

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 40

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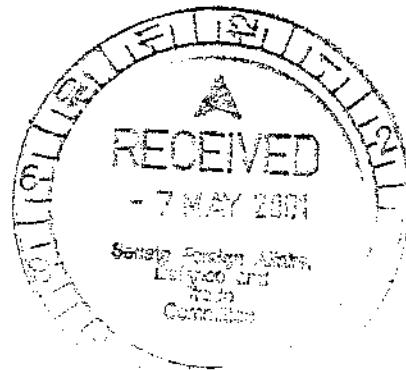
**INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF  
DEFENCE PERSONNEL**

**BY**

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**ASK WHAT NOT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO  
FOR YOU, BUT ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR  
YOUR COUNTRY**

## **RECRUITMENT**

At the present time I can only comment on recruitment on Army Reserve personnel as I have completed 37 years service and have been involved in recruiting and training of Reserves.

The present system of recruitment of part time soldiers is failing due to policies undertaken by Defence personnel at the highest level, who I believe have not fully taken into account what it means to be a part time soldier in our present time.

As the numbers of prospective part time people in the community are hesitant to make a commitment when informed of their initial phase of training ( recruit training). All unit recruit staff inform prospective applicants of their overall requirements as part of their commitment of being a part time soldier. The biggest stumbling block is the 6 week recruitment course normally held at Wagga Wagga NSW. Army Reserve soldiers and Regular soldiers attend the same recruit course over the 6 week period. Alright for regular soldiers but not for part time soldiers, as this was explained when this phase of training was implemented several years ago. We were asked our views but the decision was made up and no amount of talking on the pros and cons of this system would have made any difference.

I have had first hand experience as a Career Advisor at APA-S Sydney who was in contact with unit commanding officers and RSM's and my own peers to discuss why units were not attracting new members.

The common reply was that the 6 WEEK RECRUIT COURSE WAS NOT FEASIBLE FOR EMPLOYERS TO GIVE THEIR EMPLOYEES 6 WEEKS TIME OFF FROM THEIR EMPLOYMENT. THE RESULT GO AND WHEN YOU RETURN YOU WILL NO LONGER BE EMPLOYED. Pretty hard to hear from your employer when you only wanted to serve your country and try to do the right thing. No wonder no one was knocking down the doors of unit recruitment officers to enlist.

As this was the answer that no one wanted to hear let alone the people who were behind this system kept on telling us to make it work.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All future Army Reserve recruit courses be conducted at Regional Training Centres located in all Regions on major Army establishments. **DURATION OF 16 DAYS CONTINUOUS TRAINING.** Then unit follow up training on weekend activities until all essential training is completed, then the soldier is upgraded to ECN 510 paylevel 1.

This should take the burden off employer in granting 2 weeks military or the member can take 2 weeks annual leave if he/she agrees to this format.

The ideal time frame to complete all required recruit training to be completed in the first 12 months of service.

2. A possibility of weekend training for completion of recruit training to be organised at Brigade level for all units under there control. This would ensure the maximum number of trained WO's, Sncs and Jncs to oversee training and control.

3. A possibility of weekend training for completion of recruit training to be conducted at Regional Training Centres with their instructor support and support from Brigade units for weekend training.

Part time soldiers differ from there counterparts in the fulltime army, part time soldiers join units that are close to home, a mate /friend joins, word of mouth, finds out through the media, or joins the unit his father, uncle or relative joined years before. The part time soldier has the choice of unit, corps and location he/she can decide of what options and time they can allocate to the reserve as not to disrupt their job which is their bread and butter. As long as he/she completes the minimum days allocated by their unit for training.

Unlike the fulltime soldier the part time soldier holds down a fulltime job and partakes enlistment into the Army Reserve as a second job. As this can place pressure on certain times of the year when his /her job will always take precedent over his/her Reserve commitment. **THIS IS NOT ALWAYS ACKNOWLEDGED OR UNDERSTOOD BY SOME REGULAR ARMY CADRE MEMBERS IN GRES UNITS.**

If the training given is not realistic or challenging, interest will dwindle and fade away. This results in falling morale and loss of numbers in units. This is a major challenge for any commanding officer to retain members. We all have an obligation to raise the interest of training to obtain effective trained soldiers in all trades.



The above are the main areas that I believe could solve the retention problem.

The only really effective way to build up numbers in the Reserves is to have compulsory service for all Australians from 17 up to 35 years.

With combining all the above points listed above, then the numbers would increase to a number which would effectly enhance the defence and security of Australia for all Australians.

Remember the RSL motto.

**THE PRICE OF LIBERTY IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce Reeding". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.

**Bruce Reeding**  
03 May 01