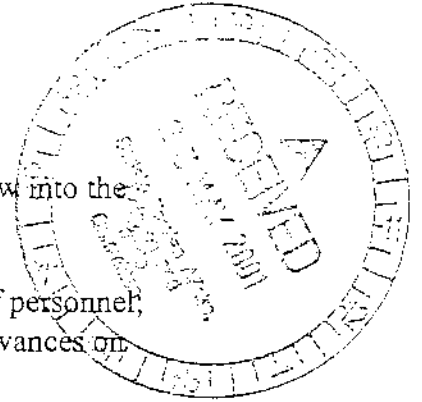


Purpose

The purpose of this submission is to give the inquiry my personal view into the following terms of reference:

- the impact of current career management practices on retention of personnel;
- the impact of changes to ADF conditions of service, pay and allowances on retention and recruitment of personnel;
- the impact of the Defence Reform Program on retention levels and recruiting



Background

I am a current serving Lieutenant in the Royal Australian Navy. I received a scholarship to enter the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1986 - The Academies inaugural year. I graduated from the Academy in 1989 with my Science degree, completed professional Supply Officer training and was posted promptly to sea. I have spent three years, of my fifteen-year career, at sea and my aim has been to achieve the position of Supply Officer of a Warship.

Experience

I have completed two professional courses that were aimed to prepare me for sea, the Supply Application Course and the Deputy Supply Officer Afloat courses. I passed both of these courses and with two years sea experience and twelve years total Navy experience there was no indication that I would be unsuitable for further sea service. My work performance reflected in my performance appraisals indicated that I was in fact most suitable for sea service and promotion to Lieutenant Commander.

Promotion

My last sea posting was on _____, a Guided Missile Frigate. This posting was pivotal to my career, as a recommendation for Sea Charge would allow me to eventually complete the Supply Charge Course and put me in a most favourable position for promotion. The following twelve months of sea service involved an intensive program involving two Asian deployments and duties around Heard Island, Great Southern Ocean.

I was not recommended for Sea Charge and this effectively halted my career. One man decided that I was not suitable. It perplexes, and angers me, that twelve years of work towards the goal of Sea Charge was dashed by one man in light of no clear indication during my training that I would not be suitable for Sea Charge.

Strike-One

Following the devastation of the decision of not being recommended for sea charge I was given solace by my career adviser that even though my sea going career was effectively dead, I still stood a good chance of promotion under the promotion system of the day. At this stage I considered that staying in the Navy would not be a bad thing despite the absence of a defined career path. The prospect of being promoted also brought with it the added incentive of the Military Superannuation Benefit

Scheme Retention Bonus, a year's salary for committing to a further five years of service on promotion to Lieutenant Commander. At this time the Navy was offering generous Redundancies for Supply Officers like myself. It was a tough decision to make at the time but I chose to stay with the Navy noting that my promotion opportunities appeared good due to my favourable reports and the number of Supply Officers accepting redundancies.

I was subsequently unsuccessful in my first and second of three opportunities to be promoted.

The Royal Australian Navy Staff College

I volunteered for and was subsequently, in the words of the Chief of Navy at his opening address to the Staff College, 'Selected' for the Royal Australian Navy Staff Course. This course is an intensive six months residential course to prepare officers for staff duties and higher command appointments. I saw this as promotion enhancing decision. It was not. I subsequently missed my final opportunity for promotion, under the then system, which has now changed - back to the original system!

Strike Three - Career Management Practices

In light of the disappointments from sea and promotion I felt I still had a good chance for promotion. It perplexes me even to this day why, I then received a letter from my career manager, whilst on the intensive Staff Course, indicating that my promotion opportunities had in fact deteriorated and that promotion was unlikely in January 2002. To me, in terms of Human Resource Management, the decision to send this letter to me during the Staff Course in light of the fact I had missed promotion and that the reason I was on this course was to enhance my promotion opportunities, seemed foolish. I felt as though I was wasting the Navy's and my time on the course. I subsequently removed myself from the course, total disillusioned with the Navy.

Conditions Of Service

I have since been posted to Melbourne and have found my conditions of service have been reduced considerably.

Noting that I would not receive a Defence pension until retiring age I decided to take the initiative some years ago and purchase and investment property in Melbourne. On arrival I found that I was not entitled to a married quarter as I had 'More than 50%' interest in my property that was located within 30 km of my place of work. Immediately I had no entitlement to a Married Quarter. This has hurt my family financially. I could have sold the property, but why should I have noting that many of my colleagues have indirect property investment and shares and they were still entitled to married quarters? I felt this was discriminatory and unfair.

I'm On my Way Out

Although I am still a serving member I am actively seeking employment outside of the Defence Force and expect to depart within the next 3-12 months. In summary I point to my reasons for dissatisfaction with the Navy:

1. Training versus operational inconsistency - All my training, performance and experience indicated that I was suitable for progression to Sea Charge yet one man decided my fate and I wasted twelve years of my life in making myself ready for the position. Why was I not told earlier?
2. No defined career path, hence no promotion - On not being recommend for sea charge I no longer had a career path. Why stay in the Navy if my efforts are not recognised?
3. Diminished Conditions Of Service - By not being promoted to Lieutenant Commander I have missed the full Retention Bonus. I am not entitled to a Married Quarter because I took responsibility for my superannuation. Why stay in an organisation that does not reward loyalty, commitment and service in other than direct pay?
4. Trust - I do not trust my Navy Career Management Organisation. Being 'Selected' for the Staff Course was a lie and waste of time noting my absence of promotion and my letter from my career manager indicating that I had diminished promotion opportunities in 2002. Why should I work for an organisation that I can no longer trust?

Concluding Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.