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DEFENCE SUBCOMMITTEE

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**JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
(DEFENCE SUBCOMMITTEE)**

Monday, 1 July 2002

Members: Senator Ferguson (*Chair*), Mr Brereton (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Bartlett, Bishop, Bolkus, Calvert, Cook, Eggleston, Chris Evans, Harradine, Sandy Macdonald, O'Brien and Payne and Mr Baird, Mr Baldwin, Mr Beazley, Mr Bevis, Mr Edwards, Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mrs Gash, Mr Hawker, Mr Jull, Mr Lindsay, Dr Martin, Mrs Moylan, Mr Nairn, Mr Price, Mr Prosser, Mr Scott, Mr Snowdon, Mr Somlyay and Mr Cameron Thompson

Subcommittee Members: Mr Scott (*Chair*), Mr Price (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Calvert, Chris Evans, Ferguson, Sandy Macdonald and Payne and Mr Baldwin, Mr Beazley, Mr Bevis, Mr Brereton, Mr Edwards, Mrs Gash, Mr Hawker, Mr Lindsay, Mr Nairn, Mr Snowdon, Mr Somlyay and Mr Cameron Thompson

Senators and members in attendance: Mr Bevis, Mr Edwards, Mr Nairn, Mr Price, Mr Scott and Senator Harradine

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

Review of transition management in the Australian Defence Force.

Committee met at 9.05 a.m.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to review the matter of transition management which arose from the Defence annual report 2000-01. Under the provisions of the resolution of the appointment of the committee, annual reports of relevant government departments and agencies tabled in the House stand referred to the committee for any inquiry the committee may wish to make. In accordance with these provisions, the Defence Subcommittee reviewed the annual report at a public hearing on 8 May 2002. On that occasion, the committee sought answers on a wide range of issues and projects. Today, the committee will focus on what is broadly termed ‘transition management’ and will review the monitoring, management and provision of support to ADF members and their families transitioning from military service to civilian life. The committee is particularly interested in the support provided to ADF personnel and their families during and following operational deployment.

In this context, the committee will look at the impact of operational deployment on ADF personnel and families, the process for assessing, recording and monitoring exposure to risk associated with military operations, and the strategies for supporting ADF families including any organisations and funding arrangements available during and post deployment. The committee is also keen to ascertain the range and availability of transition management schemes and the distinction between the different transition services for personnel leaving on discharge, redundancy, invalidity or retirement, including for military personnel injured on non-operational or training activities. We are also interested in any counselling services available for members separating from the service immediately following operational deployment and, lastly, in the process for managing personnel who separate and then rejoin the ADF.

The committee is pleased to welcome here today representatives of the Department of Defence, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and a wide range of organisations that are concerned with the welfare of the service community. On behalf of the Defence Subcommittee, I welcome every one of you here this morning. The format for today’s hearing is a roundtable discussion, but I would ask that all comments be made through the chair.

[9.07 a.m.]

ANDERSON, Mr David Charles, Acting Director-General, Resources Management, Personnel Executive, Department of Defence

BOBETS, Mr Andre, Director, Entitlements, Department of Defence

BOYD, Colonel Ross Maceuan, Director, Personnel Policy, Career Management Policy Branch, Department of Defence

BROWN, Mr Jason Lugh, Director-General, Safety Compensation and People Development, Department of Defence

BROWN, Commander Michael John, Fleet Human Resources Manager, Maritime Headquarters

BROWN, Mr Ray, President, Welfare Officer and Pensions Officer, Injured Service Persons Association (Peacetime Injuries)

COOKE, Mr David, Director, Compensation Policy, Department of Defence

COTTON, Colonel Anthony James, Director of Psychology and Director of Mental Health, Department of Defence

CULLEN, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Thomas, Commanding Officer Deployed Forces Support Unit, Department of Defence, Commander Australian Theatre

EDGAR, Mr Arthur, Branch Head, Defence Links, Department of Veterans' Affairs

GADDES, Wing Commander David McKay, Staff Officer Personnel, Headquarters Air Command, Royal Australian Air Force

HANNAN, Brigadier Michael John, Director-General, Military Public Relations, Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, Department of Defence

HINDMARSH, Wing Commander Anthony John, Deputy Director, Personnel Planning, Royal Australian Air Force

JACKMAN, Mr Malcolm Geoffrey, Chief Executive Officer, Manpower

JOHNSON, Mr Mark David, Branch Head, Disability Compensation Branch, Department of Veterans' Affairs

KEHOE, Colonel Michael Christopher, Director of Personnel, Army

LACHELE, Ms Judy, Director-General, Defence Community Organisation

LEVEY, Lieutenant Colonel Martin John, Commanding Officer, 1st Psychology Unit, Army

LINDSAY, Wing Commander David Terry, Assistant Director, Education Assistance Schemes, Department of Defence

McLENNAN, Air Commodore, Roxley Kenneth, Acting Head, Defence Personnel Executive, Department of Defence

REARDON, Mrs Latha, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Defence

REICH, Ms Jenny, Director, Social Work and Client Services, Defence Community Organisation

SKEWES, Major Gary, Armed Forces Federation of Australia

SMITH, Commander Suzanne Clare, Director, Navy Employment Conditions, Navy

STEDMAN, Colonel Malcolm Douglas, Deputy Head, Reserve Policy, Department of Defence

STEVENS, Major General James Paul, Repatriation Commissioner, Repatriation Commission

STUART, Major Simon Andrew, Company Commander, 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR)

TATTERSALL, Major Ron James, Team Leader, Separation Benefits, Directorate of Entitlements, Department of Defence

TOWNLEY, Brigadier James Harold (Rtd), Chairman, Conditions of Service Committee, Returned and Services League of Australia

TRAVERS, Mr Mark Brian, Director, Policy and Procedures, Military Compensation and Rehabilitation Scheme, Department of Veterans' Affairs

TYE, Mr Glen Eon, Director, Defence Safety Management Agency, Department of Defence

TYERS, Brigadier Douglas Ian, Commander, Logistic Support Force, Army

WELLS, Colonel Glenn, Director, Clinical Policy, Defence Health Service Branch, Department of Defence

CHAIR—I must advise you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect which proceedings in the respective houses of parliament demand. Although the subcommittee does not require you to give evidence on oath, you should be aware that this does not alter the importance of the occasion. The deliberate misleading of a subcommittee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any evidence in private then you may ask to do so and the subcommittee will give consideration to your request. I now invite you, Air Commodore Roxley McLennan, to make an opening statement on behalf of Defence. Then I will ask Major General Paul Stevens and the RSL to make opening statements in that order and then Ray Brown, Major Gary Skewes and Manpower.

Air Cdre McLennan—Thank you for that explanation of the format of the committee. Since this is going to be on a relatively informal basis—and you will notice I have brought with me a cast of thousands as support—you might expect that, in the interests of meeting the committee's objectives, I will defer many of the questions to the subject matter experts so that you will achieve a clearer picture and there will be very few questions on notice, we hope. The advice I have also received is that the committee's interest revolves around the deployment of personnel on operational service and subsequent transition into civilian life and the support services associated with both of those.

The sense I gained—really from your letter, Chair, to Minister Hill—was that there was assumed to be a strong link between deployment on operational service and transition at the completion of service. I would like to make the point early in the piece that there are almost no direct linkages between those two events. There is no strong indicator of personnel returning from operations with the intention of separating from the services earlier than they otherwise would have done. Therefore, there are no transition arrangements that directly relate to recently completed operational service.

The ADF places great emphasis on its duty of care, notwithstanding that we might be talking about warlike operations. I think it is worth noting at this point the personal effort that CDF has applied to ensuring that, for the INTERFET deployment and all the subsequent deployments, no ADF personnel were unnecessarily placed at risk. Furthermore, a range of support services is provided to our personnel before, during and after every operational deployment. Examples of these services include: predeployment health screening; relocating of the family of servicemen to supporting family locations; free mail, email and telephone calls while they are deployed; post-deployment psychological counselling; health monitoring following a return from operational service and so on. There are a raft of those, and I presume that questions will lead us into detailed explanations of some of them. We can expand on any of them.

There is a comprehensive program of personal and family support measures in place within Defence. These provisions are not static. They have undergone a process of continual review and improvement since the first INTERFET deployment, when we discovered, I think it is fair to say, that we were caught short on some of these issues. The fact is, we had not been called upon and challenged in quite the same way as INTERFET challenged us for quite some time.

With respect to transitioning of members from the ADF into civilian life, there is also a range of support services provided. They range from the routine Career Transition Assistance Scheme,

regular resettlement seminars and resettlement training to the far more specialised provisions such as the transition management scheme administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. However, to reiterate the point, there are no direct linkages between the services associated transition into civilian life at the completion of service and operational service per se. Effectively, the transition service is available to all. Some of the transition services are graduated in terms of periods of service—that is, the length of service—but there is no sense of demobilisation provisions associated with operational service and, immediately following that, a separation from the service.

Mr PRICE—Is there a greater separation rate of those who have served overseas—in other words, they may not leave straightaway, but, in fact, they separate faster than—

Air Cdre McLennan—There is some evidence of a slight increase, but the basis for that is hard to define. There is a general feeling, I think, that a lot of young folks join the ADF for adventure and so forth, they do the operational service, particularly something like INTERFET service, and they return home and say: 'I've been there and done that now. I've ticked the box—time to move on.' But I do not think that there is any strong evidence to demonstrate that people have returned from operational service and made a conscious decision that they would leave earlier than they would otherwise have expected to.

Major Gen. Stevens—I am here this morning to represent the Repatriation Commission and the Department of Veterans' Affairs. Like Defence, we have a number of Veterans' Affairs personnel here to answer specific questions. The Repatriation Commission is directly responsible for the implementation of the Veterans' Entitlements Act, which is the compensation act flowing from operational service. We are also responsible, by arrangement with Defence, for administering the military compensation and rehabilitation scheme. We actually administer both compensation schemes for which ADF personnel are eligible. We have an indirect interest in transition in that in administering the compensation schemes we wish to ensure that anyone who is leaving the service understands their entitlement to compensation and makes a claim for compensation at the earliest possible opportunity, or, at least, that their records have recorded on them the exposures and, especially, the injuries that the personnel have suffered.

We have a direct interest in transition in that over the last couple of years we have been working with the Department of Defence on a project called Defence Links, which is designed to bring Veterans' Affairs and Defence closer. As part of this Defence Links project, and by agreement with Defence, we administer what is called the Transition Management Service, the TMS. This is an element of Defence's transition arrangements. It is a service which covers the discharge of those who are being discharged on invalidity grounds. It commenced in the period November 2000 to January 2001. We now have TMS officers in each state capital as well as Townsville and the two territory capitals, Darwin and Canberra. I think I might leave it there and take up any specific questions that are raised.

Brig. Townley—Thank you for the invitation to be present today. I think the RSL is probably reasonably well aware of the many services provided to servicemen and to families pre deployment and during deployment. Perhaps like the rest of the ex-service community, we are here today as very interested observers to listen to what is in the pipeline or what are in actuality the services provided post deployment. I will leave my opening statement at that.

Mr Jackman—I am probably an interloper in this conversation today, since Manpower's main focus with the Defence Force is obviously on recruitment. But, given the changes that are happening in demographics in our society, it is obvious as we look forward that recruitment is going to get more and more difficult for the ADF and, therefore, the focus comes back onto retention. I am of the belief that one of the issues that drives retention is the fear that some people have as to how they will transition from the ADF further down their career path. The reality of life is, if you look at the kids who are in year 10—who are obviously at the beginning of our target market as we go forward—the 15-year-olds of today are about to enter the work force in Australia flipping burgers and pushing trolleys at supermarkets et cetera but they will eventually leave the work force at about age 75. So they will be in the work force for nearly 60 years. Even somebody that joins the ADF at 18 and does 30 years with the ADF will still have half their working life ahead of them. So the transition of people from the ADF becomes an important part in their whole of life career. If that is not handled well and if people perceive the transition from the ADF is not going to be handled well, then they may seek to exit the ADF early, rather than seeing out the full term of their career. From that point of view, I think that is why it becomes such an important issue in terms of maintaining force capability within the ADF.

Major Skewes—The Armed Forces Federation thanks the committee for the invitation to attend this morning. Essentially, the Armed Forces Federation is a representative body of serving members. Our main interest lies with serving members and their conditions of service. I will leave it there.

Mr R. Brown—Thank you for the invitation to attend. The ISPA deals mainly with those that have been discharged with medical conditions. I, myself, was medically discharged eight years ago. I had a family. There was a lot of confusion in regard to the transition from military to civilian life as a severely injured person. As such, I have since become involved at the coalface and deal with a lot of people who are discharged and have a lot of problems coming to terms with the transition—confusion, disappointment and uncertainty. That is where our association comes in, to try and help out so that it is a smooth transition. We provide as much information as possible. I will leave it at that for the moment.

CHAIR—I might open the roundtable now to questions from the panel.

Mr BEVIS—I just want to follow up on Roger's question in relation to separation rates following deployment. My understanding had been—from earlier deployments, and I assume it is still the case—that, if you looked at a period of, say, 12 months following return from deployment, you would find that those units that had deployed had a higher separation rate than was otherwise to be expected. We could all postulate as to why that happens, but I thought that was a given fact. Is that not the case?

Air Cdre McLennan—No. I think there is a slight increase but I am not too sure that the slight increase is particularly significant. Rather, it is more the case that people have had the opportunity, experienced it, benefited from it one way or the other, and in some cases they have had a reasonably good financial outcome from it, and have then decided to move on, not seeing the need to wait around to do it again if they had the opportunity. It would probably be more useful to get more specific personal experiences from the Army.

Col. Boyd—I think it needs to be remembered that just about all of the people entering the defence forces now have to enlist for a fixed period of service to start with. Generally, that is between four and six years; it can be longer in the case of officers. If somebody is deployed during that period, then when they come back they still have to complete that period of engagement. For young soldiers, that could be some two or three years later.

Mr BEVIS—Whether they are deployed or not, that applies. What I was trying to get clear in my mind is whether it is one of the factors that increases separation. The logic of what the Air Commodore said is certainly something I have heard anecdotally around the traps over the years, and it is understandable enough. Obviously, if you have still got an obligation it does not matter whether you have been deployed or not; you still have an obligation. After years of training, you get deployed and you do the thing that you have most wanted to do—it is natural enough, when you come back to a less challenging role, shall we say, that people think: ‘Okay, I’ve probably had my go at this. I might be waiting another five years before I get another go. I’ll see ya later.’ I am not critical of that; I am just trying to get a handle on the dynamics. I thought that process was something that applied.

Col. Kehoe—I would like to make two comments. The first is from my own perspective. I was the commanding officer of 10 Force Support Battalion and deployed with the INTERFET forces in September 1999. We certainly had prepared the unit to receive a number of applications for separation. That did not eventuate. I continued to serve in the unit for a period of eight months following the return from Timor. I would say, just from my own perspective, that there were fewer applications for separation than in the year prior to deployment. The majority of the soldiers in my unit expected to go overseas again at some point.

My second comment relates to a broader trend within Army. The initial group of INTERFET forces returned home in about February or March 2000. Whilst I do not have the facts or the exact figures with me at the moment, my recollection is that the separation trends in Army from about that point through to May 2001, as a rolling percentage, remained static. Since May 2001 to the present point, the separation rates have been in decline, despite the continuing heavy commitment of soldiers overseas. So I would say that, whilst traditionally we have expected the separation rate to increase, my own personal experience has seen that not being the case and my understanding is that that has not been reflected in the Army trend either.

Mr NAIRN—Maybe we should get an equivalent comment from the Navy and the Air Force as well in that respect.

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—The involvement of Air Force has, of course, been with a much lower number than Army, but we are tracking very similar separation trends to those Colonel Kehoe has suggested. The estimated financial year 2001-02 separation rates have returned to a level at or about the 10-year average, which is a marked decrease over the last three to five years. There may be particular employment groups within that which have a higher rate, but we are certainly not picking up any major trends associated with INTERFET at this stage.

Cmdr Brown—Navy’s involvement in East Timor was at a lesser level certainly than Army’s, but our recent involvement in Op Relex and Operation Slipper in the gulf has seen a dramatic increase in the number of our personnel being deployed. It may be too early to draw

any conclusions, but I have not seen any evidence of an increase in separations as a result of those operations.

Mr PRICE—I do not want to be accused of being an anal retentive, but I notice your starting point is INTERFET. Wasn't it the case that CDF ordered a study on family breakdowns following an earlier deployment? Certainly with the earlier deployments, particularly Somalia, I think, there was a significant separation.

Air Cdre McLennan—I will call on subject matter experts shortly to comment on the specifics, if we have the figures with us. I am not sure that we do. The ADF experience over generations has been that if you send half the family away for long enough you will get an increase in family breakdowns. That seems to be a fact of life. Certainly after each of our major deployments there has been an increase in family disturbances within those pockets of personnel. Whether that is different because of operational service or whether it is really a function of separation time and the various things that come out of that, I am not too sure. Do we have anybody with a statistical basis? I suspect not.

Col. Cotton—I am unaware as to whether or not we have the information systems, particularly from Somalia, to talk about unit specific separation rates. Certainly there was a lot of anecdotal suggestion that separation rates were higher with the Somalia operation. A lot of the anecdotal comment went to the fact that, because this was the first large operation that had come along, a number of people withheld their discharges. I can check with the Director Workforce Planning and Establishments to see if we have those numbers, if you would like.

CHAIR—Thank you. In relation to the INTERFET deployment, could you describe what sorts of potential health risks those on deployment may have been exposed to?

Col. Wells—We maintain health surveillance records of a lot of areas, particularly in our local region, so before deployment we assess what we have and then search out any additional information. East Timor has very high rates of malaria and dengue fever, and we suffered from both of those conditions a lot, particularly in the INTERFET days. As in a lot of tropical areas, there are many other infectious disease conditions present as well, including the Japanese encephalitis virus—which was one of our concerns, and we did immunise—tuberculosis and a number of helminth, or worm, infestations. It is not a very pleasant environment from a medical point of view, so we covered as many as we could with vaccinations and also did some pre-deployment treatment to cover various worm infections. They are essentially the environmental health risks.

There were also some occupational or environmental toxic risks which we had to assess, although they were not very clear—things such as burnt-out buildings and the possibility of asbestos. DMSA could perhaps talk further to that, because we did some surveys to assess whether that was a risk. So there is the pre-deployment knowledge, there are further assessments on health risks and we take countermeasures against whatever we can. During the deployment, we look further at what is present in more specific localities so we can deal with those.

CHAIR—Are you aware of where those who were deployed in INTERFET would have been and who may be more at risk than others on the deployment?

Col. Wells—Most of the battalions had regions that they operated in. They may have moved—in INTERFET times, particularly, they did move—but usually they were in one location and covered one area. So if a particular issue arises we could go back to the source and look. For example, with dengue fever we knew that 2RAR were located in a high breeding source for mosquitoes, so we were aware of why they were exposed.

Major Skewes—I was a member of the operational safety team that went to East Timor. We visited each of the sites where the Australians were deployed, in regard to occupational health and safety. We catalogued the industrial risks at each site, whether they be exposure to mercury, agricultural fumigants or asbestos. We have most of that mapped and we took GPS readings at the time, so we can identify those compounds in the areas where we did identify hazards. We covered most Australian deployed sites.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr EDWARDS—Can you relate those areas to the soldiers who served there? Do you have a record of soldiers who passed through those areas that might in the long-term have some concerns about asbestosis, so that 20 years down the track someone will not be fighting to prove the fact that they may or may not have been contaminated?

Mr Tye—My organisation mounted the operational safety team which Gary was a member of. Potential asbestos exposure was certainly the issue which occupied the team for most of their time there. We had a good idea of where the asbestos was. We are coming from a basis that those involved in the INTERFET forces on the ground would have been exposed to asbestos levels higher than they would normally have been exposed to. We accept that those in the INTERFET period would have been exposed to higher levels of asbestos than they would normally have been exposed to, because of the very nature of the damage and the fact that the early INTERFET force particularly was doing a lot of restoration of buildings to try to establish living accommodation and working accommodation. There are other issues which were identified there particularly by the operational safety team. We thought that when we went there we would be doing a lot of work on fatigue management and things like that, but asbestos really took over and, as Gary said, we mapped a lot of that area. We found some issues of road safety and some minor radiation hazards and some issues concerning hazardous chemicals. That was largely documented and appears on a lessons learned database that Army has in relation to the Timor experience.

Mr EDWARDS—Is there the same level of data relating to previous involvements like Rwanda and Somalia? Was that a lesson from both of those areas?

Mr Tye—Again, for the first time in Australia's history we deployed an operational safety team to Timor; it had never been done before, with the exception of Bougainville, where at the request of the commander we sent up a hazard assessment team to look at the chemical issue at Loloho. We have a comprehensive report on the chemicals at Loloho, and another team will be going back there shortly. General Cosgrove asked for specific safety support in Timor, which you can tend to do when you run the operation. As a consequence of that, that was probably the first time we got that level of assessment. Any assessment done prior to that would largely have been done by the preventative medicine staff, who look at preventative health issues primarily. Timor was the first time we had ever deployed safety professionals with an Australian force.

Mr EDWARDS—On return or on discharge, are those ADF personnel who may have come into contact with some of those industrial risk areas briefed about those health risks?

