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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DEFENCE AND TRADE

(DEFENCE SUBCOMMITTEE)

**Reference: The suitability of the Australian Army for peacetime, peacekeeping
and war**

FRIDAY, 17 MARCH 2000

BRISBANE

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

Defence Subcommittee

Friday, 17 March 2000

Members: Senator Ferguson (*Chair*), Senators Bourne, Brownhill, Calvert, Chapman, Cook, Gibbs, Harradine, O'Brien, Payne, Quirke and Schacht and Fran Bailey, Mr Baird, Mr Brereton, Mrs Crosio, Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mr Hawker, Mr Hollis, Mr Jull, Mrs De-Anne Kelly, Mr Lieberman, Mr Martin, Mrs Moylan, Mr Nugent, Mr O'Keefe, Mr Price, Mr Prosser, Mr Pyne, Mr Snowdon, Dr Southcott and Mr Andrew Thomson

Subcommittee members: Mr Hawker (*Chair*), Mr Price (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Brownhill, Calvert, Ferguson, Gibbs, Quirke and Schacht and Fran Bailey, Mrs Crosio, Mr Ferguson, Mr Hollis, Mr Martin, Mr Snowdon, and Dr Southcott

Senators and members in attendance: Senator Gibbs and Mr Laurie Ferguson, Mr Hawker and Mr Hollis

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To investigate and report on the suitability of the Australian Army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war. The inquiry will review the current and proposed changes to Army to ensure that it provides viable and credible land forces able to meet a range of contingencies. In considering this matter, the Committee shall take into account:

- *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare* document, released in March 1999
- The Restructuring of the Australian Army initiative
- The Defence Reform Program
- ADF force structure and preparedness
- The role and impact on full-time and part-time personnel
- *Australia's Strategic Policy* (1997).

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Subcommittee met at 9.02 a.m.**COOPER, Brigadier Brian (Private capacity)**

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. This hearing is the fifth in an inquiry presently being conducted by the Defence Subcommittee into the suitability of the Australian Army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war. The aim of the inquiry is to review the current status and proposed changes to the Army and to assess whether it provides viable and credible land forces to meet the necessary range of contingencies. Given the current strategic circumstances, it is important to determine whether the Australian Army is able to effectively contribute to operations that it may be called on to perform. In the course of the inquiry the subcommittee will conduct a number of public hearings and receive evidence from government, individuals and various representative groups associated with defence. The committee hopes to table this reference towards the middle of the year.

I must advise you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect which proceedings of 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, and the deliberate misleading of the subcommittee may be regarded as contempt. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence is given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the subcommittee will give consideration to your request. We have received your submission and it has been authorised for publication. Would you like to make any additions or corrections to that submission? I will give you a chance to make an opening remark as well.

Brig. Cooper—Yes, I have just one comment in relation to the paper that I presented. We have recently updated our assessments in a paper published in January of this year titled *Mobility and manoeuvre: land warfare in five dimensions*. I have provided the secretariat with copies of the chapter dealing with force restructuring, and I have a full copy of the paper with me if the committee would like to receive it. There are some variations, with the major differences being an increase in air mobile assets and a restructuring of 7 Brigade.

CHAIR—The committee is happy to receive that submission, and we will need a motion to authorise it for publication.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Hollis**, seconded by **Senator Gibbs**):

That the Defence Subcommittee receives as evidence and authorises for publication the supplementary submission from Brigadier Brian Cooper and Mr Scott Cooper to the inquiry into the suitability of the army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war.

Would you like to make a short opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Brig. Cooper—Yes, please. Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity of appearing before this committee. Scott Cooper and I have served in a number of different corps and postings within the Australian Army over a number of years covering the period 1952 to 1985 and 1988 to 1998, both in Australia and overseas in peace and in war. This fact, together with

other studies and work which we have undertaken, give us some qualification, in our opinion, to make a submission to the subcommittee on the suitability of the Army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war.

The Australian soldier is just as good today as he ever was, and friend and foe alike over the past 100 years have given him high praise in this regard, so any lack of suitability of the Army cannot honestly be laid at his feet. However, the Army is lacking in suitability for its many tasks, all as a result of insufficient manpower, the wrong structure, inadequate equipment, mediocre leadership and questionable guidance.

The people responsible for the parlous state of the Army are the military and civilian bureaucrats who could not see what was happening, for they were bemused by an updated denial strategy, as flawed as it was, when it was first proposed in the 1930s, and a government that gave inadequate guidance and resources. We are pleased to see this matter being addressed by your committee.

There is no reason why the Australian Army cannot be equal to the best trained and led army in the world—possibly even the best. There is no reason why it cannot have an ideal but unique structure, designed for how and where they will fight or peacekeep, and not one that is but a mirror of some other nation's army. But Australia will not have an army that will have the best equipment that money can buy because they will simply never have enough money. What is essential is that they have the best equipment that they can afford and that best augments the way they fight or keep peace.

Since 1914, friend and foe alike have identified four major attributes of the Australian soldier: he is a superb night fighter; he is equally at home in desert, bushland or jungle; he is aggressive in patrolling and dominates no-man's land; and he is one of the best shock troops in the world. These attributes, together with his other qualities, will win today's and tomorrow's battles as they won them in the past, but only if the Australian soldier is given the equipment, training and leadership that he needs. However, for years, we hid behind the statement that there was no threat for the foreseeable future. We cannot do that any longer.

But are we clear on what the government expects the Army to do? Do they expect them to fight a conventional war in, for example, Korea or Taiwan, or even further afield, or will conventional war fighting be limited to 'invasion of Australia' defence operations, with the only other task for the Army being peacekeeping and security operations? Until we have definitive answers to these questions, we will have difficulty making learned comments on what the Army's deficiencies are.

As we have stated in our submission, it is our judgment that the Australian Army should not be employed outside our region—that is, South-East Asia, Papua New Guinea and the islands of the South West Pacific—except for United Nations peacekeeping or in extreme emergencies. It is on that judgment that we have based our structure. Equally, it will do no good talking about the reserve until we have a clear picture of our total requirements. There have been a number of submissions to this committee on the reserve and the media have broadcast some of the comments of academics, bureaucrats and retired regular and reserve officers. Indeed, the cry

‘restructure the reserve and give them a worthwhile mission’ has been made many times over the years, both before I became Deputy Chief of the Army Reserve in 1984 and since.

Many attempts were made but they were never totally satisfactory due to two major factors: firstly, Citizens Military Force history, tradition, and a powerful CMF lobby made it difficult to reach an acceptable position on the deletion of units or a change in their role—for example, an infantry battalion to become a logistic unit; and, secondly, even if we could have restructured, equipped and trained them, their availability could not be guaranteed due to lack of call-out legislation. There can be no doubt that the reserves are required if Australia is to have an effective army. When the legislation is in place, then, and only then, will the reserve become effective. The only question then remaining will be: will they get the required numbers? In this matter, I find the comments of General Nunn during his interview most pragmatic and wise.

The Army is not flexible because of its structure. It is not capable because of personnel and equipment deficiencies. It is not credible because it has no readily available follow-up forces. It is too light because of insufficient mechanised forces and firepower. It is lacking in deployability because of non-availability and limitations of platforms. It is lacking in mobility because of insufficient helicopters and reserves are not available because of no legal cover. Whilst we are saying that insufficient resources are being given to Defence in general and to the Army in particular, we do appreciate that there is a limit to what can be given. We are therefore proposing a structure somewhat less than we would like as a result of this limit. However, it is a structure that can perform the tasks required by government provided that the changing strategic situation is closely monitored, thus allowing any variation to be compensated for. What size should the Army be? An educated guess suggests 65,000. The mix would need to be investigated, but if reserves are available, maybe 30,000 regular and 35,000 reserve.

CHAIR—Thank you, Brigadier. I think that is a fairly blunt assessment in terms of the time you have taken to make your opening remarks. I want to go back to your first point. You were very critical about the leadership or, as you put it, the guidance. What do you see is the way to address that problem? Obviously that is not a current criticism; I presume it is a criticism you would have made over the last 10 or 20 years.

Brig. Cooper—Yes.

CHAIR—So what is missing?

Brig. Cooper—I think the basic thing that was missing is that, when we first came up with this doctrine in the 1980s, everything predisposed the forces to a 1930s concept, which was in use in the United Kingdom. The proposal then in the British plan—which proved ineffective, when air power was not nearly as effective as it is now—was that no land forces would be deployed outside the United Kingdom. They would rely on the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force to defend their sea-air gap—the English Channel. There were two principal flaws in this strategy, which was adopted as a result of the Dibb report. Firstly, it failed to take into account the importance of keeping air power as far away as possible from that which you were trying to defend. Secondly, there is the adverse effect of such a plan on your friendly neighbours. If you are not going to help them, you cannot really expect much help from your neighbours. Dr Ryan from the Land Warfare Studies Centre made this statement:

The tendency of great powers to use aerial bombing in the place of ground forces sends a message to the rest of the world: your lives and your rights are not worth the death of one of our own. You must ask the question: if the cause is worth killing for, is it not also worth dying for?

What we were doing is sitting back here. I hesitate to use the word isolationist, but the perception was that it was an isolationist policy sitting back and waiting for the enemy. As he tried to cross our sea-gap, we would destroy him and all that would get ashore would be a few raggedy soldiers who escaped the bombing and the strafing—all we really needed was a police field force to mop them up. We did not need an army. It is a long answer, I am sorry, but if we want to defend the country, we have got to defend it from forward; we cannot defend it from back.

CHAIR—If you look at two of the more recent cases, the Kosovar one is exactly what you are saying, arguably it was similar in Kuwait too. There was quite a big ground force there, but there was preliminary work done by the air force.

Brig. Cooper—I am not objecting to use of air power, but you have to be very careful when we draw conclusions from both the Gulf War and the war in the Balkans. In the Gulf War we had an enemy who did not fight, who was not capable of fighting. So air power had unrestricted use over terrain and vegetation which allowed the smart weapons to work. If we now look at the situation in the Balkans, where we had terrain and vegetation which was not conducive to the employment of these smart weapons, a lot of the smart weapons did not work. If you read a number of publications, which I am sure are available in the parliamentary library, the weapons were not as effective. The claims of the air power enthusiasts show that a lot of the equipment that was allegedly destroyed was in fact not destroyed. On top of that, NATO did, in fact, have forces on the ground. They were the Kosovo Liberation Army. By being on the ground, they enticed the Serbian forces into the open, which created targets for the air force to destroy. So I am not against air power. We need it, but it has not yet shown that you can go in without the land forces.

CHAIR—Given your experience in the Army, and what you have said, what do you see as the priorities for the next five years for the Australian Army? What are the major things we are going to face?

Brig. Cooper—In threats, do you mean?

CHAIR—Yes, and how we would make sure we can respond to them?

Brig. Cooper—It is very difficult to be able to come up and say what the exact threats will be that we will face, but it is probably easier to come up and say what possible threats could occur. There is the possibility of a mid- to low-level confrontation, not in the next five years but in the next 20 years. The more likely threats that the Australian Army will be employed upon are, of course, threats generated by regional war lords, by drug barons, by the United Nations requirements. Therefore, the Australian forces, in being structured for war but adapted for peace, must be able to handle the lesser but most likely confrontations but, at the same time, be capable of preparing for a major confrontation which will occur, I honestly believe, within the next 20 years.

