
Sent: Wednesday, 10 September 2008 15:59
To: White Paper
Subject: WWW Submission: 13. Miscellaneous [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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Submission: I have two areas of strong opinion relating to the Australian Defence Force. These areas are Defence Capacity/Capability and Defence Recruitment

Capacity / Capability

My belief is that we should have a highly mobile defence force. The introduction of the new Helicopter Landing Platforms and the C-17 Globemaster aircraft are a perfect example of this type of mobility.

We should be looking at defence force that can multi-task. A defence force that can be moved at a moments notice to actively operate in any number of different theaters, from humanitarian and disaster relief through to full combat.

A highly mobile defence force can be achieved by:

- An increase the number of Defence Force Personnel
- An increase of mechanised force abilities
- An increase of close combat and support aircraft (e.g. helicopters and transport aircraft)
- A decrease in the use of heavy, slow and restricted equipment (such as battle tanks and static artillery) and increase multipurpose highly mobile equipment such ATVs, Bushmasters, ASLAV's
- An increase in Air Transport assets (C-17 Globemasters, C-130 Hercules, Transport Helicopters)
- An increase in Sea Transport and Amphibious assets
- The replacement of current standard issue rifle with a more reliable weapon
- An increase in section and platoon firepower
- The cross training between units and personnel
- The re-introduction of Ready Reserve Forces

By adopting similar types of strategies, Australia will have a Defence Force that can be moved to, and be operational any where in the country or world within a short period of time. By being crossed trained, the Australian Defence force can deploy more assets to a wider range of areas for longer periods of time or on a more frequent basis, as re-training, additional training, or re-equipping units with new troops will have less of a burden on assets.

Recruitment

In my strong opinion the recruitment strategies of the defence force are insufficient for current economic conditions within Australia. I believe that the recruitment criteria that have been set for entry into the defence force do not reflect the Australian society.

Too much emphasis is placed on how the applicant "looks on paper", rather than their abilities and/or aptitude.

If the defence force was serious about recruiting people that have the abilities and aptitude that are needed, it needs to be more open minded.

One thing that has been very evident in the past decade is the number of applicants being turned away due to their weight, or their education, or medical histories that will not affect their ability to serve.

I know a number of people who have been considered unsuitable for service due to admitting to having an allergy to a particular fruit, or medication, or even more bizarrely I know of one individual who was turned away for being allergic to cat saliva (how that would effect them during service I don't know)

More alarmingly, is how many people falsify their application in order to get in. During my time as an Army Cadet, we where advised by military personnel to answer questions with "half truths" during recruitment.

On a personal note I have been wishing to join the Australian Army for Officer Entry for quite some time. Unfortunately when I recently (12 months ago) enquired about entry I was told that I was not suitable as an Army Officer, and that I should not apply. I was not told this due to any lack of ability; rather it was because I did not have the required HSC results. Since finishing the HSC (10 years ago) I have completed Laboratory Qualifications and Occupational Health and Safety Qualifications and have a vast amount of experience gained in both fields. I still have a strong desire to continue down this path, however unless recruitment requirements change in accordance with our society I will never be eligible to enter into Officer Training.

To the Defence Force the HSC is the only acceptable education. This to me is a waist of potentially exceptional personnel. The defence force should be looking more closely to Police Recruitment, where varying levels of further education are looked highly upon.

My second area of contention with defence recruitment is the weight requirements. Recently my brother applied for the defence force (also the army) he was turned away due to being just outside his required BMI. This I found extremely surprising. Whilst he is a heavy person, he is very active, he goes regular to the gym, has also become very proficient in outdoor rock-climbing, and is able to out do the pre-entry fitness assessment. However he was turned away. He was turned away not due to lack of ability, but rather due to the weight written in his profile.

Entry requirements should be based on fitness not weight.

Also rather than turning away applicants that are otherwise acceptable due to their weight, why not assist them reach their goal. A large number of slightly overweight do not have the resources or knowledge to obtain the fitness levels. Why doesn't the defence force provide a pre-recruit training fitness course?

There are plenty of strategies that can be used in recruitment rather than flatly turning applicants away.

I look forward to reading the finalised White Paper.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

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