

Community Support Functions – National Support Tasks

Background

- 4.1 The ADF can be called upon to provide a range of emergency and non-emergency assistance to the Australian Government and community in non-combat related roles. Some of the tasks the ADF may be called upon to deliver include:
- emergency assistance;
 - search and rescue;
 - disaster recovery;
 - surveillance; and
 - security or non-emergency law enforcement roles.
- 4.2 In those cases where the ADF is requested to undertake law enforcement tasks or where force by defence personnel may be required, these are categorised as Defence Force Aid to Civilian Authorities and ‘are authorised by the Governor-General in Council.’¹
- 4.3 Defence provides a range of peacetime national tasks which can include surveillance of the Australian coastline relating to illegal immigration, smuggling and quarantine evasion. In relation to national security, Defence can provide a range of counter-terrorist responses.

1 Department of Defence, *2002-2003 Defence Annual Report*, 2003, p. 90.

- 4.4 On pages 90 to 93 of the 2002-03 Defence Annual Report a series of performance targets are listed for National Support Tasks. Defence indicated that it 'Achieved' all performance targets.
- 4.5 The Contribution to National Support Tasks is Output 1.3 in the Outcome/Output structure. The cost of delivering Output 1.3 is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Price of Output 1.3 – Contribution to National Support Tasks

	Projected Result	Budget Estimate
	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$000
Price to Government	8,706	9,605

Source Portfolio Budget Statement, 2004-05, Defence Portfolio, p. 123.

AACAP

- 4.6 A key program which comes under 'National Support Tasks' is the Army ATSIC Community Assistance Program (AACAP). AACAP is a co-operative initiative established between ATSIC, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) and the Department of Defence (Army) to provide assistance to a number of remote indigenous communities to improve environmental health and living conditions.
- 4.7 AACAP 2002 was the largest project completed up to that point. The project cost \$11.7 million and consisted of works in seven communities situated in:
- Beagle Bay and Lombadina/Djarindjin communities on the Dampier Peninsula; and
 - Pandanas Park south of Derby, WA.
- 4.8 Defence reported that AACAP 2002 was managed by 19 Chief Engineer Works 'with a significant proportion of the scope of works constructed by 21 Construction Squadron and 23 Support Squadron of 1 Combat Engineer Regiment.'²
- 4.9 In 2003, members from the Army's 17th Construction Squadron assisted by members from other Army, Navy and Air Force Units deployed to Palm Island in North Queensland to undertake the latest project in the AACAP series. Houses and roads were built over a five-month period, with health, employment and training activities also undertaken during

² Department of Defence, *2002-2003 Defence Annual Report*, 2003, p. 92.

this time. The project budget for AACAP 2003 was \$8.38million, excluding Army's contribution. The project was completed in November 2003.

4.10 Palm Island is located some 70km north east of Townsville, and is home to 4000 people from over 40 different tribal groups.

4.11 AACAP's objectives are consistent with ATSIC's National Aboriginal Health Strategy (NAHS) program and DHA's health programs and aimed to:

- provide a targeted approach to improving living conditions in those communities most in need of large scale environmental health infrastructure;
- achieve increased commitment from State, Territory and Local Government to community infrastructure projects;
- implement best practice techniques in project planning, delivery and management;
- improve access to health services by improving transport infrastructure;
- provide opportunistic health services in conjunction with existing health services and authorities; and
- enhance primary health care services and facilities available to communities.

4.12 On 2 October 2003 the committee visited Palm Island and received a briefing on AACAP's achievements.

4.13 The AACAP Palm Island original scope of works included:

- 21 new houses (seven by 17 Const Sqn, 14 by civil contractors, fencing by CDEP);
- upgrades to island access roads (17 Const Sqn and 3 CER);
- road repairs and street lighting (civil contractors);
- repairs to the effluent irrigation system and fencing (an in-house bid mounted by the Palm Is Council);
- renovations to the aged respite centre and general access in the community for disabled community members (an in-house bid mounted by Palm Is CDEP);
- training of residents in Certificate 1 in General Construction (25 Palm Is trainees, contributing to the Queensland Government's Community Renewal Program);
- training of residents in construction and health care, as well as education and informal training in a variety of vocational skills; and

- the provision of medical, dental, veterinary and environmental health support.³

4.14 Defence confirmed that there is a forward work program for AACAP in 2004-05 and it will continue in its current form. However, there is no planning beyond that period but Defence confirmed that, subject to continued Government funding, the AACAP program will continue. Defence stated:

We have a program planned for next year, 2004-05. There are no programs planned beyond that, as yet. That is not to say that we do not intend doing them; it is just that, as far as I understand it, the issue is getting the money into the government's budget to allow the program to continue into the future. Certainly the Army's view is that, subject to the government providing the funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group and the desire for the government to keep this going, we will be able to continue doing it.⁴

4.15 ATSIC, the Army and the Department of Health and Ageing collaborate to identify communities for assistance. Defence commented that 'the National Aboriginal Health Strategy project impact assessments methodology aims to give priority to communities with the greatest environmental health needs, in particular for priority housing and essential service infrastructure.'⁵ AACAP specifically targets projects for high needs remote communities located in northern Australia.

