

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 34

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The Secretary  
Senate Foreign Affairs,  
Defence and Trade Reference Committee  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT. 2600

Re: INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF  
DEFENCE PERSONNEL

Dear Senators,

With this communication I wish to address the terms of reference as set out on the website information sheet.

Since I am not familiar with all the terms of reference, I am restricting my comments and suggestions to those subjects that I have knowledge of.

The letter in front of each term addressed, will indicate which terms of reference have been replied too.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

Please be advised, that on some of the issues addressed, I have inside information , that is to say that I personally know a number of NCO's and Commissioned Officers, with many of them I have regular discussions on issues pertaining to Australia's Defence Forces.

I have to digress here onto a number of other issues to show the connection between my comments and why many defence personnel are leaving without even finishing their original terms of engagement.

I have also served my National Service with the West German Army, prior to migrating to Australia in 1968.

Our present combined Army, Navy and Airforce manpower totals around 55,000, with only 5000 rifleman or infantry. This is totally inadequate, making us to reliant on overseas help, which may not be forthcoming, even a small scale assignment such as East Timor took us some six months to get ready. As far as I am concerned given the size of our country (as big as the USA) and the population, we should be having a consistent contingent of 100,000 man under arms at all times, that could be seen as a deterrent against any aggressor.

Some years ago in the Financial Review (15/05/1991) the Minister for Defence Senator Ray stated, **when the army's strength was 27,000 personnel it consisted off: 2500 clerks, 964**

cooks, 500 medical assistants, 1631 drivers, 817 vehicle mechanics, 285 musicians, 585 info systems operators 430 stewards, 1728 technical store persons, 241 cartographic technicians, and 3100 riflemen about one rifleman for every 8 km of coastline.

Lets look at our equipment for a moment,

**The Mack Trucks built in Australia but are (American), are totally unsuited for our conditions probably ordered by the then government to save Mack, which was on the brink of collapsing.**

**Wasted taxpayer money.**

**Unimogs made in (Germany) a very versatile and capable vehicle but foreign built.**

**Landrover**

**A versatile vehicle but again foreign (British) built**

**International Trucks**

**Built in Australia but sourced from mainly the (USA) again foreign owned.**

**Trailers**

**Built in Australia but using foreign made axles and suspension components.**

**Tanks**

**German Leopard 2 . A good tank but ageing and in need for replacement.(Foreign built)**

**Airlanes**

**F 111 and F 18 Hornets both are US made and were built to carry nuclear weapons, which we don't have. So they were converted to carrying iron bombs under the pretence of "upgrading"**

**The Swedish built "Viggen" in my opinion would have been a better choice, as it can operate from short straight stretches of highway and we would have been able to purchase a lot more planes for the same money.**

**Transport Aircraft**

**The Hercules a versatile craft but made in the (USA) The RAAF let some of them decay away at an airstrip at Laverton until they could only be sold as scrap WHY?.**

**Cariboo**

**Australian built light transport plane, what happened to them. Did a foreign power force the government to stop producing them? so we have to buy from the US?**

**Skyhawk Navy Support planes**

**Sold to New Zealand, then leased back so we do not have to maintain them, how are we going to give airsupport to our ships and maintenance technicians their needed experience? In the event of a war, these planes would have to be repaired in New Zealand. This makes no sense at all. With the latest news being that they will be withdrawn from service later this year, not to be replaced.**

### Chinook Transport Helicopters

Rotting away on the ground to save money on fuel and maintenance. Out of 20, the government sold 16, with the remaining four getting beyond their use by date. (Insufficient training was the cause of the SAS helicopter crash in Queensland) where many of our elite troops died.

### Naval Vessels

Just to name a few

We bought two twenty year old clapped out rustbucket landingcraft from the US for sixty million Dollars, then we spend another two hundred million dollars to repair and upgrade them. For this money we could have build them here in Australia, keeping our people employed and keep the money in this country. Now we still have twenty year old vessels.

### Collins Class Submarines.

What a debacle, we spend 6 billion Dollars and pay up front (how stupid can you get) for a untried design, from a country that has no experience in submarine warfare and has not even built a prototype of these subs.