Mr HOLLIS—If that is correct—and who knows—it would seem to me very unlikely that Australia would go into any conflict situation on its own. Even in the most recent example, from reading some of the newspapers you would think that Australian forces were the only forces in Timor, but they were part of a force—though, granted, the Australians were the major forces there. Do you think that this is what we are going to be looking at? Even if there was a conflict in PNG, I could not imagine Australia going in alone. Even in the Peace Monitoring Group there now they are part of the group with New Zealand, Vanuatu and Fiji. If we have a threat to our north, I think it would be most unlikely and, dare I suggest, most unwise, if Australia went in alone in any situation. So I would see—and I wonder what you think about this—the Australian Army as part of a wider coalition. Maybe we should be looking at that in our structuring and our deliberation.

Brig. Cooper—I agree, Mr Hollis, that we must be prepared for coalition operations and that we will never have an army big enough to take on any major conflict alone—and I would not suggest that at all. However, I really can see situations where major powers may not come to our aid in providing troops on the ground; they may provide some logistic support to us. Every country does what it is in their best interest. I could see situations, both in Indonesia and in Papua New Guinea, where, for instance, the United States may say, ‘No, we do not want to become involved there.’

Mr HOLLIS—Or drag their feet considerably before becoming involved.

Brig. Cooper—Exactly so. We may be forced to go into places like Papua New Guinea and to lesser places like the South West Pacific, if not alone, then without the support of a major power. There is one problem about working in coalition: you will be aware, just as I am, of the comments made by United States secretaries of defence and others, including the Secretary of State, to the effect that if Australia does not spend any more money, we will not be able to fit in with American forces. We will not be able to have interoperability and connectivity between them because we will not understand what they are talking about or what they are giving us. I am afraid that is the truth and that will happen because I do not believe that Australia will ever be able to afford to spend the money on obtaining all that equipment which the Americans believe we should have if we are going to be in coalition with them. But I do not think anyone else in the world is going to be able to do that, either.

Mr HOLLIS—I put to you a statement that was made to this committee that has generated quite a lot of media comment, not least some comments from various Prime Ministers. If we are going to talk about a coalition, however it is defined, everyone has got to play their part. I am not giving away what was said to this committee because it is on the public record and it also had some media comment: Professor Dibb, when he appeared before us, was quite critical of New Zealand. He more or less said that New Zealand was not contributing sufficiently to defence, and the Americans have said that over recent years. I was quite interested in the New Zealand Prime Minister’s comment that New Zealand was just going to train for peacekeeping. When we were talking before about the fact that, in an ideal world, Australia would commit troops as part of a wider coalition, we would have to make sure that those coalitions were there to support it, not be a liability. Professor Dibb was suggesting—they are his words, not mine—that New Zealand was fast becoming a liability to Australia instead of an active support.

Brig. Cooper—Do you wish me to comment on that?

Mr HOLLIS—It is up to you. It fitted in with what you were saying about the threats that you perceived over the short and long-term and how we are going to respond to those threats. I do not think we could call on many troops from Vanuatu or Samoa, but we might need some form of support from the New Zealanders, which has always been forthcoming in the past, but if they are not putting the bucks into their military—and you have said that we are not, according to the Americans, putting sufficient in either—I was wondering what your view on that was.

Brig. Cooper—There is no doubt in my mind that, in respect of New Zealand, if we are talking about a low to medium level conflict, New Zealand is a liability. If we are talking about some of the simple peacekeeping, like East Timor, they can still pull their weight. As they have said, ‘We will structure for peacekeeping.’ The Canadians tried that.

Mr HOLLIS—With disastrous results.

Brig. Cooper—Yes. The trouble with structuring for peacekeeping is that peacekeeping involves platoon to company sized level, minor tactics, small arms, light, crew served weapons. Conventional war requires unit and brigade sized formations, medium artillery, more firepower, more problems with coordinating and logistically supporting. So if you structure your force for peacekeeping, it is well nigh impossible to be able to convert it to a conventional warfare force. But if you structure your force for conventional warfare, ensuring that that force is capable of operating without its heavier equipment, then you have got both covered. Yes, they are a liability in conventional operations; in peacekeeping, I think they can still pull their weight.

Senator GIBBS—It seems to me that a lot of our problems are due to a lack of money. Obviously, the budget is just not allowing enough money. I notice in your submission you say that the Department of Defence is run by managers, not leaders. I have friends in the forces; I have heard about this and about a lot of unrest. How do we change this? What do we do? Do we throw these people out and put others in?

Brig. Cooper—The first thing we do is tell them to stop talking about management. When Mr Hawke came to the position of secretary, I was very impressed with his opening statement. He said, ‘My leadership strategy deals with working with the people, because people are the thing that make it work,’ whereas his predecessor and, I am sad to say, Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Barrie, kept talking about managing the Defence Force like a big company—and Winston Churchill made comments about that which I cannot quite remember—but it is not something like a big business that you can restructure periodically. That is the first thing: stop talking about management and start getting up and speaking for your soldiers as opposed to speaking for the bureaucracy.

Senator GIBBS—That is the thing. I have a friend in the Army and he said that, the way it is structured, your loyalty is not to the Army, it is to your men.

Brig. Cooper—Yes, that is true.

Senator GIBBS—How do you feel about the Army and other forces being downsized and a lot of things being outsourced? I have been told that there is the question of whether we have enough bullets, whether we have the normal things that we are supposed to have without having all the paraphernalia—and whether we have enough mechanics to service all the equipment. There are things like that because of outsourcing. How do you feel about that?

Brig. Cooper—I think that the outsourcing has not been handled well. I was never opposed to some elements of outsourcing, because there were tasks which could be done by civilians at a cheaper cost than could be done by people in uniform. However, in some ways, we have gone too far. To give you one small example, I have had a number of reports from people in East Timor that one of the biggest problems was that they did not have enough cooks, which meant that the troops were on combat rations for a period longer than they should be, and that affects the morale of the troops. But equally it also affects winning the hearts and minds of the people—the East Timorese—because cooks can help win their hearts and minds. I will give an example of what I mean. When I was CO of the Aviation Regiment in 1972-75, we were at Oakey. Oakey had a logistics command unit, a training command unit and a field force command unit, which was my regiment, and it was run by the administrative Queensland region. When we were in barracks, of course, all my cooks helped in the base cooking, but when we went into the field my cooks came with me. A lot of the problems now are that most of the cooks at these big bases are civilians. In that one example—and they are things that have only been reported to me—I think that we may have gone too far.

I do not know how they came up with this magical figure of 50,000. What were the factors that led to it? To me, the figure of 23,000 for the Regular Army was definitely not based on its task and mission. During my six years as honorary colonel of the Aviation Corps—that was from 1993 to 1999—you could see the problem developing. In the push to reach this magical figure, establishments were cut to the extent that there was no cover for people who were on leave, ill or injured. That is a peacetime thing, but in wartime we have a cover for battle casualties. You must be able to have a viable force even when you are taking casualties.

Additionally, at the time of the increased administrative, operational and training workload, the units were not manned to the full establishment. I know that within my corps the soldiers were continually working 55 hours a week. They got nothing extra for that; that was part of being a soldier. But, more critically, the junior officers were not being trained because the commanding officers were too busy doing things that should have been done by non-existent subordinates as well as working to try to get promoted. To be promoted now, there are all these things that you have got to do to get a tick in the box—

Senator GIBBS—I have been told.

Brig. Cooper—which take platoon commanders, company commanders, battalion commanders away from their troops whom they should be training.

Senator GIBBS—That is right. And they hate it—

Brig. Cooper—Of course they do.

Senator GIBBS—and morale is so low because of these ridiculous things that are happening.

Brig. Cooper—I do not know whether this is fully implemented now but they were talking about the fact that, to be promoted to lieutenant colonel, you needed a language. Why? It would be a nice extra but it takes you away. There are so many people, both officers and soldiers, doing degrees part time. But they are doing degrees not to improve their position in the military but to prepare for the time when they get out, because they are not going to stay.

Senator GIBBS—Yes, that is right.

Brig. Cooper—There is too much work, not enough people. The Army is short 308 captains. Recruiting this year: regular, 78 per cent of target; reserve, 50 per cent of target. There was an increase in separation rates, captains to lieutenant colonel, now in excess of 12 per cent. That is what is happening to the Army.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—You referred to your connection with the reserves. You commented on protection of employment and leave protection for reserves. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that your call for three per cent of GDP is not adhered to; it does not happen. The degree of dependence upon the reserves, therefore, is a reality. Apart from the question of leave protection and employment protection, what other crucial areas do you see as problems in the reserves with respect to recruitment and keeping people, et cetera?

Brig. Cooper—First of all, as I have said, there is no question in my mind that the Australian Army needs reserves to be a credible force. We cannot operate a credible force without them. Until this legislation covering the employment is introduced, they will be limited to providing the expansion base in time of war. That is all. Readiness is an amalgam of manning, training, equipment and availability, and this is their problem at the moment. To overcome that is going to cost a lot of money. At the moment they will be able to provide individual volunteer replacements, particularly the specialists, and they will not be able to provide units. Any reservists in the ready force—and they will be required—will need to be well trained volunteers. And they will have to be volunteers. I still believe that, even if legislation is introduced, the reservists that we have in the ready force—which will be, for example, 7 Brigade—will have to be volunteers. I tend to agree with General Nunn: I am not quite certain that, once you bring in this legislation, you are necessarily going to get the fellows volunteering.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—That is what I am asking you. You and everyone else stress legislation. That is crucial, right?

Brig. Cooper—That is the first part.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—But what other problems do you see around the place?

Brig. Cooper—With the reservists?

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Yes.

Brig. Cooper—One problem at the moment is that we would not be able to get a lot of the reversists, they would not be released—those who are firemen, those who are policemen, those who work for various federal government departments. For instance, I know some who are in DSD. There is no way in the world they are going to become riflemen in an infantry battalion.

Senator GIBBS—One of our senators is a reservist. I wonder if the Senate would let him go.

Brig. Cooper—That is my point. If you bring this legislation in, how are we going to get them to volunteer? I think the minister said we could call out the reserves in time of emergency. My comment is: do they want to come or not? It sounds to me that this is voluntary conscription. In other words, they volunteer to be in the Army Reserve, but now they are being conscripted to go. As General Nunn says, will we get the numbers because the families will not let the husbands volunteer? I do not know; I really cannot answer your question. All I can say is that I agree that they are the problems. We will not know until we bite it.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—I appreciate your comments about the question of cover. The situation now, especially in Queensland and it might be elsewhere, is that people cannot even take their long service leave; they have to be paid out in money as an alternative.

Getting back to the question about contracting out, what is your anecdotal or other knowledge with regard to a claim that if you combine the problem of contracting out, which removes employment from defence employees—there are fewer jobs there for them—with the ready fitness program, then that basically throws out a lot of people who might have been pushed into alternative occupations before, who might not have been able to do this job but now cannot do other armed forces jobs? Have you any feedback on that kind of problem?

Brig. Cooper—If we go back to just after the war in South Vietnam, we had a major, for example, who had had a leg removed in a mine accident in Vietnam and we did not kick him out of the Army. All that experience that he had could be used in some other part. Another example—it happens to be another major—was the captain of the OCS rugby team who in training damaged his knee, for which he gets some compensation, and he is now a major. He will never be promoted to lieutenant-colonel because he cannot meet the fitness standards, yet he is, on my understanding, the only person in the Army with the technical qualifications to handle a particular project. His 20 years are up next year and he is, in the vernacular, saying, ‘Up your left nostril.’

CHAIR—On the question of readiness, what level of readiness do you think should be there for regulars and also for reserves?

Brig. Cooper—Once again, this is going to depend on the particular unit of the force. I envisage two elements of the force, being the Ready force and the reinforcing and expansion force. I would see a Ready force which has three brigades: 1st Brigade and 3rd Brigade, which would be pretty much totally regular, and 7th Brigade, which would be a mix, maybe fifty-fifty—I do not know. They would be three Ready force brigades, all organised on the same establishment, able to replace each other without restructuring, retraining or reorganising, and they would be at three different levels of readiness.

