

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 58

**Submittor:** Mr Jim Eftos

**Address:** 138 Osmaston Road  
CARINE WA 6020

**Telephone No:**

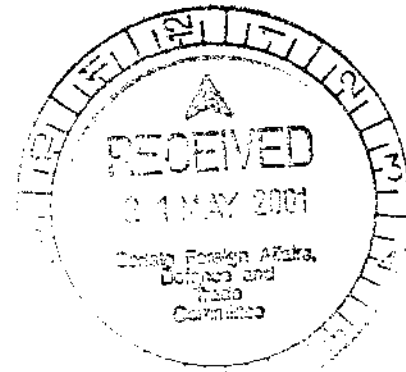
**Fax:** 08 9322 6544

**E-Mail:** [sealion@mailinet.net.au](mailto:sealion@mailinet.net.au)

**No. of Pages:** 7

**Attachments:** No

Senator John Hogg  
Chairman  
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Attention: Mr Paul Barsdell

Dear Sir

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

Please find attached my submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee to the Inquiry into Recruitment and Retention of ADF Personnel.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the inquiry.

Yours sincerely

**JIM EFTOS**

138 Osmaston Road  
CARINE WA 6020

18 May 2001

## **SUBMISSION TO:**

### **THE INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ADF PERSONNEL**

#### **1. INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is, according to the media, and political and community commentators, experiencing a 'personnel (manpower) crisis' that is affecting operational readiness, surge capability and morale. According to commentators this crisis is the direct result of higher than expected levels of separation from the Services, unattained recruitment targets and varying levels of availability for operational service by extant Service personnel. While the latter is outside the scope of the inquiry, it is still relevant in that as ADF numbers reach minimum levels necessary for operational effectiveness the number that can be deployed must be maximised. The situation is so finely balanced that any 'no show' (particularly within the Reserves) for what ever reason will have a debilitating affect on the ADF's ability to do its job.

The manpower crisis is portrayed (for mass consumption) as a recent phenomenon, the result of uncontrollable labour market forces - something that was not foreseeable and therefore difficult to counter. What is missing is any suggestion that this crisis is in some way connected to a series of political and Defence establishment decisions made over the past decade and a half under the guise of force restructuring, post Cold War peace dividend, strategic reviews, commercialisation and out-sourcing etc.

##### **1.1 Real Cause of the Crisis**

It was these decisions (taken in isolation and collectively) that has created the culture and environment that has led to the crisis. The popular response from the Defence hierarchy is that it is the current competitive labour market that is the cause of low recruitment rates and high separation levels. The real reasons are closer to home!

##### **1.2 Not a Model Employer**

Could the crisis, which is real enough, be the result of a loss of confidence in the decision makers? If yes, why? Perhaps it is because:

- The needs and interests of individual Service men and women are not being taken into account when structural changes to the Services are being planned and executed.
- Mass redundancies and downsizing deliver a clear message that loyalty and commitment is no longer a two-way street.
- Manpower and resource levels are driven by the accounting targets and not by strategic and operational need.
- Career progression and standing is reward for those whom blindly follow political edicts and instructions even if commonsense would indicate that a particular course of action is strategically, economically and socially unsound.

All this would indicate to both the interested and casual observer that the ADF is not a model employer, it puts the bottom line ahead of its workforce and in some cases the

well-being and security of the nation; it provides little loyalty, but expects loyalty, dedication and service in return; it is prepared to make decisions that effect the long-term wellbeing of its workforce (ie. job security, job fulfilment, job progression) for some short term expediency. And then as quickly it can reverse some or all these decisions when a crisis develops (East Timor) without missing a beat – as if it was part of some well thought out plan.

### **1.3 Perception**

The real issue about ADF recruitment and retention is perception – or the perception that the ADF doesn't care or can't provide a potential employee with the security, fulfilment, development opportunities and loyalty that is needed. The result being poor recruiting or retention - after all, if this is all that can be expected then why join the ADF when the private sector will treat you as poorly but at least the pay and conditions are better! The complementary perception is that if you treat Service men and women as little more than public servants in uniform then that is what you will get in return in terms of loyalty, commitment and service.

But it is unfair to imply that public servants are anything less than loyal and committed. To the contrary, they are all of these things and more. Interestingly, the public service doesn't have any problems recruiting or retaining staff, so perhaps public servants in uniform is the right way to go!

There are many examples over the past decade and a half where this perception has become a reality. Examples include:

- Support functions such as drivers, particularly refueler/tanker drivers being privatised. No consideration was given to the fact that in a contingency situation (ie. East Timor) who would go forward and refuel aircraft in a hostile environment – certainly not civilians.
- Reservists being used to undertake tasks that were no longer 'established' as the result of one of the many force structure reviews, but jobs that still needed to be done.
- Current recruiting efforts being directed at cooks, stewards, drivers and medical staff (to name a few) despite these musterings being made redundant only a few years ago.