Mr Tye—DSMA—my organisation—produced a pamphlet on exposure to asbestos in Timor and provided that to both the serving community and the ex-serving community and made people aware of the compensation scheme that we run in Defence, and have been running since the Enfield report in 1991, called the Defence Asbestos Exposure Evaluation Scheme, which allows people to have regular health scrutiny. They were certainly made well aware of the asbestos issue.

The other issues were much more focused and involved a lot less people, so they were recorded as issues but there was not much clarity about who might have been exposed. For example, we found a reasonably significant mercury hazard, but there were only a limited number of people involved there. We were working with the Thais in relation to some hazards that came out of transformers; people might have been exposed to them, but there is no clarity about who they were. So we recorded a hazard and we recorded the area that it was found in, but matching the people to the hazard could not be done.

Mr PRICE—How do you use that information in assessing future claims?

Mr Tye—A person who claims compensation merely needs to make the assertion that they were exposed to this situation. The Department of Veterans' Affairs would normally then come to us and say, 'This is the person's assertion; what informational support can you provide?' and we would have that information available. If someone makes an assertion that they were exposed to asbestos, our response would be, 'If they were in the INTERFET operation, they would have been exposed to asbestos particles above normal levels.'

Mr J. Brown—The approach is to use a beneficial standard of proof so that the benefit of the doubt is given to the person—

Mr EDWARDS—And we would hope that that will never change.

Mr J. Brown—Indeed.

Major Stuart—I have some anecdotal evidence: late last year, my company's forward operating base in Bobonaro, East Timor, was found to contain some asbestos in the roof. The action that ensued from that was that an assessment was conducted by representatives from DSMA, the asbestos was removed by contractors and disposed of in accordance with Australian standards, every soldier in my company had a note documented on their medical file recording that they had been exposed to this risk and every member of my company was briefed by battalion and the Australian National Command Element headquartered in Dili on the risk they had been exposed to. Upon return to Australia, they were briefed by representatives of the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Military Compensation and Rehabilitation Scheme on what their entitlements were, how to go about making a claim and where they stood with respect to the entitlements that may be due to them should they become ill.

Cmdr Brown—Our experience in East Timor was that, firstly, we did not become aware of the existence of asbestos until after we left, which is not ideal. I can confirm that every person

who went ashore had a record annotated on their medical files that they went ashore and may have been exposed to asbestos, and they were given briefings as to what to look for and the risks that they had been exposed to.

Col. Wells—Following all of our operations, we put on every member's medical file a post-deployment medical insert slip which contains a couple of things. One of the things is the risks they were exposed to: a list of the most common infectious diseases that were present in that area and any toxic chemicals that we have identified—and it identifies asbestos in Timor. The other thing that is included on that insert slip is all of the post-deployment activities, such as eradication courses for malaria and for worms—they are all being provided in treatment. So we have a record, which is actually on the medical file, that identifies potential exposures—and I would emphasise the word 'potential'—and activities taken to treat for possible problems that they have had.

Mr EDWARDS—I must congratulate the ADF: I saw one of the pamphlets that was prepared, and I thought it provided some excellent information. The trouble is that young people often do not read that information, but I thought it was very well done. I might turn from industrial issues to some other issues and read a question that was put on the *Notice Paper* in the Senate earlier this year. Senator Evans, the shadow minister for defence, asked, among others, this question:

(1)What counselling services were available to Australian personnel while serving in East Timor.

The response is this:

(1)From the tenth day of the mission Psychology Support Teams were deployed to East Timor. Counselling services were also offered by unit chaplains and by medical and nursing staff. This support is ongoing. Following the deployment of an Egyptian medical team in February 2000, ADF personnel also had access to a psychiatrist.

I will come back to that point in a minute, but the minister in his response went on to say:

(2)From early October 1999 to the end of December 1999, six Army psychology staff were operating in East Timor. During January 2000, another five Army psychology staff were added, and they remained in country until 6 March 2000. Since then, two Army psychology staff have been operating within the Australian Battalion Group structure and they are reinforced by up to six additional psychology staff when the battalion group returns to Australia.

In response to another part, the minister goes on to say:

(5)(a)On return to Australia, all ADF personnel have access to the full range of support services. This includes Defence health, psychology, social work and chaplaincy services. They also have access to the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS) because of their "veteran" status.

That seems to me to be a lot of good support in those areas and, hopefully, that support will have some ongoing benefit to individuals and to the service, which may well be reflected in decreased separation rates. I am wondering if someone could give me some comments as to how effective you see those support services being. I must say it is good to see the ADF is learning some lessons from previous conflicts.

Air Cdre McLennan—I will start off. As somebody who deployed with INTERFET at the start and was subject to psychological counselling before I left, I think I was probably representative of a significant number of people deployed who considered this to be a nice

thought but probably quite unnecessary. Nevertheless, counselling was provided—whether I wanted it or not—and I presume I benefited from that.

CHAIR—Can we be the judge? We will be the judge! We will check you at the end of the day.

Air Cdre McLennan—It was made absolutely clear to me that further services were available on my return, should I think I needed them. On the other hand, we did have some people with trauma while we were there, and I presume some of those have carried over. I actually had to withdraw a chaplain and send him home because the pressure had become too great. That was because, among other things, he was providing this level of support, and those that provide it also take a bit of a toll as a result of that service. Plus, there were a lot of experiences which were shocking to individuals, particularly the retrieval and identification of bodies and some of the other less than terrific things that were observed.

There was clearly a need for these services. Not everybody as an individual recognised that there was a need, and a lot of them received the counselling almost under some sufferance; nevertheless, they were all provided with it. If anybody slipped out without getting it then it was because they were particularly nifty. There was a great and concerted effort made to ensure that everybody who left the zone was counselled before they left and then, if necessary, followed up when they got home.

Mr PRICE—But what is the predisposition of ADF personnel to actually seek counselling? In other words, you are having a group—I presume it is not one-on-one—talk about issues about the possible deployment. But what is the predisposition of ADF personnel to seek counselling?

Air Cdre McLennan—I think we have improved since the Second World War when nobody sought counselling. There is now a general acceptance by people that this is a normal health service and that they should avail themselves of it. However, the ADF statistics are, even with respect to physical injuries, that people tend not to report as early as they would if they were in a civilian occupation of a similar type.

Mr NAIRN—With respect to the counselling that goes on when people are on deployment, to what—

Mr PRICE—I think there is a further answer there. In fact, I think you will find there are about three answers.

Mr NAIRN—Maybe if I could just ask this question, it could be incorporated in the other comments from people. To what extent is that counselling related to issues that are happening to people back home, with respect to their family aspects as opposed to the things that they are doing on deployment?

Air Cdre McLennan—That was the central theme of my counselling, really. The first part was, ‘What have you seen? How do you feel about it?’ and those sorts of things, which I suppose took up 30 per cent of the time that the psychologist chatted with me. The rest of it was dealing with going home; the fact that the family had been without me for a while—they were

probably rejoicing, I do not know—and how I was going to fit back in to a new routine that had been established and that sort of thing. A lot of the Navy folks would laugh at this, because that is their life, but for a lot of the other folks in the ADF it is a little unusual.

Mr EDWARDS—The question might have been more in relation to families and the things that are happening in families.

Mr NAIRN—If we could just have a comment on that, as well.

CHAIR—We might get the comment. Two or three extra responses might help here.

Ms Reich—We, indeed, see a lot of members with family issues. We have about 18,000 client contacts per annum. The presiding problems presented are family and relationship issues. Anecdotally, we are seeing relationship difficulties following deployments. One of our social workers did a research study in Townsville of relationship difficulties post deployment with members returning from Timor and found there was some significant increase in relationship difficulties. She attributed that to some of the stresses that deployment places on families. In the DCO we provide comprehensive deployment briefings before members go on deployments, both to individual members and to the families. In those briefings we flag and discuss some of the issues that commonly occur during deployments, both for the members and for families. We also discuss strategies to assist families to cope while the member is away and discuss strategies with the members as well. We provide family support activities during the deployments. We also provide briefings on return about some of the issues to be expected when a member comes back and is integrating back into the family with the spouse and the children. From our point of view we actually see a lot of members and they do come forward for counselling; not as many as we would like to see, but I would say a significant proportion.

Lt Col. Levey—I am the senior land command psychologist, so one of my roles is to ensure that the Army and, in fact, deployed members have psychological support services. The support that we provided to East Timor goes on today. There is a team today in East Timor—a psychologist and a sergeant who are supporting the battalion group. We have a psychology team in Kurgistan at the moment, and we have just returned from Diego Garcia supporting the Air Force there, as well. In order to get to see people we work in the way that is current accepted practice: everybody is psychologically screened before coming home. Our primary role is to screen people in a mental health way to try and identify people who would benefit from additional services when they get home. So, as best as possible—that is, in country—we try to screen all the people coming back to Australia. If we cannot achieve that in country then we do it immediately on their return to Australia, just to see how they are running.

We use some standard screening tools that give us some early indicators that somebody may not be coping well. At a three- to six-month period after their return to Australia we see them again, just to make sure that they are re-integrating. Since January 2000, we have conducted over 16,000 of those screenings across the ADF—primarily Army, but some Navy and an increasing number of Air Force members as well. The Army has the most significant deployable psychology capability; the Navy has Reserve officers in uniform. So, primarily, an ADF member will see an Army psychologist or psychology staff.

In terms of predisposition, yes, there is still a stigma attached to seeing a psych; we know that—I do not think I would like to do it. At the CASAC earlier this year in April, the Chief of Army indicated to Colonel Cotton, Director of Defence Force Psychology, that he would like to see it as a mandatory thing. So we are currently drafting a Defence instruction on mandating psychological screening.

Mr PRICE—Do you screen people when they leave the service?

Lt Col. Levey—Not routinely, although there is a special case: the SASR psychologist does that.

Mr PRICE—For SAS?

Lt Col. Levey—Yes. He gets involved in screening people who are not only leaving the service but also on posting as well and leaving the SAS. There just are not the resources available within land command psych services to screen people leaving.

Mr PRICE—If resources were available, do you think that would be a worthwhile thing?

Lt Col. Levey—I think there is a lot of anecdotal evidence; my experience as a psychologist is that the people who are the unhappiest often speak the loudest. The vast majority of people who are transiting do so reasonably well; although my experience in that area is quite limited. It may be a useful activity. I am not sure and I could not comment.

CHAIR—Has the Department of Veterans' Affairs received applications for psychological report for those who are taking up that entitlement?

Major Gen. Stevens—The support that we can provide is through the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service. As noted earlier, everyone who has been on an operational deployment is a veteran by definition and can use the service. They can use the service without telling us at the Repatriation Commission and they can use the service without telling Defence, because the use of the service is entirely confidential. We do keep some statistics that show that the number of peacekeepers using the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service is increasing, although it is increasing off a very low base. I have not seen any particular statistics that show the usage of the service by INTERFET members, for example, but I assume that they are using the service.

Mr BEVIS—What about Rwanda, Somalia and Cambodia?

Major Gen. Stevens—Unfortunately, I do not think we have disaggregated it to the particular conflict; we just record them as people coming back from peacekeeping service. We do know that there are people who have come back Rwanda in particular who are most disturbed by the actions around the refugee camp. We can provide them with these counselling services, and we can provide them with psychiatric treatment once the disability claim is accepted. Their follow-on from that tends to be more in the case that they do not qualify under our act for a type of service called qualifying service, which entitles them to an income support pension. So we do not get too many complaints about the treatment or the counselling we provide but we do get complaints about our ability to provide income support.

CHAIR—Are you getting any cases of PTSD out of Timor?

Major Gen. Stevens—I will ask Mr Mark Johnson, Branch Head, Disability Compensation Branch, to speak but I understand that we have had compensation claims arising out of Timor for what you would expect—that is, physical injury. The people who were actually wounded in action are, of course, eligible to claim as well. We have had PTSD claims out of Timor but I will have Mr Johnson confirm that.

Mr Johnson—We have had some claims. I am afraid I do not have numbers with me, but we could provide those numbers to the committee if you would like.

Mr EDWARDS—Could you also take on notice whether it is possible to give us a breakdown of the people from each era presenting to the VVCS.

Mr Johnson—From each deployment theatre, yes.

Col. Cotton—I want to provide some context to the support that we provide to ADF members on operations. It is a direct result of our experiences in Rwanda, Somalia and Cambodia. The provision of teams in countries is a direct response to that. The post-deployment service that we provide has two primary components. The first is an educative component, which is to give members some information about some of the reintegration issues that they might face, because—as Air Commodore McLennan said earlier—we make no connection between service and discharge. Our expectation is that people will come back from operational deployment and continue to serve on. We work with people to give them some information about how they can best do that.

The second component is, as Colonel Levey identified, a mental health screening component rather than a counselling or an intervention component, because, again, our expectation is not that people will necessarily have great difficulties but that we need to identify people who may benefit from further support. So it is a direct result of that. The screening component has identified, certainly from East Timor, that the rates of PTSD symptoms three months post Timor are really rather low. They are certainly much lower than a comparable American sample from Somalia. We do not know why they are so low. We assume it is because we are doing wonderful work and we are very much providing a high level of support to our people as a result of this, but the indications that we have are that the symptoms rate is quite low—slightly less than two per cent.

Brig. Tyers—The 1 Psychology Unit belongs to my formation, in terms of the support provided, but to go to the issue of the capacity of the organisation, we had the opportunity in the middle of last year to re-establish the baseline of the numbers of psychologists we actually have in 1 Psychology Unit. We are endeavouring to double the numbers of people in there for two simple reasons: on the basis of operational tempo over the last three to four years, quite clearly there is a significant increase in the demand for those sorts of services and, more importantly of course, it is to protect the psychologists themselves, who quite clearly need that ability to rotate and get the breaks that they require to re-establish their own bona fides. We are well on the way to re-establishing that capacity.

CHAIR—Doubling it from what?

Brig. Tyers—We are moving to establish about 15 psychologists within the 1 Psychology Unit. There are some 27 across the land army at the moment.

Mr EDWARDS—Would they be full-time ADF personnel?

Brig. Tyers—I think the personnel in 1 Psychology Unit are all full time—or half full time.

Lt Col. Levey—There are seven full-time psychologists and seven part-time psychologists at 1 Psychology Unit.

CHAIR—What is the difference of support in relation to those who have been on ‘warlike’ as opposed to ‘non-warlike’ service? There are two categories of operational service: Rwanda and Cambodia were ‘non-warlike’, whereas Afghanistan, Timor and Somalia have been ‘warlike’.

Col. Cotton—In terms of the provision of the post-deployment psychology support, there is none.

CHAIR—And peacekeeping?

Col. Cotton—There is no separation, no difference in service. The sorts of things we see are that the issues that people might have experienced will vary, but in terms of delivery of support there is no difference.

CHAIR—Would that apply also for family support and entitlements? I know that entitlements are different, but what about support for families?

Ms Reich—There is no difference.

CHAIR—You are not seeing any difference between those who are deployed on warlike as opposed to non-warlike service?

Ms Reich—Sorry, I was answering a different question, about the kind of support that we offer. We do not offer any difference in the sort of support.

Col. Cotton—To return to my earlier point, certainly I was answering the question, ‘Is there any difference in support?’ As I said, there is not. As to whether there are any differences in the effects that we are seeing, we do not really have enough data out of the current warlike operations to have a good sense of that. Certainly, our experience of peacekeeping operations is that the levels of trauma are fairly low and it is more psychosocial and organisational stresses that are the issue there. We are working fairly hard to keep abreast of what the mental health issues are on warlike operations but we do not have enough data to answer that question yet.

Major Gen. Stevens—The Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service is available to eligible veterans. Simply put, non-warlike or warlike service makes a veteran eligible, so they are able to go to the counselling service.

CHAIR—In both cases—in warlike or non-warlike?

Major Gen. Stevens—That is correct.

Mr EDWARDS—That is contrary to a ministerial announcement made before you came along, Mr Chair—I have a copy of it—that all members of the ADF are entitled to access the VVCS.

Major Gen. Stevens—There was a period of time when defence service was also covered by the Veterans Entitlements Act, and I would presume that during that period of time you would be a veteran as defined and therefore would be able to go to the—

Mr EDWARDS—No. There was a very specific announcement—made at the time that there was an announcement about the review into the MCRS—that all members of the ADF would have access to the VVCS. I will get you a copy of it. Is it not the case?

Major Gen. Stevens—As far as I am aware, the primary eligibility to access the counselling service is being a veteran. We do have arrangements with the ADF, whereby they can refer someone who is not an eligible veteran to the VVCS. That may be the case you are looking at, but I will have to follow that up and find out.

Mr EDWARDS—As a matter of interest, are members of the AFP able to access any of these services, including counselling via the VVCS?

Major Gen. Stevens—For the counselling service, I do not know, off the top of my head.

Senator HARRADINE—On the warlike and non-warlike situations and the outcomes on return, is there any difference between the family breakdowns following one as against the other?

Ms Reich—We do not have any data that captures that at the current time.

Senator HARRADINE—Am I to understand that family breakdowns are on the increase?

Ms Reich—Only anecdotally at this stage. We would have to rely on the ADF census, and I understand we will have a new census next year. Only anecdotally do we have evidence that deployments are affecting relationships in the family and may be precipitating family breakdown. But at this stage, we have no hard data to qualify that.

Mr PRICE—Why haven't you got hard data?

Ms Reich—Our data collection system is in the process of being upgraded and we have not been able to collect accurate data until now. We are now updating our data collection system so that we will be able to capture that data in the future. There may be other parts of Defence—

Mr PRICE—Air Commodore, how then was it publicly reported that the impact of family breakdown following one of the deployments—I could look it up—was not significantly different? How would you be able to say that if you cannot capture the bloody data?

Air Cdre McLennan—Not knowing which deployment you are talking about—

Mr PRICE—It was either Somalia or Rwanda.

Air Cdre McLennan—I cannot say with any degree of certainty, except that I imagine the statement would have gone along the lines that we do not have the statistical evidence to support that, which is because we do not have the data.

Mr PRICE—Could you take it on notice? CDF ordered an investigation into it and, as a result of that, there was a big article in the *Bulletin*; it was said ‘not to worry’. Now we are being told that you cannot capture the data even today.

Mr BEVIS—Could I get clear what data we do not have. Do we not have data on the incidence of family separation, family breakdown, or do we not have data on family breakdown by deployment?

Ms Reich—We have data that is captured in the ADF census about the rates of family separation, but the data that we collect in the Defence Community Organisation, as I understand it, at this stage has not captured separation as a result of deployment stress. We do have data in the ADF census that captures family breakdown.

CHAIR—Do you have any data in relation to warlike and non-warlike deployments and psychological claims?

Col. Cotton—We now collect data which indicates deployment so we can start to separate that information out. It has probably been for the last four years, since the start of the East Timor operation, that we have started to clearly identify that. We had not identified it in the past because whether it was warlike or non-warlike was not an issue in delivering the service, so it was not a consideration. But certainly I have information here which separates them according to their deployment.

CHAIR—I am interested in that question: the difference between warlike and non-warlike and access to support services or claims for injury and whether there is any data in relation to the numbers of claims. I think that information would be interesting to have because perhaps the separation of warlike and non-warlike really means that there is no difference in terms of claims.

Col. Cotton—We have the information and we would be able to make some statements about that. We have not done that analysis because, as I said, that has not been an issue for us in the delivery of the service, but we would be in a position to provide some statement on that.

Senator HARRADINE—I would just like to follow through on that. Leaving aside warlike and non-warlike and getting to the crux of the matter of preparedness, on the available figures what is the situation now as to family breakdowns following the return of our service personnel from overseas?

Ms Reich—I understand that the questions for the ADF census are in the process of being prepared. My understanding is that that would be one of the issues that would be captured in the next ADF census.

Senator HARRADINE—But you do it all the time. Surely you would have this information. This question of preparedness and the capacity of the psychs and so on is rather crucial, is it not? Is it not relevant to get some hard data as to what is happening to see if there is an increase in the number of family breakdowns amongst service personnel who have been overseas?

Mr BEVIS—For example, as an aggregate within the services, is the incidence of family breakdown any different in the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months?

Col. Cotton—You would be able to compare the breakdown rates from ADF census to ADF census.

Mr PRICE—Pardon my ignorance, but what is the ADF census? Is that using the national census and pulling ADF figures out of it?

Col. Cotton—No—my apologies, Mr Price. I think we are into our second or third iteration where we take a census of all ADF members. It is very similar to the national census but specific to ADF and looking at ADF issues. So we would be able to make those sorts of comparisons, but I am unaware of us routinely following up people to do that after every deployment.

Mr BEVIS—I understand you have that difficulty but I would have assumed that the support services would have statistical records of family breakdowns, whether or not a person had ever been deployed or had just come back from a deployment—for example, in the last 12 months you dealt with X number of personnel with family breakdown issues.

Ms Reich—With relationship issues.

Mr BEVIS—At that broader level, I am just wondering whether or not there is any trend over a time sequence.

Ms Reich—We certainly have not pulled it out from our DCO data but we possibly could.

Mr NAIRN—How often is the ADF census taken?

Col. Cotton—Good question. I am unaware, but I think it is about every three years.

Mr PRICE—It is not secret or anything, is it?

Col. Cotton—No, not at all.

Mr NAIRN—It would be interesting to know that because then you would have a direct comparison with what is happening out there in the broader community. We have the five-year census and, certainly, the census figures that came out just recently indicated that generally in

the community there is an increasing breakdown of marriages, families et cetera. That is happening generally in the community and if the ADF census is a two-yearly or three-yearly thing, or whatever it is, that would be a good comparison to make.

