

## Defence Personnel

### Gender issues

#### Introduction

- 6.1 The *Defence Annual Report 2007-08* details recent strategies to increase the proportion of women within the Defence establishment. These include efforts to 'provide more family-friendly work arrangements'; the creation of an external Reference Group on Women; and the adoption of a 'comprehensive' Recruitment of Women Strategy.<sup>1</sup>
- 6.2 In addition each of the arms of the ADF has strategies in this regard, including: the Air Force 'Making Women Feel Welcome' program, the Navy Sea Change program, and Army trials of reduced Initial Minimum Periods of Service.<sup>2</sup> There are also a number of Defence-wide and service specific initiatives to promote and market the role of women in Defence, and to monitor and support their progress once women are hired to Defence positions.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.3 These measures are designed to counter 'popular stereotypes and myths about military life': that is, that it is inherently masculine.<sup>4</sup> According to the *Defence Annual Report 2007-08* they are motivated by a desire to recruit and retain personnel in a competitive labour market, and to 'create an

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1 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.111.

2 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, pp.111-112.

3 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.111.

4 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.111.

organisation that is ... representative of ... the Australian community than is presently the case'.<sup>5</sup>

- 6.4 The Defence Annual Report Appendix 1, Staffing & Remuneration, shows the underlying conditions that have spurred these initiatives, and what challenges may lay ahead. It shows that at 30 June 2008, ADF total personnel 86.4 per cent was made up of men, and only 13.6 per cent of women.
- 6.5 Information for each of the arms of the ADF showed considerable disparities between the proportion of men and women who were officers. As at 30 June 2008 male officers in its trained force accounted for 13.5 per cent of Navy personnel were, while female officers made up only 3 per cent of its total trained force.<sup>6</sup>
- 6.6 Snapshots of Defence senior management follow a similar contour. For star-ranked officers, there were only 5 women out of a total of 171. In the 2007-2008 year, 42 male star-ranked officers were promoted and only one woman. Separations for the same year show that 12 male star-ranked officers left the ADF, and no women.<sup>7</sup>
- 6.7 Proportions were only slightly more balanced in senior civilian (Senior Executive Service) positions within Defence. Here there were 31 women out of a total of 125, and 9 men were hired but only 2 women. 11 men left the Defence SES, but no women.<sup>8</sup>
- 6.8 This chapter considers Defence's response to these challenges, detailing Defence's testimony to the Committee, on matters of:
- culture and targets with respect to gender issues;
  - initiatives on gender issues;
  - the gap year program; and
  - other allied approaches to recruitment and retention.

## Public hearings

- 6.9 In public hearings, the Committee asked Defence for details on the gender profile of the ADF, whether there were grounds for concern, and

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5 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.111.

6 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.169.

7 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.173.

8 *Defence Annual Report 2007-08*, Vol.1, p.174.

Defence's position on this, including Defence's responses and aspirations with regard to achieving greater gender balance.<sup>9</sup>

- 6.10 Defence advised the Committee on gender balance across the Australian armed services, confirming that women made up 13.6 per cent of personnel.<sup>10</sup> Other comparable countries were Canada, where women make up 13.3 per cent of Defence; New Zealand 17 per cent; the United Kingdom 9.4 per cent; and the US 14.4 per cent.<sup>11</sup>
- 6.11 Defence told the Committee that there were a number of reasons why it sought to increase the proportion of women within Defence personnel. First, 'where possible' Defence 'would like to reflect the community that the organisation serves in terms of its composition'. That, however, 'is a grand aspirational goal': Defence is 'some significant distance from it in respect to women in the ADF [and the] gap will not be closed instantly or quickly'.<sup>12</sup>
- 6.12 Second, Defence told the Committee, the 'simple reason why we are interested in seeing more women in the ADF and more people from a non-English speaking background within the ADF is the notion of talent in the economy'. If Defence fails to do this, if 'we have classes of the external labour market and if you think they do not belong':
- ... we reduce the pool that we are recruiting from. Recruitment is hard enough as it is without crossing people off the list. In essence, we are trying to make sure that people who could be successful in the organisation know that we want them and know that we have a culture that is welcoming to them and so that we do not have any classes of that external labour market population writing us off.<sup>13</sup>
- 6.13 Third, Defence told the Committee, there are other, wider, demographic trends in Australia that lead Defence to a broadening of its target group for recruiting:
- ... with the social issues in our country – the ageing population and all of those factors including that women are 51 per cent of the population – we struggle to get manpower in a man's

