

**The Effects of Including Gay and Lesbian Soldiers in the Australian Defence Forces:
Appraising the Evidence**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 1992, the Australian Defence Forces lifted its ban on open gay and lesbian soldiers. Using all available data from military, academic, non-governmental, and other sources, this report assesses the extent to which the lifting of the gay ban has affected the well-being and performance of the Australian military.

Based on the results of prior studies, eighteen in-depth interviews with informed military and non-military observers, and other data, this study finds that the full lifting of the ban on gay service has not led to any identifiable negative effects on troop morale, combat effectiveness, recruitment and retention, or other measures of military performance. Furthermore, available evidence suggests that policy changes associated with the lifting of the ban may have contributed to improvements in productivity and working environments for service members. Key findings include:

- Senior officials, commanders, and military scholars within the ADF consistently appraise the lifting of the ban as a successful policy change that has contributed to greater equity and effective working relationships within the ranks.
- Prior to the lifting of the ban, ADF service chief argued that allowing homosexuals to serve openly would jeopardize recruitment, troop cohesion, and combat effectiveness while also spreading AIDS and encouraging predatory behavior
- Senior officials, commanders and scholars report that there has been no overall pattern of disruption to the military. However, some individual units have reported disruptions that were resolved successfully through normal management procedures.
- While the lifting of the ban was not immediately followed by large numbers of personnel declaring their sexual-orientation, by the late 1990s significant numbers of

officers and enlisted personnel had successfully and largely uneventfully come out to their peers.

- Recruitment and retention rates have not suffered as a result of the policy change. As Commodore R. W. Gates of the Royal Australian Navy states in the report, “There was no great peak...where people walked out, and there was no great dip in recruiting. It really was a non-event.”
- Self-identified gay soldiers, officers, and commanders describe good working relationships in an environment that emphasizes capable and competent job performance under uniform rules of conduct for all personnel. Gay soldiers and commanders have successfully served in recent active deployments in East Timor.
- Complaints regarding sexual orientation issues comprise less than 5% of the total complaints received by the ADF of incidents of sexual harassment, bullying, and other forms of sexual misconduct.
- Of 1,400 calls received by an anonymous “Advice Line” maintained by the ADF to help personnel and commanders manage potential misconduct issues since this service was initiated in August 1998, 17 (1.21 percent) have related to sexual orientation issues.
- Current debates in Australia related to the policy change are now focused on extending equal benefits to the partners of gay servicemembers, rather than on the policy itself. To the degree that harassment issues continue to exist in the Australian Forces, most observers believe that problems faced by women soldiers are more serious than those faced by gay personnel.

II. INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1992, the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) maintained both formal and informal rules to discourage known or suspected homosexuals from serving (Smith 2000, Agostino 2000). As a result of a number of external and internal pressures, in 1992 the Defence Forces issued a new directive that lifted the remaining ban on homosexual service by specifying uniform rules of appropriate and inappropriate sexual conduct that applied equally to both heterosexual and homosexual interactions. The change in policy met with strong opposition from the ADF service chiefs as well as from several service member organizations who argued that allowing homosexuals to serve openly would jeopardize recruitment, troop cohesion, and combat effectiveness while also spreading AIDS and encouraging predatory behavior (see e.g., Associated Press, 24 November 1993). In the months that followed the policy change, however, the issue largely and quickly faded from the public stage.

