



# PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
LAUNCH OF THE READY RESERVE SCHEME  
AND RECRUITING CAMPAIGN  
BRISBANE, 2 OCTOBER 1991**

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Minister Bilney,  
CDF General Peter Gration,  
Major-General John Sanderson,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Students,

Since coming to office in 1983, my Government has made far-reaching reforms to foster an outward-looking, confident Australia which both contributes to, and benefits from, a stable and prosperous region.

The development of Australia's Defence Force is a vital part of that approach. The recently completed Force Structure Review recommended changes to Australia's defence posture to ensure we enter the next century with a defence force which is relevant, effective and efficient.

The Review was conducted on the basis of my Government's well-defined policy of defence self-reliance.

In accepting the Review, the Government was persuaded by the emphasis it gave to three key outcomes.

The first of these is to develop the combat capabilities of the Defence Force by reducing the number of service personnel involved in support functions and by contracting out such functions wherever this is appropriate.

Second, the Review reaffirmed our commitment to improving our capability to conduct operations in the northern and western approaches to the Continent. That is being done by extending western basing for the Navy, increasing the number of Army units based in the north, and by providing greater capacity for the Air Force to deploy and operate from northern airfields.

The third key outcome was to make greater use of reserves, including a new form of service - the Ready Reserve.

The principle which underlies all these reforms to the ADF is the same as that which underlies the Government's reforms in many areas. In everything we do, Australia must discard outdated practices and concepts, and look instead for the most efficient way to do the job. That is what micro-economic reform is all about. It is vital to the future of our Industry, and it is vital to the future of the defence force.

The Government's defence reforms have not been a cost-cutting measure - indeed we have maintained defence spending in real terms. These reforms have been instituted to ensure that we get the best value for our defence dollar, and that is important at any given level of expenditure.

The Ready Reserve Scheme is an excellent example of this reform in action. It is the result of an innovative and imaginative look at the way the ADF uses its most precious resource - people. It reflects a sophisticated balance of priorities, which will provide the ADF with a mix of capabilities. This will give it the readiness and sustainability we need, with the most efficient use of resources.

The Ready Reserve Scheme will improve our capability to respond to emergency situations at short notice. It does not replace or decrease the emphasis given to the very important roles of the existing reserves. Rather, it increases the depth of available trained units and personnel in an emergency.

Earlier this year I congratulated the Minister for Defence on the exemplary work undertaken by the CDF and his colleagues in bringing together the sweeping and far-reaching package of reforms contained in the Force Structure Review and the Ready Reserve Proposal.

At the time I said that much work lay ahead in bringing those major changes to fruition. The opening of the Recruiting Campaign for the Ready Reserve Scheme is a milestone in that regard.

In acknowledging that milestone, I am aware that reform is always difficult in a large organisation. I am sure that the Ready Reserve Scheme is no exception.

The fact that Defence has been able to work through the internal and external criticism that seems to be inevitable with change does the organisation great credit.

Each of the services will take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Ready Reserve Scheme. With the introduction of the Scheme, Navy is planning to restructure the whole of its Reserve organisation to meet its operational needs better.

This means that the reserves will become more involved in activities which have traditionally been undertaken by members or former members of the Permanent Naval Force. In this process some of the traditional roles and functions of the existing reserves will be replaced by greater opportunities to be involved in mainstream naval service.

The Army is committed to the total force concept with combat units trained and equipped to meet a range of contingencies in the defence of Australia and her interests.

Regular soldiers maintain high standards of collective training to meet shorter notice contingencies while reservists, through their part-time commitment, provide individual skills and the experience base to support the conduct of protracted operations when necessary.

Army Ready Reserve units will be able to reach and maintain training standards equivalent to regulars in their specialist fields. As a result they will be at a higher readiness status than the general Reserve, which will nevertheless retain important roles in protection of vital assets and provide a basis for expansion of our defence effort if required.

Reserve personnel provide a cost-effective and potent part of the Air Force.

The Ready Reserve Scheme in Air Force will provide airfield defence squadrons to protect bases during emergencies. Training will be the same as for regular airfield defence guard members.

But the Ready Reserve Scheme is not just important to the ADF. The Scheme is a part of our broad philosophy of involving more of the community in the nation's security.

The Defence Force of the future will need well-trained and highly motivated people of the highest calibre. So does the Australian workplace. The Ready Reserve Scheme provides an opportunity for young people to serve their nation in both roles.

During the last election campaign I said that Australia needed to become a clever country. I said that cleverness is something that should permeate the entire society and especially our workplaces.

I am particularly pleased to see that Defence has responded to that call with the Ready Reserve Scheme.

The Scheme is clever because it is a unique arrangement to share the talents of high-calibre young Australians between Defence and Industry. After an initial period of intense military training, Ready Reserve members will be encouraged to focus their attention on civilian careers but they will remain ready for operational service if required.

It is smart because Defence has seen the advantages of using its own resources to support the development of civilian skills as a recruitment incentive. Those skills will be of benefit to both Industry and Defence.

The Scheme will thereby help us bring out the best in ourselves as a nation.

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The conditions of service and employer-support package are arguably the best in the world.

The Scheme should be extremely attractive to those considering a Defence career for the first time, as well as to those present members of the Defence Force who want to pursue a second career.

And I believe civilian employers will find much to commend in the Scheme.

Community support, and especially the support and involvement of employers, is vital to the success of the Scheme.

While employer financial support will be of practical assistance, I am encouraged to note that initial feed-back from employers indicates broad support on both the training of employees and on support for national defence. A partnership between the Government and employers nationwide is essential for a cohesive national security policy particularly with respect to voluntary reserve service.

To date, the Committee for Employer Support of Reserve Forces has provided the contact between reserves and employers. In recognition of the increased emphasis now being placed on reserves, the role of this committee has been expanded and its title changed to the "Reserves Support Committee".

Responsibility for supporting the Committee will rest with the newly established Assistant Chief of the Defence Force Reserves, himself a senior reserve officer.

The Scheme and this Recruiting Campaign is primarily directed towards those young Australians who are about to complete secondary schooling. I commend the Scheme to those of you who wish to make a significant contribution to your nation's security.

It will also allow you to secure a future in a very competitive educational and career environment. Thus, your contribution to Australia's future can be twofold.

Before taking any decisions about whether to join the Ready Reserve Scheme, the first step is to complete your final examinations. I wish you every success in this regard and in those very important career decisions that you will make shortly thereafter.

As you finish your last term of school, I ask each one of you to consider the benefits to you and Australia of service in the Australian Defence Force Ready Reserves.

Ladies and gentlemen, I take much pleasure in declaring open the national Ready Reserve Recruiting Campaign.

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