

## **CDF SPEECH**

### **LAUNCH OF THE CDF ACTION PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN**

**THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2009**

- The Hon Greg Combet, Minister for Defence Personnel, Materiel and Science; The Hon Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Housing and the Status of Women; The Hon Warren Snowdon, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional services delivery; other Members and Senators; Women's Reference Group members; other distinguished guests; men and women of the Australian Defence Force, Ladies and gentlemen.
- I'd like to begin today by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people and their elders past and present who are the traditional owners of this land.
- I'm absolutely delighted to be here today to join with the Minister in launching this action plan.

- I want it to be absolutely clear that I want to see higher female participation rates across the three Services.
- Today's launch marks the culmination of nearly 18 months of consultation on how the ADF can achieve this, and in doing so, better reflect the community we serve.
- Ultimately, this is what this action plan is all about—ensuring the ADF truly represents the broader Australian community.
- As most men and women of the ADF would attest, life in the military offers no end of opportunity in terms of education, training and challenging and interesting work, as well as the chance to proudly serve your country.
- Yet women make up only 13.5 percent of the permanent ADF workforce, compared to 35.4 percent of the full-time Australian workforce.
- And one in every 11 men who show an interest in enlisting finally do so, compared to only one in every 20 women.
- So the question we must ask is “what are the barriers and drivers for women enlisting and staying in the ADF?”
- To help me answer this question, last year I established a reference group of highly successful women.
- These women—Elizabeth Broderick, Christine Charles, Margaret Gardner, Sam Mostyn, Christine Nixon and Elizabeth Proust—have all excelled in non-traditional workplaces.

- Over the course of the past year these women were asked to work with me to identify the systemic, cultural, attitudinal and behavioural aspects of the ADF environment that directly or indirectly discriminate against the recruitment and retention of women.
- Many members of this reference group are here today, and I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their invaluable insight, dedication and commitment.
- The recommendations offered by this reference group also combined with 17 roundtables convened by the former Minister for Defence Science and Personnel to explore how we can improve recruitment and retention.
- During these roundtables, Minister Snowdon—who joins us here today—met with more than 200 Defence women.
- The combined recommendations of these two initiatives covered a wide spectrum of issues, from what attracts women to a military career, professional development and career management, to flexible working arrangements, childcare, housing and support mechanisms.
- The recommendations brought to my attention that while much has been done to improve the recruitment and participation rates of women in the ADF, and Defence more broadly, there is more that can—and must—be done.
- And it is important to note that more must be done not just for our women, but for all members of the ADF.

- Because I want the ADF to be recognised as an employer that values all our people and provides them with conditions of service that support, enable and encourage their personal circumstances, whatever they may be.
- And that applies as much to our men as it does to our women.
- So this is why we have developed the Action Plan we are here today to launch.
- This action plan introduces a new range of measures to increase the options and attractiveness of an ADF career.
- The plan challenges existing performance appraisal systems, career training philosophies and practices, personnel policies and reporting mechanisms and focuses on six priority areas:
  - Enlistment
  - Workplace Flexibility
  - Career management
  - Accountability
  - Mentoring, and
  - Communication.
- And the new range of measures will impact on everyone in Defence, at every level and in every workplace.
- The action plan will drive a program of cultural change that will first engage and then change attitudes and behaviours to achieve a more sustainable and representative ADF workforce.

- And it is designed to create a more flexible workplace for all members and employees, and that starts with a flexible mindset.
- I've made it clear to my senior leadership team that they must embrace, champion and implement the cultural change program.
- I acknowledge that initiating change in a large multi-faceted organisation like Defence will be challenging.
- But I can tell you that the action plan and cultural change program are happening and they are here to stay.
- They are vital to the successful management of our people, vital to a successful defence force and vital to the future ADF I envision for Australia.
- I want an ADF that truly represents the broader Australian community.
- I want an ADF that offers a more flexible workplace for all our people.
- I want an ADF that supports, enables and encourages our people and their individual circumstances.
- And I want an ADF that has higher female participation across the three services.
- Thank you.