

'We need more doctors, nurses and medics' – Minister, Surgeon General

By Graham Davis who covered the Defence Health conference in Brisbane

The Australian Defence Force has 5,833 doctors, nurses and medics serving in a full time capacity or as Reservists.

.....but we need many more according to the Minister for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson and the Surgeon General of the ADF, RADM Graeme Shirtley (himself a Reservist).

The pair expressed the need in separate presentations to the recent Defence Health conference in Brisbane.

"We have 582 medical officers, 466 nurses and 1387 medics," Dr Nelson told the conference.

"But we need more doctors, nurses, radiographers and environmental health people," he said.

He pointed out that in the last budget \$263m went to Defence Health.

The Minister said the Defence budget this year was \$19.6 billion but would rise to \$26 billion over the next ten years.

He also pointed out that Australia faced a direct enemy threat in World War 2 and that "In 2006 there is no less a threat" from terrorism.

RADM Shirtley later fleshed out the figures pointing out that the ADF has 3,400 Reservists on its books with 1800 of that number on the active list.

He agreed with the minister about the need for doctors, nurses and medics but pinpointed the need for general and orthopaedic surgeons, anaesthetists and emergency physicians and specialist nurses.

He appealed to health professionals in the civilian field to investigate becoming a Reservist...or full time...member of the Defence Health organisation.

He also had some observations about Reservists.

"Reservists are region-

al folk," he said. "They need people in their area to manage them."

He called for increased Reserve activities in regions especially recruiting training and professional development.

"Regions have not had sufficient administrative support," RADM Shirtley said.

"We need improved regional structures for Reserves."

Speaking of deployments RADM Shirtley added: "We sometimes struggle to fill some rosters but have never failed."



Above right: '...we need more doctors, nurses, radiographers and environmental health people' – Defence Minister Dr Brendan Nelson opens the Defence Health conference in Brisbane. Pic by AC Aaron Curran.

Above: At work with a patient at the Medical Centre. LSMED Hayley Moore (left), Reservist nursing officer Lieutenant Merryl Honess (middle) and LSMED Rebecca Kutasi (right) attending to patient LSHSO Baden Holmes. Pic by PO Damian Pawlenko

He said the Government's decision to pay employers to compensate the loss of employees on Reserve duty (the Employer Support Payment Scheme) had done much to free up Reserve personnel for deployment.

RADM Shirtley commended the scheme.

"But I also believe there is a

high altruistic component when they go away," he said.

He told of occasions when between \$5000 and \$6000 had been provided to employers to top up the losses they would have taken.

"Thankyou medics, nurses, dentists, doctors and allied health professionals of the Reserve Forces," he said. "I am very proud to lead you."

Surgeon General RADM Graeme Shirtley who is responsible for more than 3370 Navy, Army and Air Force health reservists: "We need improved regional structures for Reserves." Pic by WOPH Steve Dent.

Meg on the job again

By Graham Davis

The saying goes, "when you're on a good thing ... stick to it."

This very well applies to Navy Reservist LEUT Meg Frugtniet.

Four years ago she was a vital organiser of the inaugural Defence Health and Australian Military Medical Association (AMMA) conference.

The conference was held in Sydney and attracted 650 people.

So when the head of Defence Health, AVM Tony Austin was looking for help in organising the second conference, this time in Brisbane, he asked Meg for support.

The success of the Brisbane conference and trade fair, held from October 19 to 22 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, indicates that she has done another great job.

Organising the conference has been just one of many roles which each week have kept her busy.

Meg does Reserve days at Campbell Park and works as a civilian perioperative nurse at the Duntroon Military Hospital.

Meg's Navy ties have spread and soon it will be a situation where there are two pairs of RAN "whites" in the washing machine.

Andrew, Manager of the Customs Detector Dog Training Unit, is going through Reserve training to become an RAN officer.

Below: Defence Health conference organiser Nursing Reservist LEUT Meg Frugtniet. Pic by Graham Davis.



If you're caught short at the clothing store, you may be able to claim

By LCDR Antony Underwood

If your local Defence clothing store is unable to supply uniform items which prevent you from doing Reserve service in rig, you may be able to buy them elsewhere and claim reimbursement for the cost difference.

Two signals and a personal visit to one Defence clothing store have convinced me that there are considerable shortages in essential items and private purchase of what you need is the only way around the problem.

Executive Officer HMAS *Cerberus* CMDR Andrew Gordon has told all in his area of responsibility that COs can authorise reimbursements for essential items not currently available. At the time of going to press, these include:

- Peaked caps, sizes 56 through to 59;
- Peaked caps for CMDR to CDRE, sizes 57, 59 and 60;
- Junior sailors caps sizes 55, 56 and 58;
- Short sleeve PV sailors' shirts, sizes 38 and 39;
- Short sleeve PV female officers' shirts, sizes 35 to 40;
- Short sleeve PV female sailors' shirts, sizes 39 and 40;
- Safety boots, sizes 4 and 10-13;
- White lanyards; and
- Blue belts.

The initial signal from HQNAVSYSKOM also listed soft rank insignia for LEUT and SBLT, shoulder boards for LCDR and CMDR and officer's cap badge. However a subsequent signal cancelled the entitlement for reimbursement of cost difference for these items.

The criteria for claiming reimbursement for the dif-

ference in cost between clothing store and outside purchase are:

- The items are essential and required to meet Service requirements;
- The item is needed for a particular posting or special duty (including posting requirements);
- Items are identical to RAN issue; and
- Receipts are provided by the member in support of each claim for reimbursement.

I believe shortages vary from store to store and can say from personal experience that there were nil stocks of short sleeve PV male officers' shirts size 44 when I visited the Australian Defence Force Academy clothing store, which now caters for all three services, in the ACT area, about three weeks ago.

The Spotless clothing store attendant told me the price was \$21.10 but none would be available until 'after Christmas - next year'.

A quick look at <http://www.glendinnings.com.au/> who specialise in naval rig and a call to their Sydney office confirmed they had a shirt of the size needed in stock at a cost of \$48 and, a day and \$10 express postage later, I had the shirt in hand.

I have the receipt and will be filling out a form for reimbursement of both cost difference and postage for my CO in the near future.

Precise information on clothing shortages and how to claim is in UNIFORMS MGR/HQNAVSYSKOM R170159Z NOV 06 and HQNAVSYSKOM WAN/Z4P 06033Z OCT 06.

The Reserve Regional Pool Manager ACT, Tas and SA, LCDR Paddy Flynn, advises Reservists to contact SO Uniforms, Mrs Debra Locke on 02 6266 3820 for guidance on whether out-of-stock items are classed as 'essential'.