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9 *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

10 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, pp.66, 70.

11 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

12 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

13 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.69.

environment in the issue, so we would be absolutely bonkers to persist in not trying to get women into our organisation.<sup>14</sup>

- 6.14 In summary, Defence told the Committee, that it has raised its expectations on recruiting women to the ADF because it 'just makes absolute sense that we have to keep after women and get them interested in our service'.<sup>15</sup>

## Culture and targets

- 6.15 The Committee engaged Defence on the question of targets for its recruitment of women to the ADF.
- 6.16 Defence advised the Committee that organisational culture was relevant to such questions. On one hand, 'Defence has dealt with what you would call the deliberate or specific discrimination':

It is not there. It is an organisation that has zero tolerance for people who practise that form of overt discrimination, but it is an organisation that, for a significant part of its history, did not have women in it. So it has many cultural traditions and many policies that were framed in that time frame. You have to make sure that you are working through and addressing those areas. They are kind of like systemic bias: They are not intentional, they are not deliberate, and they are not overt, but they are perhaps still lurking within the organisation historically.<sup>16</sup>

- 6.17 Defence told the Committee changing organisational culture in this respect requires a certain proportion of women to be recruited: 'getting critical mass and getting a shift in culture that then becomes self-supporting and reinforcing from that point'. This 'will not happen until you get above 20 or 25 per cent'.<sup>17</sup>
- 6.18 Defence suggested that this 'critical mass argument' carries 'some weight' because:

It is about the internal dialogue within Defence and it is about how people with experience communicate with other people in the community to tell them about their experience, their time within the service and their contact with it. If the broad message is positive and there are enough people carrying that message, then

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14 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, pp.69-70.

15 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

16 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

17 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

you start to shift away totally from the idea that it is not an organisation that is a suitable place for a young woman to go or to join.<sup>18</sup>

- 6.19 However, Defence told the Committee, whether such targets are achievable is yet to be confirmed:

We have a target of trying to improve our enlistment performance of women through the recruitment activity and that is around the 20 per cent level, but we are currently reviewing it see again if it is a realistic and valid target to put effort and resources into.<sup>19</sup>

- 6.20 A target to recruit women as 25 per cent of Defence had not been adopted; rather this figure had been identified as a 'breakthrough' proportion necessary for cultural change.<sup>20</sup>

- 6.21 However, Defence told the Committee that there are unique challenges in pursuing higher proportions of women, because in some parts of the armed services there are limitations on gender:

Essentially for reasons that are structural in nature, not all of the occupations within the services are open to women, for example. It is quite a lot – it is 94 per cent of the positions – but significant and large components of the Army, for example, are not areas that women enlist in. Indeed they are the areas in which we have seen growth in the last three or four years.<sup>21</sup>

- 6.22 This, Defence told the Committee, has implications for determining targets:

In setting targets, we have to make them mathematically achievable. The Army case is illustrative of why it is a challenge. As the Army grows through the Enhanced Land Force (ELF) program, it is essentially growing its infantry ranks...but that is an area of employment and classification that women cannot enlist in. So the Army is actually growing that part of its workforce from which women are excluded while it is trying to grow women in its workforce. You could set an aspirational target for the Army, but it would be mathematically unachievable.<sup>22</sup>

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18 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

19 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.69.

20 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.68.

21 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

22 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.69.

