

As a 27-year regular (now 3-year Reservist), ADF member, I can say that the idea of moving more forces to the North and North-West is a big mistake. These are areas the ADF deploys to on exercises, and is not currently based at, for good reason; infrastructure, or more correctly, the lack thereof.

Most ADF recruits have a marital status of "single". As they move through their careers, they acquire families. It's not looking after the needs of the families that causes many people to leave the ADF. Certainly, it's why I left.

Most of the country's population is in the South-Eastern corner of the continent, or dispersed along, or within, a few hundred kilometers, of the Eastern seaboard. It follows then, that the majority of the ADF are recruited from these areas, have extended families from these areas, and their spouses also fit that description. Posting a defence member to say, RAAF Curtin, would result in the member going there unaccompanied (seriously, what educated spouse with a career of their own would want to give up their life in Melbourne, Sydney, or Brisbane to live at Derby?) with all the associated costs and pressures on the family (often resulting in breakdown and divorce or the member discharging).

The Army has already encountered the problems associated with basing major units in the north (APIN) when it was realised that 5/7RAR would have to be de-linked so that Mechanised Infantry soldiers (and their families) would be able to have a respite posting in the south (Edinburgh S.A.) rather than being locked into Darwin where there are limited employment prospects for spouses.

By all means, have a presence in these remote areas, but run it in a method akin to the rotational Rifle Company Butterworth in Malaysia, and include Reservists (of all three Services) in the process.

Base a fighter Squadron at Curtin and Learmonth, but staff it on a rotational basis, including Reservists on full-time service for 3 or 4 months. Support these Bases with all the usual supporting elements, including Force Protection and Army units who can use the open spaces to train in maneuver warfare without being restricted by urban noise complaints and other space restrictions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this policy proposal.

Stephen Brasher