This report integrates prior studies of gay-military issues in Australia, press coverage, Australian Forces data, and interviews with eighteen ADF officials, academic observers, non-governmental actors, interest groups, and enlisted personnel to assess how and to what extent the performance and well-being of the Australian Defence Forces have been affected by the 1992 lifting of the ban on open gay service. Almost eight years after the ban was lifted, all available evidence indicates that the policy change has not led to deleterious consequences for recruitment or retention, effective unit functioning, or combat effectiveness. While very little quantifiable data appear to exist that bear directly on performance effects of the policy change, the experiences and observations of senior ADF officials, commanders of active-duty deployments, recruitment officers, and self-identified homosexual servicemembers all strongly suggest that the policy change has been implemented smoothly and successfully, albeit imperfectly. Their

opinions are corroborated by the research and evidence provided by informed scholars, journalists, and representatives of a number of interest and pressure groups. At the present time, public debates in Australia over gay-military issues have moved on to second-order concerns—to issues concerning spousal benefits and adequate enforcement of existing anti-discrimination policies in the workplace. For the ADF, the participation of homosexuals in the military is now very much a “non-issue.”

Part III begins the analysis by outlining the evidence collected and the methods used to appraise it. Part IV briefly reviews the historical context of the 1992 decision to lift the ban, describes the policy change, and addresses its implementation. Part V provides a systematic review of evidence from prior assessments, the Australian Defence Forces, and the independent Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, before moving on to observations made by informed academics and representatives of relevant interest groups. Part V concludes by documenting the experiences of seven current and former self-declared homosexuals in the ADF. Finally, Part VI synthesizes the available evidence and concludes the analysis.

III. METHODOLOGY

Information collected for this report was systematically gathered from publicly available primary and secondary sources relevant to an understanding of military outcomes associated with homosexual service in the Australian Defence Forces. Sources and methods included: identification, retrieval, and analysis of all prior research bearing on homosexual service in the Australian Defence Forces conducted by governmental, academic, and policy-focused organizations in North America; content analysis of Nexis/Lexis search retrievals for all North American, European, and Asia-Pacific news articles and wire service dispatches relating to

homosexual service in the Australian Defence Forces before and after the ban was lifted (n=63); interviews undertaken with Australian Defence Forces units and their senior representatives (n=3 individuals); snowball identification and interviewing of major academic, non-governmental, and policy experts on gay-military issues in Australia since the ban was lifted (n=9); and interviews with sexual minority participants in the Australian Defence Forces who were located through the cooperation of leading non-governmental and military human rights organizations (n=7). Australian Defence Forces representatives were chosen by asking academic, non-governmental, and policy experts for suggested contacts who were knowledgeable about the military's policy on homosexuality, and then using snowball identification techniques to identify other interview subjects.

To draw its conclusions, this report relies on a multi-method approach to compare and synthesize evidence provided by a variety of sources. Whenever possible, we compare independent observations from multiple sources to elucidate findings that are consistent among observers in different sectors (e.g., military, academic, non-governmental). During the interview process, we also sought to ensure that the universe of sources drawn upon for the study was complete by repeatedly asking observers from different sectors for recommendations of additional sources of information. While it is possible that additional confidential information on outcomes not documented in this report may be maintained by the ADF, senior officials contacted for this study were not aware of any additional data. The final compilation of sources that informs this report thus reflects an exhaustive inventory of relevant data and opinions.

IV. CONTEXT OF THE 1992 LIFTING OF REMAINING BAN

1. Australian Society and Military Policy Regarding Homosexuals Prior to 1992

Like the Armed Forces in many other Anglophone countries, the Australian military maintained both formal and informal rules proscribing the participation of known homosexuals in the armed forces from 1986 to 1992. Prior to 1986, the ADF did not maintain a formal policy regarding the participation of homosexuals. According to a report by United States General Accounting Office (1993), recruits were not formally questioned about their sexual orientation before 1986. However, informal efforts frequently were made to identify and document activities of personnel suspected of homosexual conduct, usually followed by the removal of such personnel from duty (Agostino 2000). Existing state and federal laws proscribing sodomy and homosexual relations usually were invoked to enforce these actions (Croome 1992, 9; Livingstone 2000).