- 6.23 Defence told the Committee, however, that a more positive view is to see the problem of recruiting numbers and its role in cultural change across the services. The cause of cultural change in the ADF can be advanced in aggregate by areas where the recruiting of women is more advanced:

Actually, if you look at the 67 per cent that we have, the participation rate of women in the Army has increased from about 11 per cent to 13 per cent. If I can keep that slowly creeping up each year, [it] will not reach 25 per cent for quite a while. But if the Navy and the Air Force are doing pretty well at it at the present time and can reach that sort of mass, then it gives a brand to the ADF that will help us along the path as well.<sup>23</sup>

- 6.24 Further, Defence advised the Committee that positive effects on organisational culture would also flow from a growing cohort of women currently in Defence, as they develop in their careers. Their impact would become more apparent as they reach higher levels of seniority:

We have got over the hump of the man's club issue in the Army and I think in the Defence Force. The women we have in our force are absolutely outstanding. There is a bow wave of women who have come through under the equal charter of men, doing all the same courses and career progressions at the lieutenant colonel or early colonel level in our system. In six or seven years time when we are sitting here you will find a whole bunch of very senior women sitting here and doing this sort of thing. The talent coming through is absolutely extraordinary...<sup>24</sup>

## Initiatives

- 6.25 Defence advised the Committee of approaches it was pursuing to increase the proportion of women in the armed services.
- 6.26 In part, this involved the creation of a women's reference group, 'established in the middle of last year with the aim of getting some external perspectives and views', which included 'senior women in large organisations'.<sup>25</sup>
- 6.27 The objective was, in particular, for the reference group to advise Defence on 'what might be the reasons why the ADF is not making the progress' it had wished to make. One initial contribution by the reference group had

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23 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

24 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

25 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

been its identification of the significance of 'critical mass', discussed above.<sup>26</sup>

- 6.28 Defence told the Committee that this reference group would play an ongoing role in a process of increasing Defence's power to attract women to Defence. The three services were working 'on an integrated view of all the initiatives that already are in train, and some new ones that are being considered', and this would go, in addition to the Chief of Service Committee, to the women's reference group for 'comment and review'.<sup>27</sup>
- 6.29 Defence told the Committee that this had arisen because the reference group had recommended that it was more effective, 'to get to that breakthrough point', to 'concentrate on five or six critical issues rather than 56 worthy initiatives'.<sup>28</sup>
- 6.30 As a result, Defence told the Committee, 'we are trying to clarify with the three services what would be those breakthrough initiatives that we think will have the most impact'.<sup>29</sup>
- 6.31 However, there continued to be challenges, along the lines already noted:
- There is a whole bunch of issues there that we have to do a lot more work on...the participation rate of women has actually decreased. But it has decreased because they are only entitled to fill 67 per cent of the employment categories in the Army, and we have had a big focus on increasing those employment categories that they are not entitled to join – the Enhanced Land Force and the HNA [Hardened Network Army] sort of approaches.<sup>30</sup>
- 6.32 Defence told the Committee that 'we are making progress':
- ...the three services are seriously looking at options to make their service more attractive to women entering and to make the experience of women within the service consistently improve so that retention goes up.<sup>31</sup>

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26 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

27 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

28 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

29 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

30 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

31 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.66.

