

## Defence Portfolio

# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 1)

Mr Julian Hill MP asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

CHAIR: Can we scratch into that? Why can't we require that? The reason I'm interested in this, I suppose, is that most organisations use robust exit survey data, because it's probably the point at which people are more likely to tell the truth about what's on their mind and if there are issues they weren't prepared to talk about.

Rear Adm. Plath: The other data we're able to use is through our other survey, which we do through YourSay, and through the census. That looks at trying to describe what leads people to have what we call a propensity to leave. We want to get them before they've made that decision to go. The data correlates, but it is a little different. As to the information we get from our current serving people—the key factors in the last couple of years are around remuneration, workplace experience, feeling valued, et cetera, and family. In the exit survey data remuneration doesn't get to the top. It's mainly around career opportunities, a lack of perspective that they can pursue a career in the military with families. As to why we don't make it compulsory, I'd have to take that on notice to say the exact reason. From a personal perspective, I don't think we would want to be giving an order for someone to fill out a form as they're leaving us. Do you have any view on that?

Major Gen. Stothart: I couldn't add value. I do think it's worthy of us getting back to you with the exact answer as to why that is.

CHAIR: You can take it on notice.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

The Exit Survey is voluntary because Defence respects members and employees rights under the National Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Human Research (2019) to choose whether or not to participate in organisational research. Mandatory completion can reduce the validity of the data; however, Defence continues to encourage completion. ADF members are invited to provide feedback on their service through the transition process.

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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 2)

Mr Julian Hill MP asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

CHAIR: You can take it on notice. We're projected to go backwards by 900 this year. What were we hoping for?

Major Gen. Stothart: We were hoping for a slight growth, approximately 100 to 200 growth. To be on a growth path is the preferred projection for our profile. We were hoping for a slight growth in terms of that projection. Clearly, we are not going to meet it this year.

CHAIR: So, we're about a thousand or thereabouts under where we'd hoped to be?

Major Gen. Stothart: I would need to go back and check exactly where we were supposed to be on that path, but that's not where we are.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

The FY21/22 ADF Average Funded Strength Guidance was 61,468. The ADF achieved an Average Funded Strength of 59,803, which was 1,665 (2.7%) below guidance.

For FY22/23 the ADF Average Funded Strength Guidance is 62,063, which is 595 higher than FY21/22. Therefore, at the start of FY22/23, ADF needed to grow by 2260 to return to Guidance.

As at 1 June 2023, the ADF is forecasting to achieve 58,584 Average Funded Strength, which is 3,479 (or 5.6%) below the Guidance of 62,063.

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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 3)

The Honourable Andrew Wallace MP asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

Mr WALLACE: Admiral Plath, just in relation to the submarines, whether it's in relation to Collins, but even more so in relation to the new AUKUS submarines, we saw a report come out of the media—and this confirms what I have been told personally by some of your submarine commanders—that there is a great deal of difficulty in attracting and training up commanders such that we are having to encourage them from other navies. Is that still the case today? What are we doing about the training of EXOs and submarine commanders? My understanding, if I remember correctly, is that there is only one place that trains these submarine commanders, and that's over in the UK. What are we doing to encourage that senior level EXO and above?

Rear Adm. Plath: I would need to get Navy to give you a specific answers about what we're doing to train those.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

The Royal Australian Navy has always trained its own submarine Executive Officers and commenced training its own Submarine Commanding Officers in Australia in 2022 after significant work to improve the training pathway to Submarine Command. Prior to this, Submarine Commanding Officers were required to complete the Royal Netherlands Navy Submarine Command course.

There are currently two submarine Commanders who were previously members of another Commonwealth Navy. Every Commanding Officer of the Royal Australian Navy's submarines are Australian Citizens, but like many Australians, not all are born in Australia and have emigrated to contribute to our nation.

Defence acknowledges the challenges with recruiting and retention. The retention of qualified and experienced personnel (including senior submarine leadership) is vitally important to Navy's plans to grow the submarine workforce. In 2016, Defence introduced a comprehensive Submarine Deliberately Differentiated Package to assist with retention and to re-attract personnel back to the submarine workforce. A key feature of this is the Submarine Capability Assurance Payment, which has been operating for seven years. The Submarine Capability Assurance Payment scheme is currently under review and any necessary changes will be implemented to ensure it remains contemporary and effective in attracting a sustainable submarine workforce.

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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 4)

The Honourable Andrew Wallace MP asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

Mr WALLACE: How are those numbers tracking for what we know we are going to need from a replenishment of Collins personnel and also in relation to the training up for our AUKUS? How are they tracking? I've been sitting on this committee now for a while, and every time I get lots of nods of heads and, yes, everything's fine. But that's not—

Rear Adm. Plath: No. I would not say to you, Deputy Chair, that everything is fine. On the AUKUS side of it, I really don't know what that trajectory looks like. Very few people do, given the way it has come into being. Vice Admiral Mead would have a very good handle on what that trajectory looks like. We are not attracting as many as we would like to attract.

