

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 46

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The Secretary  
Senate Foreign Affairs  
Defence and Trade References Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: INQUIRY INTO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF DEFENCE  
FORCE PERSONNEL**

I noticed the advertisement inviting submissions to the inquiry above and felt compelled to offer my suggestions as to how the Army, Navy and Air Force may go about this objective.

Initially, what needs to be done to attract young people to a career in the defence forces is that the defence force hierarchy need to pitch towards a younger demographic. The uniforms might be a start. I mean for Christ's sake, how long since they've had a new wardrobe? Khaki what's going on there? Where can you go with that? Navy blue just doesn't do it for a lot of kids either. It's just to 'yesterday', too much like a new school uniform.. How do you mix and match? They need to liven it up a bit, maybe try a few pastels. Black, of course, is always in style, so do something with that perhaps, and the traditional colours might work in with black.

One would no doubt agree that physical fitness is a must, but the forces need to get rid of the 'forty-miles-with-full-pack-at-0500' type of thing and look at some yoga (strength, flexibility *and* spiritual realignment) or some tai-bo or judo for example.

The PR machine within the forces needs to kick it up a gear as well. How about instead of those boring 'open days' that they have, what about some dance parties, or BDO-style youth music festivals. There needs to be a less regimented, looser type of vibe within the bases. In fact, let's do away with the whole hierachical structure altogether. We need to have people relating to each other on an equal footing. Perhaps decision-making could be facilitated through some sort of voting system. We could replace 'army base', with 'army commune' for example.

To recruit and to keep people within the forces, the defence forces need to spend less time on training for battle and more time training to *prevent* violence taking place. Armies need to meet with their 'enemy'. Meeting with the enemy out in the fields and

talking with them, rather than shooting them may help our soldiers to empathise with our 'enemy'.

In fact, although the scope of this inquiry is limited to local defence force policy, you would do well to look at things in a more 'big picture' perspective. That is to say that defence force personnel around the globe could participate in some pro-active, non-violent conflict resolution, through workshops organised through the UN, say, and could take the place of annual meetings and monthly teleconferences. It would be encouraging for say George W Bush and Saddam Hussein meeting on neutral territory, say going shopping and then for a coffee in the QVB in Sydney for example, where they could bond and perhaps engage in some meaningful and ultimately productive discussion. They could also perhaps compare notes on how they are progressing with the dismantling of their nuclear (or 'nukular', as George W Bush might say) disarmament programs.

At a grass-roots local level, defense force personnel need to become more rounded as people. They need to become more tolerant to their fellow person. The Army/Navy /Air Force need throw away the aggro and become kinder, more loving, sharing and nurturing environments if they have any hope of both retaining existing personnel and bringing in the next generation of Aussie diggers.

Yours sincerely

*Brett Davies*