## Gap year

- 6.33 The Committee engaged Defence on the subject of the gap year program. In this, young men and women are able to join the Defence Force for a period of a year, without further obligation to stay in the services.
- 6.34 Defence told the Committee that in 2008, the gap year program accounted for '700-500 in the Army and 100 in the Navy and Air Force', while in 2009, 'numbers [were] 267 in the Navy, 321 in the Army and 112 in the Air Force'.<sup>32</sup> As at 1 April 2009, '221 of the 2008 cohort had transferred to the permanent forces'.<sup>33</sup>
- 6.35 Defence advised the Committee that although the gap year program was not directed at women in particular, it was one of the most important new developments through which to address gender balance in the armed services. Defence told the Committee that 'we had an amazing number of young women apply for the gap year at percentages far in excess of what we could expect annually to ask at the recruiting desk to come in'.<sup>34</sup>
- 6.36 Defence quoted specific figures on participation in the gap year program to show a contrast with its normal recruiting effort:
- ...currently about 10 per cent of the Army is made up of women and approaching 13 per cent of positions that are available to them. In the gap year, we had 20 per cent of the intake in the first year who were women, which was a very pleasing result.<sup>35</sup>
- 6.37 Why this was the case was less certain. Defence told the Committee that:
- We have been debating whether...mothers are not prepared really to support and sponsor their daughters to go into the Army for four years, but they will give them a crack at it for 12 months with a free exit card if they do not like what they are doing. Maybe that is why there has been such heavy participation rate of young women.<sup>36</sup>
- 6.38 One of the important aspects of the gap year program was that it allowed Defence to engage with a new client group. This also entailed working with a client group about which Defence knew less than its regular target population for recruiting:

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32 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.65.

33 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.65.

34 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.70.

35 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

36 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.71.



We did a lot of research ... to track the reasons why it was so attractive. We know that out of the first year of the gap year about 30 per cent of the applicants said they would never have considered joining the Army if the gap year program was not available to them. So we knew immediately that we were tapping into a new segment of the population.<sup>37</sup>

- 6.39 Further research showed something of the motivations of gap year participants. A principle element appeared to be the freedom to experience life in the services without the longer term obligation to stay on after training:

[T]heir principal reasons were that a one-year program with no risk and the option to leave at the end was very attractive. We had several focus groups, with 20 per cent who were women, ask why particularly they were interested and again it was because it was a one-year program with no risk. They could try it, and if they liked it they would stay.<sup>38</sup>

- 6.40 Defence told the Committee that 'a large number of the people who join the ADF are predisposed to being a joiner of the ADF', however the focus of gap year and similar programs is to engage:

...the people who are neutral towards the ADF; they do not really have a view one way or the other, but perhaps they are able to consider it. That is why gap year represents such a learning opportunity for us. I think there is a try before you buy component going on ... We are extending into that neutral part of the external labour market that has not really had a contact or experience with the ADF.<sup>39</sup>

- 6.41 In terms of outcomes from the program, Defence told the Committee, some participants in the program were continuing on in the services after the end of the gap year:

... it is nice to see in the Navy, the Air Force and in the Army the number of gap year women who are staying on and doing the business.<sup>40</sup>

- 6.42 However this was not, Defence told the Committee, the program's principle objective:

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37 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

38 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

39 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

40 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.71.

Transferring into the regular Army is not necessarily our measure of success. Because we are tapping into this different segment, we want this group to have a successful one year and then go back in and talk among their social network about what a great experience they had...changing the propensity of the join discussion that occurs in this new segment in the market place.<sup>41</sup>

6.43 Other important outcomes, Defence told the Committee, were insights and changes in strategy for Defence with respect to its recruiting process, including suggestions of new 'minimum enlistment periods': this is 'a good application of that experience from gap year'.<sup>42</sup>

6.44 In short, Defence told the Committee, 'the ADF gap year has picked up a new segment that we were not tapping into before'. A significant part of the value to Defence is that it is 'trying to learn from that and adjust and change our approach'.<sup>43</sup>

6.45 Defence told the Committee that further research would be undertaken to capitalize on this experience. The gap year program was due for 'formal assessment' in the year 2010-11, and a 'longitudinal study of retention' also captured information relevant to the program.<sup>44</sup>

6.46 Individual arms of the services also capture information about the program. A representative of the RAN told the Committee that 'Certainly from a Navy perspective ... we are closely monitoring gap year':

Those people who are charged with supervising gap year participants speak with them frequently. They are spoken to when they arrive at Recruit School in the case of the Navy and undergo a qualitative information-gathering process as to why they joined. Their progress is monitored through the 11 weeks of Recruit School, and when they go into the fleet and other establishments they are assigned a supervisor who similarly monitors their progress.<sup>45</sup>

6.47 Defence advised the Committee that gap year participants are:

... interviewed at the end of the program, so in tandem with the qualitative data that we can tell you from the Navy's perspective,

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41 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

42 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

43 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

44 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.64.

