

**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
OF DEFENCE PERSONNEL**

SUBMISSION

Submission No: 104

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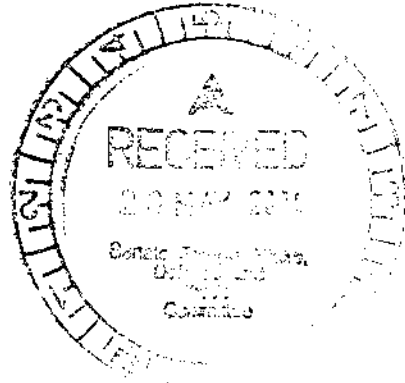


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notes Our apologies to the Committee for the late lodgement of this submission rethe reference on recruitment and retention strategies of the ADF.

Could our address be added to any distribution list that promulgates such references and calls for submissions.

John Leyden

SUBMISSION TO
SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCE
COMMITTEE
BY
COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT
ROYAL VICTORIA REGIMENT ASSOCIATION INC.

*CURRENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES OF THE
AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Royal Victoria Regiment (RVR) Association

1.1 The RVR Association represents former members of Victorian infantry battalions that have been raised since the reorganisation of the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) in 1960. Some thousands of individuals have served in these units in the intervening years.

1.2 The Committee of Management includes former Commanding Officers of both Melbourne metropolitan and country battalions, regimental officers, Warrant Officers and Senior Non Commissioned Officers.

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 To succeed as a vibrant defence force the organisation must make a far greater effort to engage the Australian Community. Effective Reservists are the most qualified ambassadors for this task. The leaders of the country at all levels need to be encouraged to demonstrate their total support for the Defence Force to the Australian Public.

2.2 It is our view that the attractiveness of Reserve service would have been greatly enhanced if the Government had mobilised a State Regiment battalion for the first relief in East Timor. This unit could have been manned with volunteer reservists from around the nation and topped up, where necessary, with regular members. In choosing to reinforce 6RAR with reservists – as long as they were below the rank of Corporal – a negative message was sent to reservists as to the futility of attempting to improve their military skills and rank

2.3 As was to be expected 6 RAR undertook extensive working-up exercises before deployment – a situation that would have been no different to a reinforced Reserve Battalion.

2.4 With the background of Association members, this submission is primarily directed to issues pertaining to reservists. Given the recent demands placed on the Reserve eg, Defence Coy Butterworth, Bougainville, East Timor

and Operation Gold in support of the Sydney Olympics, we consider this to be quite appropriate.

3. CURRENT RECRUITMENT & RETENTION STRATEGIES

3.1 It is axiomatic that current strategies are ineffective.

3.2 In the preparation of this submission an enquiry was made of your Committee as to whether the above strategies were set out in a written directive or similar. The answer was no!

3.2 This response was reinforced by the combined experience of the RVR Association as none could recall seeing such policies reduced to writing during their service.

4. IS THE CURRENT RECRUITMENT SYSTEM MEETING (CONTINUE TO MEET) ADF NEEDS?

4.1 Based on publicised reports the answer to the above question in relation to the Reserve is obviously no. To state the obvious, a continued pattern of reduction in enlistments will ultimately result in the run down of capacity, and further enhance retention difficulties with a disenchanting membership.

In preparing this submission, we have assumed that the "Reserve Recruiting System" consists of the following components:

- A centralised authority (partially privatised in Victoria) for the processing of recruit enquiries, enlistment procedures and attestation.
- A continuous 6 weeks recruit training course – and upon completion, the possible need to complete a full time Initial Employment Training (IET) module before being rated as a trained soldier.

The Centralised Authority

4.2 The economies of scale that can be achieved by having a dedicated authority are recognised but it is our view that the current system is isolated from the end user – the unit. Experience has shown that where such a function is primarily administered by the Regular Army there are marked differences in the appreciation of time lines for the completion of a specific task and the expectations of both a potential recruit and any sponsoring unit.

4.3 The administration of the recruiting process is an onerous task for the unit commander but it does have the advantages of both direct interest and the responsibility and authority of the command function.

4.4 We have received anecdotal information as to:

- delays in responding to expressions of interest,

- difficulties with enlistment procedures,
- lack of planning in timings for attendance at recruiting centres (eg prior to the arrival of the first public transport to the city area), and
- advice to some applicants that they would have to serve in a unit/Corps other than in their own geographic area (due to establishment limits).