This, of course, will depend on how we see the threat at the moment. You could see, say, 3rd Brigade at 28 days, but part of it up to seven days. You might then see 1st Brigade at 90 days, and you may see 7th Brigade at 120 days, which could be upgraded as the threat varies.

CHAIR—You are saying that the regulars are at the front, which is as you would expect, and the 7th task force at the lower level.

Brig. Cooper—Yes, but there will be reservists in 1st and 3rd Brigades on that same degree of notice because there are some specialist elements which it is not worth the Regular Army maintaining—

CHAIR—Do you mean medical?

Brig. Cooper—Medical, or even as General Nunn said, the only interrogation team in existence is Army Reserve.

CHAIR—You have been critical of a lot of things, but I want to clarify this point. Are you saying that the actual size of the Army, either Regular or Reserve or both, is too small?

Brig. Cooper—Yes. They are both too small.

CHAIR—What size should they be? You also are critical of the fact that units are not at full strength.

Brig. Cooper—It has to be an educated estimate, but looking at the structure that my co-author and I have proposed, it would appear to us that the force needs to be a total of about 65,000 of which—and this is subject to what happens with the Reserve problem, but if reservists are available—the mix would be 30,000 regular and 35,000 reservists. I am not going to argue over 1,000 or 2,000 either way, but that is the approximation of it. That size would be able to handle all the tasks that are given to us.

The problem in the past has been that the Army have been a can-do organisation. Government has said, 'This is what we need the defence forces to do,' and in this particular case, the Army. The Army have said, 'Yes, we can do it,' knowing only too well that they cannot do it. This has been going on for the last 30 years. Army should have been coming back and saying, 'With what you are giving us, we can only do half. Which things do you wish us not to do?' But they have said, 'We can do it all.' Consequently, no compromise is ever really successful. We have not been able to do everything really well.

Senator GIBBS—We are hearing a lot that the Army is not large enough and we really need to have a larger Army. Of course, that all depends on money. One of our witnesses said that people do not stay because they become so bored that they move on. How do we rectify this? Apart from telling the hierarchy, 'Stop being a manager and be a leader,' if we can actually get that through, what else do we do to attract people to stay? What do we do to attract them in the first place, and then make it attractive for them to stay and have a long-term career?

Brig. Cooper—The first thing is we have to be honest with the people that we are trying to recruit, and I do not think in the past we have been honest. We have been saying, ‘Join the Australian Defence Force and you will get a degree for nothing.’

Senator GIBBS—Have you seen the ad at the moment? It is one big party. I was thinking of joining up.

Brig. Cooper—What is the lifestyle at the moment? It is great. But we do not tell them the truth and, as a result of not telling the truth, we get certain situations occurring. This occurred when I was in: I had some young officers who said, ‘We don’t like this war, we don’t want to go to this one’. I am serious. Now we have got the situation where these two girls—without prejudicing anything, just looking at what is on the surface—are suing the Defence Force because the Navy sent them to sea.

Senator GIBBS—But they joined the Navy. What did they expect?

Brig. Cooper—The advertising said, ‘You will be separated from your family.’ We are telling them the wrong thing. I know years ago we complained about it then, and the standard comment in the Army was, ‘We should be like the US Marines: we’ve got a few vacancies left if you’re good enough, but remember, you may get all these goodies, but the time will come when you may have to pay the bill.’ We have not been honest about it. So they say, ‘This is not what I thought it was going to be. My wife said we didn’t tell her that this was going to happen.’ We lie.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Brigadier Cooper. If there are any other matters that we need information on, I am sure you would not mind us writing to you. If there are any corrections that you want to make to the *Hansard*, , we would be pleased if you could do that. Again, thank you very much for coming along.

Brig. Cooper—My pleasure. Thank you very much, all of you.

[9.49 a.m.]

DOWNEY, Mr Hugh Robert Hamilton (Private capacity)

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Downey. I must advise you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as 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 and the deliberate misleading of the subcommittee may be regarded as a contempt. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give evidence in private, you may ask the committee and it will give consideration to your request. We have received your submission and it has been authorised for publication. Would you like to make any additions or corrections?

Mr Downey—No.

CHAIR—Would you like to make an opening statement before we proceed to questions.

Mr Downey—Yes, I would. Thank you very much for inviting me to make this presentation today and for allowing me the opportunity to place my earlier submission. By way of introducing myself, I am a private citizen, and I am deeply concerned about the security of Australia. I have been a regular soldier in the Australian Army, with active service in Korea, a senior executive in industry, a consultant and a very senior public servant in both the Victorian and Queensland governments. I am now retired.

In the light of the recent deployment in East Timor, I can say without fear of contradiction that the Australian Army is not capable of committing a full battalion to any type of operation. When 2RAR arrived in Dili on 20 September 1999 it was made up of a mixed bag of soldiers from other units. The effective strength of 2RAR in August 1999, when I was there, was 80 per cent of 650 members. Given that there were members unfit or, for a variety of reasons, unable to deploy with the battalion, the figure of battalion members would have been less than 500. This is about the strength of four rifle companies, making the added strength of administration, support and battalion headquarters to be made up, in terms of numbers, by someone else. What will likely happen in the future, if the Australian commitment is even of one battalion, is that those who have already been deployed will be required to undertake further deployment, so bleeding the ready deployment force further.

These comments are made by way of introduction to my presentation, as are the figures of reserve recruiting which, in 1998-99, failed to meet its target by 2,184, while at the same time 5,056 soldiers of the Army Reserve left for various reasons. I raise another point, which saw light in previous presentations, in relation to the recruitment into the ADF. In 1997-98, some 18,500 persons applied to enlist, 1,265 were rejected on medical grounds and 3,400 were actually enlisted. The cost was \$31 million—about \$9,000 per person enlisted. In my days as a consultant, if I had cost \$9,000 in recruiting one person at the senior executive level I would have felt that that would have been very much against me in working with industry.

I read that the private sector is in the process of undertaking the first stage of ADF recruiting and it will be interesting to see if these costs are contained. It is quite one thing to carry on a normal recruitment drive, but quite another to make up for the 4,862 resignations and other terminations from the regular element of the Army in the 18-month period from July 1997 to December 1998—and that figure does not include normal retirements. All does not seem well with the morale of the Australian Army, nor does it augur well for the upgrading of the present integrated battalions to regular status.

In essence, my earlier submission was that the Australian Army is unable to meet its objectives, and this takes nothing away from the palpable dedication and professionalism of the officers and men serving in the combat units of the Army. I still hold that view.

In my submission I paid some emphasis to the lack of suitable equipment for the Army. Some of the equipment that is lacking includes: a better assault rifle, with a 40-millimetre grenade launcher; hand-held missile launchers; SP guns; attack helicopters; transport and heavy lift helicopters; ground attack aircraft; and unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance and surveillance. These are but a minimum must for the Australian Army.

In my submission I have highlighted the closed shop mentality of the staff corps, the elitism of the ADFA and the Royal Military College, the adherence to British and US doctrine, and our reliance on the US and the UN as the big brother who will come to our aid if and when we get into trouble. I have covered the reliance in overseas design of our weaponry and equipment and the lack of an industrial base in Australia to be mobilised for war. I now add that with the so-called blurring of borders in the push to globalisation, the sort of war Australia might be committed to, in addition to conventional warfare, will involve commercial, psychological, biotechnical, intelligence, networking, diplomatic and media warfare.

I have stressed the chasm between the regular and the reserve elements of the Army and the lack of interesting training for the reserves. I have painted a pen picture of an alternative in being. I am not suggesting this is necessarily right for Australia, but there are lessons to be learnt. The Swiss can mobilise 565,000 soldiers in 24 hours and their regular force consists of 1,800.

I have given a personal review of the strategic situation as I see it in Australia. Every country to our north has increased its funds as a percentage of GDP. For instance, China has increased its defence budget by 12.9 per cent, India has increased its defence budget by 28.9 per cent and every other country in the region has made similar increases. The ASEAN bloc will have the full support of Japan, which has the second largest maritime force in the Pacific and will be patrolling its supply routes for its own economic survival. The changes to their constitution and defence legislation are a foregone conclusion, so they will no longer be a self-defence force. This leaves Australia very much in no man's land and unwanted by all. China has also entered the calculation for Australia by projecting its Navy into the Indian Ocean with shore facilities in Myanmar and by undertaking naval manoeuvres 250 kilometres from its shores—not quite a blue water navy, but one with fast and well-equipped vessels with anti-submarine missiles, anti-aircraft missiles and ship-to-ship missiles.

I have made some suggestions for an alternative for Australia. All it takes is the will of the government and the opposition to think in terms of the future of this great nation as a fulcrum for peace in our region. To achieve that requires that Australia is prepared with a standing army of two brigade groups; with a cadre of instructors; with a trained militia of 15,000 each year—I am working with the ADF in this sense; with a Navy which has some 100 patrol vessels, some 15 frigates/destroyers, adequate dry dock facilities and heavy lift capability, and 5,000 trained militia each year; with an Air Force with some many more fighter/ground attack squadrons, more surveillance aircraft, 60 major lift transport aircraft, 50 helicopter squadrons of attack and heavy lift capability, and 2,000 trained militia each year.

I have undertaken some rough costings on these suggestions, and as far as I can see the overall cost would be less than the current budget of Defence. Among my hidden recommendations is the elimination of the diarchy of the Department of Defence. As a start, Australia desperately needs such a security and insurance policy, and it also needs to have a regular capability and resource audit throughout the ADF beyond that provided so well by the Australian National Audit Office.

CHAIR—Thank you, Mr Downey. Maybe I could start on your strategic analysis. I am curious as to why you are so confident that what you call the ASEAN bloc will have the full support of Japan and, secondly, that it is a foregone conclusion that Japan will move from a purely defensive defence force.

Mr Downey—Analysis suggests that that will be the case.

CHAIR—Whose analysis?

Mr Downey—Various analyses—*Jane's* for one.

CHAIR—On which point?

Mr Downey—On both points. But the ASEAN bloc will require Japan as the economic base and possibly a single currency—not a dollarisation.

Mr HOLLIS—It is interesting that we look at Asia as one bloc. I am the first to admit that Timor is going to be used like the Falklands War: whatever you want to argue with regard to defence or whatever point you want to make, you can use the Timor experience to either prove or disprove it—often the same thing. The Timor exercise was quite interesting in that Asian countries were among the first four to come in there and that they were quite widely spread. For instance, the Koreans made a deliberate decision to bring 400 people in there, the Thais came in there with a deputy commander and even the Malaysians were in there.

Mr Downey—A very minor commitment.

Mr HOLLIS—Yes, I know it was a minor commitment, but a minor commitment against a very strong ally. Imagine Malaysia: who would have thought Malaysia, even with a minor commitment, would have gone in there against Indonesia? The 400 Koreans obviously went in there for a deliberate purpose—to make a statement, I believe. So I am not sure that we can just

regard Asia as a coherent bloc. Some of the conflicts that we have had over recent years have been Asians against Asians. For example, the confrontation in Malaysia.

Mr Downey—I am not suggesting that we have a threat in Australia; we do not necessarily have a threat at the moment. I am not suggesting the Swiss have a threat either, but they have an army of 565,000 men that they can put in the field tomorrow. They do not have a threat.

Senator GIBBS—Which is quite amazing because that would be half their population.

Mr Downey—It costs almost a third of what it costs Australia.

CHAIR—Switzerland is a country without sea.

Mr Downey—I agree. It has a very small navy.