45 Captain Hill, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.64.

30 per cent or thereabouts of the first 100 participants subsequently transferred to the regular Navy.

6.48 In addition:

I am confident that the internal study we have commissioned at the end of the first year, which will be in May this year, will also contain a good deal of qualitative data as to the attitudes of those people when they joined, their attitudes throughout their training and, importantly, their attitudes when they left.<sup>46</sup>

## Other allied approaches to recruitment and retention

6.49 Defence told the Committee of other approaches it had used to address wider questions of recruitment and retention of the manpower capacity, and skills, it requires in order to fulfil its remit. Taken as a whole, these do not focus explicitly on women. But in addressing matters that affect both men and women in the armed forces, particular benefits often still arise for the situation of women.

6.50 It has been mentioned above that Defence's experience of the gap year program had led to reflection on other types of initiatives. Defence's discovery that reduced requirements to stay in the services after joining had been a significant enabler in that context.

6.51 A result of this thinking had been to consider altering, in a 'number of our categories', a 'reduced initial minimum period of service'. Defence told the Committee that this had been considered, in particular, in skill areas of which Defence was particularly in need. This would produce 'an opportunity to have a reduced initial minimum period of service in some categories'. This would be of the order of 'perhaps two years', allowing Defence 'to leverage off some of the success that we have had in the gap year' and to 'try to target a broader segment of the community'.<sup>47</sup>

6.52 Defence went on to observe that this would 'be non-gender specific':

It will just focus on some areas and trial a two-year minimum period. In some of those areas where we hope to attract women, yes; but it will be open to both genders.<sup>48</sup>

6.53 There are also things that can be done at the other end of the career trajectory. Defence told the Committee that traditional career structures

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46 Captain Hill, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.65.

47 Brigadier Fogarty, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

48 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.72.

had been particularly difficult for women who chose to have a family, due to short timelines between career 'gates':

Until last year, the retirement age in the Defence Force was 55, and then we made it 60. The men structure for command going through to becoming a unit commander and to general and all the rest of it was based on people going through gates that got them there, and they started to pay off between 52 and 55. One of the common criticisms that we had of that sort of process is that that was unfriendly to women, particularly if they wanted to be women who had a career and a family because the gates were so close together that to get through them you really had to forgo the family to be successful, or you had the family and then you could not go through the gates.<sup>49</sup>

6.54 However, the extension of the retirement age by five years had made a difference to the options open to both male and female personnel. Defence told the Committee that:

We have this wonderful situation at the present time whereby extension of the retiring age by five years, if nothing else, gives us five years we can insert in between the gates. That is a great policy and not necessarily just for women because it does say that over a career there is room for you to have five kids, if you want to, in that sort of process. But it also says to men whom we might want to send off to Harvard or to go out into industry for 12 months to gain some skills that they bring back to refresh out profession as we go through that we are going to do that. If you like, we have good policy. We have a happy circumstance of five years up our sleeve now so that we keep people in the system longer to 60.<sup>50</sup>

6.55 It also opens options up to Defence, in the sense that in getting more people through career 'gates' it had access to a wider pool of qualified personnel. Defence told the Committee that this 'allows us not to give up any standards at all on our gate'. With more time allotted to a career span Defence 'can introduce gaps where people can take time off for all sorts of reasons'. Defence told the Committee that it is anticipated that these initiatives will work better due to 'the fact that we are doing it not specifically for women but for the workforce in general'.<sup>51</sup>

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49 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, pp.72-73.

50 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.73.

51 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.73.