Mr BEVIS—Could you take it on notice to give us some idea over a time line of four or five years if possible whether it comes out of census data or out of material that has been collected over a period of time by the welfare support system, just to get some feel for that?

Col. Boyd—To expand on that, the last census was done in 1999 and the next census is planned for next year. It covers questions on family status and that sort of thing, so a direct comparison with the last census would be possible. But I think it is worth noting that even the data on the collection of separations that DCO see would not necessarily reflect the full picture, because I am sure a lot of people seek counselling support outside the military system. Then of course there are privacy issues in trying to access the full amount of data. So the questions we will ask in the census will establish what their marital status is and we can then make a comparison with the last census, but it may be difficult to get into fine-grain detail of the reasons for those changes.

Senator HARRADINE—We have been told that there is psychological advice and so on prior to posting. Does that involve only the service personnel themselves, or does it involve their spouses and families?

Air Cdre McLennan—I will ask DCO to comment shortly, but our preparation pre-deployment is largely done through a military unit. The CO is here at the moment and he can expand on that if you wish, but that tends to be focused on the service man or woman. In addition, but to some extent separate from that, we make the families aware that there is certain support available to them as well. Most of that support is through the Defence Community Organisation. Some support will be through the unit that the service man or woman belongs to as well. That varies across the ADF. Some units take that as a fundamental and very important part of their family, as it were, and other units tend not to. The units that tend not to are probably Air Force flying squadrons, for example, where people go away all the time. A pilot or a navigator in a flying squadron, particularly a transport squadron, might spend six months of the year away but he does so for one, two, three or 10 days at a time. That is quite a different arrangement to an Army unit that spends all its time at home and then suddenly goes away—and into harm's way—and therefore they approach it slightly differently. Most of that is coordinated through the Defence Community Organisation, so I will ask Judy Lachele to expand on that.

Mr EDWARDS—Could you tell us how families access those support services? How do they generally present? Is there an identifiable way which is common to a number of families? How do they generally know about your services and how do they access them?

Ms Reich—We usually get a list of families who are deploying and we will then send out invitations to those family members to attend pre-deployment briefings and family support activities.

Mr EDWARDS—Does that go to the family, or does it go via the soldier, sailor or airman?

Ms Reich—It goes direct to the home address. We send out invitations to attend pre-deployment functions and family support activities during the deployment. Major Simon Stuart may be able to illustrate what happens in his particular area, in Townsville, where they have a very close relationship between the unit and the DCO, and he may be able to illustrate exactly how that happens.

Major Stuart—A very close relationship developed between 2RAR, the Second Battalion group, and the DCO staff in Townsville. That started in June last year, about three to four months prior to deployment, and it ceased just last month. So the six-month deployment period was preceded by support and also had support afterwards. Letters and invitations from DCO and from the CO of the unit went directly to spouses and partners in the local area and also to wider and extended family around Australia. The main aim was to manage people's expectations so that they were well informed about what they and their partners were about to undergo for the period of the deployment.

The theme for the families was to 'help you to help yourself'. An example of some of the services provided was a flyer with numbers to contact people for different services. We also established a family centre on the barracks, which all families were invited to attend regularly. A number of activities were coordinated by the Defence Community Organisation, in conjunction with the staff that remained in Australia from the 2nd Battalion group, which included regular briefings about what was happening in East Timor, the political situation, and what their partners were doing on a day-to-day basis. It acted as a conduit of information from East Timor directly to families and also served to speed up any pressing inquiries. To sum up, we had fortunate circumstances with staffing in our unit and very good support from DCO. After we reviewed the support that was given to families, it was decided—widely, between DCO and 3 Brigade—that DCO was probably best placed organisationally to provide the bulk of that support, but that would require in the future some further allocation of resources to DCO to enable it to fulfil that function.

Mr Jackman—On the topic of the census, it is held every four years and there have been three of them to date. In the latest version of the published data, the focus is not on marital status but rather on single status. It includes de facto relationships as being single and it does not differentiate between de facto relationships with or without children. The only trend that appears to be coming through is that the percentage of the ADF that rate themselves as single is increasing, most notably in the older age brackets.

Mr PRICE—Are you saying that single and de facto are one category?

Mr Jackman—Correct. This sounds really anal, but I will read you the—

Mr PRICE—Can we have a word to the chaplains and recognise de facto relationships?

Mr Jackman—The quote out of the book is, 'The term "single" has changed during the course of the three censuses but includes in this instance people who identify themselves as either single or in de facto relationship.'

Senator HARRADINE—What are you reading from?

Mr Jackman—The last census that was conducted in 1999—that is, the *ADF census*, or environmental scan.

Senator HARRADINE—What is the current situation in regard to the ADF census? Is there a question there that we can look at, to see what you are actually going to ask on this occasion?

Col. Cotton—The next ADF census is due early next year. I am unaware of the details of what the break-up is going to be on marital status, but I am certainly more than happy to go and talk to that area to make sure that it is clarified.

Mr PRICE—And you will get back to the committee with that?

Col. Cotton—Yes.

Senator HARRADINE—It might be useful for the committee to receive a copy of the full questionnaire and what is actually sent out on the census.

Mr PRICE—Do we have to fill it out though, Senator?

Senator HARRADINE—I did me nasho!

Col. Boyd—The census is currently being prepared, but it is not available at this stage. We are still formulating the questions. As with any census, we are obviously looking for trend data, so previous questions will be asked again but new questions will also be asked to gather new information. It probably will not be ready until very early next year, I would say. There is a project team working on it at the moment.

CHAIR—In that census are you expecting to capture information in relation to those who may have psychological claims from normal as opposed to warlike, Rwanda as opposed to Timor or Afghanistan, or other conditions such as claims for compensation?

Col. Boyd—I am not sure. I can approach the project team and put that to them.

CHAIR—Is there any way that you can capture that information, perhaps through the Department of Veterans' Affairs? I have an interest in that; are we seeing more claims or equivalent percentages in non-warlike as opposed to warlike? What are the sorts of claims? Are they psychological or are they physical?

Major Gen. Stevens—In relation to the compensation schemes, we would have to go back and look at the data. I do not think we have ever asked ourselves that question before. We do record the conflict but, as far as I know, we have not tried to make a break-up between warlike and non-warlike.

Mr PRICE—General Stevens, you confused me a little in your response much earlier in relation to a question on mental health. What is the degree of severity required to get a successful compensation claim for mental health?

Major Gen. Stevens—I am not sure I can answer that question fully. Under both schemes you make a claim. Under the Veterans' Entitlements Act there is a thing called the 'statement of principles,' which contains the factors you have to meet. If you meet them, the claim is successful. Under the Military Compensation and Rehabilitation Scheme, a claims assessor makes a decision that they are satisfied that you have a particular condition. So I do not know that there is a degree of severity, but perhaps Mr Johnson could take it a bit further.

Mr Johnson—As Major General Stevens said, under the VEA, the SOPs have a number of points under which, if met, the claim is accepted. Under the military compensation scheme it is that your service provided a material contribution to your condition and it is accepted. But it is not like a level of severity; that is not really an issue.

Mr PRICE—Has there been a trend in claims under mental health and what is the success ratio?

Mr Johnson—I do not have information with me on the level of success rate by type of disability but, overall, acceptance under the MCRS for liability is around 76 or 77 per cent for all claims—somewhere in that mid-70s range. I think it is a similar percentage under the VEA. I do not have the figures by disability.

Mr PRICE—Can you get them for those people?

Mr Johnson—I will try. I am not sure that they are easily obtainable but I will try.

Mr PRICE—Do you see merit in having them?

Mr Johnson—I have just been advised that we can provide those figures.

Mr Tye—I can only speak specifically about the workers compensation scheme and the military compensation scheme. In relation to those, I have been watching the numbers for some time and there has been a negligible increase, if any, in relation to what we call 'stress claims'. Stress claims would pick up those mental health types of claims. They are about two per cent of all claims and they have been two per cent for the last five or six years. So if there has been an increase in those numbers it is negligible. About two per cent of those claims would be called stress claims in our research. We are dragging that information out of DVA and out of the claims administrators in trying to find reasons for cases. As you know, most of them are physical injury claims related to sport and training. But stress has been at two per cent. I have been doing the numbers for a long time and they are staying around the two per cent level.

Mr EDWARDS—You ought to get a job in politics!

Mr NAIRN—We had a good explanation of the briefings to families before somebody goes on deployment. What about on return? Can I have an explanation by way of an example? Say a soldier in Afghanistan has been there for something like three or six months and is about to come home, what sorts of triggers occur when you know that you will be going home in, say, a month's time? We heard about what happens in-country before you come home. As far as the family is concerned, what specifically happens?

Ms Reich—Again, those families will be sent invitations to attend reunion briefings. As part of the family support package, we would conduct reunion briefings to family members about the kinds of issues that may occur during the reunion period, the kinds of sensitivities or vulnerabilities that may exist with the member and strategies to assist with reintegration. I might add that all these activities are purely voluntary. We invite people; whether or not they attend is another issue. A percentage of people do attend, but there is no way we can compel people to attend and avail themselves of those reunion briefings.

Mr NAIRN—It is all very well for you to say, when somebody is coming home, that you have certain expertise within your organisation, but presumably the place where they are coming home from and what they have been doing for the last three or six months is relevant to what you would talk to the families about. Are you initially briefed by somebody else?

Ms Reich—We have a relationship with an organisation called the National Welfare Coordination Centre. They have information about where the members are posted—where they are deployed to—and they provide information to us when the people are due to return home. As to whether or not we provide different sort of information according to deployment, generally we tend to target the same issues. For clinical and more psychological issues, we would rely on the psychological side of the house to provide awareness and sensitivity on those issues to the member.

Major Skewes—The Armed Forces Federation generally accepts that, when units are deployed as a unit body, that counselling service is quite well done. Where it appears to be slipping through the cracks, though, is where individuals are drawn from specialist areas—where one or two people are drawn out of Canberra or from other areas. That is where larger coordinated activities and briefings are not occurring; therefore, there are individuals who are not getting that level of support.

Mr EDWARDS—That is exactly the point, and I think it is important to pick up on it. I congratulate 2RAR; I think they have done some tremendous stuff. I would be interested to know whether other battalions are doing the same sort of work that you are. I would like to follow up on this point that Gary just raised about either individuals who come in either via reserve forces or some of the smaller units that are deployed. Are they getting the same level of support from DCO? Are their families as well briefed?

Lt Col. Cullen—The National Welfare Coordination Centre was, until recently, one of the subunits that I commanded. The information that they provide depends on the operation, and it will change from operation to operation. They keep in touch with the families on a regular basis, and I could not be more definitive than that. They simply say, 'We're still here; if you wish to contact us then please do.' We use the Defence Community Organisation as the principal point of reference. With regard to those individuals who come back—and I think this refers to your question, Mr Edwards—I do not believe that we cover it anywhere near as well as we do with the battalion groups. That is because we do not have that facility at this stage.

Mr EDWARDS—Are the battalion groups on a par in terms of the support that they are giving their families?

Lt Col. Cullen—My observation from the Deployed Forces Support Unit perspective is yes. It varies from unit to unit but, in general terms, when large units are deployed that support is available.

Brig. Tyers—With regard to formed units, it is very much the case that even within those organisations the framework is established to have welfare officers who are part of the rear details organisations. In terms of those organisations coming back out of operations, we can take my formation as an example. Until recently, I was providing the force logistics squadron into East Timor and a significant number of people into Bougainville, and we are now providing people into Kuwait and Afghanistan. In terms of those people coming back out—and this is really in response to your question, Mr Nairn—I insisted that those people have a two-week decompression period when they come home, so the soldier does not simply arrive back from his operational deployment and then go on leave immediately without fitting back into his unit to get the support necessary. It also means that he does not arrive home and be a shock for mum and the kids at that point in time when all rules have changed. So all of those systems that are provided by DCO and so on are actually reinforced within the unit environment when the person comes back and fits back into that organisation, mainly because in recent times we are not taking the whole of the unit. We will take, perhaps, a troop or a squadron or whatever it might be. Therefore, we are trying to reinforce across both the DCO organisation and what we do in the units. Perhaps one of my previous COs, Colonel Kehoe, can talk about that, having taken his whole battalion away, with a small rear detail, in terms of INTERFET.

Col. Kehoe—In my capacity as the commanding officer at 10FSB, I reinforce the comments made by Major Stuart. My experiences were similar, and my unit had a very close relationship with the DCO organisation in Townsville. At about the 4½-month mark I found my wife had attended one of the sessions described and she was fully prepared and ‘loaded’ for me to come home in whatever state that I was going to appear. I must say that it all worked very well. Also, however, my unit was involved in sending individuals to places such as Bougainville. I reinforce the point made by Commander LSF that it comes down to a unit commander’s responsibility to ensure that his or her people are adequately prepared and, just as importantly, adequately administered when they come home, whether that be an individual reinforcement or a group going as a formed body. Certainly, I was very happy with the procedures that occurred in my unit and the interface that my unit had with organisations such as DCO.

Mr PRICE—Can I just follow up Mr Brown’s point on the reserves. In East Timor you used about 600 reserves as slots. How were they and their families followed up?

Col. Kehoe—My understanding from an Army point of view is that the decompression period referred to by Brigadier Tyers was a standard operating procedure across the combat force in Army. What we wanted to avoid was a soldier literally getting off the plane—having flown out of Dili, for example—and immediately proceeding on leave. That decompression period allowed soldiers to fit back into an Australian routine—getting up each morning at home, putting on a uniform, coming to work and, as the fairly non-technical term indicates, decompressing. During that period of time, the members—once again, using my own unit as an example—went through our post-deployment psychological interviews. There was no choice there. Everybody from me—the commanding officer—down attended and the roll was appropriately marked. They went through the post-deployment medical regime, including deworming—I had to take home packets of worming tablets for my family—and all those good

things that one goes through. Then we proceeded on leave. In my own unit, for example, I determined that the period of leave was to be no less than three weeks and no more than six weeks. I think that, ultimately, that worked pretty well. People needed a minimum of about three weeks to go away and relax, but we found that any longer than about six weeks and people would end up going feral. So it was important to bring them back and get them back into a routine.

My unit was a regular Army unit; there is no doubt about that. I guess it was at that point that a reservist's experience would have been different from a regular Army soldier's experience. Whilst that soldier would have come home while still involved in full-time service, once they went off on their period of leave it was really up to that individual soldier as to whether they chose to remain an active member of the Reserve or not. There is no doubt that, just as regular soldiers might at some stage make the decision that they wish to separate from the Army, a reservist soldier might do that as well.

Proceedings suspended from 10.40 a.m. to 10.56 a.m.

CHAIR—Prior to the break, Graham Edwards had a question he wanted to put on notice. After he has done that, Ray Brown might like to say something in relation to one of the other questions that has been raised.

Mr EDWARDS—What I wanted to know relates to that issue of the families, which the whole committee is very interested in. Obviously—if a member of the ADF is posted somewhere on deployment—the happier the family is, the happier the service person is. I want to get some idea of what happens when a spouse or a de facto presents for some support—it might be in relation to strains in a marriage or difficulty in dealing with issues with the partner away. For instance, if a woman fronts with an issue relating to the marriage, to some conditions of service or whatever, who would she see? Would that person be a member of the ADF? Would you try to give a woman the opportunity to see another woman as a counsellor? It might be easier if we could get a brief of a couple of pages; I am not sure. I would just like to see that stream. How do they present? Who are they referred through? Do they go directly? Who do they see? What is the outcome? I would be interested to know how sympathetic the ADF are these days to a situation where there are severe strains on a marriage. Under what circumstances will they return a member of the ADF early? I am happy to take those things on notice.

Ms Reich—You want us to provide you with a written brief about this?

Mr EDWARDS—I think that would be perhaps helpful to the committee.

CHAIR—Do you want to make any comments?

Ms Reich—I might very briefly respond to the questions. In the Defence Community Organisation, we have teams of social workers, military support officers, family liaison officers and regional education officers located in close proximity to every major military base throughout the country. Spouses can either self-refer or they can be referred, sometimes by the unit rear detail or by some other person who notes that there is some stress or there are some issues that DCO may be able to assist with. Quite often, the first point of contact is the family liaison officer who visits and who may pick up that a spouse is under stress and suggest that the spouse either come to family support activities or access a social worker. Sometimes, the

military support officer may, in relation to some sort of military activity—maybe in relation to a death or an illness in the family—pick up that a spouse needs some assistance and refer her to the Defence Community Organisation. Our social workers are trained counsellors. Many of them have training in relationship counselling, so they would get professional relationship counselling if that was what was required. We also have relationships with specialist agencies in the community and, if a spouse came to seek our assistance, we would then refer to specialist counselling agencies in the community, if appropriate.

In the DCO we also offer a spouse employment service to assist spouses to seek employment. We provide support when people move, because that provides a point of stress for a lot of families. There is also the support to operational activities. They are our three main areas of support. We also have a child-care service program. I think that covers the main issues relating to family support.

Mr PRICE—I am interested to know what the participation rate is for spouses, de factos and partners in a relationship. Do you provide any services for same sex couples?

Ms Reich—We do, in the DCO. We do not discriminate, so if we have same sex couples that want to come in and have counselling and receive services from us then we offer those services.

Mr PRICE—Do you have any figures on the participation?

Ms Reich—On the number of people that access our services each year?

Mr PRICE—No. In terms of people who are about to be deployed or about to return from deployment, what is the participation rate amongst those four groups of people? Are there mandated services? Is there a mandated level of service that you are required to provide? We talked about 2RAR a little earlier, and I presume you are referring to 2RAR as a group that is a best practice example of how to take that further.

Ms Reich—I do not have the figures available now, but we probably could get figures on the percentage of spouses that attended deployment and family support activities around the country, although they are not collected nationally at this stage. None of our services are mandatory; they are invitations. People can attend or non-attend. They are available and are widely publicised but, from a Defence Community Organisation perspective, none of them are mandatory.

Mr PRICE—I apologise, I am getting a bit confused. Could you provide, probably by way of notice, a list of each service that you as an organisation actually provide for families prior to deployment and post deployment? That might clear that up. I would like to refer to Senator Harradine's question. Apart from calling people in, sending them letters and what have you, what specifically does the ADF do for spouses, people in de facto relationships and people in relationships by way of trying to strengthen those relationships, given that we are accepting here at the roundtable that a deployment does put a lot of strain on those different relationships?

Ms Reich—We do provide a lot of family support activities and we have a family support funding program. We fund programs that develop a sense of networking and community with ADF spouses and de factos. Nationally, we fund a lot of initiatives that are quite often volunteer

driven to assist spouses to develop supportive networks so they are not isolated and alone when the members are on deployments. Again, we provide relationship counselling, early intervention and education about the sorts of stresses that operations and deployments can put on family members—on relationships and on the family as a whole. As much as possible, for the people that want to participate, we try to provide a holistic approach—that is, education, prevention and early awareness of issues that may arise. Then there is a community development focus that funds and maintains family support activities to provide support to spouses when members are away on deployment. Then there are strategies and specialist services that we put into place if people do need to seek counselling.

Mr PRICE—It is very hard to judge all that if you do not know what the participation rate is. You may be having tremendous success with 10 per cent of people who participate—and I am sure it is a lot higher than that—but how do you measure the success of your operation? Could you provide the committee at a later date with the list of specialist organisations that you refer people to?

Mr NAIRN—Is there any formal mechanism for feedback from families about the services that are provided? I guess that fits with what Roger is asking about how you know it is working.

Ms Reich—When we run family support activities in relation to deployment, we usually do post-evaluation measures of how useful they have been to families. We are also just about to embark on a DCO national evaluation project. We are commissioning an evaluation of all our services, and the efficacy of those services, on a national basis. The other thing that I would like to add to this discussion is that the operational tempo has increased a lot over the last two years, and organisations such as the DCO have really had to gear up and operate very differently from how they operated a couple of years ago. So we are still catching up with some of the evaluation data and the measurement of the effectiveness of our service, because many of the services have only been in place since the operational tempo increased with Operation Warden and the other deployments that we have been involved in.

Mr BEVIS—Navy has probably had more exposure to this on a more consistent basis over time than Army, and just about all of our discussion has been about recent Army deployments. I would be interested to get some view from Navy. In ship deployments—even just in the normal routine, without any particular engagement or enforcement—you have what amount to entire crews being away from their family and home circumstances for quite prolonged periods of time. To what extent is what we have been talking about for the last couple of hours built on that experience or different from that experience? What is Navy doing, presumably with greater experience and, I would hope, with some lessons to be learned by the broader Defence community?

Cmdr Brown—The DCO was developed largely from the Navy PSO and based on our experience over a long time. The process to which Mr Edwards was referring before and the triggers for all of the support services to swing into action are quite well defined and work well. We now have the National Welfare Coordination Centre, and most spouses would be aware of the contact number which they can ring up with any number of problems and be referred to the right area. Most would be referred to the Defence Community Organisation, where they can access counselling or the social workers who work there. Our experience is that the process is working well in general and that DCO is providing a good service.

Mr BEVIS—What about the things we talked about before in relation to 2RAR and the deployments in East Timor: the use of psychologists on deployment, the screening of people before they come back—in your case to a shore appointment—and the decompression scenario? Does anything like that get followed up in Navy?

