

APPENDIX 5

SUBMISSION NO. 157

1. I would like to take this opportunity to make a submission to the committee concerning the retention of personnel in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). I am a Chief petty Officer Writer (CPOWTR) and I have served in the RAN for just over 21 years. the Writer branch is mainly responsible for pay, all accounts (personal and trader), finance and personnel administration.
2. I believe the problems commenced when the Defence Reform program (DRP) was implemented which included centralisation of services, civilianisation of naval billets and contracting services to civilian companies. I served in the Sydney area when services were centralised and civilianised and am now serving in Victoria where services are also centralised and civilianised. The problems I continually see are mismanagement, a lack of accountability, ignorance and written contract problems. Civilian contractors are not held accountable for breeches of contract, which is extremely dis-heartening as sailors would be held accountable, including being charged under the Defence Force Discipline Act (DFDA). Contracts are not written properly and a number of tasks are not included, hence the sailor has to pick up the slack as well as perform their own duties. From my own experience, civilian personnel who are employed in pay, registry, removals and accounts are not professionally qualified to perform these functions. There have been problems with non-payment of Qantas accounts to the point where they have threatened that no more travel bookings will be accepted until the account is paid. Non-payment of credit card accounts, one case in particular, a Visa account had not been paid for approximately four months. Defence is the ultimate loser as the organisation gains a bad reputation when it comes to paying bills.
3. As a result of centralisation and civilianisation the Supply Branch has been decimated and mismanaged to the point, where the numbers are at critical levels. The downsizing of the Writer's branch was not monitored correctly to ensure that the correct level of numbers were maintained. In 1998 there were almost 500 Writers and we had to reach a target of about 227 by 2003. The Writer's Branch is well under the target set for 2003 and the year is 2001. I have been offered promotion and a posting goes with the job, there are problems trying to replace me, as there are not enough CPOWTRs. The career managers are searching through the Reserve List to try and find a replacement. I also get about five weeks notice to move from Victoria to Sydney; it is fortuitous that I am not married.
4. My current position in a Command billet and the staff are CSIG. The ridiculous situation is that I have no input into the management of the staff, not able to provide professional guidance to staff and not able to provide divisional

management. To add further insult I have been advised that the staff, who are also Writers, will be supervised by a Chief Petty Officer of a completely different specialisation. With all due respect to the Chief, this individual is not professionally qualified to supervise and provide professional guidance and train junior Writers. I ask where is the logic in this decision. Instead I now have personnel who are extremely irate and morale has dropped significantly to the point where one staff member, has submitted his discharge from the RAN. The introduction of Corporate Support, now known as CSIG, has driven a wedge not only between members of the Supply Branch but also the uniformed members of the Navy.

5. To add further fuel to the fire, one position in the office was identified to be civilianised. This was advised in February 2001, to date the billet is still not filled. Meanwhile the office is manned by two people, instead of three, one of which is a trainee Writer. So in reality, one person is doing the work of two plus training and supervising the trainee. The mismanagement and bungling processes that have occurred in order to get the position advertised was totally unprofessional. The Public Service also need to get their act together regarding a number of processing procedures and lack lustre way of doing business.
6. Also as a result of the DRP, the tri-service approach is being introduced and there is also bungling and mismanagement in this process. Navy has always lead the way with how they manage welfare and personnel related matters of its members. With the tri-service approach, Navy has had to step back fifty steps to keep pace with the RAAF and Army. Navy's Personal Services Organisation (PSO) which is now the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) was second to none. Although the Social Workers and Family Liaison Officers are still available through the DCO, the professional expertise of the uniformed members has been lost, due to centralisation of housing, removals and the ability to provide that something extra. Army and RAAF had no such organisation.
7. The introduction of PMKeys, what a joke this system is. Again Navy has the best personnel management system called NPEMS. The current RAAF and Army systems are deficient and again Navy has to step back because the other two services are not up to speed with their personnel management. PMKeys is civilian oriented, has no military relation and is extremely non-user friendly. I did the course in March 2001 and still have not received a login to the system, even after considerable effort to obtain one. If I don't get a login to access PMKeys, I am not able to do my job. By the time PMKeys is actually installed, I will have forgotten how to use the system. Also during the course, a number of anomalies were identified and questions asked; answers could not be supplied because the instructor did not know enough about the system. Why listen to our concerns or objections we are just the 'bunnies' at the coalface who have to use the system!
8. The bottom line is I joined the Navy for a career not a job and I am a fourth generation service member. I agree changes have to be made, but the changes haven't stopped and people are now so confused as to who does what, it is

affecting the way we do business. Defence is not a corporation, we do not make a profit, therefore, stop trying to engineer our structure as if we were a profit making corporation. The good people of Navy are discharging because enough is enough, our conditions of service are declining, there is no fun any more and we are being worked into the ground because of the 'can do' attitude. My standard working day is about 12–13 hours a day and I am certainly not remunerated for the work I do. To ensure there is no misunderstanding, I love the Navy and have a great deal of pride in the uniform. However, I do not know how much longer I can continue to perform the level of work I am currently undertaking when there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

9. I also have concerns at the lack of backbone the Navy has when it comes to tri-service issues and decision making. The Army trounces over the RAAF and Navy and if it is not done the 'green' way then it is no way. The day I have to wear a green uniform, will be the day I discharge. I have had enough of this! I continually have up-hill battles with Army personnel who have a belligerent and inflexible attitude and who are not willing to go that extra mile for their people.
10. The management of defects is a joke. There is a large amount of funding and resources being wasted. For example, I reported three defects at the same time all regarding blown light bulbs or fluorescent lights and all in the same building. Three contractors came out on three separate days and each had a contract to fix the blown lights. This is a regular occurrence. When the contractors were asked why the other lights in the building were not fixed at the same time, the reply was "I only have a contract to fix the external lights that have blown." What a gross waste of money and resources. How cost effective is this?
11. Navy had better start actively seeking answers to the retention problem and start listening to their people, otherwise there will not be enough people to man the shore bases, let alone ships. I blame the DRP and CSP for much of Navy's problems. Decisions are made that affect people at the coalface, yet they are not consulted or trials are not conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of the decision. A prime example of this is the Defence Plaza in Pitt Stree, Sydney with respect to the pay being centralised and not enough people performing the function. But it was implemented anyway and the resultant effect was a number of personnel had problems with their pay, including debts. The Sydney area alone had a debt owing to the commonwealth of approximately \$475,000 (this figure was quoted late 1999). CSP and civilianisation was introduced to save money, as sailors are an expensive commodity. However, how cost effective has it been and the cost to the Navy has been retention of its people, which is now a critical problem. The hierarchy continually say 'people are its number one asset' yet they do nothing but deliver 'lip service' to try and cope with the situation. I have seen a number of teams implemented and surveys despatched and I am yet to see anything concrete. Money is an issue, accommodation, welfare, family support are all issues as well, yet little is being done. Finally the outcome is:

DRP, Civilianisation and CSP = Senate Committee Inquiry into Retention.

12. I request this submission be made public with name and address deleted.