While such information may not reflect the norm, the incidents quoted indicate a state of affairs that could indicate a lack of urgency and basic commonsense.

4.5 It is our view that the current structure of recruiting establishments has been set up with the needs of the regular forces as their primary concern - and this is reflected in the staff ethos in dealing with business hour enquiries from potential reservists.

4.6 The costs and potential inefficiencies of the piecemeal administration of recruiting is recognised but we are of the view that a properly resourced trial be conducted at formation/unit level. Resources would include an increase in establishment for the function and an operating budget that would include provision for regional/local advertising.

4.7 A casual view of any major unit on parade would indicate that there is under-representation of major ethnic groups in the general community. Any military force should be representative of the community that it represents and every effort should be made to ensure that this actually occurs.

4.8 The parade pattern of units is a factor that should be taken into account. To the best of our knowledge, Melbourne based units all parade on a Tuesday night. This provides little scope for a potential enlistee who plays team sport as all sporting clubs known to the RVR Committee train on a Tuesday and Thursday night.

Recruit Training Course (6 Weeks Army Reserve)

4.9 The introduction of such courses undoubtedly returns a Reserve soldier to his/her unit with a good foundation for further military training. However, it is obvious that such a system is not turning out enough of them. There has been sufficient political comment and action to indicate that the unemployed in particular (mutual obligation), and the tertiary student, are key target areas for enlistment.

4.10 However, what about the employed or self employed? It is the height of naivety to believe that, particularly in the current employment situation, the enactment of legislation provides foolproof protection to a would-be soldier. As Senators will be aware, the Government had no qualms about removing Defence Force leave provisions from the core elements of Federal industrial awards.

4.11 It is our contention that the one of the latent strengths of the Reserve is the wide range of skills and experience that comes from a representative slice

of the population. In a military context this is particularly relevant in the case of skilled technicians and tradesmen. In the past these members often used annual leave to attend periods of continuous training – but for periods of 2 weeks only. Often this category of soldier was in his/her twenties and often married.

4.12 Any mandatory requirement to complete IET on a full time basis must also be considered a disincentive to enlistment. This would be particularly relevant to any qualified tradesmen who were enlisting to perform a similar task as to their civil employment.

Non-attendance at such a course raises the question as to the employment of a recruit in the interim period. We consider it essential that any soldier who has completed recruit training must have the opportunity to advance to the next level of qualification with all due speed. To this end, units must have the authority to conduct IET on a combination of continuous and non-continuous courses. Distance learning techniques can be a feature of such programs.

5. IMPACT OF DEFENCE REFORM PROGRAM

5.1 No comment on this aspect.

6. ADF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

6.1 In relation to Reserves, it is difficult to identify "Conditions of Service". The much-touted "Tax Free" pay is in fact a pre-taxed salary if one compares Regular and Reserve members with equal qualifications or on a daily pay basis. Access to Defence Force Home Loans is a marked improvement on the past but does not address the gap between recruitment and qualifying service.

6.2 ARES conditions must be structured to provide incentive to soldier-on to a stage where there are sufficient numbers to enable effective sub-unit training to be conducted. The sausage machine effect, especially the unemployed and university students, who leave when they get a job, must be arrested.

6.3 Strategies to address this issue include:

- Introduction of Employer Superannuation contributions
- Introduction of re-enlistment bonuses
- Recognition of the GST on Reserve salaries
- Recognition of the fact that ARES soldiers do most of their training at night and weekends, do not get paid for public holidays nor get recognition for periods spent working on rotating shifts – just to identify a few situations.

6.4 It would be interesting to compare the cost of the Reserve support in the Operational Search Battalion at the Olympic Games if the same function had been carried out by regular troops.

7. LEVELS & CATEGORIES OF SPECIALIST PERSONNEL ETC

7.1 Every effort should be made to maximise the talents and skills of the civilian base that have a direct inter-changeability with the ADF. Provision is made for professional personnel in medicine and law but this should be extended. Categories that are readily identified include managerial groups in transport, warehousing, purchasing, engineering, construction, information technology and communications. Military training should be a secondary consideration in identifying such persons and offering them "dormant commissions" i.e., activated when called up for minimum service and times of national emergency.

7.2 For example, the operations manager/s of a large national transport firm could be identified as the CO/OC of a potential third or fourth line transport unit. With appropriate staff support it would be envisaged that such a person would be capable of raising the necessary establishment from civil resources and meet the basic objective of professionally delivering the required tonnage to those points required.

