
Sent: Sunday, 6 July 2008 17:24
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 6. Personnel/Recruiting & Retention/Defence Families
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Name: Murray Alexander
Organisation: Defence Reserves Association SA

Submission: Improved Retention (and Recruiting) Through Increasing Community Support for ADF Service

A concerted public relations (PR) campaign for Australian Defence Force (ADF) service based on a down every street approach in suburban Australia is needed. This is so that the military is seen as part of the community and this is much needed in any future communication.

The current situation with the ADF is a Discourse of Excitement which focuses on the excitement of joining etc... at present in a world of chaos and impermanence most people want certainty for themselves and their children.

"Families are often the unsung heroes whose support is the foundation on which the Army is built." - Stated by The Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP on 5 July 2008.

However, the PR campaign target needs to include not just families of existing ADF members but also the friends and significant others of existing ADF members and importantly the families, friends and significant others (their close community) of potential ADF members.

Baby Boomer parents have come from an age of cynicism and regret for wars and concomitant battles lost. Despite honouring our war dead with great vigour that is all it is; energy to remember and participate in memorials (Anzac Day and Gallipoli pilgrimages, etc) which does not require the same focus and dedication as allowing one's precious sons, daughters and significant others to serve.

Recent so called bumbles reported in the newspapers and on TV focus on the mistakes made by defence personnel all contribute to what can be termed as the Discourse of Disapproval. This leads to continued and unrelenting criticism as each area rolls into another.

Serving ADF member's close community influences some of them to discharge. The incidence of some potential recruits being dissuaded by their close community from joining the ADF is also likely to be of significance.

On 8 May 2008, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, outlined the need for strategies to attract people from diverse cultural groups to serve in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Mr. Hieu Van Le, Lieutenant Governor of SA and Chairman of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission recently made the following points:

- Multiculturalism aims to go beyond "social integration, cultural integration and intellectual integration" to make everyone feel at home.
- What is needed is "psychological integration" for these people to feel at home. (To a large extent this will require the support of their close community for more of them to undertake ADF service.)

On 29 May 2008 the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, announced that an external Reference Group on Women has been established to advise the Australian Defence Force (ADF) on the recruitment and retention of servicewomen.

The Reference Group on Women need to consider how to improve the support of women's close community and hopefully they will also conclude that a PR campaign will help to improve the retention and recruitment of servicewomen.

On 5 June 2008 the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, announced that work is well underway to improve the Indigenous employment opportunities in Defence. Again it is contended that this initiative would be enhanced with the support of their close community.

The ADF may benefit significantly if a PR campaign to better inform the general community about the benefits of ADF service was instituted and sustained for an appropriate length of time. The savings from reduced recruiting needs, considerably less training expenditure, the retention of knowledgeable and skilled ADF members for longer should provide the funds for such a campaign.

Comment

The ADF appears to focus primarily upon recruiting to boost numbers. Emphasis upon retention is actually even more important, so as to keep the gained knowledge and experience of individuals in the ADF for longer. It should be more effective and costs less in ultimately getting and keeping the strength and effectiveness of the ADF up to its required levels.

While improved pay, conditions and benefits for serving ADF members will aid in their retention and much has been done to position these appropriately, improving the support of the serving ADF member's close community is seen as essential. The general community's improved support for ADF service will also assist in recruiting more ADF members.

Because Defence Reserves, particularly the Army Reserve (and ADF Cadets), have a presence in all major cities and also permeate regional Australia, they are an appropriate catalyst for building improved community support for ADF service.

It is frequently acknowledged in the ADF that the permanent forces derive significant numbers of their members from Defence Reserves and ADF Cadets (many of which are co-located with Defence Reserve units). Therefore this strategy would ultimately benefit the total ADF.

The topics addressed in an appropriate PR campaign should include:

- * Improved skills and abilities in the individuals through ADF Service
- * Transferable qualifications to and fro (civilian to defence / defence to civilian)
- * Pay and conditions are good (tax free pay for Reservists)
- * Enhanced comradeship and personal networks
- * Employers of Reservists are compensated (Employer Support Payments)
- * Employers of Reservists derive better employees
- * Enhanced Defence Force
- * Enhanced Australian security
- * Enhanced community pride in Australia
- * Enhanced community pride in being an Australian citizen
- * Plus other appropriate attributes to favourably influence the general community.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the proposal to establish, improve and maintain a Public Relations Campaign informing the general community about the benefits of ADF service, using the Defence Reserves (and ADF Cadets) as the vehicle to help achieve improved retention (and recruiting) in the ADF be formally assessed through market research and if it is found likely to have the desired influence over the general community, to put the campaign in place for a period of around 5 years, so that its effectiveness can be properly measured.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

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