



DEFENCE RESERVES ASSOCIATION

SUBMISSION TO RESERVE STRATEGIC REVIEW – dated 21 February 2024

OVERVIEW

This submission is provided by the Defence Reserves Association (DRA) to inform the deliberations of the panel conducting the Reserve Strategic Review. The DRA National Executive is available to expand on any particular observation or recommendation.

An enhanced Reserve is required to undertake a more significant role to enable future ADF operations, tasks and activities. Reservists are all those serving in the ADF who are not Permanent members. The Reserve comprises a range of capabilities that could be further optimised, and has the potential to harness new and emerging skills and technologies identified in the Defence Strategic Review (DSR) as central to Australia's future security and prosperity.

Realising the potential of the Reserve component will require improvements and change in the areas of legislation/policy, conditions of service, resourcing, employment AND a paradigm shift in Departmental and Command attitudes towards the Reserve of the future. The DSR confirms that the Reserve is a fully integrated component of the ADF and this requires a flexible approach to how elements of the Reserve are recruited, resourced and used.

The single greatest contribution to national security this Review can make is to enable an outcome where Government and Defence approach future planning with a common understanding that the nation requires a fully integrated and aligned ADF, with Permanent and Reserve components that complement and sustain each other.

WHAT THE RESERVE IS FOR

The Reserve consists of a range of inter-related and critical capabilities in the context of a capable ADF with depth and resilience. The Reserve provides:

1. an opportunity for service in the ADF other than in the Permanent force and connects the ADF to communities across Australia
2. elements to round out, reinforce and supplement the Permanent ADF as required
3. a capability to mount and sustain regional operations
4. the mechanism to retain SERCAT 6/7 personnel and their skills and experience post transition from the Permanent force
5. specialist skills and capabilities, both emerging and existing, required by the ADF eg: cyber, space, medical and logistics
6. domestic security and homeland defence capability, principally from the 2nd Division
7. a natural disaster response through existing DACC and future remodelled arrangements
8. an important contribution to ADF scaling and national mobilization.

FACTORS IMPEDING RESERVE OPTIMISATION

The following issues have been identified in successive Defence Reviews and Reports into Reserve matters (46 since 1972) and at many annual DRA National Conferences, as constraints on optimising Reserve capability:

1. the need for a stable resourcing model that delivers discrete and predictable budget allocations to the Reserve as a percentage of overall ADF funding year on year to generate and sustain capability
2. sub-optimal location of some Reserve facilities in terms of aligning with demographic trends and ADF recruiting objectives
3. the inability of the ADF to identify, track and utilise Reserve civilian skills, as appropriate, in order to optimise their utility and contribution to capability
4. the need to fully realise shared and sponsored workforce opportunities with Industry and Academia
5. the lack of equivalency in issued equipment for Reserve elements – especially when designated units are integral to providing a reinforcing/round out effect to specific Permanent ADF units/formations
6. the lack of flexibility and speed in ab initio recruiting, and the need for more effective engagement with SERCAT 6/7 as they transition and persistent contact with those in SERCAT 2/3 to encourage Reserve service
7. the need for reform of inequitable and inflexible conditions of service, including access to and portability of superannuation, remuneration settings such as the current Reserve salary divisor, health and wellbeing support for Reservists and their families and appropriate DVA entitlements. Consideration should be given to moving to a unified and flexible set of ADF conditions of service, provided through a continuum of Permanent and Reserve service access
8. the need to address the reality that some behaviours and policy are still not consistent with the Total Workforce System.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The DRA presents the following recommendations for further discussion and consideration:

1. establish a policy and decision making body, co-chaired by VCDF and CPers which will meet regularly to review and determine what capabilities are needed from the Reserve component of the ADF and what is required to develop, sustain and deliver them. Composition at two star rank should include Head Military Personnel, Head Reserves and Cadet Support, the Deputy Service Chiefs and Commander 2nd Division
2. assist the achievement of Permanent ADF recruiting objectives by holding provisional service members in an ADF experience setting that is enabled through the Reserve
3. empower the Reserve to recruit and enlist ab initio members to meet their requirements and to be accountable for these outcomes
4. establish regional Reserve administrative and training hubs in each state/territory to support Recommendation 3 outcomes and provide scalable facilities to deliver initial training and processing in the event of national mobilisation
5. resource and explore greater shared training and collaboration with Industry and Academia through an appropriate forum that includes all relevant stakeholders and a consequent targeted engagement and capability model
6. expand and enhance the ADF Gap Year program and improve its accessibility and utility

7. reinvigorate University linked regiments and squadrons, or create new joint units, to grow the pool of tertiary educated Reserve personnel, including consideration of HECS support incentives
8. provide greater support and focus to the development of ab initio Reserve elements within Navy and Air Force where these are required, enabled by Recommendation 4 facilities
9. strengthen the nexus between Cadet experience and ADF service
10. address the long-standing issues of inequity and inflexibility that have been identified in current Reserve conditions of service, including the need to provide appropriate support to the families of Reservists
11. ensure that contemporary Reserve/TWS nomenclature and practice are reflected in Defence Act revisions and complementary updates to the Reserve Service Protection Act, related Veteran Affairs legislation and enabling policy in both Defence and DVA
12. fast track the recognition and recording of civilian skills and qualifications, including those relevant to new domains of cyber, space and a nascent nuclear capability through engineering, physics and related disciplines, as well as developing guided weapons and drone skillsets. Consider establishing enclaves within the Reserve to hold these experts/operators.

CONCLUSION

The DRA is in a unique position to provide insight and lived experience of every facet of Reserve experience to the deliberations of those engaged in this important Review. The DRA is keen to expand on any element of this submission and will make members of the Executive available for a discussion or consultation on any aspect of the Review.

The DRA has consistently engaged with Defence in relation to Reserve matters over an extended period and has been supported in this important advocacy. The CDF attended our most recent National Conference and encouraged a robust submission to the Review from the DRA. The Review team can be assured of our ongoing support as a collegiate partner as your work continues.

Michael Annett

National President

Defence Reserves Association