

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

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

SUBMISSION

Submission No: 92

Submittor: Name Withheld

Address:

Telephone No:

Fax:

E-Mail:

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RE: Senate Inquiry into Recruitment and Retention of Defence Personnel

Dear Committee Members,

I have no problem with you printing the contents of my submission or even contacting me for further information, but I would ask that my name and address be withheld from publication.

I first joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1979 and have recently re-applied to join under the current re-enlistment for critical musterings. Under this arrangement ex-members up to 50 years of age can re-enlist into their old mustering. I found out about this not through any advertising the ADF may have carried out, but through my network of ex-service friends and acquaintances.

Since leaving the ADF I have found that my circle of friends have included both members and ex-members of the ADF (usually the RAAF). Through these friendships I have kept in touch with what happening in the services, and the troops feelings.

Whether the current recruitment system is meeting and will continue to meet, the needs of the ADF:

As I spoken to my friends who are mainly to RAAF, but some ARMY serving members, the comments were always the same. The one main problem all thought the services, and in all sections was the workload has been increasing, while manning levels have been decreasing. There seems to be a chronic shortage of trained personnel in the ranks and NCO's also. This seems to have caused un-necessary section unrest. So for these reasons I would say the recruitment programs have not worked in the past. I feel the current programme, of trying to lure ex-members by lifting the entry age is a way of bringing the manning and skill levels up to what they should be, and keeping them there.

In my last three employment positions I held, I have been dealing directly with unemployed and the youth in my area. I have been trying to push the services as alternative employment well worth looking at, but a very large portion of these (because of advertising) though the ADF mainly required officers or trained personnel.

The impact of the Defence Reform Program on Retention Levels and Recruiting:

The out sourcing of a lot of ADF duties to civilian companies is possible the main cause of unrest, and early exits from the services. This seems to me to be causing a **feeling of job insecurity**. The feelings of everyone I've spoken with, as well as my own impressions are this is **not** working! Issues such as security, safety and quality control are just some of the problems within this new system. Also this has caused a reduction of posting locations and opportunities as well as reducing the chances of promotions. When people enter the services, they do this usually with long term goals in mind, but if they feel their mustering is in danger of being contracted out, they will try to secure their future elsewhere. This I feel is one of the main reasons for the staff shortages now appearing.

The impact of changes to ADF Conditions of Service, Pay and Allowances on Retention and Recruitment of Personnel.

It would appear to me that, though the wages in the ADF are almost equivalent to positions in industry, the restriction on the serving member and their families would suggest a raise in pay would certainly be welcomed and most defiantly deserved. By increasing the number of personnel in the sections would ease the workload, this would help retain the already trained personnel. After speaking to several ex-servicemen about returning to their trades in the ADF, they all said the thought was appealing, but having to retire from the ADF at age 55 was the only drawback. As all have secure positions within industry, the thought of leaving a job at which they can work till 65 would cost them money and security if they were to join the ADF for a only few years. The thought of leaving these positions for a short stint in the ADF was not on.

My opinion about the forced retirement of service personnel at the age of 55 is the same as those I have spoken to, if a person is capable of doing his job to a high standard and his health and fitness is at a level approved by the ADF, age should not then become an issue.

The ability of the ADF to enlist trained personnel or re-enlist ex-members should be of the highest priority, not only because of the savings in training costs, but because these people know what to expect and are more mature, making their transition into service life smoother and easier. They also bring a wealth of knowledge, and usually a good work ethic with them, this usually rubes off to other team members, this makes units more productive and a happier work environment.

Current levels and Categories of Specialists Personnel in the ADF Compared to the Organisation's Requirement.

I can only reiterate some of my previous statements, about the increase workloads our troops have to endure, this can only mean our manning levels are set to low or the Recruiting and Advertising Campaign is not working or both.

The Impact of Current Career Management Practices on Retention of Personnel.

The only comments I have heard is that you can get training in almost anything through the different ADF training schemes, this is good, **but**, it is extremely hard to re-muster once the new knowledge is gained.

I believe that a well educated and knowledgeable staff are happier, more productive and more conscientious. It is a proven fact training increases a person feeling of worth to a company or organisation.

My Own Thoughts and Ideas on Recruitment and Retention of ADF Personnel.

The ADF need to retain existing and to reenlist ex-serving members.

Lifting the forced retirement age of 55 so trained staff can look at making a career in the ADF as long as health and work quality are kept to a pre-determined level.

Raising the pay level as well as lifting the personnel numbers to ease workloads.

Cutting back on the amount of work contracted out to civilian companies, this will enhance the feeling of job security within the services.

Training is an excellent way of installing a feeling of worth in to the workforce, if a person is having time and money made available to them for training (they will feel they are a important part of the organization).

Targeting media advertising to the areas where the shortages are, as I see it this is amongst the troops, highlight their importance to the services and highlight the facts the although being trained is an advantage the ADF in most cases like to train their own members.

Thank you for accepting my views