SUBMISSION TO DWP15

Introduction

- This short submission outlines a number of suggestions for the DWG 15 that addresses some minor areas for improvement in areas that I was able to witness first hand as needing attention.

- It addresses the DWP15 themes of:
  - Defence Culture;
  - Personnel and
  - Organisational Reform

Defence Culture

- Military Sociology is the study of the military as a social institution. It is an under-subscribed and little studied aspect of military issues. This is probably for two reasons. Firstly, military studies are mainly viewed as being about the heroic image of the soldier as a warrior. The study of combat and manoeuvre on battlefields is viewed as the serious stuff of military studies. Secondly, it is seen as a ‘soft’ area that deals with people problems and culture which are hard to quantify not hardware which has an obvious dollar cost.

- The reality is of course that very little of the ADF’s time is spent actually in combat and few of the ADF actually engage in it. Much time however is spent on personnel issues often with short-term band aid fixes applied. Usually this results in a lot of heat but not much light as staff come up with solutions to address retention or recruiting concerns which often use a heavy hand or results in a metaphorical trimming of branches rather than addressing the root of the problem. (According to media reports 160 ADF members were discharged in 2013 for disciplinary reasons—what was the dollar cost?).

- Military sociology is an academic discipline which can help address long term systemic issues such as indigenous and ethnic balance, female participation in combat roles, military family matters, remuneration, and use of social media, defence culture, change management and so forth. To ensure it has ‘long legs’ and can add value to the ADF it may be easier to sell it as a major of a HR degree rather than just a standalone.

- The Chief of Army for example has taken a strong stance on the increased employment of women including in combat roles. It makes me wonder who is advising him on this issue. Instead of directing those who object to “get out” I believe that he should focus on potential women candidates. It is not that women are not a valued members of the Army—they are and this has been proven many times over. However, having been a member of the Infantry/SASR/Commandos for 12 years I would assess that few women are physically capable of enduring such soldiering day after day, week after week and so forth. Yet, it has been
proven in sociological terms that in order to be accepted and integrated that a critical mass at the officer/SNCO and soldier levels for support and leadership reasons needs to be achieved. The lack of privacy and other issues also need to be addressed prior to wider employment.

- Other related aspects could be recruitment and retention issues organisational leadership, organisational reform and ethics.

**Personnel Issues**

- If we accept the need for the study and utility of military sociology as a major part of a HR stream how, where and when is it to be injected into the ADF? What should not happen is that it is relegated to an annual mandatory lecture to be ticked off as complete for the year. Rather, it needs to be given due recognition and ingrained into the ADF structure as part of the Personnel stream in the same manner as Operations and Logistics and acknowledged and rewarded as appropriate.

- The obvious place to begin the study of military sociology as an academic discipline is at ADFA by cadets who will one day be the elite opinion and leaders of the ADF. This could be injected as part of a major of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Business (BBus) or as an introductory minor or elective for those cadets studying other BA majors or Bachelor of Science (BSc). This introductory level would need to be reinforced with a postgraduate course at Master’s level (MA [Military Sociology] or MMilSoc or MA [Human Resources] or MHumRes) and eventually a PhD level in order for the subject to grow as an academic discipline.

- Study as a voluntary academic discipline would be commendable and probably very effective. The reality is of course that academic study of a subject or subjects is not necessarily focussed and is at the whim, quite rightly, of the academic freedom (within limits, of course) of the academic(s) constructing and teaching the degree components. To give the academic study due weight it would need to be supported by a component probably at the Staff College level and again at the Higher Command College level.

- It will need to be seen and proven to have value by DOCM and eventually grow into a fully-fledged viable and valued joint HR stream. Officers qualified in a HR stream will need to be identified and positions requiring their specific skill and knowledge set will need to be tagged and filled by such officers.

- If we are serious about the ADF and especially the Army being a people organisation and people being our most important asset then the study of Military Sociology as an academic discipline would go some way to supporting that view.
Organisational Reform

- It would appear that the military was once at the cutting edge of leadership and management of large organisations however now that is no longer the case. Senior officers now attend civilian management courses and are members of management associations. By way of example is the employment of former senior officers as part of Advisory Board to give a longer view. Many generals have little enough time to focus on long term initiatives and ideas and rely upon a busy staff to look at detail. An advisory board could do this work for them and with a Secretariat of civilian and military staff could comment on long term concepts and plans.

- A number of senior officers are in positions of considerable authority and influence, for example Sir Peter Cosgrove, Angus Houston and Peter Leahy. Others are not and it would appear that their talents that took them to higher command positions in the ADF and the experience that they gained in those appointments are now lost to the Army. Former Service Chiefs and other senior officers are employed as business consultants for military suppliers such as Raytheon and Thales using their former influence and knowledge to advise defence contracting firms rather than the present leadership.

- While each service chief and the CDF has an advisory board these are serving officers and human nature being what it is are not an independent group. The advantage of an advisory board of former officers could be that they are independent and by making their role as advisory only should ensure that the incumbent leadership makes all decisions and remains accountable for them. Whether their skills and knowledge are still relevant and up to date could be ensured by capping their employment at say 5 years for former Service Chiefs and 3 years for other senior officers.

- The advantage of an advisory board is that it can be expanded to encompass subject matter experts as required. Not that all standing members should remain former senior officers. Other choices maybe retired high level academics, public servants, business executives, and so forth. In order to ensure that this team focusses on areas of importance it could be chaired by the VCDF and Deputy Service Chiefs as best fits.

Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Anthony John, CSC, BA (Melb), MDefStud (UNSW), MMil Stud (Marine Corps U) MA (UNSW) psc (US) enlisted in the Australian Army in 1981 and discharged in 2010. His service was mainly with Infantry and Special Operations units. As a member of the Army he was a Visiting Fellow to ADFA for two years. His academic interests lie in part in military sociology.