7.3 Acceptance of such a commission would be dependant upon:

- Meeting medical requirements and acceptance of being available for call-up
- Completion of the minimum training necessary to a-tune them to the basics of the military
- Attendance at annual seminars (eg a long weekend) on issues pertaining to their specific areas of expertise.

8. IMPACT OF CURRENT CAREER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

8.1 Anecdotal evidence indicates that career planning processes for Reserve officers of field rank is less than satisfactory with little, if any, advice on potential postings and career progression. Good quality officers in the Reserves are usually good quality operatives in their respective civil occupations where they are required to make career choices. Such choices to be structured so that attendees develop an awareness of military requirements and considerations.

8.2 We are of the view that there would be merit in the reintroduction of regional Corps career advisory committees comprised of CO's and senior officers of the particular Corps. Such officers are in close contact with regimental officers and SNCO's and have a better understanding of their civil commitments and aspirations.

9. SUMMARY

9.1 There has been an increasing demand for the use of individual Reserve soldiers for Regular service. In part, this demand is predicated upon the fact that there is a known pool of individuals who have completed the full time Common Induction Training and Corps IET.

9.2 The transfer of drafts of such troops may be useful to the regular component but it has a deleterious effect upon the parent unit. It is apparent that they are not replaced at an acceptable rate to maintain unit effectiveness. It is our contention that the prime cause for this failure to maintain numbers relates to the unrealistic expectation that every potential enlistee into the Reserves can undertake extended periods of continuous training. They cannot.

9.3 If there is an identified need for readily deployable soldiers who have completed full time training up to IET level, the Army should accept responsibility for incorporating volunteers into subunits of major Regular units. In addition, their conditions of service should mirror those of the Regular counterparts.

9.4 For the remainder of the Army reserve there must be an acceptance of the realities of part-time soldiering. There may be **One Army** but it cannot be at a uniform standard of training. If required for deployment members will require individual, subunit and unit training, "the teeth arms in particular". Other members, with directly transferable skills, will require less military training. There is nothing new in this.

9.5 The major requirement is to ensure that the general Reservist is retained for sufficient time to develop those military skills that will enable at least effective subunit training to be conducted. This cannot be achieved if the Reserve is seen as defence on the cheap. Adequate financial incentives must form part of an equation that is composed of:

- An identified role and an acceptance of unit deployment to meet the role
- Vigorous leadership
- Adequately funded training and exercises.

ATTACHMENT

A. Summary of recommendations

DETAILS OF CONTRIBUTOR

This document is submitted on behalf of the RVR Association Inc Committee of Management by:

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Attachment A

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That responsibility for Reserve recruiting process (excluding testing) be performed at formation/major unit level and that:
 - Establishments are varied to provide an increment for recruitment tasks.
 - That Formations/units are provided with a separate advertising budget for local use.
 - That a professional package be provided for the preparation of advertising and publicity campaigns.
2. That unless an enlistee indicates otherwise, that they be posted to the unit nearest their place of residence.
3. That the processing of non-effectives be reviewed with the intention of removing them from the strength of a unit within 3 months of declaration. In addition, that a separate agency/cell be established to administer non-effective members transferred from parent units.
4. That the ethnic composition of the Reserve forces is reviewed in relation to determining whether they reflect the multicultural structure of the general population. That specific marketing campaigns be developed and directed at those groups that are under-represented in the ADF.
4. That selected Ares formations conduct recruit training courses for enlistees who cannot attend the 6-week course at the ARTC. The technical elements of the course to be based upon the ARTC syllabus but tailored to meet an Ares time frame.
5. That major units conduct IET courses on a combination of part-time and continuous courses immediately on the completion of recruit training.
6. In conjunction with recommendations four & five, distant learning packages are developed for both home and directed study.
7. That the Government issue a statement affirming its support for the deployment of ARES units as formed bodies in circumstances where reinforcement of the ARA is required.
8. That the use of the term TAX FREE not be used in advertising as it is misleading.

9. That the conditions of service for Reservists be reviewed in relation to aspects such as:

- Reasons for pay differentials between Regulars and reservists where their qualifications are identical
- Taxation
- Compensation for GST
- Introduction of Employer industry superannuation contribution
- Re-enlistment bonuses for defined periods of service.

10. An investigation be undertaken as to the viability of introducing "dormant" commissions for suitably qualified civilian experts.

11. That Corps Planning Advisory Committees be reintroduced on a regional basis.