While most historical perspectives on the treatment of homosexual personnel have identified a number of instances of investigation and prosecution (referred to by some critics as “witch hunts”) between World War II and the mid-1980s, substantial evidence nonetheless exists that homosexuality was at times tolerated if not informally accepted in some units (Smith 2000). Anecdotal evidence provided by most experts interviewed for this report also indicates that many ADF personnel were aware that practicing homosexuals served in the ranks.

In the 1980s, as Australia incorporated international human rights accords into its national laws, federal and state governments actively dismantled existing laws against homosexuality and began to ratify new human rights bills that included protection against arbitrary discrimination. As a result, the ADF could no longer justify anti-homosexual practices on the basis of territorial laws and was required to issue its own policy. It did so in September

1986, and the ban on homosexual service became an explicit and formal part of ADF instructions (Croome 1992; Smith 1995).

Even so, according to Hugh Smith, Associate Professor of Politics at the Australian Defence Force Academy, the policy of banning gays was exercised with some degree of tolerance and senior military officials often used discretion to decide whether or not to implement the gay ban (Smith 2000). At the same time, however, other persons familiar with the situation between 1986 and 1992 assert that the military routinely engaged in “witch hunts” to root out members suspected of homosexuality. According to Dr. Katerina Agostino of the Macquarie University Department of Sociology, “The military invested lots of time and money in finding and rooting people out. Military police were used” (Agostino, 2000)”

2. Context of the Policy Change

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of economic, social and cultural factors served to undermine the perceived legitimacy and rationale of the ADF ban on homosexual service. To begin, military leaders encountered criticisms of ADF policies concerning equality of opportunity and racial and ethnic diversity. In 1992, the government examined charges that the ADF was not recruiting a sufficient portion of its soldiers from non-European populations and the result was a major study of the ethnic makeup of the forces (Smith 1995, 535). Debates over the status and treatment of women in the ADF also influenced the perceived legitimacy of the ban on gay service. Though women had been able to participate in the Australian military for many years, either directly or through auxiliary branches like the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps, they were not allowed to take combat roles until the late 1980s. Smith points out that the three service branches began to face difficulties in retaining qualified personnel: “The

ADF thus had a clear incentive to open more positions to women, thereby expanding the pool of potential recruits” (Smith 1995, 540). Related to these problems, considerations of sexual harassment and problems of sexual behavior in the ADF began to come to light. In late 1992, three women who had served on board *HMAS Swan* alleged that they had been sexually harassed quite severely at the hands of their male shipmates. Similar to the Tailhook sexual harassment incident in the United States, the case provoked widespread outrage and a call for the military to examine gender issues in the forces (Agostino 2000, Smith 1995, Smith 2000).

In the years shortly before government and ADF officials considered lifting the ban on homosexuals, Australia adopted several human rights measures into its laws and codes including the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. Article 26 of the ICCPR posits the fundamental equality of all human beings and Article 2 addresses each individual’s right to equal treatment before the law (Sidoti 2000). Although sexual orientation is not included explicitly in the ICCPR’s list of prohibited justifications for discrimination, Australian Human Rights Commissioner Chris Sidoti says that the ICCPR’s list was meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Therefore, Sidoti continues, although not explicitly mentioned, sexual orientation is covered by the spirit of the ICCPR and it cannot serve as the basis of discrimination. Opponents of the ADF ban argued that the military was in violation of these human rights provisions in Australian law.

As civil rights considerations came to play an increasingly important role in the Australian political landscape, the ADF encountered a number of social and international trends that changed its understanding of its own mission and its relationship with civilian society. In particular, the end of the Cold War forced the ADF to reevaluate its role as a fighting force and many Australians came to see military service as a temporary occupation rather than a long-term

career.¹ Professor Hugh Smith has argued that during the Cold War, many Australians regarded the military as a calling and a lifetime vocation (1995). According to the old mindset, a career in the armed forces meant that military life always took precedence over other priorities. Smith says that according to the new “occupational” mindset of many Australians, however, a military career is “just another job.” Except in extraordinary circumstances like combat, soldiers now expect regular working hours, free weekends, pension and benefits, and other freedoms and privileges associated with the civilian world. In the late 1980s and early 1990’s, much of Australian society moved toward an occupational outlook on most careers including military service, and just as the rest of Australian society was moving toward greater tolerance and support for individual rights and freedoms, the military found itself needing to adjust (Smith 1995, 536-39).

