

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

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

SUBMISSION

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Summary of Main Points

This document is based on 15 years of experience I have with the Army Reserve in Western Australia and has no bearing on the Navy or Air Force. In the document, all references to the Reserves are in reference to the Australian Army Reserves, (also called Australian Army General Reserves).

Since the introduction of the CIT (Common Induction Training) the duration of the training for Recruits is now too long and would now make it difficult for anyone that is working to get time off work to attend. Once a person (who has a civilian job) has done his or her recruit camp they would not be able to get any extra time off from work to do any trade courses. Prior to the introduction of AIRN (Army Individual Ready Notification), training was very diverse especially when the Reservists were running the Reserves. As the Regular Army (ARA) took control and the introduction of AIRN, training was totally orientated towards every soldier passing their AIRN.

The problem with the current pay system in the Reserves is that there are no allowances given for any extra time worked. The current system of pay considers that a working day is either a minimum of six hours or 24 hours. Any more hours worked does not mean any extra pay. The system has become too inflexible for any soldier wanting to do any extra time with the Reserves. Prior to the changes that were made during the early 90's, the system would allow you to do 100 days service. This has now been cut back to 70 days.

There is too much emphasis on qualifying for the AIRN. Anyone that failed a BFA or did not sign the 28-day notice was discharged from the army. In my opinion the process is wrong. There is no obligation for a person to either attend a range shoot or to pass the range shoot.

Since the introduction of the One Army Policy, there has been a decline in the number of personnel being sent to non-infantry unit. Priority has been give to infantry and armour units on recruiting. In my own opinion, these changes have resulted in a number of other problems occurring with the army. I have outlined these problems in this document.

A & B. Recruitment System and the Defence Reform Program

The problem with the current recruiting system is that the advertising of defence force jobs are targeted at people who want a full time job in the defence force. Would any young person know of the existence of the Reserve Forces and their role? There is no advertising of the Reserve forces and their importance in the defence of Australia. When the Reserves were separate from the ARA in the mid eighties, there was a lot of importance placed on joining the Reserves for the defence of Australia.

In the past ten to fifteen years, each unit was responsible for recruiting people to their unit. This was done by either going out to shopping centres and setting up displays or having an "Open Day" with advertisements in the daily paper or on radio. Recruit camps were held each month at Leeuwin Barracks in Fremantle over a two-week period making it easy for people to attend. I found it easy to choose a suitable recruit camp to attend and was able to get time off from work.

Since the introduction of the CIT (Common Induction Training) the duration of the training for Recruits is now too long and would now make it difficult for me or anyone else that is working to get time off work to attend. Once a person (who has a civilian job) has done his or her recruit camp they would not be able to get any extra time off from work to do any trade courses. This makes the person partly non-employable in their unit and delays their promotion prospects since a trade is required for promotion.

Some of the soldiers that join the Reserves now are either unemployed or full time university students. I don't have a problem with this, as I was initially unemployed when I considered joining the Reserves and was later a part time university student. Joining the Reserves gave me a great opportunity to gain skills, earn some extra money and to gain some new friends. Now, the only people that I'm seeing joining the Reserves are only coming in to earn some extra money for a short time and then they leave. Full time University Student tended not to parade as often as they tend to have a lot of deadlines to meet with assignments. They naturally tend to prioritise study before Reserve commitments. Once they have finished their degree, there is a tendency to not to parade as often or they usually just quit.

With the running of Reserve units they would have key personnel from the ARA running the unit during the week. This has lead to problems with deployment of our unit into the field. The ARA usually based it training and preparation time for deployment on months and days. Whereas, the

Reserves based it's training and preparation on hours. That is, one Tuesday night is worth only three hours for preparation. This has led to inadequate preparation on deployment, both on weekends and the annual camp. What army in the world would deploy into the field unprepared and without having the right equipment or deploying without checking the equipment to see if it works?

Normal weekend activities that usually consist of one weekend a month had been increased to three weekends within a month. Personnel were expected to attend each weekend activities. This made it difficult for single people living on their own to do any housework. Every Tuesday nights training you were expected to attend. This got worse as the number of personnel declined. Non Commissioned Officers were then doing the work of privates because the privates were getting fed up attending the same repetitive training activities.

Prior to the introduction of AIRN, training was very diverse especially when the Reservists were running the Reserves. As the ARA took control and the introduction of AIRN, training was totally orientated towards every soldier passing their AIRN. Examples of the sacrifice made to training are, no river crossing training and its associated skills of making floatation devices, the only weapon that we were trained on is the F88 Steyr with some training of the Minimi and there were no training on machine guns or anti tank weapons. These skills I learnt during the late eighties / early nineties but were no longer taught after the introduction of AIRN. These skills are now only taught to infantry units. Yet, we are all told by many Officers that we are infantry soldiers first then followed by our trade. Most of the training was repetitive and was orientated towards recruits and privates. There was no advanced training that would prepare a person for promotion courses for non commissioned officers like myself. One sergeant course (Sub 2 for SGT) done at RAAOC Training Centre, Bandiana would provide adequate training for NCO's to be trained to the level of an officer. However, you would not be able to use these skills once you got back to your unit in W.A.

C. Conditions of Service and Pay

The problem with the current pay system in the Reserves is that there are no allowances given for any extra time worked. The current system of pay considers that a working day is either a minimum of six hours or 24 hours. Any more hours worked does not mean any extra pay. So if you decide to work for six hours on a Tuesday during the day, you would not get paid for attending the Tuesday night parade. If you are trying to convince a person to join the Reserves it is impossible to suggest

to them that the pay is good. A night fill job packing food onto the shelves at Coles Variety Stores or Woolworths will offer you more pay for less hours worked.

