

**Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
References Committee**

**SUBMISSION COVER SHEET**

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**Inquiry Title:** Defence Health Arrangements Prior to Deployment

**Submission No:** 03

**Date Received:** 21.11.03

**Organisation:** Armed Forces Federation of Australia

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**Date Authorised:**

**Cassidy, Laureen (SEN)**

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**From:** Graham [graham.arffa@bigpond.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, 21 November 2003 12:18 PM  
**To:** FADT, Committee (SEN)  
**Subject:** Fw: Inquiry into current health preparation arrangements for the deployment of Australian Defence Forces overseas.

Attention: Ms Saxon Patience.

Whoops!

It helps if I provide the attachement.

Here 'tis

Graham  
----- Original Message -----

**From:** Graham  
**To:** [fadt.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:fadt.sen@aph.gov.au)  
**Sent:** Friday, November 21, 2003 12:16 PM  
**Subject:** Inquiry into current health preparation arrangements for the deployment of Australian Defence Forces overseas.

Attention: Ms Saxon Patience

Hi Saxon,

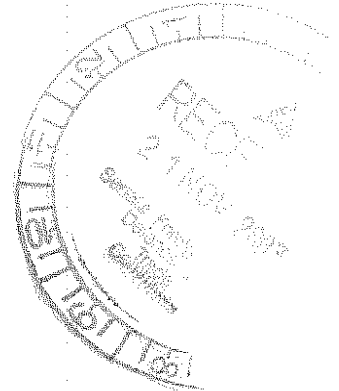
Attached is the Federation's submission to the above inquiry.

Regards,

Graham Howatt  
Industrial Officer

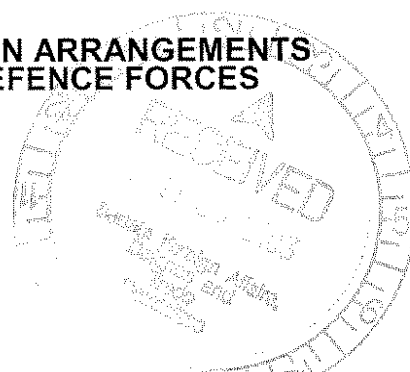
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**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT HEALTH PREPARATION ARRANGEMENTS  
FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCES  
OVERSEAS**

**ArFFA Submissions against  
Terms of Reference**



(1)

- (a) the adequacy of current arrangements within the Department of Defence for the health preparation for the deployment of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) overseas;

**No comment.**

- (b) the adequacy of record keeping of individual health and treatment episodes of those deployed, and access to those records by the individual;

The Federation accepts that in most cases adequate records are being maintained where medical treatment is provided. In the case of environmental exposures however, a notated list of possible exposures are recorded on the ADF members medical file with little or no detail as to level of exposure or risk to health. Environmental exposures include industrial chemicals, biological hazards, asbestos, depleted uranium etc. Under the Commonwealth OHS Act 1991 the employer has an obligation to record certain details about dangerous occurrences. Although deployment on specified operations preclude reporting to Comcare as the regulator, Defence still has the requirement under the Act to raise and retain specified records. In the main the Federation does not believe this is occurring.

Inadequate documentation of environmental exposures has generated countless reviews, study's and FOI requests for the Defence Department, DVA and ex-service organisations. Given the increase in the ADFs operational tempo over recent years it is disappointing that there does not appear to have been any significant improvement in documenting and informing on tangible exposure issues.

- (c) the adequacy of information provided to individual ADF members, pre-deployment, of the likely health risks and anticipated remedial activity required;

Although we cannot comment as to the specific level of medical information provided to individuals, the focus once again is on the medical issues without adequate information provided as to environmental hazards. For example, recent discussions by Federation staff with East Timor veterans identified that many of them were unaware of many of the chemicals and substances which were known by Defence to be present in the area of operations. Although it is accepted that many of these hazards did not become apparent until personnel were in-country, subsequent briefings and information have not been forthcoming or adequately recorded for future reference.