4.16 A number of issues were raised by senior military officers during the visit and inspection of the works carried out at Palm Island. First, concerns were made about the lack of any 'operational status' associated with AACAP projects and the consequential ineligibility of personnel to receive any form of formal recognition such as the Australian Service Medal. It was claimed that AACAP tasks are similar to those carried out in non-warlike operations overseas which involve long attachments away from families often to very remote localities. The associated issue of taxed allowances was also raised with the members.

4.17 In relation to remuneration, it was claimed that electricians in different corps of the Army apparently receive different pay, yet the training for these members is identical. It was also suggested that the current pay for the construction trades was deemed to be inadequate by the senior officers in the group, and not on a par with civilian counterparts in the private

3 Department of Defence, *2002-2003 Defence Annual Report*, 2003, p. 92.

4 Major General Frank Roberts, Department of Defence, *Transcript*, pp. 41-42.

5 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 9.

sector. During the public hearing, Defence was asked whether there had been any examination of the recognition and remuneration attaching to deployments with the AACAP program. Defence stated:

On the question about whether there has ever been any examination, I do not know. I would have to go and check. More broadly in response to the question you have asked, I would take the approach, first of all, that they are doing very valuable work. I think within the Army we recognise that, and I hope that that recognition does flow through to the soldiers concerned. But, at the end of the day, they are doing what it is that engineers do. I would be reasonably confident that they receive the same entitlements as anybody else who goes away for an extended period in terms of their field allowance, and I would imagine they would also get the separation allowance that goes with being away for an extended period. Does the work they do deserve something beyond that? I would have to go back and check whether we have ever given that any consideration.⁶

- 4.18 During the hearing, Defence was asked if there had been any examination or review of the achievements of ADF personnel on AACAP programs focusing on remuneration, or some other form of recognition. Defence indicated that the last examination of conditions of service package was conducted in 2001. Defence stated:

The examination was undertaken at three different remote work sites in the Northern Territory. As a result, modifications were made to the payment of field allowance. This recognised the prolonged periods of field service associated with AACAP projects and increased the rate of payment from \$22.79 to \$38.85 (current day dollars). The examination also reassessed the allocation of district allowances. The original allocation was justified and the grading remained unchanged.⁷

Conclusions

- 4.19 The Army ATSIC Community Assistance Program (AACAP) is a worthy and successful program of which ATSIC, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) and the Department of Defence can be proud.
- 4.20 The committee has first hand experience of the AACAP program through its visit to Palm Island in October 2003. Palm Island is located some 70km north east of Townsville, and is home to 4000 people from over 40

6 Major General Ken Gillespie, Department of Defence, *Transcript*, p. 38.

7 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 9.

different tribal groups. Houses and roads were built over a five-month period, with health, employment and training activities also undertaken during this time. The project budget for AACAP 2003 was \$8.38million, excluding Army's contribution. The project was completed in November 2003.

- 4.21 Defence advised that the AACAP program will continue subject to continued government funding. The committee encourages the Government to continue the AACAP program while the need for assistance to indigenous communities remains.
- 4.22 During the committee's visit to Palm Island, and at the public hearing, the issue of recognition and conditions of service for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel involved in AACAP was discussed. ADF personnel deployed to Palm Island were in a remote location and subject to separation from their families for an extended period. The committee received advice suggesting that service on an AACAP program, due to the remoteness and length of the deployment and the community contribution made through the program, should be subject to recognition and commensurate conditions of service.
- 4.23 In 2001 Defence examined the conditions of service package for ADF members on AACAP projects. In 2005 Defence should undertake another review of the conditions of service for ADF members on AACAP projects to ensure that there are no anomalies in conditions of service and that they are commensurate with the work performed.

Recommendation 1

- 4.24 **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.**

New Zealand Defence community support functions

- 4.25 In April 2003, the committee visited New Zealand and received advice on the community support functions performed by the New Zealand Defence Force.

