in the provision of answers to questions taken on notice.
- 1.13 The Committee contends that proper planning would have ensured that Defence had an appropriate senior officer available at the hearing to answer questions put to it.

Answers to question on notice

- 1.14 The Sub-Committee held its public hearing into the Defence Annual Report 2009-10 on 25 March 2011. Twenty seven questions on notice with an additional three written questions were confirmed with Defence on 18 April 2011. Defence were asked to provide responses as one submission by 7 June 2011 and, after being unable to provide responses by that date, were asked to provide responses by 1 July 2011. This timeframe was also not met.
- 1.15 Responses were received as follows:
- Answers to questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 11, 16 and 17 on 11 August 2011;
 - Answers to questions: 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27 and written questions 1 and 2 on 15 August 2011;
 - Answer to question 23 on 23 August; and,
 - Answer to written question 3 on 20 September.
- 1.16 Answers to questions on notice were provided some five months after the hearing. The Committee acknowledges there are many pressing matters for the Department but believes this delay is unacceptable. The Committee cannot be sure if the hold-up was in the Minister's office, was due to Defence Ministerial and Executive Support or from the line areas responsible for drafting answers to the questions on notice.

- 1.17 The Committee recommends that the Department of Defence review its practices and procedures to ensure that answers to the Committee's questions on notice are provided in a more timely manner.

Recommendation 1

The Department of Defence review its practices and procedures to ensure that answers to the Committee's questions on notice are provided in a more timely manner.