Mr WALLACE: Can you come back to the committee?

Rear Adm. Plath: Yes.

Mr WALLACE: Can you undertake to come back to the committee with some more detailed evidence about where we need to be, where we are today and what we are doing to meet that shortfall, please, and specific projects or programs we've put in place to deal with that shortfall, both from a crew perspective and an officer perspective?

CHAIR: We always allow lots of elasticity in these annual report inquiries. It is a 2021-22 annual report inquiry, and so the detail of AUKUS and the nuclear sub program, you could argue, is a bit outside our focus in reviewing that annual report. I just put that there in terms of what's reasonable in a short space of time to expect. But I think next year that would be a matter of great interest to the committee. So, do what you can and as much as you can; that would be useful.

Mr WALLACE: I appreciate that makes absolutely perfect sense, but I don't think this committee should be standing on that sort of ceremony, to be honest, though, because the way we deal with it is part of the reason we're not getting on the front foot and dealing with this issue. What you said makes perfect sense, but I would still like to see that information.

Mr Nockels: Perhaps if I could just add to that, having sat in on a few briefings with Navy, who are looking at this in terms of what their interaction with the future ASA is and how they're going to crew boats going forward. There is actually quite a lot of work and planning that Navy has done around this. You don't have the three experts on that so we will have to come back to you on that with a bit more detail and we'll take your questions on notice. What I can say, though, is from a current force we're pretty close to what we need to be. The last numbers I saw we're a little bit off, and so that goes to the admiral's comments about we've still got challenges, but we're not significantly off. There will be a significant growth required, not least of which is that the boats we will take on are bigger and require a larger crew. We will have to significantly increase the size of the submariner force. The Navy has been focused on that issue and planning around that. I know they're already placing people overseas from a training perspective. As to that comment about how you grow the commander of a boat out in 10 to 15 years, we're already putting people in nuclear training pathways.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

- The Australian Navy is implementing its plan to build the submariner workforce to support our future Australian nuclear-powered submarines (SSN); and is increasing its submariner workforce from the current total of 856 to a steady state SSN workforce of approximately 2900 qualified submariners in the mid 2050's.
  - 11 submarine officers are conducting nuclear training overseas prior to undertaking a sea tour on a Virginia or Astute Class SSN.
  - A further five officers are scheduled to commence training at Charleston, South Carolina prior to the end of 2023.
  - The first cohort of nine sailors will commence nuclear training at Charleston, South Carolina in Q3 2023. This initial cohort will consist of junior sailors who are currently serving within the Collins Class capability.
- The training demand in 2024 will see up to 50 officers and sailors from different workgroups undertake nuclear propulsion technical training at Charleston, and a further 50 sailors from different workgroups commencing submarine training at the US Navy Submarine school in Groton. Training demand is forecast to increase steadily out to 2028 in line with AUKUS Optimal Pathway capability milestones.
- Australian Navy personnel are already training, and will continue to train, in United Kingdom and United States institutions and will gain hands-on experience through opportunities onboard United Kingdom and United States submarines and through joint sustainment activities.
  - This experience will build the skill of our Australian workforce so as a country we are ready to build, operate, and maintain our sovereign Australian nuclear-powered submarines from the early 2030s.

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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 5)

The Honourable Shayne Neumann MP asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

Mr NEUMANN: If that's the case, has it had a disproportionate impact on young people or middle-aged people when you're recruiting, when they're thinking of a second or third career? Or is it women in particular or multicultural groups? Where is it having the greatest impact?

Major Gen. Stothart: In terms of which element of the demographic is being impacted?

Mr NEUMANN: Yes, the demographic of the country where these cultural issues are having the biggest impact? If it's anecdotal?

Major Gen. Stothart: We may have captured that information. I can't give it to you at the moment.

Mr NEUMANN: Can you take that on notice?

Major Gen. Stothart: I can.

Mr NEUMANN: Can you come back to us about that. I think that's a really important issue. If it's having an adverse impact on recruiting women or young women in particular, that's a very big issue; similarly with young men, people in CALD communities or First Nations communities, I would think that's really a very important issue.

