



**THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP**  
**Minister for Defence**

**THE HON. WARREN SNOWDON MP**  
**Minister for Defence Science and Personnel**

Saturday, 2 May 2009

**INCREASING DIVERSITY IN DEFENCE**

The Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP, and the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, announced today that the Government will spend \$35 million over the next four years to boost employment within Defence for women, Indigenous and multicultural Australians.

“These initiatives will ensure that Defence becomes more representative of the wider Australian community, and taps into the full pool of potential recruits,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Defence aims to increase the number of women recruited to the Australian Defence Force by improving awareness of the career options available to them and better preparing candidates for the physical and mental challenges they will face. The initiatives, some of which are already being employed include:

- having current serving women visiting schools to share their experiences, and a public affairs program;
- a fitness program to assist women to pass their pre-enlistment physical fitness test; and
- a mentoring program to enable the establishment of networks and support frameworks prior to enlistment.

“A coaching and mentoring program for currently serving women will provide servicewomen with the knowledge they need to better navigate the military environment and manage their own careers” Mr Snowdon said.

A range of strategies will also be developed to address the turnover rate of women in Defence including: career management, training, professional development, work/family balance, support mechanisms, flexible working arrangements, childcare, schooling, and housing.

**A Defence Force for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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“Two new programs, aligned to the Government's ‘Closing the Gap’ initiative, will prepare Indigenous Australian participants for life in Defence, assisting them to acquire skills that are transferable back to their community, and increase their participation in the workforce,” Mr Snowden said.

- The Defence Indigenous Development Program is a nine month course designed to provide remote Indigenous Australians with a broad range of skills to serve them in future work, including the Regional Force Surveillance Unit NORFORCE.
- The Indigenous Pre-Recruitment Course Program will provide training in the recruiting process, personal grooming, interview skills, leadership and familiarisation tours to Defence establishments and recruit schools.

The retention of Indigenous Australians in the Australian Defence Force will be addressed through the development of support programs and mentors for new members as they progress through recruit training and into their initial education.

Attracting a greater number of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds to Defence will also be pursued through the development of an Australian Defence Force Multicultural Recruitment Strategy. This strategy will assist in raising the profile of Defence as an employer of choice for greater numbers of those from culturally diverse backgrounds, while also ensuring Defence continues to become more representative of the wider Australian community it serves.

“These activities are aimed at enhancing career opportunities for all Australians. They will ensure that Defence becomes more diverse and is able to meet future workforce demands in a competitive labour market,” Mr Snowden said.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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