Col. Cotton—Certainly in the recent operations that Navy have been involved in they have taken the model that we use for land based operations for psych support and applied it to the maritime environment, if you like, given the different natures of the deployments. So they are using the same mental health screening tools and providing the same level of education and screening interventions for those operations.

Cmdr Smith—I would like to add for your interest that, between October 2001 and June 2002, we have statistics that indicate that over 1,500 Navy personnel returning from deployment have received psychological debriefs from our Navy Reserve psychologists.

CHAIR—Could you repeat that? Did you say over 1,500?

Cmdr Smith—Yes, a total of over 1,500 personnel who have returned to Australia.

Mr BEVIS—They would be people who—

Cmdr Smith—People involved in Operation Relex and Operation Slipper.

Mr NAIRN—Did you say Naval Reserve?

Cmdr Smith—Yes. We have uniformed Navy psychologists in the Reserve force. We do not have a permanent psych force in uniform.

Mr BEVIS—Too dangerous.

Cmdr Smith—Our uniformed psychologists are reservists, and we have them deploying through Colonel Cotton's organisation.

Mr BEVIS—Navy personnel who are not actually in the Gulf, say, on one of the peacekeeping or UN interdiction activities would as a matter of normal rotation spend a few months at sea. Do they receive the same access to advice for all of those family separation issues? There may be different levels of trauma, because they may not be confronting life threatening experiences or seeing some of the things that the soldiers, for example, would have had to deal with in Somalia, Rwanda or East Timor; nonetheless, you are still separated from your family and civilian contacts. Do they have the same access to services?

Cmdr Brown—Most Navy deployments are similarly supported regardless of their activity. That has been the process for a long time. All personnel receive pre-deployment briefings. Briefings are available to spouses and they get information packs while the ship is away. The psychological debriefings post operation have only occurred for people returning from Operation Relex and Operation Slipper.

Mr BEVIS—Is there a triservice approach to this, as in at least the core of the issue is dealt with on a triservice basis?

Col. Cotton—Yes.

Cmdr Smith—Yes. It is great to see a positive spin being placed on the good work we are doing, but I would like to highlight that the difficulties we are having with people returning from deployments are with those people who are going into non-Navy work environments. Those returning to Navy units or establishments, or who are going to another ship, come back into the Navy family and tend to be fairly well looked after. But we are finding—sometimes, unfortunately, a little too far down the track—people who go into contractor or commercial support environments where we do have a number of Navy positions embedded have been falling through the cracks in terms of being able to monitor their progress. Navy is putting in place a number of strategies and systemic changes to improve that monitoring. I just wanted to flag that for you.

Mr BEVIS—I want to get onto some economic transition issues, and this might be an appropriate time. You are referring there to people who are still working full time in the Defence environment but in a privatised, outsourced area of that Defence environment. I am particularly interested in the issues that you just gave a heads-up on and the way in which you anticipate looking at them.

Adding a further question to that, and I guess it is to all services: what happens with reservists who go overseas, and just about all of the deployments have had an element of the reserves in them? Are they kept on when they come back for, say, a week or two weeks full time as part of that decompression process? What contact is there with their civilian employer so that if their behaviour is not exactly as it was six months earlier their civilian employer has some understanding of why that might be, and is there some consideration or support, both for the reservist and the employer? Can someone give us some information on how that unfolds?

CHAIR—Who wants to open up the batting here?

Col. Kehoe—I am happy to speak on that. I guess it follows up from a point that I was alluding to previously. As I indicated, our experience, particularly with the 6RAR Battalion group—I do not recall the actual time of their particular deployment—is that they took a Reserve company group or component of their force sourced largely from the Enoggera area, so they came from within the 7 Brigade family, if I can term it that. They were part-time members who served for their tour on full-time service. I understand that one of the lessons we learnt from that particular deployment, following the decompression period and the normal medical and psychological post-deployment activities, is that that did occur and it occurred well. What we did not follow up and do, I guess, was re-establish the link between the reservist and their old Reserve unit. These soldiers came from a variety of Reserve units. In this case, 6RAR did their lead-up training, performed exceedingly well and went through, if you like, the post-deployment processes that you have heard described in a fair amount of detail, and then we passed them back to their Reserve unit. That did not occur as well as it could have. I do not have exact statistics or numbers on how many of those Reserve members are serving today, but anecdotally I do understand that that did not occur as well as it might have. We have learnt from that.

The forthcoming 5/7RAR deployment, which goes later this year, will also take a Reserve company, sourced largely from the 4th Brigade in Victoria. We are taking some specific measures during the transition, if you like, from full-time service back to part-time service. When these soldiers come out—remember, these soldiers have not even started their preliminary deployment training, so we are talking about what will happen in March 2003—they will come back to Darwin with the 5/7 Battalion based in Darwin and they will go through their decompression phase, as we have described. We will then fly the commanding officers, regimental sergeant majors and those sorts of people from their units up to Darwin to be present during the final days of the decompression processes that I have described. They will have an opportunity to speak to their soldiers about what is occurring in their part-time unit for the remainder of 2003 and to re-establish those links with the individual soldiers before they physically return to Victoria and, hopefully, return to being serving members of their part-time unit.

As I said, that particular conjugal link did not work as well as it could have with our Brisbane experience, and we will allocate resources and time to ensure that it does. In the end, of course, you can lead the proverbial horse to water but, ultimately, if that young soldier has either taken a liking to full-time service and wants to transfer to the full-time component of the Army or, indeed, said, ‘Well, I’ve done that. That’s part of my life experience and I’m now going to move on,’ that will lie with that individual, but we will try and ensure that the linkage between the previous unit is then re-established.

Mr BEVIS—Could I follow that up? It seems to me that there are two quite separate issues here: one is the question of the retention of those reservists in some form in the military—whether that is in a full-time or a part-time capacity; the other is that, if they are maintaining a part-time involvement then there is civilian employment and the extent to which we make sure that we do what we can to ease their way back to their former civilian employment. I recall very well when the Ready Reserve was disbanded and a number of those people went across to the full-time service. Many of them said, ‘Well, hang on, why do we want to hang around in a Reserve component that is doing things less often’, as they would have seen it, ‘to a less rigorous level than we were used to?’ For reservists coming back from an overseas deployment, I can see that as being highly motivating for them. On the other hand, at the other end of the continuum, they could come back and say, ‘Do I really want to go back to Tuesday night parades?’ Firstly, what do we do about ensuring that those who want to get into full-time service after that are able to? Secondly, what do we do about maintaining motivation amongst reservists who have been through, say, a three-month deployment and a month or two lead-up before that? They have probably been full-time for maybe six months. What do we do to maintain their interest?

Col. Kehoe—Once again, just from an Army point of view, any soldier has a right to request a transfer between the various categories of the Army. There is no problem there. They would then be managed by our Soldier Career Management Agency in a virtual pool of soldiers who apply to transfer from their particular trade in the part-time force into the Regular Army force. Upon application, they will initially be given an indication from their commanding officer as to whether it is recommended or not, and subsequently by the Soldier Career Management Agency as to whether that will be approved and when they are likely to actually transfer, because they have to fit into the funnel of soldiers coming through Kapooka and other avenues.

As far as the motivation issue is concerned, like everything, that comes back to the individual commanding officer who is responsible for that soldier in his or her unit, and how well that person is up to the task. I cannot speak for individual Reserve COs, because I am not an individual Reserve CO. All I can say is that we all fundamentally understand that the challenges and motivators in a part-time unit are fundamentally different to those in a full-time unit. In the end, if you have given a young soldier, or an older soldier, a taste for full-time service and they enjoy it, they may well find that does drop back a little bit. It is the nature of a part-time unit that it is part-time service, but those challenges of retaining his or her soldiers are there for any part-time CO, whether the soldiers have been on operations or not.

Mr BEVIS—It may seem self-evident in a discussion like this, but I do not think that the process of osmosis worked last time when the Ready Reserve arrangements occurred. Indeed, it did not, which is why there were special processes put in place. I am not sure from the answer, but it would seem as though there are not particular alerts or programs put in place to try and maintain motivational levels. I understand what you are saying: a good commander has to do this with everybody. But I think we are dealing here with a special category of reservists for whom there needs to be some particular attention if you actually want them to stay as reservists.

Col. Kehoe—You are right. Coming back to my original point, our linkages between the commanding officers of those Reserve soldiers now and, for example, the commanding officer of 5/7RAR are being established as we speak. I suppose the part-time COs of these soldiers in Victoria are far more aware of those challenges than I suspect their equivalents in Brisbane were a few years ago. I guess that lead time and the indication that they are going to have to treat these people as a special category are now well known, and they now have a number of months to get something in place.

Mr BEVIS—The problem is that we seem to relearn this difficulty. We did it after Cambodia. We did it after—I cannot remember now whether it was Somalia or Rwanda or both of them. We did it after the Ready Reserve, and we are sort of relearning it now.

Col. Boyd—As you would probably be aware, Defence is looking at creating various categories of reserve, ranging right up to high readiness reserves. While this program is not in place as yet, once it is embedded I would say that returning Reserve members would have an option to decide which level of readiness reserve they wish to go into. For those that have developed a taste for more rigorous and higher standards and more challenging training et cetera, they could opt, and subsequently be rewarded, for going into those high readiness areas, but, for those who are quite happy to return to an infrequent Tuesday afternoon parade, that option would also be open. Giving members choice when they return will hopefully address some of those concerns that were expressed.

Mr PRICE—When you talk about a high readiness area, is it an ‘area’? We have never had an explanation of the concept—and I am sure that will happen—but is it a made-up company that is ‘high ready’? Is the individual designated in his or her particular unit as ‘high readiness’ although their peers may be low readiness or whatever the category is?

Col. Boyd—Again, it is not my direct area and somebody else may be able to add to this, but my understanding is that soldiers will be grouped together so that high readiness soldiers will form into high readiness units and their whole unit should operate at that higher tempo.

Mr PRICE—To follow up a question that Mr Bevis asked regarding slots, I understood that a number of the reservists were in fact reserve NCOs who took a downgrade to be privates to serve in those slots. Has there been any follow-up with those reservists returning to their units? Secondly, have you got any stats for us in terms of numbers of reservists who, following a deployment, have applied to become part of the full-time Army?

Col. Kehoe—Which deployment were you referring to, where you understood people had reverted in rank?

Mr PRICE—In East Timor; I thought some of the reservists filling slots there were NCOs.

Col. Kehoe—I am not aware of any significant trend or individual example. Was your unit involved, Simon?

Major Stuart—No.

Col. Kehoe—I personally am not aware; I can take that on notice and have a look at that for you.

Mr PRICE—Mr Bevis asked about what we are doing for employers of the reserves: what is specifically done by way of communicating with the employer once the reservist returns to his employment? Are there any pastoral care links set up with the employer, so that you are alerted to adjustment problems?

Col. Kehoe—I am not aware of any specific program but, again, I can take that on notice and come back to you if necessary.

CHAIR—Mr Jackman, does Manpower have any comment regarding employers of reserves?

Mr Jackman—Unfortunately not. I do not have any experience of that, so I cannot comment on that.

CHAIR—Getting back to support to families, what sort of support is available where someone has been injured or killed on a deployment in a warlike or a non-warlike situation? What do you actually do in those circumstances—could you describe the processes, as opposed to the normal support that would be available for people going on and returning from deployment—where, for instance, someone has been killed or severely injured?

Ms Reich—The Defence Community Organisation does have quite a coordinated process. In the event of death, we arrange for notification to happen as soon as possible. Then we send one of our military support officers—either at the point of notification or very soon afterwards—to provide support to the family. Then our social workers will go along and provide support to the family. We coordinate the whole funeral and case manage all the issues that surround the death, from the beginning to the end of the process. In some cases, the case management process can take up to two years to finalise all the issues that surround a death including the will, dealing with probate and making sure that all those issues are on track, following through on the family's wishes about the sort of funeral and plaques and follow-up grief counselling after the death.

In the case of serious injury, when a soldier has to be returned to Australia, again the same sorts of processes will kick in: the military support officer will provide support to the family, we provide travelling assistance to family members—for instance, if they need to be sent to Darwin, if someone is being transported back from Timor—and we provide social work support to those family members and to the member until the situation has been resolved.

CHAIR—Are you saying there is also assistance in helping them work through the sometimes complex range of compensation and support that is available?

Ms Reich—In partnership with the other parts of Defence that deal with compensation issues and financial entitlements, yes.

Mr R. Brown—When we talk about ‘non-warlike’, are we referring to people injured in peacetime?

CHAIR—No, we are talking about a non-warlike deployment. Peacetime would be back here.

Mr EDWARDS—But the same level of support would be there for a family whether the person was injured in warlike or non-warlike circumstances. There is no difference in the grief.

CHAIR—There is no difference?

Ms Reich—No. It is exactly the same.

Mr EDWARDS—What procedures are in place to deal with the media, who are incredibly well informed and very intrusive? I fear the time when the media are going to announce someone as a casualty before the family has been properly notified. We must have been very close to that in a couple of instances in recent times. I ask the question because I remember, when a couple of blokes were wounded in Timor, being appalled to see about two days later one of these fellows having his X-rays displayed all over the media with someone pointing out this and that. What processes are put in place to deal with the media, and how intrusive are we going to let them become?

Mr BEVIS—And we will adopt them here in the parliament and we might get somewhere.

Ms Lachele—We have coordination processes in place with each of the single services. Each service tends to have its own policy on handling media issues, and we work with their policies. We also work in conjunction with the NWCC to ensure that the issues are handled sensitively and in a timely manner.

Lt Col. Cullen—Going back to a question that was raised earlier about the notification aspect, we attempt in every case to make sure that the families are notified by a member of the unit that the person came from with, wherever possible, a padre—a chaplain, either service or non-service—to provide that first point of contact. Prior to the media getting this information, or at least to our releasing any information, we try to make sure that all the member’s next of kin, or the people they have identified as wishing to be notified in case of an accident or death, have indeed been notified.

Mr BEVIS—Are there protocols with the media about this?

Lt Col. Cullen—I cannot comment on that.

Air Cdre McLennan—I could take that on notice. There are some protocols, but I am not familiar enough with them to be able to recite them to you. In any case, handling the media is problematic, as you are well aware.

Mr BEVIS—That was a bit unfair.

Air Cdre McLennan—Our only real defence is to have our own processes so slick that we keep within their information loop. That has been the aim, and a lot of attention has been paid to that. Most of the time we have been able to achieve it. They very rarely catch us out.

CHAIR—In the case of the *Westralia*, the media were out there raising the alert that there had been people killed. It caused enormous grief to anyone who had a family member on board, wondering whether it was their son, daughter, husband, wife or whatever. This is a very serious question for us, because it creates that uncertainty in the minds of many families.

Air Cdre McLennan—The other aspect of it is that when these things happen and they are major we like to be able to do that in person. That takes us a little time, because you actually have to get somebody to the family. Unfortunately, the media do not have any of those sorts of personal or moral considerations to deal with, so getting inside that information loop is pretty hard.

Mr BEVIS—It seems to me that there should be a set of protocols with the media. Even in an open society such as ours—which we all seek to defend, no matter how much it hurts us from time—there are some human sensitivity issues that I would have thought Defence would want to have protocols with the media about and which most responsible people in the media would be happy to enter into. If there are, I would like to know—and if there are not, I would also like to know, because I think it is something that should be pursued. People in that situation deserve their privacy, rather than having some shock jock trying to get their ratings up.

Air Cdre McLennan—That is managed by PACC, Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, and I will attempt to get somebody here this afternoon who can explain those to you.

Cmdr Brown—I would like to comment on the process that occurred when a sailor was recently lost overboard from HMAS *Darwin*. Part of the process of restricting the media access initially was to stop emails from the ship, because the tendency was for all the sailors on board to send a quick email home saying, 'It's not me; I'm okay, don't worry.' They stopped that process. The CO sent an email to all the families after the next of kin had been informed. He said in that email that the next of kin had been informed, so everybody knew that, since they had not been informed, it was not their son or daughter who was the casualty or missing. But it does take some very positive and quick steps on the part of the unit commander to put a cap on the information getting out in the first instance and then let the organisation swing into gear with a media release as soon as possible after the family has been informed.

Mr EDWARDS—How do you control the use of mobile phones?

Cmdr Brown—We do control mobile phones at sea. Depending on the nature of the operation, we would either collect all the mobile phones from all the individuals or merely say that they are not to be used, and we have means of monitoring that as well. It is very easy. If an incident occurs, the commanding officer will say, ‘Shut down the email lines until we’ve got this situation in hand and the appropriate people have been informed properly, and then I’ll open them up again.’

Mr BEVIS—Can I go back to the an issue on economic transition, which actually applies ir-respective of whether you are on deployment, injured or not. When people leave the service they, in most cases, seek some sort of income stream, some sort of job in the private sector—life. To what extent do we provide counselling support or assistance for those exiting, irrespective of what might be the precursor to that exit, if any? What civilian recognition, as part of the normal civilian recognition systems in the training, education and academic streams, does military training now accrue? To what extent is the military training plugged into the civilian accreditation systems?

Col. Boyd—I have recently attended a resettlement seminar, which the Air Commodore referred to in his opening address. The resettlement seminar is three days long. It is open to all members of the ADF regardless of how long they have been in the service, whether it is 25 years or six months. It is a voluntary activity, and all members are strongly advised and counselled to attend. They are generally run in capital cities at least twice a year. If a member is serving outside a capital city, then they can be given travel assistance to attend. They attend as duty members.

With respect to some of the topics that are covered during this seminar, they can basically be divided into three main categories. Members are informed of the entitlements that they may have accrued by way of their military service. There is quite a lot of counselling on financial aspects, covering such things as superannuation and financial planning. The other element of the counselling concerns how to find employment outside—issues such as preparing CVs, how to approach a job interview et cetera. I have a copy of the program, which I am happy to table.

The seminar that I attended in Canberra last week was attended by about 250 members. Almost everyone that I spoke to who attended thought that it was of excellent value and that it prepared them very well in alerting them to the issues. Each individual then has to seek individual advice, but it certainly highlighted all the issues.

Members are encouraged not to leave attendance at one of these seminars until they have actually decided to leave but to attend as early as they possibly can. They are also able to attend more than one seminar. In my case, I attended a resettlement seminar when I was a young officer, because I had a secondary duty in the unit as a resettlement officer. I attended another one about 10 years ago, and I have attended one recently. The sort of advice you get prepares you for that ultimate transition, whenever that should occur.

CHAIR—Do you bring job agency people to these seminars or is it purely a briefing by military personnel?

Col. Boyd—Again, there are probably three categories of people who present these things. There are the members whose job it is to put these things together and coordinate them; there are serving members who come to give briefings on their specialist areas; and there are outside organisations who also come along and present. They are given strict guidelines not to give a sales pitch for their particular products, but I am sure that people do go and see them later, which they are entitled to do. Their presentations are general in nature but are very good value—things like financial planning, the benefits of the various superannuation schemes and how they should access them.

CHAIR—Is there any data available on how successful people are post separation from the ADF in getting a job that gives them satisfaction? Do some go on to greater things? Is there any information at all about how these people get on?

Col. Boyd—The ADF do run an exit survey. It is not in my particular area but I do get a fair bit of the data that comes from this exit survey. They get about a 15 to 20 per cent response to it. It is purely voluntary; it is sent to mailing addresses and given to people as they leave. Some of the questions ask about how successful the transition to civilian life has been. I do not have the data with me; it could be provided.

CHAIR—Is there any information on whether the job they have bears any relationship to the service or particular field of expertise they had within the ADF? In other words, are the skills that they have acquired during their service life something that led them to getting a job? Are there any linkages here in alerting job agencies as to the sort of skills that are there?

Col. Boyd—The guidance that came out at the seminar that I attended from people whose job it is to help people find employment outside was that members of the ADF have a lot of skills, some of which are unique, but a lot of them are very transferable. Probably the biggest challenge for ADF members is to recognise what those transferable skills are and to value them and sell themselves. A lot of members do not recognise the skills that they have developed as a result of their service. So a lot of these counselling services help people to identify those and to translate military service into terminology that an outside employer can recognise and understand.

Mr Jackman—I would like to make some general comments and speak from three points of view. I was serving once upon a time on the other side of the Tasman when they did have a navy. Since then I have made the transition. I would like to speak secondly from a Manpower point of view. Thirdly, Manpower is part of a consortium called the Careers Transitions Consortium that was put in place five years ago to manage outplacement from Telstra. Over that five years we have managed about 8,000 people successfully out of Telstra, with more than 90 per cent of them actually getting a job, having exited from Telstra.

Just as a general comment, if you look at outplacement in the private sector, it is completely different from transition management in the Defence Force. The resettlement that defence forces around the world have been offering for probably the last 50 or 60 years is really an information based activity to try and prepare a member for when they actually exit the Defence Force in one form or another, whether it is upon retirement for age, whether it is because they want to seek early separation or whatever. It is not actually an outplacement service. It is not a job placement service. It is really just to educate the individual. In the corporate world—the

private sector world—outplacement services have really developed over the last 20 years in a response to organisations right-sizing, downsizing and retrenching people. It was predominantly about salving corporate consciences, in terms of, ‘We are doing the wrong thing by these people; but we have got to do it, so we need to feel good about it.’ At the same time, the financial benefit to the organisation was seen in terms of: ‘I do not want a former employee that I have retrenched badmouthing me in the marketplace because, in the end, they will end up working for a competitor or a consumer, or they are a consumer anyway, and we all know that bad stories go around a hell of a lot quicker than good stories do’—as in what happens in this house on a day-to-day basis.

