

MEDIA RELEASE



Peter Lindsay

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence

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MAJOR REVIEW OF DEFENCE RESERVES LEGISLATION ANNOUNCED

Defence will conduct a major review of the legislation designed to protect Reservists, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Mr Peter Lindsay MP announced today.

The *Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001* is designed to allow the men and women who serve in Australia's Navy, Army and Air Force Reserves to enjoy appropriate levels of protection in their civilian occupations without burdening employers with unnecessary compliance.

"I have asked the Head of Reserve Policy and Assistant Chief of the Defence Force (Reserves), Major General Neil Wilson, to conduct a review of the *Defence Reserve Service Protection Act*," Mr Lindsay said.

Mr Lindsay made the announcement whilst in Coffs Harbour today launching the Southern Cross University Student Reservist Support Policy.

"Historically a high number of Reservists have and continue to come from the student bodies of universities across Australia," Mr Lindsay said.

"This relationship provides much needed income to students and has provided some of Australia's most distinguished soldiers.

"I congratulate Southern Cross University for leading the way to develop a set of defence leave guidelines, which represents best practice."

In April 2001, in recognition to the changing role of the Reserves, the Government introduced the *Act*. In addition to creating an offence for the dismissal, disadvantage or discrimination of a Reservist in their civilian employment, the Act provides protections for partners, contractors and students undertaking Defence service. It also places obligations upon employers to release Reservists for Defence service when required.

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

"None of our major allies provide a level of support and protection equal to that provided to Australia's Defence Reservists.

"While I am confident that this unique and groundbreaking legislation is working to protect the rights of Australian Reservists in their civilian occupations, 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."

Mr Lindsay said while General Wilson would oversee the review, he expected that Defence would seek comments on the operation of the Act from all interested parties.

"I urge everyone to have input into the review by writing to the review committee," he said.

For further information on the review go to www.defence.gov.au/reserves/

The review's terms of reference can be found on line.

Media Information:

Media Advisor: Niki Lyons 0418 762 307

Defence Media: (02) 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664

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