

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

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

**SUBMISSION**

**Submission No:** 65

**Submittor:** Name Withheld

**Contact:**

**Address:**

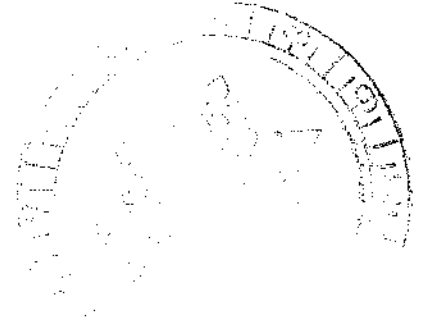
**Telephone No:**

**Fax:**

**E-Mail:**

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# Submission

to Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence  
and Trade References Committee

## Inquiry into Recruitment and Retention of Defence Personnel

10 May 2001

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### Introduction

I am a former member of the RAAF and a recent RAAF Active Reserve officer applicant. I am forty years old and in good health. My submission addresses point 2a and 2e of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

### Summary

I left the RAAF after 6 years service mainly because I was seeking to remuster as an Air Electronics Analyst but was reluctant to sign on for another 3 or 6 years without being advised if my application to remuster was to be accepted. I would have been happy to keep resigning for shorter periods while this application was pending.

I subsequently worked as an instrument fitter in heavy industry before completing a degree and working in the public relations/organisational communication field.

During 2000 I responded to defence advertising and media reports that highlighted a need for reserve personnel. As a former RAAF instrument fitter with industry experience and with my current job as an operator at a coal terminal I felt my technical skills might be useful.

After contacting the Newcastle Defence Force Recruiting Centre ( NRC ) I was referred to 26 Sqn at RAAF Base Williamtown where I attended two interviews. When my 26 Sqn interviewers discovered I also had a degree ( Bachelor of Arts Communications Studies ) and extensive professional experience which included service with a former Federal Minister I was invited to apply as an Operations Officer.

I subsequently attended a brief interview at the NRC and after submitting my application documents was invited to attend a selection day at the Sydney Defence Force Recruiting Centre ( SRC ). Following testing and examination at the SRC I was advised I was unsuccessful.

I found my experience at the SRC to be a fairly awful one mainly for the reasons listed.

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### Key Points

- Overnight accommodation offered for officer applicants was of a poor standard. On consideration I elected to travel by car/rail very early on the morning I was to attend.
- Applicants had to mill about on the busy footpath while waiting for the centre to open, some with their luggage. Once inside there was no reception to direct inquiries at the ground floor level and poor signage.
- After finally registering at a 3<sup>rd</sup> floor office we were ushered into a cramped rear hallway and were advised to bring valuables with us because thieves were inclined to come in from off the street. ( I recall thinking that if we couldn't defend the SRC from petty thieves how could we hope to defend the country?! )
- As part of the physical examination men and women were instructed to remove shoes. This was an embarrassment for some, especially for the guy with holes in his socks and one or two with odour problems. Shoes were placed near our other belongings as we lined up. The place looked like a jumble sale.
- Another part of the medical required male and female applicants to provide urine samples. We were instructed to write our names on the sides of the styrofoam cups provided in black texta. One by one we placed our unsealed samples side by side on a cupboard bench. The pong from so much warm pee was quite strong.
- Psychological testing took place in a room that resembled a second hand furniture shop.
- One part of the psychological test was dated 1970 or thereabouts and the age of the test sheet and the strict instructions not to mark the precious papers was a source of some amusement to many applicants afterwards.
- Many of us sat for up to 2 hours in the reception area while we waited for interviews after testing
- At the interview my resume was returned with little comment or enquiry. I was informed I had not scored high enough to be considered and like most others was ushered out via a fire exit. I was disappointed that I did not have a chance to present my credentials personally, a courtesy that was accorded to me at both 26 Sqn and the NRC.
- The overwhelming impression I gained through attending the SRC was of being processed like cattle in a third rate and indifferent facility. It seemed an overly bureaucratic organisation and its recruitment practices out of touch with modern employment practices.

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### Conclusion

The effective recruitment advertising campaign for ADF personnel may not be supported by the actual recruitment experience for many applicants who attend the SRC.

The SRC is an inadequate facility.

Current recruitment practices at the SRC are unprofessional, impersonal and hopelessly outdated.

Regionally the NRC and in my case personnel at 26 Sqn RAAF Williamtown provided a much more professional service and gave a more positive impression.

### Recommendations

1. Ensure the reputation and image of the ADF is not compromised through poor recruitment practices.
2. Upgrade, relocate or abolish the SRC.
3. Review, update and improve recruitment practices
4. Reallocate recruitment responsibilities. For example, most ADF Active Reserve positions are recruited locally. Consider tendering some recruitment activities to professional employment agencies ( as many corporate entities do ) in support of increased responsibility provided to local defence organisations. This would provide a more modern and personalised service to meet local needs and save time and money.

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