Major Gen. Stothart: I agree, and I will come back to you. The research shows that the population of target demographic is in three sections for us. There's a target demographic propensity to serve such that they're going to join us no matter how hard it is; they're going to come to us. They are committed and lifelong motivated to join us. There is the other end of the propensity to serve who just would not even consider us and are potentially negative in sentiment towards us. But as I said, there is a group in the middle with some propensity to serve that could be attracted to us and actually apply and work through the system; that group is still as large as it has been. There is still significant positive propensity to serve in the Australian Defence Force. I will go back and find out whether our market research has told us as to the positive and the neutrals. I'll go back and ask whether there have been any changes to the negative areas.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

Our market research encourages respondents to give feedback and currently we have not seen the Royal Commission or systemic cultural concerns to be figurative in this feedback. The research aims to understand the current labour market and inform marketing initiatives, rather than to ascertain attitudinal shifts in community sentiment. It may be that these issues are having an influence on propensity at a general community level, but there are no specific references to this in our market research from respondents.

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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 6)

Senator the Honourable David Fawcett asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

Senator FAWCETT: Can I take you to paragraph 19 of your submission. You state that Defence classified 42 workforce categories and occupations as critical, which is an increase of 18 from last year. Can you take on notice—I don't need them now—what those categories are and the ones that are new as a subset of that?

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

The 42 listed critical categories and occupations for 2023 are as below, with the ones marked with asterisks having been added for 2023.

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APS (17)	Capability Analyst
*	Chief Engineer
	Communication Officer
	Electronics-Electrical Engineer
*	Engineering Executive
*	Engineering Manager
*	Engineering Professional
*	ICT Business Analyst
	ICT Enterprise Architect
*	ICT Project Manager
	ICT Security Specialist
*	ICT Vendor Manager
*	Intelligence Assessment
	Mechanical-Material Engineer
*	Project Cost Estimation Analyst
	Strategic and International Policy
*	Systems Engineer

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Navy (9)	Communications Information Systems
	Communications Information Systems
	Submariner
*	Cryptologic Networks
*	Electronic Warfare Submarines
	Electronics Technician
*	Marine Technician
*	Marine Technician Submariner
	Maritime Warfare Officer Submariner
*	Principal Warfare Officer

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Army (8)	Army Psychologist
*	Artillery Command Systems Operator (ECN 254)
*	Artillery Gunner (ECN 162)
*	Artillery Observer (ECN 255)
*	Cyber Specialist (ECN 664)
	Electronic Warfare (ECN 663)
*	Mechanic Recovery (ECN 226)
*	Signals Officer

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RAAF (8)	AIA Operational Intelligence
	AIA Signals Intelligence
	Airborne Electronics Analyst
*	Cyber Warfare Analyst
*	Cyber Warfare Officer
*	Electronics Engineer
	Movements
*	Network Technician



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# INQUIRY QUESTION

(Question No. 7)

Senator the Honourable David Fawcett asked the Department of Defence the following question, upon notice, on 23 May 2023:

Senator FAWCETT: I'll just move on to another area; I'm conscious of time. I worked with CASA for a number of years to get them to broaden their thinking about colour vision deficiency for pilots, because it opens up nearly 10 per cent of the population. CASA now has aligned with world's best practice. We used to lead the world about 30 years ago and we had a short period of reversion, but they've come back now to saying, 'Yes, you can fly a wide-bodied aircraft if you have a colour deficiency, if you can pass a practical test.' I spoke probably three or four years ago to Defence to ask whether they would consider the same approach. In my experience it is not actually required for a military pilot that, if you fail the Ishihara test, you can't be a pilot. That would be an extra 9 per cent to 10 per cent of the population that would be in the recruiting pool for that very specific trade area. What's your current policy?

Major Gen. Stohart: I will need to take that on notice and come back to you on it. I know there restrictions around vision. I'm conscious of time. The medical standards for entry and for transfer within service category core is an area of active pursuit for us. The difference between employability and deployability and the additions of new categories around space and cyber mean that we can have people deliver a very significant operational effect regardless of their physical capacity and endurance.

The Department of Defence has provided the following answer to the question:

Current Defence policy regarding colour vision deficiency uses a sequential approach to testing, similar to that used by the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority. The Ishihara test is the first stage of testing for both Defence and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and requires participants to differentiate a symbol from the background on an image.

Should a candidate fail the Ishihara test, they will progress to the next assessment being the Konan Cone Contrast Test-High Definition. The Konan Cone Contrast Test-High Definition scores participants out of 100. A score of 90 or better in this test is classified as normal colour perception; scores between 60 and 89 are classified as moderate colour perception, any score less than 60 indicates a severe deficiency in colour perception.

The Defence Health Manual Volume 2 Part 5 Chapter 7 – Health requirements for aviation-related occupations provides the minimum health requirements for initial entry or in-service transfer to an aviation-related occupation. The Defence Health Manual provides that pilots are required to have normal or moderate colour perception to meet the health requirements.

The ADF is not able to offer flight restrictions (day flight only and multi-crew restrictions) to our pilots as these are not manageable in a military environment and would impact capability.