- 6.56 Defence told the Committee that there were other areas where similar effects could apply: that is, where removing tensions between life-patterns and careers would improve Defence's ability to engage male and female personnel. Particular benefits for women arise not because they have been singled out, but due to their greater experience, for example, of career interruptions.
- 6.57 This approach was echoed in Defence's thinking on contemporary expectations of the span of a career:
- ... something like 52 per cent of males will leave the ADF inside 10 years, and the number is either 72 or 78 per cent of females. ... [this points] ...to a sense that women are seeing a career as something that is a within-10-year stint, but a good half of men who join the ADF see it that way as well.<sup>52</sup>
- 6.58 From Defence's point of view, addressing this would have advantages, first, across all personnel, male and female, and special benefits for Defence's ability to retain female personnel.
- 6.59 Similarly, Defence noted another area where arrangements made for one gender had positive implications for the other. Defence told the Committee that there 'is an increasing number of single parents who are men in our organisation', who face career dilemmas which were in the past more often suffered by women.<sup>53</sup> If Defence is able to address this, it enhances its ability to retain valued personnel.
- 6.60 In fact, Defence told the Committee that feedback from female personnel was also strongly supportive of this general approach:
- Our women are telling us, 'Don't get into positive discrimination to support us. We don't need that. We're doing quite well in our own right.'<sup>54</sup>
- 6.61 Thus, Defence told the Committee, 'special' treatment for women was considered less effective than measures that remove mismatches between life and career patterns for Defence personnel regardless of gender. While this principle applies to arrangements made for Defence force personnel, however, there is still more that can be done to change outside perceptions. There are positive stories that Defence could use to better advantage in working to change those perceptions.

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52 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.71.

53 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.73.

54 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.73.

For example, I wonder how many women will front up to give the address in all the little RSLs on Anzac Day wearing their medals as veterans. We are looking at that right now. That is the sort of message that Australia needs to hear. We actually have a lot of women.<sup>55</sup>

6.62 Defence told the Committee that 'we have women who served in the Middle East area of operations and have performed to exceptional levels of performance'. This 'is known within the service, but perhaps it is not known well outside the service and outside the Defence organisation'.<sup>56</sup>

6.63 To capitalize on this, Defence told the Committee it has to look 'at some of the people who have been successful and have achievement in their career and being more deliberate about telling that story as a way of getting the message out'.<sup>57</sup>

6.64 One example of these very creditable contributions was the involvement by female personnel in supporting ADF helicopters engaging in current operations:

We see the Chinook organisation that is in Afghanistan at the present time. It is a really professional, strong, dangerous environment in which they are operating, and it is commanded by a young woman who is doing it magnificently. They are the stories that people need to hear. If we can cash in on those, if we can get you, the press and ourselves and public engagements to show women in that light, then hopefully it will start to feed that we are not a man's club and that actually we have some really clever young women who are trail blazers and who are doing a great job.<sup>58</sup>

6.65 This, Defence told the Committee, in combination with the gap year program and changes to working conditions, could form a foundation for a change in the perceptions of women's role in the ADF, and women's perception of the ADF.

## Committee Comment

6.66 Defence have clear objectives, and a good business case, with regard to increasing the proportion of women in Defence personnel.

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55 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.73.

56 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, pp.66-67.

57 Mr Minns, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, pp.66-67.

58 Lieutenant General Gillespie, *Transcript*, Thursday 16 April 2009, p.74.

- 6.67 As with other recruitment and retention measures, increasing the opportunity for all Australians with the skill and commitment to serve our nation's defence forces is desirable.
- 6.68 The Committee welcomes the establishment of the women's reference group, and its integration into Defence's strategy to create an environment that is more able to attract, support and retain female personnel. This will increase the talent available to Defence.
- 6.69 The Committee is also mindful of the continuing perceptions of the ADF as a masculine domain. Changing this will require a sustained period of cultural and structural change.

The Committee finds it encouraging that Defence are tackling gender issues in ways that are non-discriminatory, and from a number of different perspectives: not only addressing recruiting, but also promotion paths, length-of-career and other dimensions.