So the outplacement services offered in the private sector are very focused on getting somebody a job. The real difference is, whilst they go through the same education program that Ross just talked about, and it covers things like what your entitlements are, what you will get from the organisation, what you do with your money, how you find another job and what activities you need to go through, all of the people traditionally get a case manager assigned to them. One of the things that you will see in outplacement in the private sector is that about 85 per cent of people in outplacement programs are earning less than the average weekly wage. The impression that you have got is that senior executives are getting one-on-one programs—that does occur, but it is basically a very small proportion of the activity. For most of the people in outplacement programs, the outplacement provider is getting paid around \$1,000—maybe 50 per cent either side of that—and the program will last no more than six months, but there is a case manager assigned to each individual.

One of the things that we did with the career transition consortium is that we put outplacement organisations with placement organisations. Fifty per cent of the consortium are people like ourselves that are there to try and place individuals into jobs. One of the things that comes out of that is, in fact, that only about 15 per cent of the people are placed through the placement organisations. The rest find jobs for themselves in one form or another under the guidance of the case manager. Most of the activity for individuals to do with ‘where do I go next?’ is to do with them getting off their own backside, with guidance, and getting out and doing that. In terms of where the ADF goes in the future, that sort of activity is actually relatively inexpensive, but when you have got the numbers of members that we are talking about it cumulatively becomes relatively expensive. But it is one of the issues that the ADF needs to look at. It should, by all means, continue with the resettlement seminars. I think the point that you make, Ross, is very valid: there is no point in talking about this three months before separation; you want to be talking about this three years before separation. But I think providing some outplacement service has real merit.

In my opening remarks, I made the comment that it is the fear of the unknown that sometimes drives people to separate, rather than the fear of staying. If you have just completed a four-year stint as a grunt, you are then thinking, ‘Do I sign for another two years or another four years?’ You think about it and you say, ‘I am 23 years old. I have had a good time. I have done this sort of thing. Maybe now is a really good time to go,’ versus ‘Do I sign up for another four years? Once I have signed up for four years I know there will be a career transition program in place for me, and the statistics tell me that 85 per cent of the people who leave have a job within three months of doing that.’ I think that takes away some of that fear in doing that. Likewise, the programs need to be graduated, because obviously somebody who is a 35-year-old major or warrant officer has different needs from a 23-year-old private soldier and also has very different

needs from a one-star who is exiting in their 50s. That is the way the corporate world does it as well, in terms of scaling the types of activities that the individuals get. So the senior executives get programs that cost five figures-plus and they get individual activities. As officers, they have all the facilities in the world. There are a lot more comments I could make as we progress, about qualifications, but—

CHAIR—So you are saying there is a retention issue there as well as an opportunity, because of security over a job.

Mr Jackman—Inherently, I believe, there is a huge retention issue—it is only anecdotal, but I think people are concerned about their future. If there were a stronger transition program, they might feel more comfortable about when they actually exit. As I said earlier, the 15-year-old of today will be in the work force for 60 years. That sounds crazy to all of us around the table, but most 15-year-olds will enter the work force in their early 20s now, after some form of post-secondary education. They will leave the full-time work force, like most of us will, in their early 60s, but given the fact that most of the 15-year-olds will live to be 100, they will actually exit the work force in some sort of phased approach some time between, say, 60 to 65 right through to 75. There will be both a social and a financial necessity to keep working up to about 75. We have got to think about the fact that the 15-year-old kid who wants to join one of the services at the moment has a 60-year working life ahead of them, and most of them—the vast majority of the people that enter the ADF as we go forward over the next five years; I would estimate 95 per cent of them—will spend less than half their working life in the ADF.

CHAIR—That is only one of their jobs.

Col. Boyd—Malcolm made that very good point about a need for a scaled approach, and that is exactly what the ADF has. One of the entitlements which I mentioned that is presented in the seminar is the career transition assistance scheme. Wing Commander Lindsay has just come to the table. He runs that scheme, so if the members of the committee are interested I am sure David could give a run-down on that aspect.

Mr BEVIS—I would be interested for the wing commander to give us that run-down. I think that is an interesting area that is opening up.

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—I look after the career transition assistance scheme for ADF people. Basically, the benefits you get depend upon your time in service. The maximum level of benefit, though, is available to medical discharges. Essentially, they can get career transition management counselling, or what used to be called transition or vocational counselling—I cannot remember the term—costing up to about \$2,000. That is designed to work out the areas of employment that they could become involved in and to help them get those jobs. In addition to that they can get—there is no actual financial limit—any amount of training that is consistent with a career that they could reasonably expect when they leave the service.

Mr BEVIS—Can you give us an example?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—It depends on the nature of their injuries or the condition that they have sustained. It is between them and their case manager. They work out where they should be looking.

Mr EDWARDS—And if you are not injured?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—If you are not injured, it will depend upon the length of service that you have done. If you have done 18 or more years of service—there are other benefits but I am talking about the main ones here—you can either get career transition management counselling, again at a cost of about \$2,000, or opt for training. There is no limit on the dollars that are put into training. In that case, we require an election—in that, if you do not know what you want to do then we will be happy to pay for the career transition management counselling, but if you know what you want to do then you apply for the training that will help you to get the job that you are after. Normally, there is about a \$4,000 limit but we could pay, say, up to \$16,000 for pilots to get particular licences that they need. In effect, there is no financial limit. I believe a lot of people would probably get out and not take up any training because they figure, ‘I’ve got these skills, I want that job. I am already able to get that job.’ So the bulk of the benefits are for people who have done 18 or more years of service. For people who have done from 12 to 18 years of service, the key benefit would be that they can access \$1,000 for career transition training: courses that will help them to get a job. The aim of course is to give them a top-up in training that allows them a transition from their service related employment into civilian employment, and to take those skills that they have developed with them.

Mr PRICE—Could you give me an example—of the sort of training, say, that infantry people would seek?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—No, I cannot give examples. It depends on what they want to do.

Mr NAIRN—What about somebody who has a degree within the armed services and then wants to do some postgraduate study or something like that; is that paid for?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—Currently, they cannot access tertiary studies under career transition. Our aim is to get them employable with the minimum amount of unemployment. Once you start talking tertiary studies there is a long time frame involved; therefore it is counter to our aim. We want them to go from military to civilian life—a smooth transition. We are not trying to get them from this job to that job, which might be a promotion or a new profession. So allowing tertiary education works against us.

Air Cdre McLennan—There are other provisions within the service to allow for tertiary education and qualifications and so forth.

CHAIR—Within the service?

Air Cdre McLennan—That is right, but not that particular arrangement. This is focused on transition, but there are personal development opportunities within the service which, if a person thinks far enough ahead of course, he can create for himself to prepare for the eventual transition.

Mr R. Brown—As an ESO who helps people with claims and the transition from military to civilian, I am a bit confused as to why you are dealing with the transition from ADF to civilian when we have the MCRS transitional management service as well. I am confused in that the Air Force is providing a transitional management service when the Department of Veterans’ Affairs

MCRS is providing one as well. It sounds like the guidelines that you are providing are exactly the same as the DVA's MCRS, and I am confused as to why there are two lots of teams.

CHAIR—Who wants to answer that question?

Mr Tye—I understood that what Dave Lindsay was talking about initially was the scheme that the DVA were managing in relation to injured persons. We did a lot of work when we set up military rehabilitation in the early 1990s, and throughout the 1990s, and I can only speak up to the year 2000 because the DVA took over the management from then. There were about 600 to 1,000 open rehab cases at any one time for people with a variety of conditions—from severely injured people, in Ray's category, to people who were not so severely injured but were facing medical discharge. We saw very few tradespeople, non-commissioned officers or officers in that category. Most of them were able to move into employment relatively easily, except if they were severely injured. We found that if people had had periods of service in excess of three years the vast majority of them had quite marketable skills.

The biggest difficulty was getting them to understand and articulate that they had marketable skills. We found that there was a big fear of the unknown. In the context of rehabilitation for Defence Force discharges to a new employer or a new job, which is seen to be the hardest category of any rehabilitation, we found a 70 per cent return to work in that category simply because these people had marketable skills which were attractive outside. There has always been a fairly supportive feeling amongst Australian employers in relation to members of the Defence Force.

The difficulty was identifying what skills they had and for them to articulate those skills. A lot of the support we offered for these people was by way of writing CVs and applications rather than too much more work. That is not the case for the severely injured people but that is the case for the majority of people who came through the rehabilitation scheme and were not severely injured. Most of them were able to get into employment in a relatively short time.

Col. Boyd—I would like to clarify the types of courses that people might do. One of the very popular courses is the business directors course and a lot of people take that up. A lot of people take up jobs and need to know how to run a small business, so the company directors course and the course on how to run a small business are very popular. David mentioned the issue of licences. Getting licences can be very expensive even if it is to get a semitrailer licence or a truck licence. The funds can be used to pay for that, as well as the more exotic licences that were mentioned.

The Air Commodore talked about other forms of training and he referred to the Defence Assisted Study Scheme; it is run separate to the Career Transition and Education Assistance Scheme. Basically, under the Defence Assisted Study Scheme there are three types of courses. Level 1 includes the tertiary level courses and members can have fees up to \$3,000 paid each year to do those courses. The level 2 courses are diploma courses and people can access up to \$2,000 a year to do that, and they can do that for every year of their service if they wish. The third level includes the vocational certificate level courses, and I think they can access about \$1,000 a year for that. They also receive books plus time off from work, so a fair bit of support is given.

Again, members are encouraged at these seminars to start thinking about accessing these things, not six months before they get out but five years before they get out. Some of the people that have accessed our course have actually done legal degrees under this scheme, which has basically been paid for them, part-time, over the last five or six years of their service and they were able to step straight into the legal profession on separation from the ADF. So if people plan long and well enough ahead they can certainly prepare themselves well for a transition to civilian life.

Mr NAIRN—Do those different levels of training that you mentioned they have access to depend on the level of service?

Col. Boyd—I believe it is purely dependent on the type of course. Level 1 includes courses that directly assist the members in the provision of delivery of capability to defence. For example, a management course is very applicable to defence and so it receives the highest level of funding. The second level is desirable and the third level is very much vocational. It is not dependent on years of service; it is purely dependent on the type of course that it is.

Mr J. Brown—A bit of context about the Australian Defence Organisation educational system will provide some background. While not aimed at transition, it is aimed at developing both capability and the individual defence member. There are the three service training commands as well as a civilian training organisation—but I use the word ‘civilian’ in inverted commas because all that training is available to uniformed members also. Each of those will provide, directly or through service providers, training fully articulated to the Australian national framework. Indeed, all three of the service areas and the non-war fighting training have been endorsed with quality education training organisation status—national quality endorsement has been provided—so, whether it is a vocational education trade competency or a tertiary education, each is fully articulated externally. A defence member can virtually, with a length of service proficient to do the education and balanced against duty, leave defence with a PhD. In the main, however, we are talking about trade and vocational type training, which articulates very well, and the scheme as outlined helps provide managers and their staff with an opportunity to identify those opportunities. Essentially, we use a whole range of service providers. They could be a group like the Open Learning consortia of universities for the higher end, the institutes of technology or our own qualified trainers who can provide this articulated training. A defence member can effectively prepare, while doing defence work, for a fully certified career outside.

CHAIR—It all sounds great—what is available—but, with the increased pressure on tempo over the last few years, in reality are many people taking up these offers and doing these courses? That is the question we need you to answer.

Mr J. Brown—There is a stressor on that. One of the things we have been paying more attention to is using the national accreditation framework and recognition of prior learning to allow articulation along the job experience into that area, and we use both internal and external assessors to do that. But there is a pressure in terms of time availability. People drop out of courses and do not restart them. Others take time to get back into them. But particularly at the vocational education training end—the competency end—we have a lot more opportunity today than in the past to provide recognition of prior learning towards certification.

CHAIR—Someone who has done, say, two deputations into Timor is not likely to have maintained a course or perhaps even started a course and yet may have decided it is time to get out, and they jump out quickly.

Mr J. Brown—We cannot overcome it.

CHAIR—How do you deal with that issue—is there some other method you could devise that would see these people doing these courses before they do separate?

Col. Boyd—There are several points in response to that. The deployments to East Timor are for six months. I have known people who have continued with their courses while they were over there, doing it by correspondence. Admittedly, a lot probably need to defer their study for six months, but that sort of thing can happen to anybody if their personal circumstances change. The thing to note is that I know we have quite a number of people on ships at sea doing these courses, and they are able to do that through the email system that was mentioned earlier by submitting their assignments and things by email. The other point that I would make is that for members who, for whatever reason, do not have time to complete any of the sort of training that was mentioned by Wing Commander Lindsay there is a provision to allow them to preserve their entitlements for up to 12 months after separation. So somebody who makes a quick decision to get out can then still access that counselling support for another 12 months after that if they elect to do so.

Mr BEVIS—If I could just follow that up, I am pleased, as I understand the answer just given, that the vocational training programs within defence are fully articulated now with national accreditation, which is great. Specifically, does that include things with state accreditation like driving licences, forklift licences and heavy vehicle licenses? For example, does an army forklift licence count in each state jurisdiction?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—Forklifts in particular do not; you need to get a new licence, and that is one of the things our transition scheme will pay for.

Mr BEVIS—Is there a reason why driving a forklift around an Army depot is different to driving it around Woolworths?

Mr Tye—We face this issue under the OHS legislation quite regularly. We find that Army, Navy and Air Force employees are soldiers, sailors and airmen first—that is their major job. They have some requirements to do some of the driving, particularly forklift and crane driving, but not the full range of stuff you need to do to get a licence under the state scheme. So they provide a service licence that allows them to do the activities they are required to do in the service but not the full range of activities. We are currently looking at that. It causes us a lot of problems with the state schemes in relation to OHS. A working party on this has, if you like, disintegrated over the last couple of years, but we are about to reactivate a working party to look at exactly this issue, because it is raised on a regular basis and is starting to be raised again. There is a service licence given, which in most cases does not equate to the state requirement. That causes us problems in relation to the OHS legislation as well, so we are now looking at how we can address that. The attitude expressed to us from Army, Navy and Air Force is that for the activities they are required to do they do not need the full range of competencies needed

for a state licence so, generally speaking, Army, Navy and Air Force have a service specific licence that provides them with those competencies.

Mr BEVIS—I think you just told me that the forklift driver at Woollies is more proficient at driving a forklift than the Army forklift driver.

Mr Tye—I am saying that the forklift driver at Woollies has a whole lot of requirements, particularly on public roads and issues like that, that it has been considered that the Defence Force member may not need to face. He is certainly competent to undertake the roles he is required to undertake as a soldier forklift driver.

Mr PRICE—Can you give us a list of those qualifications that do not equate?

Mr Tye—Yes, I can do that.

CHAIR—Isn't that totally inconsistent with several announcements saying, 'We will line up and get recognition for all our defence qualifications'?

Mr Tye—As I said, we are working to improve that situation now and to make them equate. But I am aware that the work done by our working groups indicates that there are some licences that are service specific rather than state based licences.

Mr BEVIS—I will ask the question in reverse: is a reservist whose civilian occupation involves driving forklifts and who has a forklift licence required to undergo further training to meet the required defence standard, or are they automatically certified to do that work in defence?

Lt Col. Cullen—I think I can speak for both of us. I am a former CO of the 10 Terminal Regiment, which Colonel Kehoe took over by another name. Our principal responsibility was providing terminal operators, and that meant handling heavy forklifts and cranes. We were the major crane and forklift operators within the Army. Our training was very good, and indeed our people were qualified to operate on main roads. They needed to be, because we had to drive the stuff on the roads and, although we were driving Commonwealth vehicles, were required to be trained to that level. When we crossed state boundaries we had to get some special exemptions for the equipment, but not for the drivers. So I would be most surprised if we had to go through a special training program. Reserve soldiers who come in with a qualification would be assessed. Their qualification would not be accepted *carte blanche*; they would be assessed. If they were found to be capable they could be tested, pass the tests and then be employed.

Mr Jackman—In terms of practicalities, a forklift driver who is moving from Brisbane to Sydney has to go through that same process. In our trades area we would not believe a trade certificate if our life depended on it, and we put most people through an assessment. When we are doing large-scale recruitment for forklift drivers the same principle applies that you have mentioned in terms of 'Let's assess them.' From the money you have talked about, Dave, in relation to going from being a forklift driver in the Army to getting a certificate to work in Sydney, that it takes half a day and \$500, if that, I suspect, to become a fully qualified forklift driver. I think the biggest issue is whether you want to join the TWU.

CHAIR—That is the expensive part.

Mr R. Brown—In my experience when I joined the military, I had a motorbike licence and a car licence, but for five years in the military I could not touch a motorbike or any vehicle until I had done an Army qualified course. However, in certain situations, you could be trade tested and be able to move the vehicle around the compound. As far I am aware, you still have to do a special course.

Mr Johnson—Just to pick up on a question that Ray asked a few minutes ago about the relationship between the Transition Management Service administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Career Transition Service that was being spoken about, the TMS that the DVA administers is for personnel who have been discharged on invalidity grounds whereas the Career Transition Service that was being talked about is much more widely accessed by all potentially discharging personnel.

Under the TMS, a transition action plan and checklist is prepared by someone who is going to be discharged on invalidity grounds, and that covers a number of issues: medical issues—Medicare, health insurance arrangements, future treatment arrangements; advice on entitlements under the MCRS, the Veterans' Entitlement Act, ComSuper, Centrelink for family payments, and housing—that is, current and future location and relocation entitlements under the defence housing scheme; and vocational aspects as well, including job prospects, transferable skills, the sorts of issues that have been discussed in the last few minutes. They are also put in touch with the Career Transition Service so that they can access many of the services available under that scheme. We are responsible for a subset of people discharging from the military, but the schemes are not completely separate.

Mr NAIRN—Mr Jackman, coming back to something you said before about people having left the services, you said that something like 85 per cent of people are in a job three months after they leave. I am not sure whether you were giving that as a throwaway line or as a statistic. If the latter is the case, presumably there is a certain amount of work done in collecting that sort of data. To what extent is that data collected and for how long does it continue—to see whether there is a problem of long-term unemployment and that type of thing?

Mr Jackman—That statistic was in fact related to the work we have done with Telstra. It is a very good parallel example, because all of the people that we have dealt with out of Telstra are on forced redundancy; most of them are very long-serving individuals with Telstra who have spent their whole lives there. The example I was making is that, if defence, through case management, had that sort of separation rate and success after separation with getting people into employment, then I think people would see it as being a major benefit. I take the point that most of the transition services are available to people after 12 or 18 years service. I suspect there would be a significant cost-benefit model if you could bring that length of service qualification down so that you could get the retention rate up in the bracket of people who are separating, say, after four to eight years.

CHAIR—Was the figure you gave for Telstra 85 per cent within three months?

Mr Jackman—Yes. We run all the statistics. A small proportion of the individuals retire and a reasonable number go. I think it is very much like what happened with defence: lots of them

move back into the corporate world, some of them take it as an opportunity for a major career shift, some of them retire, lots of them go and start their own business et cetera—all of those options are available to people. I notice that a lot of people talk about ‘employer of choice’, and I think all large organisations in Australia are trying to be employers of choice. When you go and ask employees what they want, one of the key elements of that is: ‘Where is this job taking me?’

If you can remove some of the fear of the unknown from people, about ‘What will happen to me when I am 32?’ or something like that, and they can qualify for career transition after a much shorter period in their career, I think you would get lots of people not taking early separation. In terms of the business community, when we talk about separation rates and all the rest of it, most organisations know that they are going to get about a 20 or 25 per cent attrition rate. So organisations are not looking for major quality changes. They are looking to try and understand where they actually get the true benefits. If they lose most of their people at 18 months, they say, ‘What can we do to get people to stay with us for 24 or 30 months, because that increment there is really going to work for us.’ They still then have the social welfare responsibility. Do not take that point literally, but they have that mentality about looking after the long-termers that do 20 years.

The current programs basically reward people who have stayed in the organisation—they have their 12- or 18-year break points—but nothing positive is done to encourage people who have done their four years to stay on for eight years. If they joined as an 18- to 20-year-old, that eight-year point is likely to be the period when they are in a stable relationship, they might be looking to buy a house and they might have a young family on the way. That is when transition would be most traumatic for them, so they say: ‘I am footloose and fancy-free. I will go at four years.’ This is all anecdotal, but there is a lot of substance behind it. There is a very strong cost-benefit model to say to people ‘We will give you transition services a lot earlier in your career and take some of the fear out of it.’ Then you build your statistics base behind that which says: ‘Eighty-five or 90 per cent of the people that took career transition at eight years were in a job within three months. In fact, most of them moved straight out and were actually able to use their termination benefits as a deposit for a house, because they went straight into a job.’ That sort of stuff gets people to say: ‘We will stay around for another four years. It ain’t such a bad idea.’

Mr NAIRN—Just following on from that, do we have much information about people who leave the defence forces further down the track? It is probably a huge thing to get an accurate handle on, but even if there is some limited information it would be useful.