Senator GIBBS—In another committee—yesterday, I think it was—the committee members were talking to a brigadier or a general from Israel, and he was saying that most of the Israeli troops are actually reserves. They have the Regular Army. Of course, they are at it all the time—defending, fighting and whatever. He said that most of them are just regular people who go to work but are constantly called up. Most Israeli soldiers are reserves. The problems we have been hearing a lot about are that the reservists are underequipped; the reservists are not given enough equipment, enough training; they become bored; they cannot get away from work and all this sort of thing. If we are going to have an increased army—and it does seem that we do need a larger army and a larger reserve force—what is the answer here? I know money is a huge factor, the big factor, but what else do we do, bearing in mind that maybe we can glean a little bit more money for the services?

Mr Downey—My suggestion in my submission was that our Regular Army should be about 15,000. That is two brigade groups. These are fairly rough figures but fair enough. I think it is currently about 23,000, so I am not suggesting a bigger army; I am suggesting a smaller Regular Army. That includes a two battalion strength of instructors. I am suggesting also that, with the opposition and the government in cohorts, there could be some form of national renewal where there is a universal six months at age 20 for everybody to do something for Australia, out of which some 10 per cent might volunteer to go into the Navy, the Army or the Air Force for that six months. That is three months of learning how to look after yourself, learning fire and movement, because the basis of the whole thing as far as the Army is concerned is march and shoot, march and shoot. It is as simple as that. As far as the Air Force is concerned, the 2,500 who might go into the Air Force could be trained in the first three months in how to fly helicopters and light fixed-wing aircraft in intensive training. How much fun is that? It is all fun. And everybody in the Regular Army at some stage of their career will have a chance of being a commander of those troops coming in.

Senator GIBBS—But if we have an army that small—for example, the people who were sent to Timor—if it had been a different situation and had exacerbated, the entire army would still be there. The problem was relieving people. You send people in; they have to come out. They cannot be at it all the time—they will go nuts. They have to come out and have a bit of R&R.

But you have to have people to go in and relieve them. That would be rather inadequate if we were actually in a war situation, wouldn't it?

Mr Downey—Take Albert Jacka, for instance, a VC winner of World War I. He arrived in Egypt in late 1914 and he came home in 1919. He had been through every battle that Australia fought.

Mr HOLLIS—We are not in 1914 now.

Mr Downey—In 1952-53 I was in Korea for 12 months. I had five days R&R in Japan. Now we expect—for instance, in Somalia—17 weeks; in Rwanda, about the same time.

Senator GIBBS—But isn't it a different type of war?

Mr Downey—There is no war.

Senator GIBBS—No, what I was saying is: is it a different type of situation? I know of people who went to war in the First World War and the Second World War—like my father, who was there for the entire time—and were there the whole time. But isn't it a different situation?

Mr Downey—Maybe social amelioration, for instance, has made us a bit soft.

Senator GIBBS—Probably.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Two points: could you give us an overall summary of the level of Swiss training? You talk about there being half a million people under arms, et cetera.

Mr Downey—Yes. Their initial training is, I think, 18 weeks. Every year or so they go out for two weeks. It is a burden. They have had a number of referendums on whether or not they should dispense with that, and they have always come out in favour of maintaining the status quo.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Let us imagine that we do not go towards your concept. You speak about departures, retirements, resignations, morale problems. Could you give us a summary of what you see as the major morale problems there at the moment?

Mr Downey—I do not think there is a major morale problem so much with the ordinary digger, except that it is a pretty boring life, training all the time. I am talking about the infantryman carrying around 48 kilos of gear and water—most of it is water. As far as officers are concerned—my recent experience is with the battalion in Townsville in August 1999—you cannot get a command unless you have got a second degree—a masters degree! Why the hell is that necessary to be a good soldier, to be a good commander?

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—So that is the total picture of why you think people are leaving? That is the main point?

Mr Downey—No, I do not think it is. I think that of the young officers, for instance, who go to ADFA, the majority seem to choose logistics. Gosh, if I had my way, I would make Lindsay Fox a major-general and put him in charge of logistics, and I would make the supply manager of Coles Myer a major-general and put him in charge of supply-purchasing. They could run teams, because that is proper outsourcing. You cannot expect an infantry major or half colonel to become an expert in logistics or purchasing. They want things on time when they need it.

Mr HOLLIS—Can we talk a little about your national renewal program. You say that every 20-year-old—and I guess that would be male and female—should serve for a period of six months, and you would expect that only 10 per cent of those would volunteer to become defence personnel.

Mr Downey—Yes.

Mr HOLLIS—As a member of parliament, every so often we get suggestions about national service being reintroduced. It is a very expensive program.

Mr Downey—\$1.4 billion.

Mr HOLLIS—Those are your figures. It would be an expensive program. Also, having been through national service myself—I had a couple of years in the CMF—the permanent forces were very resentful because all they were doing was training us.

Mr Downey—A cadre battalion would have roughly two to three majors, eight to 10 lieutenants and 325 corporals. A corporal would be in charge of 10 men for six months. Three months would be spent learning to use their weapons, become mobile and look after themselves, and three months would be spent patrolling Australia wherever Australia needed to be patrolled—the northern coastline, for instance. I am talking about Army now.

Mr HOLLIS—What about the other 90 per cent? What would they be doing?

Mr Downey—Flood mitigation, reforestation, foreshore regeneration.

Mr HOLLIS—We have got Work for the Dole to do that already—reforestation, et cetera.

Mr Downey—With 250,000 people a year?

Mr HOLLIS—What I mean is that is what they do. That is Work for the Dole.

Mr Downey—I am talking about large projects with 250,000 people every year who turn 20. I am excluding from that 10 per cent who are sole supporters of families, or intellectually or physically unable to undertake that program.

Mr HOLLIS—How would you persuade the population of Australia to accept this scheme?

Mr Downey—A number of surveys have been undertaken which suggest that the youth of Australia are looking for some sort of vision so that they can be proud of Australia and achieve something for Australia.

Mr HOLLIS—I am not disputing that but I am still suggesting that, firstly, the expense of it and, secondly, the public acceptance of it would be very difficult to gain. That is my view; I could well be wrong.

Mr Downey—The public take a 0.5 per cent increase in their Medicare levy and nobody says anything.

Mr HOLLIS—But that was taken on the promise that, firstly, it was short term and, secondly, it was for a specific purpose.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Why do you think it is that, at the time you are suggesting this concept, Europe is essentially abandoning it? If you go through the European nations, France is moving away. A number of others have moved away. Italy has essentially had to let everyone go off and do a whole lot of private sector things because people just will not go in.

Mr Downey—For too long we have followed what Britain and Europe have done. We need to do something for ourselves. Australia is a very vital and resourceful country which needs to be protected. We cannot protect it now, nor can we take it as given that anybody else will help.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—No-one is denying that but you have obviously taken some interest in Switzerland; therefore I assume that you have some interest in European developments in terms of—

Mr Downey—Not at all. I am not interested in European developments one iota. I would be interested in a situation where Australia was a neutral nation, yes.

CHAIR—Mr Downey, you seem to be rather critical of the use of new technology. When you talked about the Army, ‘march and shoot’ was the description I think you used in relation to training. But, if you look at what has happened in recent times with training, the modern soldier is highly skilled. One of the things that certainly proved very significant in the Timor operation was technical skills—for example, the use of night vision—which gave the Army the edge to be able to achieve such an outcome with no battle casualties.

Mr Downey—I accept that, but that depends on the supply of AA batteries.

CHAIR—But do you really think Australians are going to accept large scale casualties because we have an underequipped army?

Mr Downey—I am not suggesting that. I make a point that what we need are things like a better assault rifle with a 40-millimetre grenade launcher attached. I am suggesting that we need hand-held missiles for defence against air attack. I am suggesting that we use SPs, self-propelled guns, of 105- and 155-millimetre calibre. I am suggesting we need attack helicopters in bulk. I am suggesting we need transport and heavy lift helicopters in bulk. We need ground

attack aircraft and we need unmanned aerial vehicles. This is all high technology. We have got an assault rifle which some soldiers say is good and some soldiers say is not. I do not think it is very good. It is an Austrian design and it is designed for temperate to cold climates. It is not designed for the sort of purpose that we need.

CHAIR—It is a lot lighter to carry than its predecessor.

Mr Downey—Yes, but we are now carrying 12 litres of water.

CHAIR—It is probably better to be able to carry the water and—

Mr Downey—We are talking of a kilo or so.

Senator GIBBS—Basically what you are saying is that if you have a smaller army—say, 15,000 max—and if you had all of this you-beaut equipment and high technology, and lots of it, then we really would not need the manpower.

Mr Downey—We will always need manpower.

Senator GIBBS—No, I mean that you would not need as much because you would have sufficient equipment. We have heard that at the moment it is inadequate and all that sort of thing. Are you saying that if we had all of these technological aspects, all of these weapons and whatever, you could basically have an army of 15,000 max and that is it?

Mr Downey—With 15,000 coming in every year and being on call for the next 10 years, that makes a fair sort of number on the ground.

Senator GIBBS—Do you mean 15,000 actually going into the Army each year?

Mr Downey—Yes, for six months.

Senator GIBBS—Okay.

Mr HOLLIS—Mr Downey, we live in a part of the world that is quite turbulent every so often and many suggest will become even more turbulent. Our neighbours watch what we are doing. What do you think our neighbours' response would be if we went into this fairly large recruitment and training program? Do you think that would be viewed by our neighbours as a friendly act or an unfriendly act?

Mr Downey—I still think that, for instance, Indonesia thinks that our buying F111s years and years ago, yonks ago, was a very unfriendly act.

Mr HOLLIS—And publicly stated that it was, too.

Mr Downey—Yes. I would not be too worried, to be honest, if we say that they are for the defence of Australia and would never be used outside of Australia or its territories.

Mr HOLLIS—The trouble is, though, that people might well not believe that.

Mr Downey—We need Foreign Affairs to have the great calibre to put that point across. That would be my basis, that they would never be used beyond the shores of Australia or beyond the territory of Australia.

Mr HOLLIS—I might suggest that, if there is going to be this massive change and upheaval in our defence forces, it might also require an equally massive change in reorientation of thinking within our diplomatic service as well to sell what we are doing.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming along and for your submission.

[10.28 a.m.]

McMAHON, Mr Gregory Michael, Representative, Defence Reserve Support Committee, Queensland Council of Unions

THOMPSON, Mr Terence Roche Bill, Representative, Defence Reserves Support Council, Australian Council of Trade Unions

CHAIR—Welcome. Are there any additional capacities in which you appear?

Mr Thompson—I am an industrial officer with the Australian services union. I am a former officer in the Regular Army and in the Army Reserve. My colleague, Mr Greg McMahon, is a past president of the Association of Professional Engineers, Managers and Scientists of Australia. He is also a major in the Royal Australian Engineers as an Army Reserve officer.

CHAIR—I must advise you that the 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, and the deliberate misleading of the subcommittee may be regarded as contempt. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence is given in public, but should you at any time wish to give evidence in private, you may ask to do so and the committee will give due consideration to your request. We have received the ACTU submission and it has been authorised for publication. Would you like to make any additions or corrections to that submission?

Mr Thompson—No, that stands.

CHAIR—Would you like to make a short opening statement before we proceed to questions?

Mr Thompson—The ACTU supports the defence reserves. It considers them an important part of Australia's defence. Indeed, Greg McMahon and I formulated the ACTU policy, and I believe that it is comprehensive to the extent of what we see is required and the inadequacies of the present system. We will go into some detail about that shortly.

There is clearly a matter of the civilian employment of reservists and the defence obligation where that employment will be, in some cases, contradictory to the military aim, and vice versa. We seek to minimise or eliminate those particular problems, and in that paper and a supplementary document, which I will circulate at your direction, Mr Chairman, we have set out what we think is the way to go in addressing those issues. So I will ask Mr McMahon to get under way with this particular matter.