- 4.26 While the discussions were broad ranging, a significant part of the briefing focused on the role and operations of the 3rd Regional Training Unit (3RTU). The mission of 3RTU is to ‘provide individual training in order to allow 3LFG to meet directed outputs and to meet CDF/Chief of Army Directives on youth training.’
- 4.27 The youth training conducted by 3RTU includes the Limited Service Volunteers (LSV) program for 18 to 25 year old unemployed persons, and the Youth Life Skills (YLS) program for 12 to 17 year olds who are predominantly ‘at risk.’

Youth Life Skills (YLS)

- 4.28 The role of the YLS is to ‘provide training opportunities for youth to develop life skills in order that they may be better prepared to take their place within, and contribute too New Zealand society.’ Participants are generally of secondary school age. Participants are not subject to military law although a military environment exists which helps students to develop a positive behaviour and attitude.
- 4.29 The Army’s role in the YLS is to provide expertise in certain areas so that groups can learn to help themselves. Territorial Force (Reserve) Regiments assist the scheme by providing instructors and liaison in local areas.

Limited Services Volunteers (LSV)

- 4.30 The role of the LSV is to ‘provide training to unemployed people to develop skills, responsibilities and discipline to enable them to function in day to day life in New Zealand society.’ The key aim of the program is to ‘develop the self discipline, confidence and attitude of the trainees to enhance their employment opportunities.’ Participants for the course must be:
- 18 to 25 years old;
 - free from serious convictions;
 - medically fit for ‘moderate’ physical activity; and
 - be registered unemployed through the Department of Work and Income;
- 4.31 Participants are referred through, and funding is provided by, the Department of Work and Income (DWI). The NZDF provides for the facility and staff costs. Staffing for the program is tri-Service but procedures are Army. The LSV is only provided at the Burnham Camp. A memorandum of understanding exists between the DWI and the NZDF.

- 4.32 In contrast to the YLS, trainees are subject to military law. There are 5 to 6 courses per year, each of six weeks in duration. The maximum number of trainees per course is 144.
- 4.33 While the YLS is not vocationally specific it has a generic objective of developing attitudes and behaviour which can help lead to employment. Some of the key qualities that are emphasised include:
- learning to apply self-discipline;
 - respect for self, others and community, organisations and the team;
 - time management and punctuality;
 - healthy and positive lifestyle;
 - goal setting; and
 - presentation skills.
- 4.34 The LSV, in its current form has been running since 1993 although earlier versions of the program go back to the 1980s.
- 4.35 Defence indicated that it was aware of the New Zealand programs. Defence noted that Australian Defence Force Cadets 'are provided with similar opportunities' to those provided through the New Zealand programs. Defence, however, concluded that 'there is no consideration currently being given to adapting elements of the New Zealand programs to the ADF cadet programs.'⁸
- 4.36 Defence advised that there are 472 Cadet units across Australia of which 51 are based in schools.⁹ A major review of the Cadet scheme in 2000 indicated that about 30 per cent of Cadets, with over 24 months tenure in the program, moved into the ADF.¹⁰ Defence stated:
- During the first half of 2004, Defence intends to carry out a comprehensive attitudinal study of Cadets to ascertain their views on a range of issues. One specific component of the study will seek to identify those factors that influence Cadets to join the ADF.¹¹

Conclusions

- 4.37 During April 2003 the committee visited New Zealand as part of the 2003 parliamentary committee exchange program. In June 2003 the committee tabled its report of the visit.¹² As part of this report, the committee

8 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 8.

9 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 7.

10 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 6.

11 Department of Defence, *Submission 1*, Question 6.

12 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Report of the 2003 New Zealand Parliamentary Committee Exchange, 6-11 April 2003*, June 2003.

concluded that it would pursue with Defence the opportunity to implement similar programs to the New Zealand Youth Life Skill (YLS) and Limited Services Volunteers (LSV) programs. In June 2003 the committee stated:

The key messages that came through during the briefings about the Youth Life Skills (YLS) and Limited Service Volunteers (LSV) programs are the positive support from the public, the clear benefits and sense of achievement for participants, and the training rewards for defence force personnel involved in the program. The programs clearly have merit and the NZDF should be proud of its contribution to the needs and development of New Zealand youth.¹³

- 4.38 During the public hearing on 15 December 2003 Defence was examined on the scope and effectiveness of its community support functions. Defence indicated that it was aware of the New Zealand youth support programs but noted that Australian Defence Force Cadets ‘are provided with similar opportunities’ to those provided through the New Zealand programs. Notwithstanding this, 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.

Recommendation 2

- 4.39 **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.**

13 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Report of the 2003 New Zealand Parliamentary Committee Exchange, 6-11 April 2003*, June 2003, p. 55.