Col. Boyd—The only information we really gather is at the time of exit and about three months afterwards, with the ADF exit survey. It is collected continuously and is collated and analysed annually. As I mentioned earlier, there is only about a 10 to 15 per cent response rate to it, which perhaps calls into question the validity of some of the comments made, but once members leave we cannot obligate them to respond to these things. I know that the career management agencies try and track their people, and usually about 12 months after separation they will write to the address left at the time of separation just to check on them and see whether they fancy rejoining the ADF. It is really a recruiting tool. But we very quickly lose track of people beyond 12 months, as we are a very mobile population. It is not cost-effective to try and pursue them any longer than 12 months after separation.

Mr BEVIS—I want to go back to an earlier issue that I raised on reserves. No-one was available then, but there is now someone who may be able to add to the information we were discussing before. Just to recap, the question was about support for people returning from deployment. The issue that I raised earlier was that with virtually all of our deployments we have had reservists. When those people return, what level of assistance or support is given to them to fit back into their former life? As I understand the earlier discussion, in terms of their personal life, their partner and their family arrangements, they have got access to the same raft of services that anyone else would have. The other question that I raised was about their employer. If they are maintaining a role as a reservist, their other job is in the private sector. The employer may not have the same understanding of the need to accommodate the sorts of behavioural changes that might be exhibited on return from a deployment. What, if anything, do we do to engage with the employers of those reservists and follow through that transition not just back into their family life but back into their civilian employment life?

Col. Stedman—We are constantly dealing with employers. The Defence Reserves Support Council, which was set up some years ago as a peak body to work with defence, the government and the community—in particular, with the employer section of the community—was enhanced following a decision by the government in 2000 and includes now representatives from a number of employer groups, including the Australian Industry Group; the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, COSBOA; and other groups. That council also has active committees in each of the states and in the Northern Territory and is in the process of setting up a committee in the ACT, which will be officially launched either later this month or next month. Part of the role of the council and its committees is to undertake a number of activities to maintain and build employer support within the community. One of the key initiatives that has been taken in recent times has been the employer support payments scheme, which was launched just over 12 months ago.

As an aside, for those of you who have seen the article by Ian McPhedran in today's Melbourne *Herald Sun*, there are a significant number of inaccuracies in that article, which takes a shot at the scheme. Probably the most important point I would make is that a self-employed reservist who meets the criteria laid down in the scheme and is released from his company for defence service is entitled to the payment in exactly the same way as any other employer, which the article would seem to suggest is somehow a rort.

Moving on, the council and its committees undertake other activities, such as Exercise Executive Stretch, that get employers out to see what reservists do, what life is like in the military, employer nights, employer visits to exercises and so forth. All of that is intended to build up employer support for reserve and defence service.

With regard to deployments, each deployment we deal with employers who raise any problems or issues. If an employer does not raise issues, if everything is working fine, we do not have the resources to go chasing around every employer of every reservist; we wait for their feedback. I would say that under the Defence [Reserve Service \(Protection\) Act](#), which came into effect last year, one of the requirements that a service chief must consider in deciding whether or not to make that full-time service protected is the impact on third parties. We have a legislative requirement which we now follow through to go out to employers when we are intending to bring a reservist on to full-time service—for example, for service in Timor—to find out the effect of that on the employer and consider any objections that are made. So we are

putting a lot of effort into keeping employers happy with the situation, to explaining to them the importance of their support for what the reservists are doing and the importance to the nation's defence of what the reservists are doing. I am not sure if I have entirely answered the question.

Mr BEVIS—There is actually a lot of stuff there that I am tempted to follow up, but I will not because it is probably outside the purview of what we are on about today. If I go specifically to that point on return though, many of those things you described are ongoing routine activities of defence and the Defence Reserve Support Council and the like, and their activities such as Exercise Executive Stretch and so on are generic. For reservists who are deployed, do we, for example, contact the employers of those who are overseas at some point in the process to bring them together to make them feel a bit more involved, to say, 'This is the unit that Fred Bloggs is in, this is where they are in East Timor and this is the sort of stuff they are doing'? Do we try to engage them as a target group?

Col. Stedman—In the past, we have not done it perhaps as well as we might. We are about to trial taking a group of 20 employers out to an exercise at Shoalwater Bay involving the 7 Brigade, your local brigade, which we hope will be a precursor to being able to involve on a routine basis selected employers in seeing what their reservist employees are actually up to on operations. We have discussed this in-house, but I need to stress that this has not been formalised. The action still needs to be taken; it has not been put to the services yet. We have discussed ideas, such as trying to get a small number of employers of the reservists in the reserve company going to Timor in the next rotation up to visit that company in Timor for a short period. But that is still just an idea. We have not done as much in the past as we would like to do in the future. It is something that we are trying to ramp up.

Mr BEVIS—Finally, you mentioned that if problems arise in an individual case then mechanisms kick in. Is there a record of those potential problems, and can you tell us what sorts of statistics you have on the problems arising for those reservists on their return from overseas deployments?

Col. Stedman—I am not aware of any cases that have been brought to our attention following the implementation of the Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act or at the time a reservist has returned from overseas service. There have been some cases, including one last year, where the reservist had been deployed prior to the implementation of that act, but there have been none, to my knowledge, brought to our attention since the act came into effect. As an aside, and this may be of some relevance, with regard to the reserve company that is currently being prepared to deploy to Timor, I understand that in the order of 120 reservists went through the screening process for suitability for deployment to Timor and we received only one formal objection from an employer with regard to declaring that protected service in accordance with the act.

Proceedings suspended from 12.32 p.m. to 1.32 p.m.

CHAIR—I think we have lost Senator Harradine and I think also Mr Bevis is not able to be with us this afternoon. I understand, Air Commodore, that we have some answers to questions that we had on notice this morning to do with protocols in terms of the media following an accident or an incident that affects families.

Air Cdre McLennan—Yes. I will invite Brigadier Mike Hannan to answer the questions related to the media.

Brig. Hannan—On the matter of injuries occurring to servicemen or servicewomen on operations, the first point to make is that, of course, the ADF may or may not control the information coming out of the area of operations. In any particular area of operations, there may be international media, other coalition partners, the United Nations and other parties involved who may have some control of the information flow which is outside our control. In addition, there are forms of information other than the media coming out of any area of operations that may find their way back into the international media, our own domestic media or, indeed, into the public domain in some other way. Firstly, public affairs does not act unilaterally in any matters concerning issues arising out of operations; it acts in support of the chain of command and the Defence Community Organisation. If there is a notification, in the first instance the public affairs organisation would make some attempts to establish the accuracy of the information that has come out in first reports.

Our experience to date has been that there is a high level of unreliability in the first reports to come out of any operational circumstance. It is very important that the public affairs organisation does not go off half-cocked and allow that information to run without first establishing what the actual facts are in any particular case. The first priority in every case is the notification of the next of kin. That is done by the Defence Community Organisation and we would act in support of that. As part of that process, the family would be asked whether they were happy for the name to be released, assuming that the release of the name was consistent with our operational security requirements. As you would understand, in the case of special forces soldiers, we may not wish the name to be released, regardless. If the family were not happy about the name being released then we would approach the media, provide them with all other details and request their cooperation in suppressing the name for a period of time. That time would generally be limited and the circumstances under which the media might cooperate in that would depend on upon the circumstances surrounding the incident. Generally speaking, the media have been cooperative in those kinds of matters in the past and I do not see any reason why that would not continue. We would release, after clearance from both the chain of command and the Defence Community Organisation, full details of the circumstances as quickly as we had them fully established. We would do that by a media release and then normally a doorstep or some other similar operation.

Our aim, however, would be to provide direct support to the family. At the time the family was approached by the Defence Community Organisation, we would offer them direct support from our staff. That would include acting as an intermediary with the media, should they request that, and briefing them or dealing with any of their queries and explaining to them the sorts of things that were likely to happen. Of course, the next of kin are quite entitled to do whatever they want in this regard and they can reject our support, speak to the media and make whatever statements they wish. We do not have any control over that. But the offer is there and is made as part of the standard procedures and, generally speaking, is taken up by the families. We would then provide the next of kin with a 24-hour-a-day on-call response for as long as the issue was running as a media matter.

Mr EDWARDS—One of the things that we were concerned to ensure was that next of kin are treated the same, regardless of whether something occurs in an operational sense or back in

Australia. I should imagine, for instance, that it would probably be harder to keep a media lid—if you want to use that term—on something like the Blackhawk disaster than it would be perhaps in relation to casualties being notified from Afghanistan or Timor or wherever. The point is that the next of kin, we would like to think, would have the same level of support, regardless of wherever the incident was.

Brig. Hannan—Whether it was an incident occurring in training in Australia or in operations overseas?

Mr EDWARDS—Yes.

Brig. Hannan—Absolutely. The system is designed that way. Our SOPs deal in support of the Defence Community Organisation in that regard but also in support of the chain of command. It is very important that we work very closely with them and in support of them and do not take the lead ourselves, because that can lead to incorrect information being inadvertently put into the public domain. The point I would like to restate here in regards to your question is that, even in circumstances like Afghanistan or the Middle East or any other area of operations, there may be many other sources of information coming out of the area that might provide all sorts of details—some of them totally incorrect, some of them quite accurate—over which we have no control.

I think our ability to keep the lid on the situation is limited. Our best effect is to be very accurate in what we do tell the media, so that they have confidence that what we say is the truth—that it is correct, accurate and as timely as we can make it. It is important that we do not delay in getting the information out because of some sensitivities within the chain of command or within the other administrative systems. We have to push those other systems to be as responsive as possible, because if we are not timely the media will take other information of less reliable origins and run with it as fact.

CHAIR—Taking the *Westralia* as an example, is any support given to the families to protect them from a prying media—for example, a statement has been made and is accurate—or are they left alone out there?

Brig. Hannan—At the stage when the Defence Community Organisation first contacts them and does the notification, we would provide staff in support of that organisation who would brief the families on what was likely to happen and to offer them support. That support would be on call 24 hours a day. We would even take on the role of acting as an intermediary with the media should they wish that to be the case. However, the family may have its own reasons for not wanting to accept that support. They may have other reasons or another agenda that might cause them to want to speak to the press directly or to have some other intermediary act on their behalf.

Mr PRICE—Would you provide a photograph of the ADF member to the press?

Brig. Hannan—We would provide that only after having consulted with the family.

Mr PRICE—Would you give them the choice?

Brig. Hannan—Yes.

CHAIR—Does the DCO want to say anything?

Ms Reich—I agree that that is what happens. Our MSOs are usually the key point in protecting the family, in consultation with the area there.

Mr NAIRN—Where stories may be out before you would like them to be out—and where you have a bit more control, so predominantly in Australia rather than in an international operation—does it normally come from within some other part of Defence? Is it ‘information is power’ syndrome? Is that what you find, or have you never really looked at it?

Brig. Hannan—Every incident is different. You have to look at where the incident took place, the other parties that are involved, the other folks that are on the ground—including local residents in the area—who the press speak to and so on. There is enormous pressure on the various media to react quickly and to be the first with information. If they cannot get information from us because we do not have it, or we do not have it reliably enough to release it, they will run with what they have, and that may be hearsay or the comments of witnesses who are not directly involved. It is difficult to say where it comes from—every circumstance would be different—but it is very important for us as an organisation to realise that there are many other sources of information, and that we have to establish our credibility by being quick to respond and by being very accurate in what we do. We cannot afford to make a mistake in detail. The advantage we would get from that is that the media would then be more likely to cooperate with us in protecting the privacy of families and others.

CHAIR—Brigadier Hannan, thanks for that. There may still be something that comes to mind as we get through the afternoon. Let us now go back to separation transition management and those issues that we left off just prior to lunch.

Mr PRICE—Is transition management managed by each of the single services, or is it managed centrally?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—It is central. All the services have the same conditions.

Mr PRICE—Can you give me a breakdown of what you spend per person by officer, NCO and other ranks?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—I can get it for you. I do not have that information here.

Mr PRICE—Is your budget constrained, or do you meet the level of demand?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—Currently we have more than enough funds to meet the demand.

Mr PRICE—We had better take that in secret, if that is all right!

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—However, it is an entitlement whereby if we did run short we would go to the head DPE and put out our hand for more money.

Mr PRICE—I was interested in Mr Jackman's comments. He was quite right in talking about the lengthening period in the work force. What experience are you having in the opposite direction—that is, that people's service in the ADF is becoming shorter rather than longer? How did your 18-year rule develop?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—I was not involved in setting up this scheme. It followed on from—

Mr PRICE—This is a legacy project.

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—We had the discharge resettlement training system, which was based on people who did 20 years. If you did less than 20 years, you basically got nothing. We recognised that a lot of people were serving fewer than 20 years. I do not know how they came up with 18 years as the magic cut-off where you got the maximum. The entitlements of people who do less than 12 years would be fairly scant. I do not know what the basis was of those. I guess the people who administer the scheme are of the view that we should put more funding towards people who have served less time, but that has not been pursued policy wise.

Mr PRICE—Could you just repeat that?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—We had a conference only a few weeks ago, and most of the people who administer the scheme throughout the country supported the view that we should put more money or more benefits towards people who have served less time.

Mr PRICE—I thought that was what you meant.

Air Cdre McLennan—Colonel Boyd was involved in the development of the scheme over a period.

Col. Boyd—The scheme that is currently running was only launched as a pilot in June or July last year and formally came into being at the start of this year. On that basis, it is still evolving. The intention is to do an evaluation of it in about 12 months time but, until we have let it run for a little while, it would probably be pre-emptive to act too soon. Certainly the view when the scheme was revitalised was to give greater levels of benefit to people who had done less than 20 years of service, which was clearly inappropriate. The level of benefit now is markedly better than it was before, but I would accept that some refinement is necessary. Indeed, there may well be a case to increase the level of entitlement for people who have done fewer years of service.

Air Cdre McLennan—Let me also add a little piece on the funding, because that probably sounded like we did not budget properly for it. The intention was to provide an entitlement and then ensure that we had adequately provided for that entitlement, but it is a moving feast—not everybody takes up their entitlement; it is entirely voluntary. During the additional estimates process we would see an adjustment to the funds provided. That might be an increase or reduction, depending on what the uptake had been during the first half of the year. The funding arrangement is adjusted as necessary in order to satisfy the entitlements that people are given.

Mr PRICE—Is there a different take-up rate between officers, as one group, and NCOs and other ranks, as a second group?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—Again I am unable to answer that, but I can get the information for you.

CHAIR—It seems strange to me that, the longer you have been in, the more you get as an entitlement for separation.

Air Cdre McLennan—I think there is a view that it is, first of all, a reward scheme. We would prefer to have rewards as opposed to returns of service, so it is a retention measure in that respect. But also perhaps the need is greater the longer you have been in. If you have been in an outfit for 30 years, the transition is probably personally more difficult. Even though by the time you leave you are better qualified and you will probably transition to a more senior position more readily, the reality is that you will also be living in a fairly warm comfort zone and the personal transition will be more challenging. Therefore, you probably need more support to do that. That is certainly something that we have discovered, particularly with senior officer ranks. Even though they are very intelligent and very well qualified, they often need a good deal of assistance when it comes to that point. It does not seem to matter how well prepared they are for it; the transition still can be a traumatic experience.

Mr PRICE—Have you got an age profile of service in terms of other ranks, NCOs and officers—a breakdown of the most common length of service? I am trying to get a feel for how this age thing cuts in. Do you follow what I am getting at?

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—No, I don't.

Mr PRICE—If a private serves 10 years on average and you have an 18-year cut-off, then it clearly disadvantages them if they have a significant need for transitional services. NCOs serve an average of 25 years—and, most commonly, 20 years—and officers are different again. I just want to see how it impacts on the different ranks in the service.

Wing Cmdr Lindsay—We have not looked at the ages or the times in for the people who are accessing the scheme. I believe that the typical stay in the ADF is about nine years, so that group is missing the bulk of the benefits of the scheme as it exists at the moment.

Mr PRICE—It becomes a double whammy when you do not actually want a lot of those who serve nine years to stay on. They get no services and you are not particularly looking for another nine years from them.

Air Cdre McLennan—I am sorry, I am not understanding the question there. Retention is more important to us than recruitment.

Mr PRICE—Sure, there are great advantages in retention, but in a number of occupations you are not looking for a really lengthy service commitment, whereas you are desperate to retain other skills.

Air Cdre McLennan—That is true.

Mr PRICE—You basically want a young ADF not an ageing ADF.

Air Cdre McLennan—Up to a point we do. In the areas where we would prefer to have some youth, generally speaking they transition as a natural result of the way they enlisted and the reasons they had when they enlisted. A lot of our soldiers are actually after relatively short-term excitement—adventure, travel—and want to learn a trade, develop some skills, get some experience and move on. But they will do that themselves anyway. At the end of that point they have usually achieved what they want to achieve and they do not have any great difficulty transitioning. In fact, it is the people who have become entrenched in the service that have the greater difficulty transitioning and need that assistance.

Mr PRICE—With great respect, Air Commodore, if you do not actually track them, how do you know that they fit in well?

Air Cdre McLennan—Perhaps because we do not get a huge amount of feedback saying that they have had trouble. If there was a lobby out there that was coming to us saying, ‘We have people who are destitute, who have not been able to fit in, who have had social problems or who are continually on the dole line,’ then we would take that on board. But there is no evidence I know of that says that we are having a problem in that area.

When somebody joins the Army as a soldier, gets a trade, exercises the trade for a few years and leaves at the end of his initial period of service—and I think about 40 per cent of soldiers, sailors and airmen leave after their initial period of service—the implication to me is that they have set some goals, they have used the service, they have provided service and, when they have achieved those particular goals, they have moved on in a way they are comfortable with and have planned for.

Mr NAIRN—Is Mr Price’s assumption that you would not really want a lot of these people to stay anyway correct? I do not think that is right but I think it should be clarified.

Air Cdre McLennan—I do not agree with that. We would be happier for more of them to stay, because training is expensive regardless of who you are training.

CHAIR—Brigadier Townley, the Air Commodore said that there does not seem to be a particular lobby out there. No-one is calling the RSL a lobby group, but are you seeing any groups of ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen who have missed the opportunity to get into employment and are knocking on the door of the RSL?

Brig. Townley—I would draw the line at ‘groups’. No doubt that happens to individuals but, like the Air Commodore, I am unaware of any particular group in the ex-service society that feels that way or has been disadvantaged in that way.

CHAIR—Do you get people saying to you that their transition from military life and separation into civilian life was not what they expected?

Brig. Townley—Yes indeed, but I would qualify that by saying that it applied to the previous transition management scheme. As has been outlined, this present scheme has been running for some six months, so it is a bit early to make judgments along those lines. But under the previous arrangements we certainly did hear that.

CHAIR—Does the RSL have a particular view as to what would be appropriate?

Brig. Townley—The present scheme is probably a good step in the right direction. No doubt there is scope for finetuning, particularly in respect of where the bulk of the effort goes. As the committee has observed, that is at the upper end of service at the moment. There may be very good reasons for that but, by the same token, that focus may be missing some deserving people at the bottom end of it.

CHAIR—We do not particularly know where they get to. I was interested in Malcolm Jackman's point regarding Telstra—that it is known that 85 per cent had jobs within three months. How many do you know of in the ex-service community who have got jobs? You do not really track them in the ADF, do you? Once they are out the door they have the entitlement for training and opportunities but then they are lost to the system unless there is a claim for compensation.

Brig. Townley—I do not think the RSL would have that sort of information.

Mr EDWARDS—It might be interesting to see what is showing from the joblink program, which I think is still running out of the RSL in Perth. I know they were having a fair amount of contact with serving personnel who came to them simply because they were a group of ex-servicemen running an employment agency for veterans and serving personnel. I have not read one of their annual reports lately, but there could be a lot of interesting information there. I assume that is still being funded.

Brig. Townley—I do not know the answer to that.

Mr EDWARDS—You are aware of it?

Brig. Townley—Yes, I am.

Cmdr Smith—The Navy is probably in a reasonable position to make some judgments about how well people might be doing post-separation, because the vast majority of our personnel from the service elect to transfer to the reserves when they separate. In fact more than 50 per cent who are currently active in the reserves have formerly served in the permanent Navy. One of our problems in targeting these people to come back for Reserve work is that they are already quite happily employed outside.

Another interesting point that might be worth noting in the context of this discussion is that we have three peak separation periods. The first is between four and six years of service. There are two major reasons cited for people separating, and one is the desire to make a career change while still young enough. They would be at the leading seaman rank when they got out. The four- to six-year mark is significant because, when people enlist, they sign up for either four years or six years, depending on which employment group they are going into. The other major reason cited for their leaving is for lifestyle changes: they have lived in harsh conditions and barracks type accommodation and they want to get out and experience something a little more comfortable.

The other point I want to make on the subject of people who have left is that we have recently embarked on a re-entry campaign. We went through the last round late last year. We wrote to targeted people in what we call 'critical employment groups'—people who have got out in the last two to three years—and we invited them to come back under what we consider to be fairly attractive conditions of service. While we have been reasonably successful—we would only need to get a few people coming back in, particularly in the technical areas, to consider that we have had a success—the majority of people that we have been able to contact have been quite happily employed outside.

Mr PRICE—Navy has the best figures in terms of female enlistment. Is one of the problems that, when women decide to have a family, we tend to lose them notwithstanding a significant amount of investment—that seems to be the wrong word—in training and so on? Are those women coming back? Are the conditions sufficiently attractive to bring those women back?