CHAIR—Just before we do, if you would like that paper to be authorised for publication, then the committee, I am sure, will be happy to do that.

Mr Thompson—Yes, we are happy to do that.

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

That *ACTU policy — reservists called-out for the defence of Australia* be incorporated in the Defence Subcommittee's records as an exhibit to the inquiry into suitability of the Army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war.

Mr McMahon—The legislation has a couple of characteristics. It was passed by the parliament in 1965. At the time that we wrote to you with this submission, nobody had ever initiated an action under this legislation. We have compared its provisions with those of the United States, and we offer the opinion that the reason nobody has ever taken a matter to court under the legislation is that it is so fraught with problems for the reservist. An advantage that the American jurisdiction have over the Australian is that they had legislation that was semi-workable up until Operation Desert Storm. Both houses of parliament, the Senate and the House of Representatives in the United States, got together and reformulated the legislation as a result of the outcomes against reservists coming back from Desert Storm and their legislation is now quite workable.

They have a lot of case history decisions on the meanings of words and the meaning of phrases. They have things like reasonableness tests: what is reasonable in terms of warning that reservists should give to their employer; what is reasonable in terms of the amount of time. They have court decisions which establish things like quotas. Organisations that have got a small number of employees cannot afford to let them all go at one time; that was a practical problem that has arisen in the United States. They have case law regarding quotas. So they have a very mature set of rules which, when you look at the maturity of them, are no longer the legislative approach which I think every jurisdiction would seek to avoid. They have a mature approach where the HRM manager, the union officials and the reservists' advisers look at the case law and have a good understanding of something that has been worked out over previous cases, and so most of their matters are resolved administratively with the benefit of experience and good definition. In Australia, we do not have that, and the foundation that is not there is an effective piece of legislation.

I offer you the summary that, as the legislation exists, it is a win-lose-lose situation, or at least that is how it was thought until recently. The win is for the defence forces in extracting employees out of the workplace to meet some requirement—all commentators agree they have the power to do that. The two losers are with respect to the employee, who commentators say—and we are going back to official reports like the Standish report, to legal opinions that have been given to state branches of the DRSC, to in-house opinion within the defence forces—the legislation does not provide effective protection for. The lose that is not clear is that for the employer. You will notice that one of our submissions deals with exemptions for employer.

There are clearly situations—say, in a call-out—when the extraction of the employee from the employer for a defence situation would create undue hardship. In the United States that is the case; they have exemptions, they have clearly defined situations to deal with those types of undue hardship occurrences. In Australia, the exemption provisions are quite vague and, again, that understanding is not there. Whereas it was seen to be a win-lose-lose, I think now, with the realisation that our defence forces are strongly dependent and becoming increasingly dependent upon the reserves, it may be a lose-lose-lose. That is why we have advocated this concept to the authorities that to make it work it has to be managed out if you are going to get people managed back in.

Whereas legally the defence forces, on the first occasion, might be able to force people to leave—whether the situation is undue hardship or not—and effectively tear them out of the organisation just through the legal power they have to meet a real need the defence forces might have in a real situation, that tearing out process will educate everybody: reservist, potential recruit, employer and HR manager. There will be papers about it in HRM conferences setting out the difficulties that they have caused for organisations and for individuals. So the defence forces will find, on the second occasion, that they are not getting the recruits and that the employers will be more educated in defending themselves against those situations.

We are therefore, in the proposals we put before you, advocating a ‘manage out, manage in’ approach. That will require the combined input not just of the defence forces in designing effective legislation but of other organs of government, such as labour and whoever is looking after veteran issues, so that what comes up is a package that meets the needs of the Defence Force but is, industrially and business wise, workable. You might see this as a paper that is strongly focused on legislation, but I have tried to describe to you that the legislative approach is just a foundation upon which a mature jurisdiction can be developed that emulates the American jurisdiction, where things are largely dealt with in a non-legislative manner. They involve not just the defence forces but also their equivalent of the department of labour and industrial relations and the issues are dealt with at the desk of the human resource manager of organisations, which is where they can best be worked out. It is a foundation for a mature process that is largely handled away from the courts and in which it is not just the employees’ situation that we are tending to. We acknowledge that, if the employer is not suitably looked after, it is the reservist who is going to suffer in that problem as well, because the employers are in a much better situation to look after themselves. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you both very much. We will come back to some specifics, but I would like to start off by asking you about the fact that we are seeing some difficulty in the reserves recruiting—in fact, the numbers have fallen significantly below the target. Would you have some comments from your experience about why it is that people are not as keen as they used to be to volunteer for the reserves?

Mr Thompson—There is a lot of competition for younger people, in terms of sporting clubs and various other activities, and maybe they do not see defence service as being attractive. Certainly if they look at some of the employment issues, if they consider that reserve service would impact adversely upon their employment, they might have second thoughts about it. There is certainly nothing in existence today which would encourage a person to join the reserve in terms of their employment.

Mr McMahon—Rather than an opinion, I will give you some figures. An increasing percentage of reservists are no longer telling their employers that they are in the reserves. The membership of unions by reservists is twice the national average. Those figures suggest that the reservist sees his or her status within their civilian organisation as an area of concern, of threat—something that has to be very carefully managed. One of the insights we are offering to the defence forces in dealing with the situation is to appreciate that the bulk of the situation is being dealt with by the reservists themselves, that they have worked out the strategies. The figures show that they are working for larger organisations. They are working for government. Forty per cent of employed reservists are in government. So they are using strategies to

minimise the dangers of being in the reserve, and we are suggesting to the defence forces that they tap into that knowledge and work with those schemes rather than against them.

Mr Thompson—The long-term reservist is essentially a self-manager.

Senator GIBBS—In previous inquiries we have heard about the reservists feeling that they are discriminated against—that they do not get enough training and that they are not regarded as part of the Army as a whole. How do you feel about that? Have you had a lot of people complaining about that sort of thing? People are leaving—

Mr McMahon—Discrimination from within the defence forces?

Senator GIBBS—Discrimination against reservists by Regular Army?

Mr Thompson—Particularly if it involves rank, it could be a question of people being envious of the rank and considering that they have been denied that opportunity. But there is discrimination in the workplace in the sense that anyone who is absent from the workplace on a defence call-out, on training or whatever, quite often that their workmates have to bear the workload for them in their absence, and that is sometimes resented. I am not up to date, I am afraid. It is nearly 10 years since I left the reserve, but my recollection is that there is certainly a problem in the various perceptions and aspirations of the regular service person and the reservist.

Senator GIBBS—What percentages of people would actually be in the work force? A few former witnesses have said, ‘Of course, if anything did happen and we had to call out the reserves, they wouldn’t be able to go because they are in the ambulance, the police force, the fire brigade and other essential services.’ Is this correct? Do you have a higher proportion working in the essential services as opposed to working in an office, in a labouring job or in a trade?

Mr McMahon—The figures that I recall, which are two years old now, indicate that about 40 per cent of employed people are in government. That includes federal and local government. My understanding is that they are in government so that if something does happen, they can go. They believe that they have a better chance in a larger organisation of getting their jobs back.

Senator GIBBS—That makes sense.

Mr McMahon—I think where your concern is real is with the unemployed and students. It was not possible during Vietnam to pull students out of universities to put them in national service. The bulk of those units are students. They have deliberately embarked upon a recruitment policy of capturing students to get their figures. I do not believe that, in a real situation of fire they would be politically able to extract them out of the university, but that is only an extrapolation from national service days.

Senator GIBBS—Do you have complaints about people leaving the reserves en masse? We have been told by previous witnesses that a lot of them are just simply leaving. They are not interested because of different things. They are frightened of losing their job, discrimination by

the employer and that, if they do go away, their job will not be there. There were other things such as lack of equipment within the Army. They feel they are not treated properly. Do you have any evidence of this?

Mr McMahan—I am only aware of the figures that talk about the 30 per cent loss after the recruitment course. I am talking about the army; I am not familiar with the navy and air force. That is a situation where the figures reported to us, the Defence Reserve Support Committee, show that a very well-orchestrated and significant effort is put in from the point that the soldier or recruit enlists. They go through a fast and streamlined recruitment course process. After the recruitment course they go back to their units. What happens in the units is a subject of the issues that you have demonstrated. The priorities may be a lot less than equipping and providing resources for recruitment courses. I am only aware of the figures. I am not aware of mass walkouts with respect to particular units. I am just aware of the statistics that have been put into the public view.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—You gave the figure that, at the moment, 50 per cent of reserves are in a trade union movement.

Mr McMahan—Twice the national average, yes.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—On the surface that seems to substantiate the argument of lack of protection, essentially concerns of employer harassment toward building reserves. Just to clarify this in case it is a misleading figure: there has traditionally been a heavy dependence upon Telstra and railways. That kind of public service sector has always been fairly strong on reserves. Are those figures partly related to de-unionisation of the private sector as a proportion of the trade union movement? Is that possibly a factor in this? Have you got any longitudinal figures that go back and see the level of unionisation amongst reservists five or 10 years ago?

Mr McMahan—No, I do not. It is possible that, because they are joining the government, they are getting with the government culture in joining unions. But recently our experience in the government is that their level of membership is very low there too.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—In a relative sense.

Mr McMahan—It is higher than in private enterprise.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—I met with one of the interstate reserve support committees recently. One of the things they raised with me was a question of career prospects and reserves for people who were full-time reserves. I do not know if this is accurate. You may have some feedback. There was a view that, basically, Regular Army people were getting senior positions. This was having a morale problem amongst the reserves. Have you come across that at all?

Mr McMahan—With the shrinking of the number of units, there has to be competition. When you integrate a reserve and a regular unit, a decision has to be made as to whether the CO is going to be a reserve or a regular. I have heard the complaints. On my inspection, it seems to be even-handed.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—I do not know if I am getting into an area that is not really your emphasis, but you are both on the reserve support committee, are you not?

Mr McMahon—Yes.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Another point raised by that interstate committee was the degree of these long training induction periods for reserves and the problem of interfacing that with employment. It was put that, part of what is done there is essentially the question of people's fitness et cetera, and that might be better dealt with at a local reserve level than being part of a long induction period. Have you got any comment on that?

Mr Thompson—It certainly presents as a problem. The Army requires reservists to attend a course of considerable length at Kapooka, outside Wagga. If you consider the travelling time from, say, North Queensland or Western Australia, you are taking that person, if they are in employment, away from their place of work for a considerable period. I think it is about 12 or 14 weeks. The employer and the employee obviously would have some concerns about that.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—They say that one of the particular things that should be looked at is that part of that relates just to fitness, and fitness should really be looked at at a local unit level.

Mr Thompson—I would agree, if that is the only reason.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—That is not the only reason.

Mr Thompson—Yes, there may be other reasons. But that particular aspect presumably could be sorted out before the actual training at Kapooka began.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—Finally, getting away from the ACTU, could you tell us about the efforts of the Defence Support Committee? I know you are not representing the Defence Support Committee, but could you give us some overview of what you are involved in and what you are doing?

Mr Thompson—My role in the national committee and Greg's role in the Queensland committee are similar in the sense that we are providing a bit of human resource and industrial relations input to the committees. I have been with the national committee since 1996. Things such as the removal of defence service leave from industrial awards with the introduction of the Workplace Relations Act 1996 came as a bolt from the blue. There were considerable concerns expressed, certainly at the level of the national body, regarding the introduction of that law and the reduction of industrial awards down to 19 or 20 allowable matters. Our paper suggests that the Australian government is a model employer in these matters. If the Australian government were to become a model employer in terms of reserve service, I believe that some similar provisions in employment law would have to be reinstated to ensure that the government is a model employer—that it does release its employees for defence reserve service.

