
Sent: Tuesday, 30 September 2008 22:32
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 6. Personnel/Recruiting & Retention/Defence Families
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Name: Elizabeth Irvine

Submission: Could more consideration be given to strengthening the notion of Cadets in schools.

I live in regional Australia and I have a neighbour whose son attends Cadets every Thursday evening 35 kms away in a neighbouring town because his own school does not have a Cadet Unit. He strongly believes in what he is being taught and values the experience. He is typical of a number of young people I know who have loved their years with Cadets (both Army and Air Force) but because their schools have no Cadet Unit involvement, they have had to seek out Cadet Units operating in their districts, often a great distance from their homes. All these young people have said that they would have preferred to attend a Cadet Unit in their own school. Is there some way that the Cadet Unit experience could be expanded particularly within the State school system so that all kids regardless of background could have the opportunity to learn the basic principles of service and discipline as well as physical and mental challenges, leadership and practical hands-on skills that Cadet Units are so effective in teaching. In these days of reality TV, most kids are enthralled with the concepts of such shows as "Survivor". The physical aspects of Cadet training may offer a safer challenge and more structured alternative than taking up some dangerous extreme sport.

I can see that some parents may object to their children learning about such defence force tasks as participation in high intensity warfare situations but I am sure that many people (and parents in particular) would not object to the other defence force major tasks specified in the White Paper Public Discussion Paper especially the ones relating to involvement in humanitarian aid and peace-keeping operations. I believe that if these Defence Force Tasks were more widely known and understood in Australia and young people were given basic training in these fields via Cadet Units, the benefits to the young people involved as well as the communities they come from would be substantial and multi-dimensional.

In the same vein, I believe that the Cadet Units should be more strongly supported by local Reservists and I believe that there should be greater opportunity for closer co-operation, sharing of resources and training strategies. In local communities, this may mean that Cadet Units and Reservists use common facilities. Cadets would then be able to see more clearly that a career path exists for them should they choose it and that there are mentors available locally to help them in their chosen field. Working in a regional university and volunteering in a range of community organisations, I come into contact with many young people who would appreciate the opportunity to serve their country and their community if the career path was made more "hands on", more realistically achievable, more locally visible. In a sense, the recruitment drive starts at school rather than in late adolescence.

There may even be opportunities for other service groups (eg SES, St John Ambulance, Red Cross, Rural Fire Service) to use Cadet / Reservist facilities for meetings, combined training exercises, regional strategy workshops. In this way, buildings and facilities would be used more effectively in the local community where resources are often scarce and co-operation and camaraderie would be facilitated between a range of groups who may otherwise operate in isolation.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report