To improve conditions of pay I would recommend that a set pay should be paid for a standard working day in barracks of six hours. When the Reserves deploy to the field on weekends an allowance should be paid for living in the field and for working longer hours.

The One Army Policy had removed benefits from Reservists that were not given to the ARA. For example, getting certificates of services. Reservist never received any benefits that the ARA had.

D. Specialist Personnel

The only comment that I can make here is that it came impossible to train any individual for specialist jobs within our unit. Since there was a continuous decline in personnel and no new recruits being employed, most personnel had to be broad based trained. Relying on them to do a variety of tasks without specialising in any one trade.

In our unit, two instructors (Trade Testing Officers) had trained about 8 people for the Bath Unit in 1999. Of those trained, only two of them are qualified and are still in the system. Both instructors have gone inactive.

E. Career Management

The system has become too inflexible for any soldier wanting to do any extra time with the Reserves. Prior to the changes that were made during the early 90's, the system would allow you to do 100 days service. This has now been cut back to 70 days. Only in some circumstances are extra days granted to you (usually 30 days maximum). Anyone wanting to do any extra work is told not to parade until the new financial year where his or her "Man Days" are reset to 70 days on 1st July. This has lead to the term of "Ghost Soldiers" being used by soldiers to describe a units' strength. That is, soldiers that are on the roll book that don't / can't parade. Their names are called out on parade but they are never there for duty.

Over the years of service I have seen discrimination and resentment occurring from ARA personnel that they see the Reservist as a threat to their jobs. The Federal Government has also enhanced this

problem by announcing in the media that they will be reducing the number of full time soldiers and increasing the number of Army Reserve personnel. We were discouraged from using our skills that we had learnt in our civilian occupation, unless you did a military course on the same subject(s). Reservists having more skills than the ARA personnel were resented and were not allowed to express their opinions on subjects that we were qualified to speak on. The system had encouraged arrogance amongst ARA Warrant Officer and Officers that they were better than the civilian community. Especially with ARA Officers that were qualified with a university degree such as a Bachelor of Arts degree. The army system had filled them with such confidence of superiority that they forgot to look at the talents of their own troops. A number of Reservists (privates and NCO's) in our unit already had a university degree either before they joined the army or got one during their years of service.

ARA Officers are coming out of Kapooka with little knowledge of the real world, poor management skills on how to best utilise skills of personnel under their command and poor financial skills. Poor budgeting planning has result in equipment not been maintained. An example of this is with the Field Showering System Mobile (Bath Unit) where the filtration system is long over due for replacement. It has been request from senior NCO's and myself to have them replaced. We are told that they have been budgeted for and they would get replaced.

The One Army Policy has made it difficult for Reservist to get promoted by increasing the duration of promotion camps. With the RAAOC corps (Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps) it has extended one of its sergeant's courses from two weeks to about five weeks. The skills learnt by the people that have gone on this course have never put their skills into practice. For a corporal to be promoted to sergeant you would need to attend three promotion course camps over four years. Assuming that you could get the time of work at that time of the year. Some courses were only run once a year and usually at a busy time of the year for civilian occupations making it difficult to get time off at work.

F. Other Issues

The following items of discussion have come from many people over the years. These items have had a bearing on people's moral and their reasons for quitting. We have all made a number of verbal or written complaints about the system and how we can improve the training to our officers. But it seem that it was like sound falling on deaf ears. So this is great opportunity to be heard by

people that are prepared to listen. I believe that this senate inquiry needs to be broadened for the sack of the defence of Australia so that we can all maintain our lifestyles in this peaceful country.

The exercise program (PT) and CFA are set at the same level for men and a separate set of requirements for women. There is no consideration for the different body types that is now found across the community. Not everyone joining the defence force is large and strong. Small people are expected to be able to do the same exercise program or obstacle course in a CFA as a tall person. The backpacks that we are now expected to carry have got larger over the years along with an increasing list of DP 1 equipment to carry. Small people are expected to carry a large pack along with the DP 1 equipment. During the mid 80's the packs were smaller which fitted the smaller person properly.

The army does not allow time for proper healing of injuries. A medical certificate will say for the person not to exercise for a month. During this time you have lost your fitness but you may be expected to pass a BFA (if you are over due to attend one) straight after the dated period. There is no period of time allocated for you to get your fitness level up to the standard before the injury had occurred. The system no longer takes into consideration if you have a recurring injury. Before the introduction of AIRN, people that had medical certificates for injuries were exempt from doing components of the BFA that affected their injuries. This would allow them to pass a BFA without the threat of being discharged from the army. They would then be classified for use only within the Communication Zone. The AIRN has resulted in experienced people being discharged from the army whom could still have made a contribution to the armies training program. In my opinion it's an army that shoots its own wounded! Forget about the mateship!

There is too much emphasis on qualifying for the AIRN. Anyone that failed a BFA or did not sign the 28-day notice was discharged from the army. In my opinion the process is wrong. There is no obligation for a person to either attend a range shoot or to pass the range shoot. You don't even have to hit the target as long as you fired the weapon on that day. You would not be discharged for failing a range shoot. So it was possible to pass the AIRN requirements but fail a range shoot. You would still be eligible to wear the F88 Steyr badge (AIRN badge) and would not be discharged from the army. So why would you introduce a system that gets rid of its most experienced people in an organisation?

I was once told that if a person joins for only one reason they would not stay for long in the Reserves. Only people that join for all three reasons (to gain skills, earn some extra money and to gain some new friends) would they stay for a long time. I have noticed that the first thing to go was the skilled-based training, then friends would leave in frustration and boredom. The only thing that kept the remaining people in was the tax-free money. Once you either paid your mortgage off or debts or got totally fed up with the system was it then time to leave.

Yours truly,
Mr Stuart Everett