

**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
OF DEFENCE PERSONNEL**

SUBMISSION

Submission No: 23

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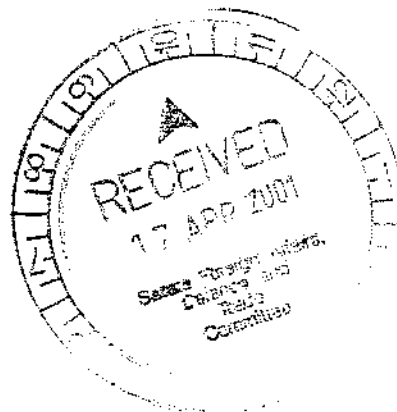
E-Mail:

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Attachments: Nil



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The Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs,
Defence and Trade References Committee,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

I would appreciate it if the attached submission [R.S.L] dealing with recruitment of defence personnel be given consideration by your committee.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Thomas

10 Landon Way,

Mt Claremont

Western Australia 6011,

147401

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Mr D Phillips
National President R.S.L.
G.P.O. Box 5073,
Canberra,
A.C.T. 2601.

Dear Sir,

Having thought long and hard, I have come to the conclusion to seek your advice and input into an aspect of our society that I feel needs to be addressed and attitudes hopefully changed.

With your assistance and lateral thinking, my concerns maybe able to be debated at the national R.S.L. conference, if considered worthy.

In our society to day, there are so many of our young Australians who for whatever reason erred within their lives, as their judgement while in their youth, was clouded by various influences, other than drink related crimes.

The young Australians come from all backgrounds and walks of life, BUT they are AUSTRALIANS

Having erred once usually is sufficient to allow them to realise that what they did was against everything they had been taught, by parents, educational institutions, religious bodies and society.

Of course, by then it is too late to turn the clock back and recover the lost ground, as the judiciary and the court system has imposed it's penalty and has handed down a penalty, not only of a monetary nature but also the stigma of a recorded criminal conviction.

Carried, generally for life that impedes the individual for the remainder of his or her life whether or not they have reformed.

This penalty, is one that society has designed to be an added burden, greater than the monetary one imposed, which in my humble opinion in many cases is truly unjust.

Even the judicial law states that you can only be judged once for a crime, but that in it's self is a lie, as the criminal conviction is a second and major penalty.

I apologise to you Sir, for my long winded approach but I am trying to make the point before I put my questions to you.

It disturbs me greatly, that to day in times of relative peace the majority of our young Australian's who do have a criminal convictions recorded and have not re-offended, are denied entry into the Australian Defence Forces.

Does this mean, that in times of national crisis within or external of our nations borders, the Australian Defence Forces will follow the same line of thinking and exclude them from active service as should be the case?

I am aware of the spent conviction provision, in many cases this is still not an option, although no further offending has occurred during the seven to ten years it takes to arrive at the position where the spent conviction hearing may occur.

Yes, the individuals have offended in his or her civilian life but has not offended within the Military system and if allowed to enter service would probable not offend, as the lesson as been learnt.

To have the Australian Defence Forces also shame them and to hold them as unfit for service, is to lose these individuals from any national or personal pride that in the future may be required to be tapped.

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In my opinion, there are many within this Nation that in times of war would not entertain the thought of fighting in defence of our Nation, although they enjoy all the spoils offered from within our society, WHY add to this growing number?

If the thinking of to day continues to be applied and the wait for a spent conviction is to remain at seven to ten years, the young men and women will have become more disillusioned and depressed at the loss of opportunities that may have been afforded, if accepted by the Australian Defence Forces.

I appreciate that not all individuals with a criminal conviction could or should be considered as suitable for enlistment within the Australian Defence Forces, consideration should in my opinion, be given to individuals who have not been incarcerated within a institution in the first instance

The high scholastic standards that the Australian Defence Forces hold so dear and are a measure of their worth today could still be applied to the individuals wishing to apply for entry in the regular service.

I am sure, in the private sector of industry and of commerce there are professionals, with criminal convictions, who have made and are making to this day, tremendous contributions to our society in a positive manner, so why not allow others to join the professionals within the armed services?

If, for what ever reason the Minister, the Australian Defence Forces or the R.S.L feel that it would not be in the best interest of this Nation to allow individuals with criminal convictions to enter into regular forces service, could consideration be given to allowing them to participate in the Reserve services?

Perhaps, after serving within the reserve forces a term of three years, without blemish or prejudice, the opportunity to elevate them into the regular wing of the armed service of their choice could be gained.

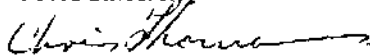
I would urge the R.S.L to debate the above issue and if possible alter in a positive way, the policy that is currently being applied by the Australian Defence Forces and the Minister

Where there is no future, all hope is lost.

"IF EAST WE FORGET"

I look forward to your response and advice to the above topic, in due course

Yours Sincerely



Chris Thomas

15 Landon Way,

Mt.Claremont

Western Australia 6010

12/0/01

cc The Secretary Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee