

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Parliamentary inquiry – Impact of Defence Activities and Facilities on Rural and Regional Communities – 21 March 2018

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: SSCFADT - Impact of Defence training activities and facilities on rural and regional communities – 21 Mar 18 – Q8 - Moore

Question reference number: 8

Senator: Claire Moore

Type of question: Spoken, Hansard pages 11-12

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 13 April 2018

Question:

Mr Grzeskowiak: managing director of that company in Darwin, and I've been involved with him subsequently. The difficulty there was that they'd got themselves into a position where they were doing a lot of work making wooden targets that Defence doesn't need anymore. We're not going to buy targets we can't use or need, and that is unfortunate. We put a bit of focus into people with disabilities. For example, inside Defence, we're currently employing around 100 people with disabilities on a scheme that we have introduced over the last three years, where we've set up at various Defence bases—usually the bigger bases where there's lots going on—a team, using companies—a company called Help, I think, is one. We go to the market we use and they come in, because they're expert at helping people with disabilities integrate into the workplace, and we use them to do a range of tasks. They build up a capability to do a range of tasks that help the Defence base; the people there usually do administrative tasks and do their work. We've rolled that out progressively, and I think we're at eight or nine Defence bases now that employ around 100 people with disabilities—many of them people with mental disabilities rather than just physical disabilities. I've personally been to four or five of those centres, met with the people and talked with them. It is very satisfying when you see that the policies you're implementing are giving the chance of a job to people who maybe wouldn't have had the chance of a job before. That's one of the things we're doing internally at Defence.

We do seek to do other work. We've got something called the Dandelion Program, where we're actively employing people who are somewhere on the autism spectrum. They are really good at some types of work—I won't go into the detail of what they do, but they're very, very attentive to detail. That's working really well for us. We do work with several companies, just in the general course of business, that have their own disability employment programs, and we encourage that sort of thing. It's an area that we have got a little bit of a focus on, and it's going to be an area that we'll have a continuing focus on as we go forward. Defence has a disability champion in the same way that I'm a champion for Indigenous employment—we have a disability champion as well at the deputy secretary level—and that gives it visibility,

and maintains visibility, within the department.

Senator MOORE: Can we get a little bit more information about that? I'd like to see that integrated into this report; that there's work with local companies and that there'd be focus—

Mr Grzeskowiak: On notice, we can give you a little bit more detail about the things I've just talked about.

Senator MOORE: That would be very useful. Thank you.

Answer:

Defence has invested in rural and regional communities by creating a range of employment opportunities for people with intellectual and physical disability through the following programs: the Dandelion@Defence Program; the Inclusive Employment Program; and the Defence Administrative Assistance Program;

Dandelion@Defence

- There are nine individuals employed through the Dandelion@Defence Program.
- The Dandelion@Defence Program delivers dedicated cyber-security capability to Defence staffed by persons who have been diagnosed with autism.

Inclusive Employment Program

- There are 19 individuals employed through the Inclusive Employment Program.
- The program was established in 2013 and employs people with intellectual disability at the APS 1 and 2 levels.

Defence Administrative Assistance Program

- There are 127 people employed through the Defence Administrative Assistance Program.
- The Defence Administrative Assistance Program is a partnership with local Australian Disability Enterprises to provide people with disability the opportunity to engage in meaningful work.
- The Defence Administrative Assistance Program teams are successfully operating in nine Defence sites across the country providing capability support; administration and customer service delivery directly to the organisation.
- The Defence Administrative Assistance Program helps to break down barriers, with individuals working directly in units on our bases.
- For the participants, the Program provides the opportunity to be part of a professional and inclusive organisation that enables them to develop the skills and confidence to pursue broader opportunities in the wider community.
- For Defence employees, it provides first-hand experience of the benefits of inclusion in the workplace and increases the visibility of the valuable contribution people with disability can make to Defence capability.

Overall, Defence is contributing to the national approach of improving the lives of Australians with disability, their families and carers by providing access to employment opportunities in rural and regional areas that may not have previously existed. Individuals are developing skills to create a career pathway through ongoing training including life and

social development skills. This investment also builds the confidence of families, guardians and local communities who are engaged to contribute to the success of the program.

Defence will continue to implement a range of initiatives in line with the *As One – Australian Public Service - Making it Happen Disability Employment Strategy* to remove barriers to employment for people with disability.