Mr McMahon—We would say there is a lot to be done and that there is not enough being done with respect to the role that is seen for the DRSC by the government. I would point to the

budget that they were given and the inferences that one should draw from that. But it is a venue for some progress. The most notable aspect that I would refer to is the opportunity afforded in Queensland to get unions, government and industry together to talk about the issue of what would be fair compensation for employers when a reservist is taken out for small periods of training or for a major call-out. Those three groups were able to come together and agree to a figure, and that provides a lead for the rest of the community. The three parties got together to resolve all the issues associated with reservists and the contribution which reservists make to the defence forces. We would just like to see more happen, much more rapidly.

Mr HOLLIS—Thank you very much for your paper. This is an issue that is constantly being brought up. I do not think any topic has been brought up more often than the role of the reserve and the reservists. In Canberra recently, a doctor who had been in Timor had to resign from his position in a hospital because of the length of the period that he was away.

The other issue—and I know we have dealt with this in parenting, so I do not think it is an impossible one—is that there is a difficulty with the very small firms. It is all very well for government and very large firms, and I think you have said yourself that often just as a measure of protection, if you like, people from government and very large firms tend to join. But as someone—I think it was Senator Gibbs—sharply reminded a witness once when they put this to us about very small firms, that argument was also being used for maternity leave, and that has been dealt with. With a little bit of constructive thinking, there must also be the possibility to deal with that in the case of reserves.

Mr Thompson—Of course there are existing provisions under the Workplace Relations Act for such things as jury service and family leave. Whether you can stretch the bow to encompass defence reserve leave is questionable, but they are similar forms of leave.

Mr McMahon—That is a very good analogy. We are talking about two groups of people who on two occasions, on average, in their life have to be taken out of the workplace for six to 12 months, and the organisation has to be geared up for replacing them temporarily and then giving them their job when they come back. The analogy is very strong. Can I again refer you to the United States, where they have a quota system with regard to taking matters to court. They now have a case law on when an organisation can establish a quota. In Australia a situation can develop for a small organisation in the country where all the members are from the one unit and when that unit has to go everybody goes out of the work force. There is a case where a quota might be a practical solution so that the organisation, after it has hired its quota, can refuse people employment on the basis that they are members of the reserve. It is a win-win situation. In the United States the quota issue arose with a police department. Somebody spoke before about the reserves working in government and those people being of restricted service. That problem was anticipated in the United States, and they resolved it by allowing that police department to have a quota so that when the call-out was necessary, they were only going to be affected to a manageable degree.

If our future in the defence force is going to be based on the reserve then we have to be serious about what that means. I think that somebody should be going over to the United States and looking at it from all three aspects. Over there, where there is an army dependent upon reservists, we could look at what is a reasonable period for a reservist to be taken out of the

work force. In Australia, it is two to four weeks; in the United States, it is 90 days. It is just a case of establishing that level. Our defence forces are peacetime defence forces, and once that level is established then everybody who is affected by it—the HR managers, the employment people in organisations, the reservists and financial institutions—can gear up to it, and the United States can give a lead as to how that can occur.

Mr HOLLIS—You should talk to Minister Moore and get him to suggest that this committee go over and have a look at that.

Mr McMahon—Are there any unionists here?

Mr Thompson—If I could just add a point to pick up on what Senator Gibbs mentioned. I can recall going to a workplace when family leave was introduced to the workplace and the CEO of the organisation wringing his hands—it was a male—and saying, ‘What are we going to do? It is going to be a dreadful business having people absent on maternity leave,’ as it was then called. I said, ‘Five years from now I think we will look back on it and say that it is just another administrative procedure.’ I think that is what we have to cultivate; that it is, in fact, just another administrative procedure. Some would call it an administrative burden, but if we are to have an effective reserve I believe those sorts of measures need to be in place.

CHAIR—How long has that quota system been in place in the United States?

Mr McMahon—Because of what happened in Desert Storm, 25 per cent of reservists lost their jobs and both houses initiated their own bills to deal with the matter. Realising they were both doing it, they came together and devised a joint bill. That came in shortly after Desert Storm. But their case law existed prior to that. They had legislation going back to about the time of our Defence (Re-establishment) Act. A lot of the problems that developed were dealt with by cases. Desert Storm showed up extra problems, which they all sought to deal with by a review of the legislation.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—We commissioned some work from the Parliamentary Library months ago. It is not as detailed as Mr McMahon supplied to the committee. There is a Parliamentary Library document on the US alternative.

CHAIR—Thank you. Did you give it to the committee last week?

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—No.

CHAIR—Coming back to your submission, you talk about the protections needed. I noticed there is quite a long list there—protections for reservists and their families. Amongst those you have included bankruptcy. I am just wondering why you specifically put that in there? It is on page 4 of your first submission.

Mr Thompson—We were attempting to be all things to all people and to have as much of the basics covered.

Mr McMahon—From my recollection, that came out of material that we got for protection of national servicemen that allowed for a real case or cases that arose where people were declared bankrupt. I do not think they are able to keep their position in the defence forces if they are—certainly if they were officers I do not think at that time they were allowed to continue. But if they were in proceedings associated with bankruptcy there had to be a moratorium established because in those days you were in for two years and were destined to be going overseas.

CHAIR—So you would not be encouraging someone who is facing a problem suddenly to zip in.

Mr McMahon—You have reminded me of a particular issue that has not been covered. If an employer goes for an exemption because losing his or her employee would cause problems, what happens to the employee? Do they get an exemption automatically? There is that kind of practical problem. It should. The employee should be given the opportunity to claim exemption as well, otherwise what is happening is that the employer gets the exemption and the employee gets pulled out. It is those kinds of practical problems we are not getting any information on, because nobody is going out there and getting anecdotes. They are shying away from them because of the volume of problems that are out there. We do not have a workable legislation to give us case law. If we did, we would be getting a lot of these—not bankruptcy ones, but some of these problems.

CHAIR—Talking about experiences, what about the case of East Timor? Have you had any examples of people having come back and faced problems or discrimination?

Mr Thompson—I am not aware of any.

Mr McMahon—I do not think the number of reservists over there is large yet. I understand that part of the planning may involve a greater number of reservists. Currently there are not a lot of them. Most of them are on a volunteer basis. There are probably a lot of reservists who are getting into difficulties because they are backfilling positions.

Mr Thompson—There is a considerable void in the information on this area. Defence Reserve units cannot provide that sort of information. Personnel administration and their records do not throw this information back through the system. There is a considerable problem in trying to assess precisely what those problems are.

CHAIR—Can I thank you very much indeed for coming before the committee and coming all this way too, because Townsville is almost as far away as I am. Also, thank you for your submission. You will get a copy of your evidence so if there is anything there you see is incorrect, please let us know. If there is anything further that the committee wishes to take up with you, I am sure that you will be happy to respond. Thank you very much.

Mr HOLLIS—If you get any more examples like you have of the states we would be quite interested in those. You are obviously doing some work in this area. What you have put here about the states is quite extensive. If you had any other examples—even from other countries—we would be quite interested in having a look at those.

Mr McMahon—I have a presentation that I give on the comparison of the Australian and the United States legislation. If there were interest in that—it is just 20 overhead slides—I would be happy to send a copy to the committee through Bill.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr HOLLIS—We might talk to the military attache at the embassy as well. I think it is most unlikely that the minister will send us over there to personally look at it but maybe we could talk to the attache.

Mr McMahon—I think that somebody from the Defence Force, government, union and employers needs to look at it, and not just go and talk to reservists in those other countries but talk to the people who are administering the problems—the Department of Labour. I have contacted them recently and they hold us in very high regard because of what we are doing in East Timor. I happened to ring up on the day that East Timor was on the front page of the *Washington Post* and they are very receptive people—they are the ones who are managing it—and you could talk to the veterans organisations and to the unions over there.

Mr Thompson—I would like to make one final point. The essential message that we are emphasising here is that if there is to be an army reserve then the management of the reservist into the service and out of the service needs to be done properly. Right now we are suggesting that there are inadequate legal and administrative provisions. That is the core of what we are saying. That has to be addressed if there is to be an effective management of that situation. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you.

[11.13 a.m.]

McINTOSH, Brigadier Patrick Francis, CSC, Commander, Headquarter 7 Brigade

CHAIR—Welcome. I 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 and that the deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt. The subcommittee prefers that you give all evidence in public, but should you at any stage wish to give evidence in private you may ask to do so and the committee will certainly give consideration to that request. The subcommittee appreciates the time you have set aside to discuss this inquiry. Before we commence questions, do you have any issues you would like to raise concerning the suitability of Army for peace, peacekeeping and war?

Brig. McIntosh—What I would like to do is provide an outline of the 7th Brigade which I think will help to provide some context to the answers that I provide to your questions. Out of that will flow some of our thoughts on the suitability of the brigade and, therefore, the General Reserve and Regular Army for the performance of its tasks in peace, peacekeeping and war.

CHAIR—Please proceed.

Brig. McIntosh—The 7th Brigade is a major combat organisation and the principal resident of Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in Brisbane. The Army has long regarded Queensland, and in particular south-east Queensland, as a major source of recruiting for defence and as an area that is very kindly disposed to defence issues and the Army. We do not take those attitudes by Queenslanders for granted. We know that we must work hard to justify ourselves to them as taxpayers and as providers of their sons and daughters for service in the Army.

The 7th Brigade was re-established at Enoggera on 20 October 1999 as a result of the name change from the 7th Task Force. The 7th Task Force itself was formed as part of the restructuring of the Army program on 1 July 1997 due to the amalgamation of the 6th Brigade and the 7th Brigade. The 6th Brigade had been the Ready Reserve brigade at Enoggera, and the 7th Brigade had been the General Reserve brigade at Kelvin Grove here in Brisbane. The 7th Brigade is an integrated motorised light infantry formation. Its role is to conduct operations in Australia and its nearer region as a follow-on brigade. It has an established strength of 1,989 full-time and 2,470 part-time personnel. An established strength means that that is what we are allowed to have on the books; we cannot go over that. It has a posted strength, however, of 1,821 full time, which is 92 per cent of our entitlement, and 1,755 part time, which is 71 per cent of our entitlement. Of the 1,755 part time, about 1,400 are trade qualified. The reserve members are drawn from south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales. So our area of responsibility spans Maryborough in the north, right down into northern New South Wales, right out through the Darling Downs down into the granite belt, so it is quite a large area.

The core fighting elements of the brigade are the three motorised infantry battalions: the 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, which has been raised in readiness and will deploy to East Timor in April; the 25th/49th Battalion, the Royal Queensland Regiment, an integrated battalion; and the 9th Battalion, the Royal Queensland Regiment, a reserve battalion. These units are intimately supported by a reconnaissance regiment, the 2nd 14th Light Horse Regiment; a field artillery regiment, known as the 1st Field Regiment; a combat engineer regiment, the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment; and a logistic battalion, which is the 7th Combat Service Support Battalion. All of the support units are integrated—that is, a mix of full time and part time, as is the brigade headquarters and the command support unit that supports that headquarters.

In terms of readiness, we are in the process of applying a readiness approach to integration. As part of this process, we will ensure that full-time elements are trained and available for a wide range of tasks, and we hope to grow enhanced readiness from the reserves. We intend to use the subunit—that is, approximately 100 personnel—as the building block, so we will integrate predominantly at subunit level. The brigade is better equipped than other reserve brigades and has excellent facilities. It currently holds 75 per cent of its minimum level of capability—MLOC—equipment. The minimum level of capability at the moment is defined as suitable to perform peacekeeping operations. However, because of the need to fully equip 6RAR from brigade holdings, the other units have become quite hollow—with the integrated battalion, for instance, down to 60 per cent of the MLOC holdings.

