

People**Defence Personnel (recruitment and retention, recruiting advertising)**

Rear Admiral Russ Shalders, Head Defence Personnel Executive

Mr Felix Bleeser, Deputy Head Defence Personnel Executive

Commodore Louis Rago, Director-General Personnel Plans

Ms Bronwen Grey, CSM, Director Equity Organisation

CHAIR—I declare open this meeting of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee. I will shortly welcome back Senator Hill, Minister for Defence. I welcome Dr Hawke and officers of the Defence organisation. Yesterday the committee adjourned on output 3, Army, which was completed. Today the committee will move to output 4, Air Force. Before I call for questions, Dr Hawke, you have a question of the committee.

Senator Hill—I have an answer to a question asked yesterday. I think it was immediately after lunch, when I was not here, that Senator Faulkner asked who tasked Admiral Gates to conduct a review of intelligence advice relating to SIEVX et cetera. The answer is that my office, on my behalf, tasked CDF/Secretary task force to seek the formal advice. They did this to ensure that an answer that I had previously given to Mr Crean was accurate and complete. That brief is being finalised and I expect to get it in the next few days.

CHAIR—Thank you, Minister. Dr Hawke do you wish to ask something?

Dr Hawke—I have nothing further to add.

CHAIR—I thought you were going to raise a question about questions on notice.

Dr Hawke—I was going to raise that at the end, but if it is appropriate I will do it now. I wanted to raise with you whether it would suit you and the committee for the written questions on notice—because we probably will not deal with everything today—to be tabled by the close of business tomorrow when the committee finishes its hearings.

CHAIR—In view of the fact that the return date for questions on notice is 12 July, I think the secretary is concerned that if the questions on notice are not tabled at an appropriate time then the return becomes very difficult.

Dr Hawke—That is right, Mr Chairman.

CHAIR—In other words, if the committee's questions are tabled in two weeks time, having been flagged at this time—

Senator Hill—It becomes very difficult anyway. The earlier they are tabled the better.

Senator HOGG—I think we should do something similar to that being advocated. I understand your dilemma—and I do not see any problem with that; I cannot speak for the shadow minister and others—but the past practice of the committee has been to have those tabled about 24 hours after Defence appears. There is a need to go back and cull the things that do not need to be addressed.

Dr Hawke—This would accord with that practice. It is just that the last time around we got some questions lodged some four or five days after the committee had finished its hearings, which made it particularly difficult for us to meet the timetable we are required to meet.

CHAIR—We will meet your request, Dr Hawke. If it requires us to have a private meeting, we will do so.

Dr Hawke—Thank you.