These examples are not at the 'big end of town', where restructuring affecting staff officers are minimal – they are issues at the grass roots, where perceptions are born and nurtured.

A negative perception has long term corrosive powers – which is why the current crisis has its origins over a decade ago when many of the potential recruits of today were still playing with toy soldiers and model aeroplanes. Any attempt to redress this negative perception, therefore, needs to be directed at the grass roots and be part of long term strategy (5-10 years) to remove the negativity, re-ignite interest and make the ADF a preferred employer and military service a desirable career.

## **2. ADDRESSING THE CRISIS**

If the crisis is real and the attempt to address it is also real, then new and old approaches need to be considered. If current strategies are not working then the

challenge is to think 'outside the box' and develop a plan that is multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-focussed. The plan should mirror the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted society that the ADF purports to be a part of and is in existence to serve.

Possible strategies should include:

### **2.1 Restoring the Faith**

The main issue to be addressed without doubt is restoring the confidence and re-kindling the loyalty of existing members of the ADF. The old adage of a disgruntled customer telling ten others while a happy customer only telling two or three is relevant to this discussion. Members of the ADF need to be proud of their lot, they need to tell their family and friends of the benefits of their career choice. An interesting exercise would be to determine how many offspring follow their parents into a career in the Services. Anecdotal evidence would suggest this is not as high as it has been in the past. Why?

Rekindled confidence and loyalty will pay dividends immediately by arresting separation rates and maintain the integrity of the current pool of intellectual knowledge and skill – the greatest asset in the ADF.

This will require a concerted effort – a well thought out and coordinated strategy, adequately resourced and delivered with the same political resolve and Service commitment that was the hallmark of previous programs aimed at eliciting a change of attitude or acceptance of a review strategy.

### **2.2 A New Public Image**

The public image of the ADF needs to be revitalised. This can be achieved by tried and true methods, such as telling it as it is! The Defence Forces offer interesting, challenging and demanding careers, which are relatively well paid and secure. Defence careers are also stressful, relatively risky and may lead to the ultimate test: to kill or be killed. After all that is the role of the ADF. Current advertising campaigns go to great lengths to stress that everyone in the ADF is an 'ordinary' person – someone who plays sport, socialises, has normal relationships, raises a family etc. This is not denied – but what is missing is the other side – the parts that make a serviceman or woman special, the part that requires them to defend this country and its population against external and internal threats that may involve killing or being killed.

If current ads were subject to probity tests and advertising standards they may very well be in contravention of consumer protection laws for misrepresenting their product.

The new public image should evoke sentiments of nationalism, pride, service, commitment and sacrifice. The aim being to ensure current service personnel (and ex-service personnel) have a special standing and respect in the community and that service in the ADF is an honourable profession that reflects the highest ideals and values of a community and a nation. A lesson is to compare the standing of servicemen and women in the US to those in Australia.

Old-fashioned values such as service, loyalty, honour, selflessness need to be part of the 'makeover'. The challenge is to get the mix right between healthy values and jingoism.

The current theme that the ADF is just another job for ordinary, everyday people means that it is competing with other ordinary everyday jobs in the workplace. It will always be a loser in this game because ordinary, everyday jobs don't require the hidden qualities identified above. Instead of competing by identifying the similarities, compete by stressing the differences.

### **2.3 Redirecting the Advertising Budget**

If the success of an advertising campaign is measured by the intended outcome or proportion of the target audience reached then by all measurements the current recruiting campaign is a dismal failure. At a cost of many millions of dollars the only beneficiaries appear to be the advertising industry and the media outlets. Nobody denies that advertising is necessary and nobody denies that the content and format of the print and television advertisements are quality, professional products. For the cost they should be!

The issue is the target audience and how effective are the ads in attracting this audience. A re-think should be on the advertising strategy and not the budget. What is required is a new approach if the desired outcome of potential recruits registering their interest in a career in the ADF is to be realised.

#### **Possible strategies:**

- **Public Profile.** Get the ADF (and the recruiting staff) into the public's eye. Spend the advertising budget going to public vistas such as shopping centres, with appropriate hardware, that people can see and touch. Let them see where their taxes are going. Offer more open days and displays (air shows) where the public can see, hear and smell ADF hardware and meet 'real' Service people and not the 'plastic' images in the media. Sponsor 'advertorials', programs on television or movies with a military theme. If production houses can be encouraged to develop programs outside the current police drama genre Defence will not only be paid for the privilege of access to facilities, but the product is a 'free' half or one hour advertisement for the ADF. The US film industry provides many examples of how this provides benefits for the commercial interests as well as the Defence establishment.
- **Sponsorship and Scholarships.** Through the effective use of scholarships, bursaries and other forms of assistance with education costs, it would be possible to nurture an interest and commitment to the ADF in young people. I appreciate that is already occurring – but the impact is limited because access is restricted, generally, to a few professional courses at tertiary level. Extending the same practices to other levels of education ie. TAFE and general high school students will broaden the appeal and the number of potential recruits. The ideal age is about 15 years when decisions about course structures and content are being considered and possible career paths are being decided.
- **University Air Squadrons.** The re-introduction of University Air Squadrons (UAS) is an extension of the above strategy. UAS's served a valuable purpose up

