

28 March 2004

INDUSTRY SUPPORTS NEW LEAVE GUIDELINES FOR DEFENCE RESERVES

Statement by Heather Ridout
Ai Group Chief Executive

The new guidelines for companies with employees in the Defence Reserves released today provide a good model for business in managing staff committed to the important task of defending Australia.

The Ai Group fully appreciates the outstanding contribution made by Australian industry to defending our nation. There is no more worthy contribution by Australian companies and many of their employees than their involvement in the Australian Defence Force Reserves program.

The flexibility of the new guidelines for private sector defence leave recognises that every workplace is different and a single approach cannot work for all.

Small business in particular can have difficulty in filling gaps when staff are away on Defence Reserve duty and the model provides a good level of support and guidance in this regard.

We also welcome the voluntary nature of the new guidelines and the emphasis on the benefits for both business and the defence forces of the Defence Reservist scheme.

Industry well understands that staff involved in such activities show a commitment to Australia and learn valuable leadership and management skills.

An important first step for businesses not currently involved in the Defence Reserve program would be to look closely at how their internal employment policies can be arranged to best facilitate staff participation in the Defence Force Reserves.

As a leading industry organisation, Ai Group will be taking the initiative to inform our 10,000 member companies of the new defence leave guidelines.

I would encourage employers to fully support this program.

For further Comment:

Heather Ridout - Chief Executive

Leigh Purnell – Executive Director International

Media inquiries: Tony Melville

0419 257 361

0418 262 622

0419 190 347