Cmdr Smith—I have recently spent a bit of time looking at the situation with career and family issues—I am talking about the officer corps on this issue; I cannot speak with as much familiarity for the sailors—and we have found that women who separate at our next peak, which is at the 10- to 12-year mark, do so in part for family reasons. At the 10- to 12-year mark, these women are reaching a point where they need to go to sea to get what we call their charge qualifications—so they would be either a head of department or an executive officer of a warship.

We know the average age that women are having their first child in the military is 29, which is fairly similar to community standards from my understanding. There is no doubt that when faced with a decision to press on—to put family on hold or to have a family, with the prospect of trying to get back to sea for that critical posting that will give them their tick in the box for advancement to the more senior ranks—a lot of them are separating because it is very difficult to juggle family and deployments. There is no doubt about that.

As to whether the service is flexible enough, I do not think we have gone anywhere near as far as we will need to. Looking at the changes to demographics—the changes that were talked about earlier regarding our understanding of how the labour market and people's work lifestyles are changing—we will have to be far more flexible in our crewing arrangements, I believe, but we are not anywhere near that yet.

CHAIR—Did you say that the average age for women in the services to have their first child is 29?

Cmdr Smith—Yes.

Mr NAIRN—You just said that you have started a campaign to recruit people back in. How long has that being going? Is it too early to see how successful it is?

Cmdr Smith—I can let you know the figures to date. We ran the first re-entry campaign last year. There would not be anyone here who could give me the figures for that. I could not tell you those. I would say roughly 80 people may have been written to and we might have got seven re-entering—somewhere in that ballpark. In this current campaign, we have had re-engagement letters sent to 71 people offering them favourable conditions of service: re-entry at

the rank that they left, no loss of seniority et cetera. Of the 16 who have responded to date, two people have indicated that they are willing to re-enter. These are at the senior sailor level, in our critical categories. Three have declined and 11 responses have been 'return to sender'. The letters have only gone out in the last four weeks, I think. It is still early days but we think that even getting two accepting up to now has already justified the resourcing. We have a reservist working three days a week on this task. Already, we have recouped our outlay.

Mr NAIRN—How long have these people been out of the service?

Cmdr Smith—They have been out for two years, or within the last two years.

Mr NAIRN—Is the same thing happening in the Army and the Air Force?

Air Cdre McLennan—I think Air Force kicked off the program, to some extent due to specific shortages, particularly of pilots. Wing Commander Hindmarsh should be able to give you some fairly good figures with respect to that.

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—We started this in March of last year. We placed two advertisements in the paper. We now routinely provide a letter to each person who leaves and we follow up 12 months later. In financial year 2001-02, we had 49 airmen and 39 officers rejoin. Along with that, we also had about 40 lateral recruits from within Australia and overseas, and about 65 to 75 from the RNZAF joined us.

Mr NAIRN—Are these people that have predominantly done just their initial minimum—what is the minimum that you have to be in for; is it four or six years?—or are they often people that have been in for quite some time—

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—Correct.

Mr NAIRN—who then drop out and a year or so later think: 'I made a mistake. I will go back.'

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—What we are trying to do in Air Force is to adopt a different culture. The ADF has very much had a culture that the door slams behind you when you leave. We are very much changing that culture in Air Force, and I believe Navy and Army are doing the same thing. It is more a culture of a revolving door, so that when people leave, for whatever reason—whether it be because of family pressures, change of lifestyle, change of career or whatever—we want them to stay in contact with us so that if their circumstances change they can rejoin us with, probably, like conditions to when they left, or perhaps even better conditions to when they left, taking into account what they may have done in the time since they left the Air Force. As I said, we have been running this since March/April of last year, but this is only one of a complementary set of strategies that the Air Force has to aid recruiting and retention. It should not be looked upon as an individual initiative.

Mr PRICE—We were at RAAF Edinburgh recently and it was pretty hard to spot the female pilots. I take it that pilot recruitment—getting them back in, I mean—is almost exclusively male?

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—The problem that we seem to experience with female pilots—and Air Commodore McLennan can certainly speak to this—is that there is very little interest in being a female pilot. There was an initial surge of interest when pilot positions were opened up to females, but there simply are not large numbers of people applying. There is no actual prejudicial bias in the recruiting profile; it is simply that we are not that interesting to a lot of females.

Mr PRICE—I find that hard to believe.

Air Cdre McLennan—We did too, to be frank. Pilot—and, in fact, all air crew positions—was opened up to females some time ago. Indeed, there is only one very small category within the Air Force which is not open to females. The Navy is much the same: there is one small category—clearance divers—which is not open to females. There was an initial flurry of excitement, I suppose—the pathfinders—and then it just died. I am not too sure what the reason is apart from the fact that a lot of the females have looked around and said, ‘What would I rather do?’ and pilot does not seem to come high on the list for some reason. Those that we have are simply outstanding, in every case. But there is just not a queue at the door.

CHAIR—It would be an interesting comparison to see whether it is also reflected in civilian airline employment, because I do not see too many female pilots. It is just an observation.

Air Cdre McLennan—You do not see too many females there. Once again, it has been available for quite some time.

Mr EDWARDS—In relation to the figures that you gave us from the Navy about people’s reasons for separation, I assume that every ADF person who leaves is quizzed as to why they are leaving, so we would have some fairly good statistics as to their reasons. Does the reason that you put forward—because a number of people want another choice in their lifestyle while they are still young enough to pursue that—apply across the board to the three forces? What would the other reasons be?

Cmdr Smith—I can give you the reasons that I have. I was jotting them down this morning when we were talking on another topic. I mentioned the two main reasons. We have got very good data on this. When someone indicates their notice to discharge from the service, there is a requirement for the commanding officer to interview that member. Essentially, they then have to write a report back to the career management agency in Canberra with not only the reasons for wanting to separate that that person is indicating but also what we might actually be able to offer in order to retain them.

Mr PRICE—Everyone is interviewed?

Cmdr Smith—Yes, they are.

Mr PRICE—It is not the 15 per cent who respond.

Cmdr Smith—That is for Navy.

Mr EDWARDS—What about across the other services?

Col. Kehoe—The same applies for Army. As the commanding officer of a unit, I interviewed every soldier who left my unit, regardless of whether they were posted or were actually moving on discharge. On the application form that the member fills out to indicate that he wishes to either separate from the service or transfer to a part-time component, the member puts down the reasons why and the commanding officer makes comments. Sometimes members will not be as forthcoming as they perhaps wish to be, but, generally, a good CO will ascertain the reasons why over a coffee table chat with a soldier. That type of interview is different from the formal exit survey that was spoken about earlier today.

Mr PRICE—What is done with the information? Is there any analysis of it? It seems to me that Navy is using it as a point of intervention, either to correct something or maybe to retain personnel.

Col. Kehoe—Once again, from a coalface point of view, when the soldier initially gives an indication that he or she may well be looking for something different, junior leaders at every level are encouraged to talk to them. What we have, certainly within the full-time combat force, is a pro forma which gives a series of cascading options to spoon-feed the young leader—obviously we are talking often about young corporals or young lieutenants who may well be in their early 20s—a series of questions to ask as to what they might do to sway that person. Often, it might be a specific issue that has occurred, and the soldier says, ‘I’ve had enough. I’ll actually head off.’ With a bit of coalface counselling the junior leader will say things like, ‘Have you thought about taking a bit of leave without pay to cool off?’ or, ‘You have become disenchanted with being a rifleman. Have you thought about a core transfer to another branch?’ We are finding that, like a lot of things, when that occurs up at the coalface with the junior leader who that person is actually interfacing with on a regular basis, that is where the best intervention occurs. I found that when I as a CO actually interviewed a soldier who had got through that process to that point, I had very little sway over them. I suspect that is just human nature.

Mr PRICE—But there is nothing systemic done with the information that is gathered at that interview? I appreciate that it is an opportunity to take action locally or offer alternatives.

Col. Kehoe—The information from both soldier and officer is collected at the career management agencies. I cannot speak for what occurs there. I can find out, if you like, to see if we are.

Mr PRICE—Thank you.

Mr EDWARDS—I was wondering whether that sort of information is fed back to recruiting agents and might impact on the sort of person they are looking for.

Col. Kehoe—Once again, I will have a look at that.

Wing Cmdr Hindmarsh—I want to bring up a point about the retention issue. Anecdotally, we find that most people form a decision to leave between 12 and 18 months before they take any action to leave. Although we make our best efforts to ascertain whether a person can be swayed into staying, once they have notified an intent to separate they are normally too far along the psychological decision making trail to make them change their minds. What the ADF has done to try to get ahead of that decision cycle is to do regular ‘your say’ retention surveys

and the like. I have one available here. Of all the people who were surveyed recently, 45 per cent of respondents indicated that they had not considered leaving the ADF or that they intended to stay until retirement age, a separate 22.9 per cent said that they plan to leave within the next two years and a further 25.3 per cent plan to leave in the following three to seven years. The point I make is that, rather than relying upon the grassroots approach, which although still required may be too little too late, we are getting ahead of the game by surveying our people to gain an assessment of their intent to leave in a time frame which allows us to address the issues that they may raise. If we can do this in a timely fashion, it may prevent them from leaving.

Mr Jackman—A follow-up on that: those same statistics apply in the private sector. The reality is that, of those people who resign and are then convinced to stay, 90 per cent will leave within 12 months. There is some survey material out there that say that 40 per cent of people tend to change jobs within the following two years and another 40 per cent—maybe it is the same 40 per cent—want to change careers within the next five years. Given all those statistics, I do not think the ADF is that out of tune with everything. What you can draw from that, I think, is that perhaps it is not the environment that the ADF lives in but the community that we all live in.

Air Cdre McLennan—Perhaps it is worth adding that our separation rate over the last three years has been around 13 per cent and is now heading to 11½ per cent. By industry standards—and I think Malcolm will be able to back this up—most industries would give their hind legs for those sorts of figures. I think 17 per cent is more the norm, and in some areas it is a lot more.

Mr Jackman—The Australian Graduate School of Management, with Fairfax and Hewitt's, run 'the best employers to work for in Australia'. The last published statistics I saw from them was that the winners in that category had separation rates of 15 per cent. The separation rate of the group that participated in that survey was 20 per cent. Most employers would tell you that, on average, somewhere between 30 per cent and 40 per cent is the Australian norm for business. That figure of 30 per cent or 40 per cent takes into account the entire casual work force as well. The ADF's separation rates would probably be the lowest in the country.

Col. Boyd—Returning to the question of the exit survey: a list of the top 10 reasons cited for leaving are contained in the blue book on Mr Jackson's desk. That data is drawn from the exit survey. I cannot tell you all of the 10 reasons in there, but one of the quite prominent ones, not surprisingly, is to take up outside employment. Other reasons are probably of no surprise to those working in the retention business in the ADF: geographic stability, spouse employment, children's education and those sorts of things. They all feature, but certainly the No. 1 reason cited—and I think it is consistent for the three services; it is certainly the main reason overall—is to take up outside employment or to pursue outside employment while still young enough to do so.

On the other issue about being a little more proactive, something that my area is working on at the moment is the development of a commanders' retention toolkit. That will provide a range of tools for commanders to enable them to do the sorts of things that Colonel Kehoe was talking about on a more consistent basis across the whole of the ADF. Colonel Kehoe mentioned that, by the time it gets to the CO's attention, it is often too late. I would agree with that. I think that by the time it gets to the CO's attention it is an application that has been signed. The member

has passed some psychological point where, really, he or she has made up their mind about getting out. It takes an enormous amount to persuade them otherwise.

A couple of tools that will be in this retention toolkit will provide statistical data to commanders so that they can run a search on our personnel system and identify in advance those people most likely to leave. If they fall into certain categories—for example, if they are approaching the end of their period of service, or they are a female member approaching the child bearing stage, or one of the other peaks of separation such as working in a critical trade—using this tool we should be able to put that into the computer and get a list of names. We would then proactively go to those people before they reach that critical period and ask: ‘How’s it going? Are you still happy in the service? Are there any issues that we need to address.’ So, hopefully, we will address those things before the member makes that critical decision and passes that psychological point where they have really made up their mind. My staff are working on the retention toolkit at the moment and we hope to have it out by September.

CHAIR—Major General Stevens, are you advised when people are separating as to whether they have an entitlement, or do they come to you seeking that entitlement? Are you advised, in relation to the separation from services and that process, of entitlements?

Major Gen. Stevens—I do not think I could say that we are advised. What we have been trying to do is go the other way and take part in all of these resettlement seminars, take part in the discharge process to have information provided to the person who is leaving the service of what their entitlements are. With the development of the Transition Management Service, we are now advised of those who will be discharged on invalidity grounds, but I would have to say they are the only ones who are about to be discharged whose names are given to us. As far as I am aware, we do not get the names of the people who are undergoing the non-invalidity process.

CHAIR—Would you be aware of, say, those who have been to East Timor or Afghanistan and who have a veteran’s entitlement?

Major Gen. Stevens—I would probably have to say, in general, no. Some of them have applied to the department to have their service recognised as qualifying service. So in a sense we would know who they were but, in general terms, no we do not get told those names until a person applies and we follow through the claims process that that person puts in train.

CHAIR—So you are not advised of the name, rank and serial number of someone who has been to Timor and has a veteran’s entitlement?

Major Gen. Stevens—In general terms, we are not.

CHAIR—So you have to go searching when they come to you?

Major Gen. Stevens—That is correct.

Cmdr Brown—We do have all that data, though. Defence has that data, so it is easy to provide should they need it.

CHAIR—How easy is easy? Is it kept on manual files or is it in computer generated files?

Cmdr Brown—Both.

Mr PRICE—Are the separation peaks that the Navy ran through for us different from the Army and the Air Force?

Col. Boyd—There is a slight difference between male and female that reflects the imperative, I suppose, on the females to go off and have families but, otherwise, no.

Mr PRICE—I think General Cosgrove, as Chief of Army, said that he was going to allow a new category of ‘retired Army member’, which would allow them to be recalled as necessary—it is not ‘inactive’, but I cannot think of the phrase. Has that been implemented yet?

Col. Kehoe—You might be referring to the new categories of service, one of which is the stand-by reserve. Is that the organisation to which you are referring?

Mr PRICE—It could be. They are recently retired. Beforehand, you could retire and disappear into the ether, couldn't you?

Col. Kehoe—What they are referring to there, I believe—and this is not just an Army matter; it concerns the ADF—is that, as a result of some legislation from last year, there will be a new group. We are revising the categories of service, which will mainly affect the way we label the reserves. The inactive reserve will essentially become the stand-by reserve in that it will not have a regular and required commitment of time. The active reserve will essentially mirror what is the General Reserve at the moment.

Mr PRICE—Won't the inactive reserve allow you to keep in better contact with former ADF members?

Col. Kehoe—In the same way that we do contact and keep track of inactive reserve members at the moment. A member who was to transfer to the stand-by reserve under the draft conditions that we are proposing will have no training commitment per se, so it will really be up to the member to ensure that he or she initiates contact—for example, if they were to change postal address or something. I know Army in particular are looking to see whether or not we need to more specifically target individual trades or ranks that are critical and to work out whether we need to pay some sort of incentive to make sure that somebody in certain critical trades does keep in contact when they are in the stand-by reserve. But we are in the early stages of that at the moment.

Mr EDWARDS—It was mentioned earlier that the DVA get involved only when someone is being discharged on the basis of invalidity. That is where we get into the situation where there seems to be a dual role between ADF and DVA. Earlier, Ray Brown indicated that, with regard to his transition, there was a fair amount of confusion and disappointment in that whole process. Could we examine some of those issues regarding the treatment of ADF personnel when they are discharged on the basis of invalidity?

Mr R. Brown—Initially, when I went through my transition I had a family: I had three children and a newborn. As can be appreciated by a couple of the other representatives here, that whole scenario was new in that we had a high-level injury with a family and no procedures had been put in place for that, especially with regard to a peacetime injured person. A lot of it was trial and error and was concerned with what could be instigated to assist the family, not so much the individual. As an individual it is a lot easier, but when you are dealing with a family—and at that stage I had done 10 years service—there is the thing where you do not want to leave the service because you are comfortable and happy. Then we found that the services provided, such as counselling, housing and financial assistance, were new grounds. What I and my family went through was documented so that we could come up with a procedure. That was eight years ago. I must admit that now the procedure is a lot smoother; however, it is still not without fault.

What is happening is obviously at the instigation of the TMS—there was no TMS when I went through. It has been instigated but it does need honing. There is some confusion within the three services—DVA, MCRS and Defence health—in that, whilst the member is serving, Defence health does all the covering of costs and procurements. However, TMS is there but it does not really cut in until the member is discharged. So what we have is three departments trying to sort out who is going to pay for it. Unit commanders do not want to dip into their pockets, because their budget is for their unit. MCRS and DVA do not want to come in, because the member is still serving. I have spoken with the DVA and MCRS representatives and they are fully aware of that problem.

What we feel should happen is that, when a member is earmarked for discharge—and it is going to be obvious in some cases—the MCRS and DVA should come in and do the transitional management from that point, leaving the unit and its funds out of it. There are still cases now of confusion with people being discharged on medical grounds. Some people have been known to just say, ‘I’ve had enough; I’ve been stuffed around. I’m getting out; I’ll do it myself.’ There are cases of that. Thankfully, there are not a lot of them, but they are there. I suppose that, while they are still there, there are too many.

Cmdr Smith—I would just like to lend some support to that claim. Sadly, I have just been advised in the last week of a case involving a sailor who survived the *Westralia* fire. He was the last out of the engine room, in fact. He is about to be TPI’d—is that the right expression?

Major Gen. Stevens—No.

Cmdr Smith—He has been discharged on medical grounds. He was one of those cases that went to work in a non-Navy environment—it was actually an Army environment that he went to work in. Because he was not medically fit to perform the task, they had him removed from the unit. He was left to languish in the mess drinking coffee for several months before Navy was hooked back into this particular sailor’s case. The Navy commanding officer who had administrative responsibility for him then had enormous difficulty getting advice from the ADF medical people as to how he could be appropriately employed. They said that, for confidentiality reasons, they were not able to give any information. By the way, it came back to Navy’s attention because his wife contacted the Chief of Navy personally.

Mr PRICE—That was not a bad move.

Cmdr Smith—But it is a sad indictment of the system.

Mr PRICE—I agree.

Cmdr Smith—The other point I want to make about this story that was told to me in the last week is that this sailor now has his discharge date from the medical people but it has come through too late. Veterans' Affairs were not able to actually kick their process into touch until they had a discharge date. Now the sailor is discharged and he is not likely to be getting any benefits, I am told, for about six months. I was actually asked to flag this if there was an opportunity.

Mr EDWARDS—It is called a dorothy dixer.

Cmdr Smith—There are a lot of systemic problems here; there are obviously problems in connecting. Navy are obviously not hooked in here as well as we could be. It does not appear that the system is working as well as it could.

Major Tattersall—I would like to address the point that was raised by Ray Brown. Ray was injured in a training accident in the Northern Territory. This was about 12 months before the focus was brought in on the issue of the Blackhawk crash. I was contacted by the Chief of Army, who asked me if I would speak to Ray while he was still undergoing treatment at Moorong Spinal Unit. At that point in time, he had been injured for about eight months. Is that right, Ray?

Mr R. Brown—Yes.

Major Tattersall—I found him up there about a month before he was due to be discharged as medically unfit. The importance of Ray's injury and of bringing him forward had a fairly large effect on the manpower resources within the ADF. His unit had not been in contact with him for most of the time that he was in hospital, the Defence Community Organisation was out of the loop because there was no CO reporting mechanism and the compensation system that was available under the Military Compensation Scheme was inadequate for Ray's needs. In other words, the amounts of money that were being offered to Ray were fairly small in comparison to what they could have been if he had owned his own home and vehicle. Then he could have had elements of the compensation act apply to his circumstances. What then happened was that we put together a case which went forward to the department of finance for an act of grace payment to Ray. We brought the Defence Housing Authority into play to allow for the manufacture or the purchase and modification of a home. Then MCRS came across to assist in purchasing a vehicle which was then able to be modified for Ray's needs.

This was the early intervention of trying to bring together the old MCRS or the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 into the modern term, as we now see it post Blackhawk. Fortunately, we were able to get the authority from the department of finance and set Ray up as best we could at that stage. Shortly following that we had the Blackhawk crash, if I remember rightly. Once the Blackhawk crash inquiry was over, a lot of the infrastructure that was put into play for Ray was able to be put on the table, and then changes were made to the Defence Act.

Mr Tye—I was involved in military compensation and rehabilitation at that time, and Ray's case was the catalyst for many of the changes that happened. The work was starting and Blackhawk provided a further catalyst for a lot of the changes that happened to the Military Compensation Act and for the military compensation schemes that came into place. But many of the arrangements put in place—not just the compensation but the support organisations as well—were a consequence of the situation that Ray Brown found himself in, of having been basically lost to the organisation for a while whilst in Moorong. It was less than favourable treatment of a member.

CHAIR—Major General Stevens, can you comment on the Navy situation and the lag time of six months?

Major Gen. Stevens—I do not quite understand why there is a lag time of six months, in the sense that a person who is injured in service can put in a claim straightaway. But it is up to the person to make that claim. I understand that in this particular case the individual concerned was somehow lost within the system and so may not have got the right advice, or any advice. It was not picked up early enough.

