

CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN MILITARY

EEO and anti-discrimination measures have a long history in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Some significant milestones are:

The 1800s

1899 | The first Army Nursing Service was set up in NSW.

The 1900s to the 1940s

1901 | Army Nurses were serving in the Boer War on the establishment of the Australian Army.

1902 | Australian Army Nursing Reserve (AANR) was created to provide trained personnel in the event of war.

1914 | Between 1914 and 1919 at least 2139 Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) personnel served overseas, 423 worked in Australian military hospitals and 29 died on active service. Nurses were entitled to the privileges of commissioned rank but did not formally hold any rank. After World War I (WWI) the AANS then reverted back to reserve status.

1939 | The AANS was again placed on active duty and nurses served overseas as part of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF). During World War II (WWII) 71 nurses died on active service.

1941 | A shortage of males led to the formation of Women's Services in the 1940's. There were over 60 000 women in the three Services.

Formation of the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) which was disbanded in 1947.

1942 | Formation of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) which was disbanded at the end of WWII.

Formation of the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS), which originated during WWI in the Voluntary Aid Detachments raised from the Australian Red Cross and the Order of St John.

1948 | The AANS was designated 'Royal' (RAANS) and became part of the Australian Regular Army in 1949.

The 1950s to the 1960s

1950 | Government approved in principle the re-formation of the Women's Services – Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) and the Women's Australian Army Corp (WAAC) ('Royal' prefix was granted in Jun 1951 – WRAAC) and the reconstitution of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS).

- 1951 | Enlistment of women into the Women's Services but not exceeding 4 per cent of the mainstream services. Women remained managed by women and non-trade training was conducted by women.
- AAMWS disbanded and its functions incorporated into the new Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC).
- 1967 | RAANC officers served in Vietnam.
- 1969 | Women were allowed to remain in service following marriage.

The 1970s

- 1974 | Pregnancy did not automatically mean discharge.
- 1975 | International Year of Women. Chiefs of Staff Committee agreed to set up a Working Party to examine and report on the role of women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).
- Recommendation that women should be permitted to serve on active service but not in combat roles.
- 1977 | Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) was abolished and females were integrated into the mainstream Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- 1979 | Equal pay with males.
- Abolition of Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) and amalgamation with mainstream Army.

The 1980s

- 1980 | The Australian Government ratified the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Defence requested exemptions for combat and combat-related duties.
- First WRANS Officers embarked on short familiarisation cruise onboard HMAS Jervis Bay.
- 1984 | All women who joined the Navy from September 1984 were informed that they would be liable for sea service.
- Sex Discrimination Act was promulgated. The ADF gained an exemption allowing them to discriminate against women in positions involving the performance of combat duties or combat-related duties; or in prescribed circumstances in relation to combat or combat-related duties.
- 17 000 ADF positions (23.5 per cent) open to women in competition with males.
- First WRANS Officers were permitted to complete full training courses onboard HMAS Jervis Bay.

- 1985 | WRANS Regulations were repealed and separate Women's Services abolished.
- First female Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Officers and female sailors were permitted to serve in seagoing billets.
- The Services agreed that an Instruction on sexual harassment should be promulgated.
- 1986 | Promulgation of Defence Instruction on sexual harassment.
- 21 750 ADF positions (35 per cent) open to women in competition with males.
- 1987 | First two female pilots graduated from the RAAF pilots course.
- 1988 | Minister for Defence Science and Personnel conducted a conference to discuss the way ahead for women in the ADF.
- RAN appointed the first female Commanding Officer.
- 1989 | 28 562 ADF positions (43 per cent) open to women in competition with males.

The 1990s

- 1990 | Review of Defence Instruction (General) on sexual harassment.
- Army set up the Combat Related Employment of Women Evaluation Team (CREWET).
- RAN initiated the 'Employment of Women at Sea Implementation Plan' to balance sea to shore ratio with available accommodation.
- Chief of the Naval Staff agreed to allow women to serve in combat related positions and in all ships in peacetime with the exception of submarines.
- RAN females on ships deploying to the Gulf remained onboard.
- Three RAAF female pilots employed in combat related roles in C130 aircraft at 36 Squadron.
- Chiefs of Staff Committee reviewed the employment of women in the ADF expanding the numbers of combat-related positions available to women.
- 1991 | RAN abolished the term WRAN from female sailor ranks.
- Chief of the Naval Staff agreed that women could serve onboard Collins class submarines.

- 1992 | 'Halfway to Equal' (the Report of the Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia) recommended Defence exemptions under the Sex Discrimination Act be rejected. Some exemptions were retained.
- Defence Instruction (General) – Personnel 35-3 'Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour by Members of the ADF' issued in June.
- Review of the Employment of Women in Combat and Combat-Related Positions was submitted to Chiefs of Staff Committee. In December, in response to this review, the Government announced that women could serve in all positions, other than Navy - Clearance divers, Army – Armour, Artillery, Infantry and Combat Engineers and Air Force – Ground Defence, opening up 87 per cent of the ADF to women in competition with males.
- 1993 | Defence Instruction (General) – Personnel 35-3 revised to reflect current developments.
- 1995 | Defence Instruction (General) – Personnel 35-3 substantially revised to reflect outcome of Senate Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the ADF.
- 1997 | Formation of the Defence Equity Organisation (DEO) to set directions, communicate and promote the principles of equity and diversity.
- 1999 | Defence Instruction (General) – Personnel 35-3 revised and reissued in March as 'Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Offences, Fraternalisation and other Unacceptable Behaviour in the ADF', after taking into account issues raised in relation to reported incidents and the requirements of Commanders in dealing with unacceptable behaviour issues.
- DEO booklet "A guide to fair leadership and discipline in the ADF" published.