

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 62

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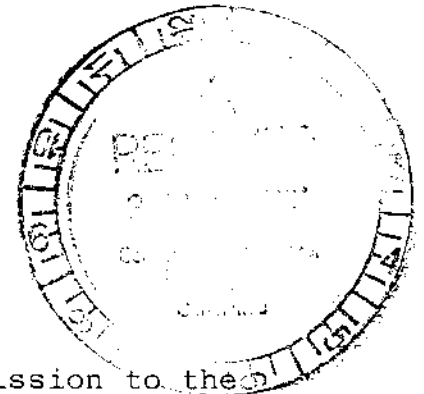
**No. of Pages:** 3

**Attachments:** NO

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14 May 2001

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



Dear Sir,

Respectfully endorsed the undersigned's submission to the following terms of reference;

1. Whether the current recruitment and retention strategies of the Australian Defence Force(ADF) are effective in meeting the organization's personnel requirements(including reserves).
2. That in considering these terms of reference, the committee examine and report on the following issues;
  - a) Whether the current recruitment system is meeting and will continue to meet it's needs of the ADF.

In recent developments as been observed through the media like newspapers, radios, televisions and words of mouth around Darwin of the Northern Territory, it seems that the ADF is facing problems due to the shortage of recruits of personnel and reserves.

On a Sunday territorian dated 22 April 2001, a topic about this dilemma has been mentioned, that Australian Defence Force especially the Army, lacks the number of reserves and new recruits to fill the vacancies required for it's defence.

This information is quite alarming due to the fact, that although Australia is a country with sophisticated technology to combat any emergency attack on it's shores, without sufficient personnel to man the operation, modern technology cannot protect the country by itself.

Australia's current recruitment system is not meeting the needs of the Defence Force. It should encourage and promote realistic promises to the future recruits, in order to boost their confidence, trust, morale and pride of serving the country's Defence Force.

In placing advertisements to recruit people for the Defence, whatever advertised should be the things carried out when they were recruited, instead of making things different altogether, because this kind of practice, will create distrust among the newly recruits to the fore, which will make them feel discourage and contempt towards ADF.

There are also concerns among the young people and families, that those officers in the Defence Force are abusing new recruits, creating fear that if they will join the ADF, there might be more sufferings they have to encounter and endure inside the Force, long before they experienced actual combat with enemies, which the initiations are more severe than the actual fight itself in a real battlefield or war.

These concerns contribute to the reasons, why not many young people are enlisted in the Service.

There are lots of advertisements made, to attract people to join the Defence, but results are not very impressive because, once they are in the Service are taken for granted as if they don't exist.

Because of this problem and concerns that ADF have to provide solutions, this current recruitment system will remain as it is if the methods of recruiting will remain unchanged.

There should be no problems arising in the recruitment system with ADF, if respect, appreciation, encouragement and support to these recruits are always maintained, but the problems as observed lies in the fact, that once recruited, they are treated like persons who are less important than the rest.

It is alright for Officers, because they acquire prestige in their position, but how about the rank and file recruits, are their self-esteem intact to feel proud in defending Australia, from all enemies that endanger the country?

Top Management of ADF must not forget these things, which might be trivial to them because of their rank, but they have to think that the people below them are also human beings like themselves and have feelings. These individuals desire to be treated with respect and not as ammunitions ready for disposals at anytime as urgency demands. Unless these recruits are treated as human beings and not as ammunitions for the war, recruitment for ADF will be sluggish, because people are not inspired to enlist and offer their service for the country, if there is no incentive for them in joining the Force.

b) The Impact of the Defence Reform Program on Retention Levels and Recruiting;

If the Reform Program on Retention Levels and Recruiting are substantially adequate, there is no reason why a negative impact can be felt. Depending on the program itself, a positive and negative impact cannot be determined, unless both extremes are used in the program.

Whatever proven methods of the past implemented programs, it should be maintained in that level, but if changes have to occur, the policy makers should evaluate the foreseeable future this changes can possibly create.

Those high ranking officers of the Australian Defence Force, are the only persons who acquired the knowledge and authority, as to the possible impact the Defence Reform Program can create. They are the only people who are more reliable in providing informations on the possible impact of this program, in relation to retention and recruiting of personnel.

To avoid monotony on implementing the same policies, it should be noted out, that if the present policies of this program still serve the purpose and are effective, a little bit of new approach can be integrated into the policy to make it more relevant to the present needs.

Since the implementation of the program seems inadequate, the policy makers need to study the problems, propose several recommendations and from these, choose the most effective ones that would definitely succeed when implemented.

Using trial and error methods in formulating policies, will not only cost substantial funds being drained out, but also, it will hinder the smooth and effective performance of the Defence Force, which might cause demoralization among the personnel.

The public can make that much submissions, but the decisions and the implementations on the policies are in the hands of the Policy Makers. Because of this scenario, it is only hoped by the people, that whatever excellent ideas the submitters had provided in regards to this term of reference, it should be selected and implemented to let things happened as expected.

No matter how excellent an idea might be, if action is absent, then that idea will become useless and to prevent this thing from happening, excellent ideas should be implemented to obtain effective results.

Overall in the writer's view, the impact of Australia's Defence Force Reform Program on retention levels and recruiting will be minimal, if only the defective ones are replaced. But if the changes of policies are drastic, there will be a possibility that the result can cause disastrous effect on the lives of those people being affected.

The matter should be left to the policy makers for decision making, which course of action they have to take that could benefit everyone in the Defence Force, based on the submissions from the people, which need consolidation to make the program work.

Truly yours,

*Filomena Nichols*  
FILOMENA NICHOLS