As the center-left/left party in Australian politics, the Labour government that controlled Parliament in the late 1980s and early 1990s faced some disagreement within its own ranks over social issues such as the lifting of the ban on gays and lesbians in the military. As Croome (2000) points out, some members of Labour’s caucus supported “traditional family values” and opposed lifting the ban. Others were traditional progressives, committed to an expansion of what they argued were equal rights for all Australians.

In a 1990 test of the military ban on homosexuals, a servicewoman made a formal complaint to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission and contended that her discharge had been partially based upon the fact that she was a lesbian. The HREOC asked the ADF to explain the reasoning behind its ban on homosexual service, and some observers believe that the complaint was a serious challenge to ADF policy and that it may have

¹ In the intervening decade, the ADF has become a significant contributor to international peacekeeping efforts, most recently in East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

prompted the ADF to review its rationale for discrimination (UK Ministry of Defence 1996, H1-1; Smith 1995, 544; Croome 1992, 10). In February 1992, the Minister for Defence Science and Personnel informed Parliament that the federal government would review the ADF's ban (Croome 1992, 10). In June 1992, however, the Defense Minister told Parliament that following the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff, the Government would not lift the ban. Gay activists condemned the declaration as hypocritical and prejudiced. (Agence France Presse, 18 June 1992)

In reaction, the Government formed a special party committee to study the matter, to accept submissions from interested groups, and to make policy recommendations for the government. In September 1992, this committee recommended that the ban be dropped "immediately." The Caucus Committee also recommended that the ADF undertake a survey of members' attitudes and engage in an education campaign as part of the lifting of the ban. Committee members who favored lifting the ban contended that the military was not significantly different from other organizations and thus should not be exempt from anti-discriminatory policy changes being made elsewhere.² Those who opposed the removal of the personnel restrictions contended that such a change would hinder the military's operational effectiveness, combat performance, and morale. At the time, an ADF spokesperson said that the military would find the removal of the ban "disturb[ing]" and would likely react with disgust (Agence France Presse, 18 September 1992).

3. The Lifting of the Ban and Immediate Reactions

In late November 1992, the Cabinet accepted the Caucus Committee recommendation and the Government voted to drop the ban on the service of gays and lesbians in the Australian

² In 1992, for example, Australia was one of three countries (along with Finland and the Netherlands) that gave residency rights to the foreign partners of homosexual citizens. However, homosexuality was still illegal in Tasmania (Kyodo News Service, 2 December 1992).

military. Although the Defense Minister and the service chiefs opposed the removal of the ban, the Attorney General, the Health Minister, and the Prime Minister all supported its removal. The Attorney General argued that Australia's policy violated international human rights agreements not to discriminate against people based upon sexual orientation and the Health Minister said that by pushing military members to keep their relationships "underground", the ban contradicted efforts to fight AIDS. Prime Minister Paul Keating then made the decision to accept the policy change and to order its immediate implementation in the entire ADF. (Agence France Presse, 23 November 1992; United Press International, 23 November 1992; Reuters, 24 November 1992.)

In place of the previous military regulation banning gays and lesbians from service, the government issued a more general instruction on "sexual misconduct policy." Among other provisions, the new instruction referred to unacceptable conduct without making a distinction between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Rather than define what was unacceptable based upon sexual orientation, in other words, the new instruction prohibited any sexual behavior that negatively impacted group cohesion or command relationships, took advantage of subordinates, or discredited the ADF (Smith, 1995, 545). Thus, for example, "homosexual advances" were not illegitimate; threatening sexual behavior was. And the policy provided commanders with some latitude to judge whether a certain behavior was acceptable or not in a certain context.