If the person makes a claim under the Military Compensation Scheme, they will go through the process of that scheme, which includes an attempt to look at whether that person can be rehabilitated to the extent that they can be re-employed in the ADF—perhaps in a different role—or a decision will be made that they cannot be employed in the ADF and they will have to leave. As I understand it, once that is done, there is a transition from Defence care, which is something that Ray was talking about, to MCRS care or DVA care—one of the two. The DVA schemes do not have the rehabilitation component. A decision is simply made about the level of injury that the person has and whether it is caused by war, and then about the level of pension that would apply. If the person is totally and permanently incapacitated, that payment cannot start until they are no longer working, because it is for people who are unable to work more than eight hours per week. You could not still be employed in the ADF and be receiving a TPI pension, because one would cancel the other. This is a long way of saying it. The only way that I can see a six-month lag time is if the person involved has only just put in a claim and that claim is still to be resolved; the resolution time will come into effect.

Mr PRICE—What is the average resolution time?

Major Gen. Stevens—I think the average time for resolving a disability compensation claim is about 60 days.

Mr PRICE—I am really interested in your comments about 'totally and permanently incapacitated'. I have a relatively young guy in my electorate who I am very proud of. He and his partner decided to undertake a university course. He has done two years of it, but she has found that she is unable to claim Austudy and, as a result of not being able to claim Austudy and repaying the Austudy that they receive, they have both now given up. With younger people on T and PI, the suggestion that they can never go back to the work force may not always be valid. I think that, if they are capable of doing a degree, your department ought to encourage them to do that.

Major Gen. Stevens—I could not agree with you more. The fact is that a person is admitted to what is actually called a ‘special rate pension’ in the act—T and PI in the old days. A person makes a claim to the department that the injury they have is service related and it stops them from working for more than eight hours a week—that is what the department in the end rules; the act says that this injury must be permanent. We on the Repatriation Commission agree with your contention—especially for the younger veterans—that to face a life on the TPI pension benefits is not the best outlook. Over the last three or four years, we have revitalised our rehabilitation scheme, called the Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme. This is a scheme available to help people transiting from the ADF. The scheme can also help people on TPI pensions in that it contains a safety net. They must be assessed by a rehabilitation agency; in our case, it is the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service. Once they start their training program and go through it, and if they get employment, their TPI benefits remain as a safety net. If they do not earn sufficient money to bring them to that level or if they drop out of their employment for some reason, their TPI benefit kicks back in again.

We have had modest success with this program. Not a lot of TPIs have come on to it. I think the reason for that is that the majority of people in these days and times who are made TPI are Vietnam veterans. They are in their mid-50s and some of them are just not interested. This is a voluntary scheme, not a compulsory scheme. The return to work outcome for 50-year-olds is not as good as the return to work outcome for younger people. A working party that I am chairing is just in the process of making a report to the commission on ways to improve the Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme. The committee of inquiry that the government has set up to look at the veterans act has also a term of reference to look at the way we might improve our rehabilitation.

Mr PRICE—I would put the point to you that, if someone is capable of working even for six hours a week, this may make a huge difference to their self-esteem.

Major Gen. Stevens—Yes, but we would not stop them doing that. Under the act, as long as they do not work more than eight hours then we have no cause to pay any attention to what they are doing. You can work up to eight hours a week and still be a TPI.

Mr PRICE—But the availability of assistance to get any of the skills required to work six hours is not great.

Major Gen. Stevens—It is provided through this Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme.

Mr PRICE—How many are on that?

Major Gen. Stevens—I will have to get you the accurate figures but I think that, since we started four years ago, we have had about 1,000 inquiries, if my memory serves me correctly. Not all of those were assessed as being capable of undertaking a rehabilitation program. I will have to get you the figures, I think, instead of trying to guess or remember what they are.

Mr PRICE—I would be grateful if you could just give us a bit more detail on notice about that scheme.

Major Gen. Stevens—We can easily do that.

Mr PRICE—Do you do anything for the spouses of those on special rate pensions? They can have an expectation of staying at home or whatever, until that accident happens or that injury occurs. Do you provide anything for them at all? In fact, it may be really critical for their earning power to be advanced.

Major Gen. Stevens—In general terms again—there is no access to the vocational rehabilitation scheme for spouses.

Mr PRICE—Not rehabilitation, but training?

Major Gen. Stevens—We do not run a training program. We provide the spouses of TPI veterans with income support and they are entitled to a partner service pension. All service pensions are asset tested, so the family's other income may cut them out of that but they are entitled to apply for it.

Mr PRICE—Pardon my ignorance, but how much is that?

Major Gen. Stevens—I do not know off the top of my head. I will get you those figures as well. But we do provide them with income support, and carer allowance is available to them through Centrelink.

Mr EDWARDS—Now that the issue of the sailor from the *Westralia* has been raised, would you take that on notice so that we can find out as a committee what the situation is.

Cmdr Smith—Certainly.

Mr EDWARDS—Whether that is through DVA or—

CHAIR—It has been referred to DVA; is that right?

Mr Travers—I would say that, if the person put a claim in through either the MCRS or the DVA, it would be with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Mr EDWARDS—I do not care who handles this, as long as we get some information as to the current status.

CHAIR—You would like that at our next committee hearing?

Mr EDWARDS—Yes. I am not going to touch on the compensation issues much, because I know that the writing up of some legislation is currently taking place. There is consultation with veterans organisations, although I understand that the process is very slow. Indeed, we have been waiting for this legislation to get to parliament for some time now. So I am not going to touch on it much, but I have been advised that there is some sort of stand-off between DVA and Defence. Could someone tell me what that stand-off is and how soon it is going to be resolved? I think this whole MCRS issue is fairly important.

Mr J. Brown—Calling it a stand-off would be very strong wording indeed. There are three issues that remain under discussion—issues that I think we will be able to resolve fairly effectively. The first issue is of a technical nature. It is to do with the type of assessment that will be provided, whether it is assessment through the GARP process as used under the veterans' act or through the PIG—the permanent impairment guide. Both of those are under revision and have implications. At the moment, though, I think we are of one mind in looking towards the GARP process. The issue of governance was under some discussion in terms of the role of the review board. Again, we do not disagree about the nature and content of the review; we are just trying avoid additional levels of review to ensure that we do not further complicate already complicated procedures. So while there is pretty strong and robust discussion at the working group, which includes a range of ex-service organisations, the main focus is to get the stuff on the table so we can work through it. The issues between DVA and us are matters at that level as opposed to matters of significant substance, as I see it.

Major Gen. Stevens—I would agree with that assessment. The new Military Compensation Scheme is to be based on the military compensation and rehabilitation scheme structure, melded with elements of the Veterans' Entitlements Act so that the new scheme covers what is now covered by both schemes. This sounds simple but it is quite difficult to do in some cases. Now that we have been given the go-ahead to develop the new act, that is what is taking time at the moment. I believe there is no stand-off between the two departments.

Mr EDWARDS—The go-ahead was given some years ago. I recall being briefed on this when I first came into the parliament in about 1999. So the go-ahead has been there; it just seems to have been a fairly long and protracted process. Indeed, I understand that the previous Minister for Defence put a hold on it for all of last year. I am pleased that it is starting to come together and that there is some robust debate on these things. The word 'stand-off' was given to me by one of the ESOs on the working party.

Major Tattersall, I thought you touched on a crucial issue in relation to rehabilitation, particularly for people with severe disabilities, and that is home ownership. Members of the ADF and their spouses only have a limited time in military housing, and long-term security for themselves and their families is very important for ADF personnel who are caught up in these circumstances.

Mr R. Brown—You were talking about pensions, return to work and vocation. I would like to bring up the point that, when we talk about special rate pensions, income support and the voluntary return to work, that applies to those who have VA coverage. Those who are peacetime injured receive only 75 per cent of their discharge wages plus they have to undertake an assessment for a return to work. I would like to bring up the fact that an assessment of whether you are able to return to work takes place under the MCRS. You were touching on the DHA home. It is also a problem that for the severely injured person being discharged the chances of getting a home loan are very minimal, even with a lump sum. That is an area we are looking at in the new scheme.

DHA need to play a bigger part in transition. There is a quadriplegic RAAF guy who is currently in the RAAF hospital. It is very important to get him out into the community and used to being away from the RAAF and preparing to go into his own home. The problem we had was that when we tried to find out what was happening with the house that I used through DHA

earlier this year, the answer that came back was: 'No, I'm afraid that house is no longer under DHA control and we don't have it.' At the start of June, the question was asked, 'Can you go and have a look at a house that might be suitable?' and it just happened to be the one they said was no longer under their control. So, when it comes to DHA, I think that they have to be more integrated within the transitional stages as well, especially with the new compensation scheme coming up.

Mr EDWARDS—Those are very important issues, and I hope the parliament will be very firm in its scrutiny of them. I will be very disappointed if our parliament accepts that it is a fair enough thing for an injured soldier—perhaps at the level of private—to live for the rest of his or her life on 75 per cent of a private's wage.

Mr J. Brown—We have been doing a lot of exploration of the safety net issue, and this is one of the areas where robust debate has been enjoyed. It is not about not giving an appropriate amount but about what should be the best marker or indicator to ensure that it reflects appropriate community standards, whether that is based on a better Defence salary or one of the other systems for linking it. We are all very conscious of that.

Mr EDWARDS—Good.

Mr PRICE—Is there a time line for wrapping this up?

Mr J. Brown—We had hoped to get something ready in time for the autumn sittings, but there are three problems we have to work through. One is the impact of these two forms of assessment. There is a review of the second version of the GARP, and we have to look at the actuarial impacts of those in getting the amount of detail and transferring it in. We are very conscious that, if we cut the process short, having restarted it with vigour, we should not cut out the input and time for discussion of the ex-service organisations and others. It is really going to be a matter of balancing our preferred time line against getting the best possible scheme we can get.

Mr PRICE—Is that for a cabinet submission or for drafting principles of legislation?

Mr J. Brown—We are working towards an exposure draft in parallel with working on the major issues.

Mr Johnson—The hope is that an exposure draft will be available for comment in the latter part of this year. While the working party is designed to allow everyone involved to raise issues and discuss those issues, there will be an exposure draft for ESOs and other groups to look at before the legislation is put before the parliament.

Mr EDWARDS—The committee has been given the date of October. I am not sure how firm that will be. That was at another of our hearings.

Mr Tye—Mr Edwards spoke about the rate being 75 per cent. In fact, it is 70 per cent. That is the rate that is applicable to all Commonwealth employees and has been since 1988. The rate under the Military Compensation Scheme arrangements, as they apply to ADF members and to

support, is the rate applicable to all Commonwealth employees and it has been applicable since the 1988 act came into being. That is where it is derived from.

Mr EDWARDS—That does not mean to say that it is a fair thing.

Mr Tye—No, I was just saying that—

Mr EDWARDS—I just hope that the committee is not accepting that as a fair thing, because I will be very disappointed if the parliament accepts it as a fair thing.

CHAIR—There are really two issues here, aren't there? One is the level of military compensation and the other is transition management and how that adequately deals with the situation of the *Westralia* and, formerly, with your case, Ray. There are the old cases and those that are not going to come under the new act; it is about how those are dealt with as well and how they interact with the Veterans' Entitlement Act, where that applies. Regarding those who are medically discharged, it concerns whether there is any rehabilitation in terms of support or training to see how they can be brought back into the work force in whatever capacity. I think you have made the point, Roger, about someone on TPI being on that entitlement for life and not being able to be rehabilitated, necessarily, into the work force—or being seen to be unable to get back.

Mr J. Brown—Certainly, in our discussions about this, we emphasise that it is safety, rehabilitation and compensation, and that getting the first two right is as important as effectively helping people in life.

Mr EDWARDS—I agree entirely.

Mr J. Brown—So that is going to be a strong focus of the new legislation.

CHAIR—And there is the lack of housing and motor vehicles, and having the issue of DHA in there. Are they involved in any discussion here?

Mr J. Brown—We have started to look at what the role of the housing authority could be. This issue was discussed at the last meeting and I think we have noted the concern that rehabilitation would be incredibly difficult if people's circumstances, environment, housing and welfare have not been dealt with as part of the total package.

Mr Cooke—I was just going to make the point that Jason has already made: the current legislation does have a significant focus on rehabilitation and that is the plan for the new legislation.

CHAIR—Are there any other questions or further comments?

Mr EDWARDS—In relation to that, or on other issues?

CHAIR—That or other issues.

Mr EDWARDS—I understand that the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service in Townsville is conducting an evaluation of all East Timor peacekeepers for the period of 1 January 2002 to 30 July 2002, investigating suicide risk, trauma, alcohol abuse and relationship difficulties. I understand that this work is being conducted in association with local Defence Force clinicians. I just wonder, in due course, whether it would be possible for the committee to be briefed on the results of that evaluation.

Given that some of the issues are being looked at—and I assume that these are current issues within the ADF: suicide risk, trauma, alcohol abuse and relationship difficulties—I wonder what work is being done within the ADF, for instance, on alcohol and other substance abuse. To what degree is it an issue and a problem? Reading about kitbags full of alcohol being taken off boats and these sorts of things does raise some concern as to the extent of alcohol abuse. Is it any better or any worse than it has been for the last 100 years? How is it in comparison to community standards?

Cmdr Brown—The particular incident, I guess, you are referring to is in relation to the incident on *Darwin*.

Mr EDWARDS—Just generally, but some of it does spring from that.

Cmdr Brown—I think there was a large amount of alcohol found on board in the instance of *Darwin*, because there was very cheap alcohol available on Christmas Island. It was not so much that people were bringing that alcohol onto the ship to abuse it there; they were bringing it on because it was cheap and they wanted to take it home. I think the evidence that we have is that the abuse of alcohol at sea is only something that occurs in minor instances. Do you want to go further down that track?

Mr EDWARDS—I would just be interested in general comments. I must say, I was very surprised to learn that where 2RAR were deployed in East Timor, for instance, it was a completely dry camp.

Col. Cotton—One of my responsibilities is the implementation of the ADF Mental Health Strategy. It was developed last year and was launched by Minister Vale in May of this year. The Mental Health Strategy was a key recommendation of the *ADF Health status report (2000)*. It is designed to draw together the broad range of mental health services that we already deliver to the ADF. That includes addressing substance abuse, alcohol abuse and those sorts of things. Earlier this year, it was funded to the tune of \$5½ million over a four-year period. A key component of that funding is for an ADF alcohol management program. We have recently advertised and interviewed for a national coordinator of drug and alcohol practitioners for the ADF, and we have advertised this weekend for 16 addiction practitioners to be deployed across the country at our major concentrations of troops.

The alcohol management program was based on a document known as *Sobering facts*. I have a copy here that I can leave with you, if you would like. It showed that rates of alcohol use in the ADF were higher than in the general community. That is a concern for us. That is certainly what prompted the alcohol management program. We are being fairly proactive about this. As far as I am aware, we are the only Western nation that has a comprehensive mental health strategy for its people. The key themes of the strategy are about improving our surveillance and

our understanding of mental health issues within the ADF, focusing predominantly on promotion of mental health and the prevention of and early intervention in any mental health problems that occur within the ADF. So we are being quite proactive about that. As I said, we have basically been going since the start of the year, so we are as busy as one can be in trying to implement something like this.

Major Gen. Stevens—The study that Mr Edwards mentioned rings a bell with me. I will let you know exactly what it is. Prima facie, I do not see any reason why you would not be able to see the results of it.

CHAIR—That would be good. We will have that on notice.

Mr EDWARDS—What I was actually reading from was an answer to the previous question I raised. That was the response given by the Minister for Defence to the shadow minister. It is on the record.

Col. Cotton—I should have mentioned this before. The study that you are talking about, Mr Edwards, is a community based intervention program being run by the VVCS in Townsville. We have very strong links with the DVA through the DVA links program and through the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, which is jointly funded by the Department of Defence and DVA. The VVCS program is a trial of a group based intervention program for current serving peacekeeper veterans to look at the broad range of services that we might be able to avail ourselves of in delivering services to the ADF. It is being run over that trial period. It is being evaluated by both DVA and Defence. There will be no problems, as far as I am aware, in providing the results of that study.

Mr EDWARDS—I am greatly encouraged that these sorts of programs are being run. I think it is great, because these things do impact on the whole environment of the defence community. Generally, the better the community is, the better your retention rates are.

Col. Cotton—We have talked a little bit about the fact that some people will not want to use the services that Defence provides, so we need to be smart about the range of services that we can provide. While not keeping tabs on our people who choose to do otherwise, we can make sure that what has been provided to them is appropriate and best practice. With this sort of thing, I can see a great deal of value for the ADF and the community in general by us broadening the services that we can provide to people.

Mr EDWARDS—I would agree. I would just hope that there are some women involved in that.

Col. Cotton—The program is voluntary. I do not know the composition of the people who are involved because, as I said—

Mr EDWARDS—Voluntarily conscript some! That is something the Army is good at.

Col. Cotton—I am unaware of that.

Mr EDWARDS—I take the point, but I would hope that, in the course of that study, there is some involvement of women.

Col. Cotton—Certainly there is no restriction. As I said, it is a voluntary thing, and I am not aware of the composition of the study group.

Ms Reich—In relation to women being involved, there is another joint VVCS and defence initiative that is being run out of Townsville and has also been transferred to Cairns called Peaceful Kids, Peaceful Partners. It is a joint initiative to provide an intervention for the spouses and the children of members who have been deployed. That has been an extremely successful initiative.

Mr PRICE—It is almost giving them respite care. Is that the idea?

Ms Reich—No. It is really just to develop strategies for how to manage when the member is away and some of the issues when the member returns. There are quite significant issues for children of peacekeepers and of people on operational deployments, because they suffer a lot of anxiety about whether the member is going to be safe, whether the member is going to return home and whether the member is going to get killed. These are the sorts of issues that interventions like this seek to deal with and to allay fears around.

Mr EDWARDS—A good training movie is *We Were Soldiers*. That is a good training movie, I reckon, for a lot of things.

Mr PRICE—Mr Tye, how does the ADF rate in terms of the number of peacetime accidents and injuries to ADF members?

Mr Tye—That is a very difficult question for us to answer, because we have a very poor reporting rate. We have a requirement that all fatalities incidents, including dangerous occurrences or what we more commonly call ‘near misses’, are reported, and we estimate that we are getting around a 10 to 15 per cent reporting rate. There is a disinclination, as you are probably aware—as there is a disinclination to claim compensation whilst you are serving—to highlight disability or the possibility of something occurring. Therefore, we have quite a low reporting rate. Major Gary Skewes, in his capacity working for me, is in charge of this area. We receive about 12,000 incident reports a year, so it is very difficult to give you any ratio or any comparison in relation to that. We have a low reporting rate. Most of the injuries and accidents occur as a consequence of PT and sport and training. Those are the primary reasons for most of the injuries.

Mr PRICE—What is the strategy to increase the reporting rate?

Mr Tye—We are about to roll out a strategy to increase the reporting rate through publicity. That has proved to be moderately successful in the past. But, as a consequence of the development of a system called Health Keys—which is supposed to come on line either this year or the beginning of next year—we will have a link with the health services. So, if a person attends an RAP or a ship’s office for medical assistance and they say it is a workplace related injury, that will transfer overnight into our DEFCARE system and we will capture that. We believe we will have 100 per cent capture of all serious personal injuries or incidents—that is,

invalidity or other reasonably serious incidents—where they received medical treatment. That should get us that capture in relation to the ADF.

In relation to dangerous occurrences or near misses, we will continue to develop promotion strategies to get people to report that. We have found that, in one division, a lot of work has been put in to emphasising safety, and that is happening across the defence organisations as a rule. As a consequence of working with the CDF and the secretary, we are emphasising the importance of safety—as safety is a fundamental people issue. As a consequence of the increase of interest in that by General Molan in 1 Division, we have had a significant increase in reporting out of that division. That is about leadership from above, and that is starting to come through from the organisation. Only on 18 June the defence committee made some fairly major decisions in relation to safety, and the report will be part of that promotion campaign.

Air Cdre McLennan—Specifically, the secretary directed that the state of play would be reported quarterly to the defence committee.

Major Skewes—On that, in the last 12 months, the reporting rate has gone up by 80 per cent. So we have had 80 per cent more reports in the last 12 months than in the preceding 12 months.

Mr PRICE—Is that in 1 Division?

Major Skewes—No, that is across defence.

CHAIR—Are there any other comments that anyone would like to make this afternoon? I think the panel are practically satisfied at this stage.

Mr PRICE—Until further notice.

CHAIR—Is there anything that anyone would like to raise today which has not been prompted by a question?

Air Cdre McLennan—From defence's side, we have found this to be a useful discussion, particularly the opportunity to explain some of the things that we are doing in this area—particularly family support, support to deployed forces and transition—which we often do not get the opportunity to pass on. Thank you very much for the approach that the committee has taken. I think it has been a very useful information exchange.

CHAIR—General Stevens, do you want to say anything?

Major Gen. Stevens—I could not have said it better, Mr Chairman.

Mr R. Brown—I would like to reiterate and say thank you for the opportunity to pass on information that I have accumulated over the years.

CHAIR—Thank you for the depth of the representations that you have made here today—that indicates your commitment to the subject and also the serious nature of this issue as seen by the committee—and also for the frankness of the discussions we have had today. They have

been particularly helpful for all members of the committee. I know that we as a committee will perhaps take some of these issues further in the future and put a watching brief on some of the other issues, too. I, myself, have found the discussions to be very helpful, and I think that the frankness of your answers has helped us all as the day has gone on. I conclude by thanking you for your attendance here today and for your participation.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Price**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it and submissions presented at the public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 3.18 p.m.