For motorisation, the brigade uses the interim infantry motorised vehicle, a 6x6 landrover, which is the phase 1 vehicle for Project Bushranger. The brigade will receive a two-battalion lift of the new Australian built Bushmaster vehicle within the next two years. The Bushmaster is a purpose-built vehicle which carries a section of soldiers—that is, about 10 soldiers—and offers protection against small arms and mines.

The reconnaissance regiment is currently equipped with the M113 armoured track vehicle and the 4x4 surveillance Land Rover variant. The regiment will be equipped with the Australian light armoured vehicle, the Aslav, which is a wheeled armoured vehicle, in about 2004. The introduction of this new equipment will greatly enhance the mobility and firepower of the brigade and the protection provided to our soldiers. The motorised brigade will be a very potent capability when fully equipped.

In terms of training, the brigade enjoys easy access to excellent all-weather training facilities in training areas such as Shoalwater Bay, Wide Bay, Canungra, Oakey, the Enoggera Close training area and Greenbank. It also has ready access to ranges and simulation facilities.

The brigade has little difficulty attracting and retaining full-time members because of its favoured location. It also represents an excellent respite posting from the north. The part-time numbers have dropped in recent years, but we are embarking on a program to build them up. If we are not successful, the brigade cannot survive as an integrated formation in its current form. We have many critical skills deficiencies and we are finding it particularly difficult to train reservists in technical trade skills because of the length of the courses. Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that overview is useful, I am pleased to take any questions you may have.

CHAIR—With respect to your last couple of points, you talked about the difficulties of recruiting, mainly for reserves. When was 7th Brigade—the 7th Task Force in its previous form—actually at full strength? When you sent 6th Battalion to Timor, you said that it hollowed out your other units. When was the last time you could actually say you did not face that problem?

Brig. McIntosh—It was a long time ago. You could argue that at the end of the Ready Reserve Scheme it would have been able to be fully manned had the Ready Reservists been able to be called out for deployment to East Timor. It would have been possible within 90 days to raise that battalion without having to gut other units. Before that you would have to go back to when it was a regular brigade. 6RAR was a regular battalion, but only a three-company battalion in those days. That was before the Ready Reserve Scheme.

CHAIR—That leads to a question about the Ready Reserve. I do not know whether you have read General Sanderson's comments to the committee. He was very critical of the Army Reserve, saying that, in his view, it did not have a future role, as it is currently seen; that in fact we should be reverting back to the Ready Reserve and expanding it. What is your experience there and what would be your comments on that?

Brig. McIntosh—It is essential that we grow readiness out of the reserve and that is what we are attempting to do within the 7th Brigade at the moment. We need to determine exactly what readiness is required from reserve elements, both within my formation and within all of the other reserve formations as well. Also, we need to look at our capacity to supplement full-time units with higher readiness reserve elements. I believe there is some utility there. Once we have worked out what the requirement is for a higher or enhanced readiness component within our reserve army, then we need to look at the ways that we can train the reservists to meet that higher readiness requirement. The Ready Reserve Scheme, in a training sense, certainly did that for us. The problem with the Ready Reserve Scheme at the time, however, was that there was no greater capacity to call out the Ready Reserve than there was to call out the general reserve. In terms of readiness, it was really a misnomer. It was a higher trained reserve, but it was not necessarily any more ready if there was no willingness to call them out, and the legislative cover for that was never really provided. However, we do have that cover now.

There were other problems with the Ready Reserve in that training the reservists in the one location by bringing them all to south-east Queensland dislocated those reservists from their home location and from growing an affiliation with a reserve unit in that home location. This, of course, would have had benefits in the longer term—even after they left the reserve and went into business—of having people in business who were predisposed to defence and reserve issues within their local communities. They were trained but then they went back to their home locations. It was very expensive to bring them back for centralised training within the brigade. A lot of their skills perished over the four-year period after the full-time service commitment. The perishability of those skills was contributed to by the distances that many had to travel to return to Enoggera. Some of that training eventually was effected locally through training teams visiting regional locations. There were benefits with the Ready Reserve Scheme. It certainly provided higher training. We now have the provision to be able to call them out and use them. We were able to almost guarantee that we had these Ready Reservists for a period of five years.

We were able to commit money to a higher level of training in the knowledge that we were going to retain most of them for a reasonable period of time.

There were a lot of lessons learnt from the Ready Reserve that we can apply generally to reservists, but I do not think any kind of scheme like that should be restricted just to students. It should not be restricted just to one region, and we should not necessarily be drawing them out of other regions where perhaps higher readiness reserve elements are also required.

CHAIR—Given General Sanderson's thinking, which was that you do get higher skilled reservists—you have said it would be more expensive; that was well documented—the question I am really coming to is: in terms of the future reserve, do you see the Ready Reserve as a way of supplementing the numbers and increasing the skill base?

Brig. McIntosh—Yes, I do.

CHAIR—Would you, therefore, say that is something that is needed in terms of the Ready Reserve?

Brig. McIntosh—I think a form of Ready Reserve service is necessary if we are to have higher readiness and enhanced readiness reserves within our army. You have to find a way of being able to bring these soldiers in, give them all of the induction level training and their initial trade skill training up-front, and then apply that training in a collective training environment—in other words, bring together and orchestrate those skills in a field training environment. We also need to be able to find a way of training reservists in some of the higher skills with technical and trade courses. You just cannot do it. It is physically impossible to do it with many of the longer courses that we have at the moment with the reserve service and the options we have for training. I think a form of training like the Ready Reserve scheme will enable us to attract technicians, tradesmen and train many of those trades, such as the high technical communications fields, recovery mechanics and things like that, and then have some kind of return of service obligation. That means that we will get value out of them for a period of time in the future. In essence, I agree with that.

CHAIR—If I can put words in your mouth, you are to some extent saying what General Sanderson was saying. That is that we do need a more highly skilled reserve force.

Brig. McIntosh—Yes, we do. If you are going to have an enhanced reserve or a higher readiness reserve, then you need to have a way of training them. The Ready Reserve scheme provided that.

Mr HOLLIS—On a different tack from that, I understand you were in charge of the Australian medical team in Rwanda.

Brig. McIntosh—That is right.

Mr HOLLIS—What did that teach you about the preparation for a contingency like that?

Brig. McIntosh—It taught me that we really need to have formed units that are trained and have both the individual skills and the collective skills resident within a unit before we deploy it on operations. I deployed the first rotation to Rwanda. One of the problems we had with the deployment to Rwanda was that we were cobbling together a fairly unique organisation, which was a medical unit with logistics support and protection support, to send it away to Africa to perform a fairly unique task. We had to take individuals from right across the Defence Force. In fact, the 301 people who deployed with me came from 63 different units from the three services. We had essentially two weeks to bring those people together, do whatever training was needed before we deployed them, and then go to Rwanda and do a very difficult job under very difficult conditions for six months. Many of those soldiers had no capacity to complete administration or even take pre-embarkation leave.

What it means is we have to be prepared for a whole range of potential conflict and make sure that we have units that are flexible and able to be tailored to be able to send them away to perform whatever job we see as credible. So we need to be constantly reviewing what we perceive to be credible contingencies and credible operations and make sure we organise for those particular operations.

Mr HOLLIS—You would be aware there is an argument going on. What is the future? Based on that experience, should we be training our forces for a peacekeeping role or a conventional role and can these be interplacéd? Even as late as this morning it was said to train them conventionally for a conflict situation, and they can adapt to peacekeeping, whereas it is harder the other way around. The Canadian example is sometimes quoted. The New Zealand example is that it is harder if you have trained for a peacekeeping role to then switch, if needed, to more of a combat role. Rwanda was basically peacekeeping, wasn't it?

Brig. McIntosh—It was Chapter VI, so technically it was peacekeeping. I agree with the notion of training for war and applying it to peace. Most of what we took to Rwanda were combat support and combat service support elements, and what they do in war is what they do in peace. They went over there and provided levels 1 to 3 medical support and logistics support. What the infantry did over there they would do in war, so they had to be trained for war. The reason we were so effective over there was that the protection elements that I had with me were capable of being able to provide protection and do their job regardless of what may occur with the security situation. It gave them the confidence to be able to do their job properly, to be able to intercede, to be able to save lives, and to be able to go and take the medical elements to whatever part of Rwanda we needed to be in to do our job as tasked by the UN. I would have to say we were the only UN force in Rwanda that did that; the rest went away from every roadblock that the RPA put in their way. We did not go away from one.

The reason for that was that our soldiers had the ability and the confidence, and they demonstrated such professionalism that they were never really stopped. They were challenged, but nobody was really willing to take it to that next stage where they would have had to apply force against us, for which we would have then used force in self-protection. That was all because we had trained for war, we had trained for conflict and then we applied those skills in a peacekeeping environment—and I do not think we should ever go away from that. But this talk of conflict is not to say that we do not have medical units, for instance. We must have the flexibility to be able to bring formed bodies together to deploy on an operation, rather than

having to bring a whole bunch of individuals together, as we had to do at very short notice to deploy them over there into a very difficult environment. We should not repeat that exercise.

Mr HOLLIS—This may be a slightly unfair or embarrassing question because you are a serving officer, but, from what you have said about Rwanda, how well prepared do you think we were for Timor?

Brig. McIntosh—In terms of our ability to command and control such an operation, I think we were very well prepared for it. In terms of our ability to be able to conduct such an operation, I think we were very well prepared for it. There were some difficulties with logistics support. Once you start deploying overseas, logistics becomes difficult. We were doing it as an international force, as opposed to the UN, but even under the UN it takes the UN a long time to get their logistics base in place. So there were some difficulties with logistics. That is a reflection of the lack of logistic backup that we have for deployed forces, particularly if you are deploying offshore. But in terms of our ability to go and do that task, we were very well trained for it.

We have been training for protection and security operations and response operations for a long time. When you look at the range of tasks that are credible for us, response operations within the littoral environment, that really means either conducting denial operations—but you only conduct denial operations if you have managed to pre-empt the situation, and we were essentially able to do that in Timor—or, if you have not pre-empted the situation, you need to conduct offensive operations. We do have units that are trained for that. After that, you are providing a secure environment. You may have to do that by the use of force; on other occasions, you do not have to. In this case, they did not necessarily have to use too much force to produce a secure environment. After that, you transition to providing protection and, after that, it is a political solution—it is always a political solution. In the modern world it is going to be very rare for the military to provide the final solution to any of these problems. Then, after that, you come home. So, essentially, you deploy, you conduct some kind of a response operation, you provide a secure environment, you provide protection while the political processes work and then you redeploy.

That is what we train for, and that is essentially war fighting in the modern era. They are credible tasks for our Defence Force, that is what we focus on. It does not really matter whether you are doing that in defence of Australia in the north or whether you are doing it in our littoral environment or somewhere else as part of a peacekeeping or a peace enforcement operation. So, operationally, we were very well prepared and that is why we were so successful. It is not to say there were no problems with things like logistics support, but that never stopped anything from occurring.

Mr HOLLIS—I am not disputing what you have said for one moment, but it has been put to us that we were there just for the right amount of time with a large contingent. The difficulty might have been down the track when we had to replace the same level of personnel over a period of three months and then the next three months. People always talk about hypothetical situations. It has also been put to us that we were fortunate in one way that there was not a big eruption on the streets of Port Moresby or something like that which may have needed a deployment there.

Brig. McIntosh—There were plans in place for a rotation. I was involved in that as basically the follow-on formation. I had three battalions in my brigade; only one was raised to go to Timor. I have two other battalions that could have been raised in a time frame that would have been acceptable. It would have required some mobilisation effort. It would have required a major effort and contribution from the reserves, a greater contribution than was, in fact, provided for the smaller force that did go. There were plans. The Chief of Army had extensive plans that covered a wide range of options. You would have to speak to him about our ability to be able to rotate that large force in the shorter term but there were plans in place for us to be able to rotate if we needed to.