According to a report prepared by the British Defence Ministry, the Australian policy "recognises that sexual relations are a part of adult life and are predominately a private matter for each individual. Nevertheless, the ADF is concerned with the sexual behavior of its members where it is inconsistent with the inherent requirements of the ADF, or where it is unlawful. ... The term 'Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour' is not defined and thus left to a wide variety of command interpretation. This lack of prescriptive definition of unacceptable behavior is in line

with the Australian Sex Discrimination Act's emphasis on what is reasonable in the circumstances and the recipient's response to such behaviour" (UK Defence Ministry 1996, H1-3).

Reaction to the Australian change was swift and severe. The Returned and Services League, Australia's largest veterans group, condemned the policy change and argued that allowing open homosexuals to serve would shatter unit cohesion and lead to a deterioration of trust among soldiers, thus undermining the forces' fighting effectiveness (Associated Press, 24 November 1992). Other opponents raised the specter of AIDS and said that the battlefield practice of direct blood-to-blood transfers would lead to an increased incidence of HIV infection. Even within the military, however, opinion seemed to be somewhat mixed (Associated Press, 9 December 1992). As of January 1993, however, no members of the ADF declared themselves to be gay to military authorities (Associated Press, 27 January 1993). Early reports generated in the immediate aftermath of the policy change indicated that the ADF did not experience any decline in recruiting or combat performance and media attention to the issue largely disappeared approximately six months after new policy's implementation (New York Times, 30 April 1993).

After the lifting of the ban, the ADF introduced a variety of new programs and training courses to enforce and support the provisions of the Defence Instruction on Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Offences, Fraternisation and other Unacceptable Behavior in the Australian Defence Forces (2000). In 1997, responsibilities for monitoring, education, and enforcement of the Instructions were consolidated into the new Defence Equity Organization (DEO) that reports directly to the Defence Personnel Executive (the head of personnel for the ADF). Currently, the DEO is planning to provide additional support for the integration of gay and lesbian soldiers by creating a new training course (Grey 2000).

V. EFFECTS OF FULL INCLUSION ON PERFORMANCE IN THE ADF: APPRAISING THE EVIDENCE

A. Prior Assessments: United States General Accounting Office (1993) And United Kingdom Ministry Of Defence (1996)

GAO (1993) Study

In June 1993, seven months after the Australian ban on homosexual service was lifted, the General Accounting Office of the United States conducted interviews with ADF officials to document early outcomes associated with the change (GAO 1993). The short overview of the policy change concludes with a summary statement based on comments from an “Australian official,” who stated that:

“...[A]lthough it is too early to assess the results of the revised policy, no reported changes have occurred in the number of persons declaring his or her sexual preference or the number of recruits being inducted. Effects on unit cohesiveness have not yet been fully determined. However, early indications are that the new policy has had little or no adverse impact” (19).

These claims are substantiated by additional evidence collected for this study, described below.

United Kingdom (1996) Assessment

In February 1996, the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence completed a report documenting the findings of its “Homosexuality Policy Assessment Team” that investigated homosexual personnel policies of a number of foreign militaries. The team sent to Australia met with representatives of the Royal Australian Air Force, Royal Australian Army, and Royal Australian Navy, as well as with Dr. Hugh Smith of the ADF Academy (also interviewed for this report) and service psychologists at ADF headquarters in Canberra. Their findings describe the context of the policy change, the manner in which it was implemented, and observed outcomes in practice.

Regarding implementation of the policy, the British team reported that service staffs believed that the change had not resulted in any notable problems for military functioning.

According to the report,

Service policy staffs all stated that following an initial outcry, homosexuality had become a non-issue...The difficulties of integrating open homosexuals were described as 'just another legitimate management problem' (UK Ministry of Defence 1996, H1-4).

