

MR KELVIN THOMSON, MHR FOR WILLS
23rd August 2008
SPEECH TO
DEFENCE RESERVES ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL CONFERENCE

OLD OFFICERS MESS, RAAF WILLIAMS POINT COOK BASE

- WGCDR Margot Forster (RAAF Williams Base Commander)
Commanding Officer Combat Support Unit Williams
- The Hon Bob Baldwin MP, Member for Paterson, representing Sen
Nick Minchin
- Dr. Paul Monk PhD, presenting the Strategic Overview
- MAJGEN Greg Melick ACDF (Reserves)
- Dr. Andrew Davies of ASPI, presenting on their Reserves Study
- Major General Jim Barry, National President of the Defence
Reserves Association;
- Members of the Defence Reserves Association
- Ladies and Gentlemen
- I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land
on which we meet – the KULIN (Koolin) People

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today at the Defence Reserves Association National Conference, representing the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon.

The **AIM** of the Defence Reserves Association is to achieve the best possible defence of Australia and its national interests, whilst within the Australian Defence Force as a whole:-

- That optimum and effective use is made of its Reserve Forces

- Their capabilities are both fully developed and their potential exploited
- Their manning, equipping and training is of the highest appropriate standard
- They are fully supported by all legislative and administrative procedures, and
- They have comparable conditions of service to their permanent counterparts.

At the outset, let me observe that the Reserve is a crucial component of the total Australian Defence Force capability construct.

The Reserve plays a significant strategic role that includes surging, supporting and sustaining the range of contemporary military operations in which the ADF has become increasingly engaged.

The High Readiness Reserve, Active Reserve, Standby Reserve and Specialist Reserve all have a valuable role to play in delivering Defence capability.

This includes discrete military capability that cannot be sustained in the regular forces.

And increasingly more reservists are undertaking continuous full-time service to support regular workforce capability needs.

Rather than giving you a shopping list of what the Reserve elements do now, what the Minister would like you to do at this conference is to think widely and innovatively on how the Reserve can, and must, contribute to future Defence capability needs.

The Defence budget is finite and the White Paper development process is identifying funding pressures that may affect our ability to invest in Defence capability.

That is one of the reasons why the Minister has directed the Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force to find \$10 billion in savings over the next 10 years to be reinvested in capability.

These savings will not be to the detriment of military capability or the men and women who serve.

The current savings program is yielding dividends for reinvestment, but more needs to be done.

We can't predict what the White Paper capability outcomes will be, but it is fair to say that many of the emerging funding pressures will have to be managed within existing budget allocations.

The White Paper process is not an open chequebook exercise.

The Defence White Paper will consider the best way to deliver a finite capability within finite resources.

The Reserve remains a crucial component and must be included in all aspects of Australian Defence Force consideration - and not as a separate entity.

As part of this process, we must also consider a total workforce approach to establish the right mix and distribution to deliver the required Defence capability in a sustainable, risk-managed and cost effective way.

The importance of the Reserve as part of the ADF will undoubtedly increase in future years, but the question for you is what the composition and capability contributions might be.

It strikes me that the Reserve has three types of workforce profile:

- the 'citizen' reservist (the Army model);
- the former full-time ADF reservist (mainly Navy and Air Force);
and
- the specialist (mainly Health, Legal and other professions across the three Services).

Each has its strengths and weaknesses and capability costs, and we will have to consider how we develop and maintain our Reserve workforce

capability out to 2030 - and what its composition might be as part of the future ADF.

This is in the continuing face of a buoyant economy, skills shortages and the constant competition from employers for people with the same aptitude and range of skills sought by the ADF.

The White Paper will give us the workforce capability framework but your members and others like the Defence Reserves Support Council have a significant role to play in the way we support our reservists to deliver the required capability.

We also need you to think about the workforce capability challenges we face and find innovative solutions - such as working cooperatively with employers to explore complementary skills development and employment options so that the ADF can readily draw on and develop crucial Reserve capability.

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The Reserve is a strategic resource that needs to be managed as such.

It is not an add-on to the regular forces, but is an integral part of the ADF.

The White Paper will give us a capability roadmap to 2030 and beyond, and the Reserve will very much be part of that construct.

Major General Greg Mellick will outline a number of interesting ideas and considerations for the Reserve and, on behalf of the Minister, I encourage you to debate and challenge them during this conference.

To Major General Jim Barry and all the members of the Defence Reserves Association, I wish you a productive conference.