Mr HOLLIS—As a commanding officer, do you think that there is too much emphasis on technology in the modern Australian Army?

Brig. McIntosh—No, I do not. I do not see that there is a great emphasis on technology right across the board in the modern Australian Army. What we have, for instance, in infantry battalions at the moment is protected mobility with our new vehicles. I do not think we can send any Australians on any operation in the future without affording them the basic kind of protection that most other armies around the world have.

We are still operating weapon systems in the Australian Army that are very accurate and simple to operate. They have optic sights that aid us to recognise and identify a target. Modern warfare is all about discrimination in the use of force. That kind of technology is not high tech but it is absolutely essential. For the kinds of protection and security operations we are going to perform in the future, we cannot afford to be doing that only by day. We need the night vision capability that has now been afforded.

We need communications because of force to space ratios that we will operate on in the lower level of conflict, which is essentially the niche market for the Australian Defence Force, and because of our strategic circumstance. We need to be able to communicate over long distances simply because of the nature of Australian geography. Because of the force to space ratios that we will operate, you have to communicate over long distances. To do that you need to use modern technology in terms of satellite communications, et cetera. We have that but it is only really at the formation level in my brigade.

At the soldier level, they are still carrying a Steyr, a very capable weapon with night vision gear that is very easy to use and train for. They have communications that are easy to use and we are giving them the mobility that is also easy to use. It takes seven days to train a driver who can drive a Land Rover to drive the new Bushmaster vehicle. We are not talking about something that is going to take forever to train a person. All of the military specifications for this equipment are really designed around ease of use, precision, hardiness and robustness for operation in a unit environment. There are technical trades—intelligence is one. Unless we can get that side of our operations right then we are going to be doing it hard rather than smart. With communications, it is within a very defined part of the defence force and it is absolutely essential that we have that. We cannot interoperate with anybody that is capable without that kind of capability. I do not really think that we have gone too high tech at all. I think we have got that about right.

CHAIR—I was interested in your comments about the niche market. You had plans there for bringing in two more battalions. If you had to face that, what problems were you likely to run into in reserves getting leave to go to Timor?

Brig. McIntosh—We would never have been able to do it without calling out the reserves. It would have been very difficult at the time because the legislation was not there. It would have also been very difficult because many of the reserves that we have on our books are not trade qualified so we would have had to bring them in and get them up to date in their trade qualifications.

CHAIR—That would be for how many months?

Brig. McIntosh—It depends on the trade. The problem is that we have a critical skills deficiency within the brigade, and this is my biggest concern. That affects your readiness as a formation to be able to go and conduct operations. If we are relying on the reservists, for instance, in a motorised formation to provide mechanics and we cannot encourage existing mechanics in the civil field to come in and be mechanics because they do not want to, then we have to try to either grow those mechanics through some kind of cooperative operation with civilian apprentice schemes or grow them ourselves within the Defence Force, and there is no real capacity to do that. So the critical skills shortage would be our main deficiency.

But given Timor, specifically, we were looking at deploying battalion groups. We could have trained the infantry soldiers, the armoured corps soldiers and other elements of the group in a reasonable time frame had we been able to call out and equip, through extra cross levelling and procurement, the units that would have had to have been raised in readiness to deploy to Timor. So we had the capacity throughout the whole of the Australian Army to be able to mobilise sufficient forces over a period of time, but it would have required call-out and a massive effort to bring people up to date in their trade skills, and we would have had to look to see whether the equipment holdings throughout Defence would have been sufficient for us to be able to raise the units that were necessary. But certainly there was a plan in place for us to raise what we thought may be necessary, and we did have the ability to do that.

CHAIR—What specific logistic shortcomings were you talking about in the Timor operation?

Brig. McIntosh—It is very difficult for me, because I do not work in the logistic environment and I would not like to mislead the committee. I am reporting on what was fairly apparent: that it was difficult for us to get the whole of the force in location and supported logistically as quickly as we would have liked. To maintain that force there for an extensive period through rotation would have been difficult. The area of concern with logistics is that it takes so long to train logisticians. For instance, it takes longer to train logisticians than it does to train an infantry soldier or a gun number. Many of the logistic trades are technical trades and, by necessity, the courses for those trades are very long and we do not always have the civilian equivalent where we can bring people in through contract or through direct recruiting into the logistic units to be able to cover that trade. As it turned out, we were able to meet the commitment that we had. What I was talking about there was that, in the event that we had to rotate a total force for a longer period, there would have been logistic difficulties.

CHAIR—Or if you had had to bring them in under duress.

Brig. McIntosh—Of course. The logistics requirement then grows. But, as I said, logistics is not my specialist area and I really would not like to comment on what the exact deficiencies were in that area.

Senator GIBBS—Brigadier, could I just follow up on what you were saying before about training and bringing apprentices in. You said earlier that the reserves should have more highly qualified training but that there was a problem with the length of courses. How do we address this situation? What do you see as a solution to having a reserve that is ready and highly qualified technically and trade-wise—in all that sort of thing?

Brig. McIntosh—I think there are a number of potential solutions. One of them is to determine the trades we consider will be impossible to train a reservist in and make those positions full time. If we have courses that are going to be more than 12 months, for instance, to learn a trade skill—or a couple of years in some trades—it is going to be impossible to train a reservist in those unless you can bring them in on some kind of full-time service. For doing that, you would then need some kind of obligation from them afterwards to get the value for that money. Then you have to start to look at whether it is really worth doing that with the reservists or whether we just make that a full-time position. Then we are growing skills within the regular army and, when they leave, those skills will then be used within the civilian community. Hopefully, those people will then be attracted to join the reserve army if we can have some kind of an inducement package for them to do that. So I think one of the first things we need to do is just to look at some of those trade skills. We have looked to see how we can fill them through reserve service for many years now and we have found that many of those trades we just cannot fill.

Another area is in the technical trades, like mechanics, where we need to have some kind of a cooperative scheme with apprentice organisations around Australia whereby we attract apprentices into the Defence Force at a very early stage. Perhaps Defence could join with the apprentice training organisation to meet some of the costs, and we conduct their induction training into the Defence Force during the period of their apprentice scheme, so that at the end of their apprenticeship they can serve. They can also get their trade training that they need to do perhaps within a defence organisation as well—or at least some of it could be done within a defence organisation, as part of a cooperative scheme.

We have looked at an option of doing this in the 7th Brigade. We had a trial of such a scheme last year. Unfortunately it did not work, because the apprentice organisation was on the Gold Coast and we only attracted a very small number of people. But I think there was enough learnt from that experience for us to be able to look at that as a potential scheme to be applied more widely than we did it here. I think it has got the potential to work. I think the only way—short of making those kinds of trades full time, which is very expensive, particularly if you are going to employ those full-time members in a part-time unit—is to look at some kind of a cooperative approach through an apprentice type of scheme.

The other option is what we just discussed before: essentially what the Ready Reserve Scheme did but extend that to training people in trade—bring them in and give them their trade

qualifications, if we determine that we want them to be reserve positions, but have a return of service obligation at the end of that trade qualification so that we get sufficient time out of them to make it worth our while. So there are options.

Senator GIBBS—Yes. Is my understanding correct that at the moment you do not go into the Army and serve an apprenticeship? They do not do that any more, do they? They used to years ago, didn't they?

Brig. McIntosh—I am not certain of how the army apprenticeship scheme works. It is a different scheme from what it used to be where they had army apprentices. They now have an agreement with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology where they conduct some training and then bring people in. If you need the information on that, I would have to take that on notice and I would be happy to provide the information about the regular army apprentice scheme and any reserve apprenticeship scheme that we operate at the moment as well.

Senator GIBBS—Thank you very much.

Mr LAURIE FERGUSON—On a similar point, you referred to the length of courses earlier as one of the difficulties. Moving away from apprentices and trainees et cetera, just a common induction, and assuming that despite the advisability of it we do not go towards any kind of previous system we had with recruits, are there any options there in regard to modifying that induction period, because it does seem from a lot of discussion around the place that it is one of the difficulties getting people for that length of time? Are there modules that could be basically separated out, or is there any lateral thinking in regard to that?

Brig. McIntosh—The concept of common induction training was to make sure that both the full time and the part time, obviously, were at the same inducted level, which really makes it easier for us to call on the reserves to serve as individual and follow-on reinforcements in higher readiness units, and we can bring them up to a degree of readiness far more quickly. I do not think we need to be going away from those ideals.

There are aspects of CIT that are being looked at at the moment for change. I am not sure exactly what has been advocated in Army Office, and the Chief of Army is probably the best person to advise on that. But as a formation commander in a formation that has to try and make common induction training work, I would advocate that we need to take a readiness approach to all of our training and to all of our structures, and that includes common induction training. If you have got high readiness organisations, then their emphasis is on collective training and being ready to go into combat. You have to provide them with trained replacements.

If we are going to grow readiness out of the reserve, the enhanced reserve elements have also got to be trained when they move into that enhanced readiness unit, otherwise it will not have any effective readiness. However, there are also standard readiness reserve organisations that have a role. That role is to provide individual and follow-on reinforcements with trade qualified people, and there are specific tasks they can be assigned that they can train for within a reasonable training time. Then the only aspect of readiness that concerns them after that is their availability, and we now have call-out provisions and we can also call on volunteers for service.

With that lower readiness organisation, we do have the scope to be able to look at things like the trade training and conducting that trade training—not completely, perhaps, but some of it—within the unit environment. Essentially, what it means is the lower readiness reserve organisations are effectively a training organisation. As people become trade qualified, they move into subunits within that organisation where they can be assigned discrete tasks that they can train for, but tasks that we have decreed that we may need in credible contingencies, so that they will be readily available to deploy should we call them out or should they volunteer. But you would also still have the structure of the organisation in place for the other role of the reserve which is, of course, the potential for ultimate follow-on or mobilisation. So I think we just need to look at that from a readiness perspective, and I am sure that is being done as we speak.

CHAIR—One of the other questions we would be very interested to get your views on, if you are prepared to offer them, is the Army strategy. Do you feel that the strategy in the Department of Defence nowadays is working to the disadvantage of Army?

Brig. McIntosh—Strategy is clearly evolving, as we read in the media. The debate has extended beyond defence of Australia. I do not think anybody in Army would deny that our primary role is the defence of Australia. Whether we have to defend Australia on Australian territory or whether we need to engage within our region is really the centre of the debate. I do not think there is much that we will do in the future, in the modern collective security environment, which does not involve us engaging with regional coalitions and with our traditional coalition partners. Therefore, we really need to be prepared to do whatever has to be done to provide a secure region and a secure world, and Army has a role to play in that.

Clearly, our emphasis is within our immediate region; we are too small to be engaging too much beyond that. My own view is that there are niche markets in defence, as I said before, and our niche, within Army, is at the lower level of conflict. Our strategic circumstance basically suggests that, for the foreseeable future, that is the level at which we will probably need to operate. We are too small a population, with too small a GDP, to be really engaging ourselves in anything much beyond that. I am not employed in the strategic field, as I am sure you appreciate, and I would not really like to expand much beyond that.

CHAIR—I was going to say ‘and ...?’ but you do not want to go ‘and ...’. I appreciate that it is probably a slightly sensitive area. As there are no further questions, thank you very much for coming along today, Brigadier. That has been very valuable and we appreciate you taking the time to come before the subcommittee and the frank responses you have given us. We certainly commend the work that you do.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Hollis**, seconded by **Senator Gibbs**):

That the subcommittee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Subcommittee adjourned at 11.55 a.m.