Now we have to spend hundreds of millions of Dollars of Taxpayers money to make them serviceable

This is outright criminal and somebody's head should have rolled over this, particularly when for an extra few hundred million dollars we could have had a design from a country the has the experience and expertise of two World Wars of submarine warfare to draw on. Everybody knows that they subs are duds, (floating coffins) so nobody wants to serve on them.

### Patrol Boats

The Navy has taken possession of new patrol boats apparently build in Queensland.

They were build from aluminium and manganese to stop them from rusting. They are floating fire coffins for our sailors. Everybody who has watched telecasts of the Falklands War on TV. would have seen, what an Exocet Missile did to the aluminium superstructure of a British Destroyer It totally disintegrated the ship.

These boats have as an armament a 0.50 calibre machine gun. What can one do with this?

We should have Motor Torpedo Boats like the German Navy, with 4 x torpedo tubes, 2 x machine guns, 1 x 20 millimetre gun and 1 x 37 millimetre gun or missile launcher. With that sort of craft, we could fight frigates and destroyers at sea and in shallow waters.

The old patrol boats were refurbished at Hervey Bay and sold to of all countries  
"Indonesia"

### Guns

Our mortars and heavy artillery guns are probably outdated, so where do we get our replacements from "Overseas"

### Rifles

The Styer

Austrian (foreign) build useless pieces of equipment, with the sights fogging up in rain, can't be used for rapid fire (Army order No 7196-94 ) accidental discharges that have cos a number of Australian Soldiers their life.

Apparently a few drops of rain in the barrel, makes the weapon dangerous to the operator.

Yet the federal government paid ADI the sum of 400,000.00 Dollars (probable from the Medicare Buy Back Levy) to melt down the remaining 110,000 SLR's,(each of them worth \$4,000.00 on the second hand market, a staggering \$440 000 000.00) to make the buyback figures from the national gun amnesty look good and to show a good profit for a potential private (foreign owned buyer)

The SLR's in their aged condition were still a better gun than the Styer in my opinion.

#### Ammunition

**We import ammunition of all places from Indonesia, with a record of being unable to meet demand and faulty cartridges.**

The list goes on and on.

These are just a few of the issues that concern defence force personnel. One can clearly see, why moral in the services is low and why so many personnel are leaving

**These brave men and women are saying, why should we risk our lives for a country, whose government and politicians and population does not respect us and does not support what we are trying to do with the outdated equipment we have to put up with.**

(a)

From comments and writeups in the media, it is obvious that the present system of recruitment practices does not attract an adequate number of young people to join the services.

**In 1998, 3409 recruits were enlisted, but 5939 personnel left the services. Army 2698, RAAF 1716, Navy 1525**

A number of young people I have been talking to on a number of occasions, which were very much interested in joining up, and which have decided against doing so, gave me the following answers.

**Why should we join up and go overseas to fight in a war, get shot up, be crippled or even killed, only to come back to a country whose politicians do not want to honour what the diggers have been fighting for (yet they sent them there in the first place) and still to this day do not want to adequately compensate WW 2 POW. for what they went through, (and what about the Korean and Vietnam Veterans, (we had no business there) so that them (the politicians) can live it up on our expense. Stuff the polities let them go and fight their dirty wars themselves**

**Why fight for a foreign owned country, in which we have no longer a say, and for a government that works in the interest of the multinationals, but not the Australian People.**

(b)

I can't comment on this issues as I do not have adequate knowledge or information on the subjects in question, other than the present efforts of concentrating more and more defence facilities into larger bases is detrimental to our security for it takes only a few well targeted missiles or bombing raids and Australia is out of business.

(c)

A major stumbling block to the long term retention of defence personnel, are many of the condition they are required to work under. **Some of these are:**

The change of postings every two years.

No regards for families school aged children.

**The excessive away from home placing's, eg: going bush and when returning from overseas posting, being sent onto another overseas posting in less than 12 months. What about their families, that can't alway's accompany them?.**

**The inadequate medical cover for family members of defence personnel.**

The further and further isolation of defence facilities from the general public creates a clear rift between defence personnel and civilians.

