

MEDIA RELEASE



Peter Lindsay

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence

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REVIEW OF DEFENCE RESERVES LEGISLATION VISITS CAIRNS

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Mr Peter Lindsay, is calling for all community members interested in the Defence Reserve to have their say at a legislation review workshop to be held in Cairns on Thursday (12 July).

The Cairns workshop will be held at Rydges on the Esplanade from 9.30am to 11am.

"I urge everyone to have input into the review by attending the workshop or writing to the review committee," Mr Lindsay said.

In 2001, the Federal Government introduced legislation designed to protect the rights of Reservists in employment and education.

At the same time, other initiatives were approved by the Government, including a financial support scheme for employers to help offset the costs of releasing Reservists for Defence service.

The legislation review aims to ensure the effectiveness of the Act.

Major General Greg Garde AO RFD QC, who is chairing a panel of Defence and business representatives, is leading the review. The panel is holding public forums throughout Australia to consult with those affected by the Act and hear suggestions about how it can be improved. The panel has already visited Darwin, Perth, Karratha, Canberra and Townsville.

Mr Lindsay said the support provided to Reservists under this legislation is 'unique in the world'.

"In addition to creating an offence for the dismissal, disadvantage or discrimination of a Reservist in their civilian employment, the Act provides protections for business partners, contractors and students undertaking Defence service. It also places obligations on employers to release Reservists for Defence service when required," Mr Lindsay said.

"The panel wants to hear public opinions on how it affects employers of Reservists and their Reservist employees at the grass roots level.

"While I am confident that this groundbreaking legislation is working to protect the rights of Australian Reservists in their civilian occupations and education, we need to make sure that it achieves these objectives without placing an excessive burden on employers, business or universities. The Government wants to make sure that the Act is meeting its goals," he said.

In addition to the workshop series, the panel is inviting public submissions via the Defence Reserves Support website, consulting with individuals and representatives from the three Services, comparing Australia's legislation with similar provisions elsewhere in the world and seeking expert legal opinion on any recommended changes to the Act.

The review panel will submit its final report in November. For further information on the review go to www.defence.gov.au/reserves/ The review's Terms of Reference can be found on line.

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