until 1973 when they were prematurely disbanded by the Whitlam Government. The decision to disband the UAS was rationalised on cost and efficiency grounds. The true reason was philosophically based – a reaction to anti-war sentiment following the Vietnam War. The value of the UAS concept is significant in that it nurtures an understanding of defence matters and develops an interest in the armed forces as a possible career option for tertiary students. Universities and other tertiary institutions are ideal sources of future members of the officer corps. UASs are a feature of the Defence establishment in the UK and are used to recruit reserve and permanent RAF Officers. A bi-product of the scheme is that also instils an awareness of air power and doctrine in the future leaders in the community, particularly those destined for influential careers such as law, politics and commerce.

- **Engaging Indigenous, Ethnic and other Minority Groups.** The ADF has done very little to attract to its ranks minority and ethnic sectors of the community. Not tapping this potential source of recruits not only limits numbers but it also puts the ADF at odds with the community from a demographic perspective (the ADF should be representative of the broader community). The current crisis could be addressed overnight if the selection pool was expanded by 2-3% - this corresponds to the proportion of Aboriginals in the population. This does not include the proportion of the population that would be described as 'ethnic' or racially diverse. The image of the ADF is that it is predominantly 'white', 'anglo-saxon' and 'Australian-born'. This is obviously untrue. It, however, acts as a barrier to potential recruits that do not fit this perceived model. The fear of being ostracised, ridiculed, marginalised or just not taken as being an equal is a powerful disincentive. Addressing this issue will require a major strategy similar to the type implemented to promote equity and access for females in the ADF. Not addressing this shortcoming is not only socially unacceptable but it is also inefficient and limiting from a human resource perspective.
- **Cadet Training Schemes.** While it is acknowledged that the ADF does provide significant in-kind assistance to various Service cadet programs there is much more that can be achieved to maximise the potential of cadet participants as future members of the ADF and Defence Force Reserves. The high proportion of current member of the ADF who had some contact with the cadet movement is well documented (please refer to the recently released Topley Report). This is mirrored in Canada, the US and the UK - over 40% of the British Army Officer Corps has had some contact with the Combined Cadet Forces in the UK.

An example of how the United States military fosters interest and commitment from young people is the Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) program

### **3. NAVAL JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING CORPS**

NJROTC was established in 1964. Instructors are retired Service personnel and conduct the program at accredited secondary schools throughout the USA.

There are currently 63,000 cadets and 960 instructors in the program with units in all states and territories in the USA. The US Navy is seeking to expand the number of

high schools in the program from 435 to 490 during 2000/01 with plans to add a further 210 units by 2004/05.

NJROTC's basic objectives is to:

- Promote patriotism.
- Develop informed and responsible citizens.
- Promote habits of orderliness and precision.
- Develop respect for constituted authority.
- Develop a higher degree of personal honour, self-reliance, individual discipline, and leadership.
- Promote an understanding of the basic elements and requirements for national security.
- Develop respect for and an understanding of the need for constituted authority in a democratic society.
- **Develop an interest in the military services as a possible career.**

The Navy provides schools hosting NJROTC units with instructional materials, equipment, uniforms, monetary reimbursement for orientation trips and instructor salary reimbursement.

NJROTC instructors are exclusively retired Regular or Reserve Officers and Senior Non-commissioned Officers with no less than 20 years service. They are hired by the school council and are paid by the school. The US Navy reimburses half of the salaries funded by the school. There are currently over 1,000 adult instructors (a further 500 are required by 2005 to meet an expansion in the program).

The instructors are paid (known as the Minimum Instructor Pay level) at their regular (pre-retirement) pay scale less their gross retirement pay ie. the effect being no change in their pay entitlements following retirement.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The ADF has an immediate problem with meeting recruiting targets and arresting personnel separation rates. This is the result of a decade and a half of inept policy formulation and administration. Solutions must therefore address the underlying problems. The proposed solutions outlined above do not attempt the quick fix – this may not be possible because of the institutionalised causes. The solutions proposed are for the medium to long term – changing perceptions, attitudes and institutions. The challenge for Defence policy makers is having the courage to admit past mistakes and to take the long term approach to solving these mistakes.

Jim Eftos

March 2001