Inadequate pay and allowances

**Defence Force Personnel are on duty (Standby) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.**

**On many days they are on duty for 18 hours a day with only a 6 hour break to sleep and do all the things they are supposed to.**

**For instance; a sergeants salary is \$37,000.00 per annum, he does not get paid any overtime.**

**So when one calculates  $24 \times 7 \text{ days} = 168 \text{ hours}$ ,  $\times 52 \text{ weeks} = 8736 \text{ hours}$ .**

**\$37,000.00 divided by 8736 hours = \$ 4.235 an hour. Would you gentlemen senators work for such a lousy hourly wage and risk getting shot to pieces or even killed?**

They can earn the same amount in a civilian job, doing only 40 hour per week, Monday to Friday.

Inadequate pension levels after twenty years of service.

Not allowed to be organised in any way, shape or form.

**The prospect of being used by the government to fight their own families. (civil demonstrations)**

Officers having to ring in on a daily basis, even when on holiday's

**Having civilians placed in strategic roles, that haven't got a glue about military issues.**

**Civilians are used in the forces to make up the numbers, but they are not soldiers.**

Personnel being discouraged to wearing their uniforms when on leave. We were proud to go out and show off our uniforms.

**The comments of the then defence minister, when a soldier in uniform was beaten up in Sydney some years ago, "they should not wear their uniform when on leave." This has done more harm then anything else to the forces, as it clearly indicates what the government thinks of them.**

**He should have come out in support of them instead.**

(d)

**The Defence Forces of any country must have their own specialist personnel to maintain and repair equipment independent from the private sector.**

**We can't force civilians to go out on the middle of a stormy night to perhaps recover or repair a tank or any other piece of equipment. It has taken Australia far to long to mobilise a force for the Timor assignment**

**For civilians to enter military installations, they are required to have security clearance, which they do not have. So defence personnel has to accompany them and watch them until**

they leave the installation. Why not send a trained defence force person or persons to do the job in the first place.

We have a situation where services such as transport and maintenance are contracted out to private enterprise, leaving defence personnel sitting idle, not getting any hands on experience and loosing their skills whilst contractors work from 9.00am to 5.00pm. There after they have to be paid Overtime. Defence personnel don't get paid overtime. You can't force civilians to serve overseas or even at our most northern frontier.

(e)

Many middle ranking commissioned officers are leaving the services because their chance of being promoted are twindling each year.

**There are too many high ranking officers eg. Colonels and Generals in nonproductive roles still on duty.** They should be retired to make way for the younger Officers waiting for their promotions.

**Then there is that stupid age limit: one has to be a Major for five years before a promotion to Lieutenant Colonel is possible, but if a Major is over 35 years old, he is considered to old.** Then there is the issue of bungling up careers by the army. For instance: (I have to generalise here so as no to jeopardise that particular Officers career)

This is my understanding of the situation,

This officer was promised a tour of duty and was already issued with an assignment notice, but was actually never sent, another Officer was sent instead.

He was then to go for a 6 months assignment to another country, which did not eventuate either because the Officer presently over there decided to return to Australia one month later than planned and in doing so has messed up the Staff College entry date for this other Officer. Because of these things he has lost his seniority over an Officer (his junior) recently returned from overseas and although better qualified will now be junior to this other Officer and may thus miss out on his promotion and command of a regiment becoming 2 I.C. only.

Given this scenario, it is not surprising that so many personnel are leaving the services further more it appears to me, that the Australian Defence Forces are to top heavy, that is there are to many high ranking officers and not enough privates, to justify the amount of highranking officers still on duty. There are also to many commissioned ranks overall.

Another sergeant I personally know, has decided to call it a day, He is engaged in specialised training and after many years of faithful and diligent service, the Army has not seen fit to offer him a promotion. So he is leaving and joining the Police Force of one state, where he's qualifications and experience are welcomed together with a better salary package and promotion prospects

(f)

**Australia spends about 2% of her Domestic Gross Product on defence.(down from previously being 6%) Any other country I know off, spend at least 5% on their GDP, some even more**

**We don't seem to have any money for our defence, yet we seem to have plenty to pay big fat bonuses to Public Servants and politicians that don't deserve them.**

To top it all off, the government objected to the \$13.00 a week wage rise for low paid workers, yet the politicians did not hesitate to give themselves a \$100.00 weekly increase in their salary.