The opinions of personnel drawn from the services, however, varied in their assessments of potential difficulties arising from the policy change. According to the report, male members of a random volunteer group from the Royal Australian Air Force were "very largely against the new policy and believe that, in a combat situation, the presence of open homosexuals would have a degrading effect on [o]perational effectiveness" (H1-4). However, personnel drawn from an Army Logistics unit, as well as a Royal Australian Navy group based in Sydney, emphasized equality and non-discrimination regardless of personal opinions on homosexuality per se (H1-4). The report concludes that HIV was "not regarded as a significant issue" in light of routine testing of personnel.

The British report noted that thirty-three homosexual soldiers, contacted through the president of the major gay servicemembers group, had been willing to identify themselves to members of the team. Senior members of the group included a RAN Commander and a former Army Lieutenant Colonel. The authors believed that another fifteen personnel were members of the group but were not willing to reveal their identities. The report speculates that the reasons for this "continuing reticence" were related to "fear of comrades [sic] rejection and informal sanctions, and anxiety about the effect on their careers" (H1-5). According to the report, gay service members were satisfied with the policy change but were still eager to push for additional acceptance and rights such as equal entitlements for same-sex partners.

B. Evidence from the Australian Defence Forces

Defence Equity Organization

The Defence Equity Organization (DEO) serves as the primary ADF unit responsible for development, implementation, training, and support for all policies regarding equity, diversity, and sexual misconduct in the military. Its self-described mission “is to inform, educate, encourage and ensure that equitable policies, processes and practices form an integral part of doing business in Defence as the basis for a fairer and better work environment” (DEO 2000). Formed in August 1997 during a widespread re-organization of the ADF, the DEO consolidated responsibilities that had been assigned separately to each service branch as well as a human rights policy area within Defence Headquarters (now defunct). In addition to supporting the implementation of ministry policies, DEO handles complaints regarding all matters of sexual misconduct including harassment, bullying and assault, provides an anonymous advice line for service members and commanders, and directs the training and outreach activities of “Equity Advisors” throughout the forces. The director of the Defence Equity Organization, Ms. Bronwen Grey, occupied the analogous Directorship in Defence Headquarters until 1997.

According to Director Grey, all available formal and informal evidence regarding outcomes associated with the 1992 policy change suggests that, in spite of early fears of deleterious consequences, the lifting of the gay ban has had no adverse effects on the capability or functioning of the Defence Forces:

I have to say, from that point on [the 1992 change], nothing happened. I mean people were expecting the sky to fall, and it didn't. Now, a number of gay people probably didn't come out at that point, but we've had an X.O. of a ship come out and say to the ship's company, "I'm gay," and, quite frankly, no one cared (Grey 2000).

The Director bases her conclusion on her experiences at Defence Equity as well as her tenure as Director of Personnel Policy at Headquarters (HQADF) before the 1997 re-organization. While quantifiable data associated with sexual conduct or performance outcomes prior to 1997 are not available, Director Grey says that

[T]here was no increase in complaints about gay people or by gay people. There was no known increase in fights, on a ship, or in Army units or something...The recruitment figures didn't alter.... At that time, it didn't figure in recruitment. Commanders were really on the watch at the time because they were told that had to really make sure that this worked.... [They] were watching out for problems. They didn't identify any. Now that doesn't mean there weren't any, but they didn't identify any (Grey 2000).

When pushed by the interviewer to identify any problems that may have arisen after the ban was lifted, the Director did note that some gay people probably did not feel comfortable revealing their sexual orientation immediately after the change. Nonetheless, she says that a number of individuals have unambiguously come out to peers and commanding officers and that their revelations had no negative consequences for their careers or personal relationships. When asked to clearly specify any other concrete observations of what she termed a virtual “non event,” the Director added,

All I can say is, from the organizational point of view, while we were waiting for problems...we were ready. Nothing happened. There were no increased complaints or recruiting [problems] at all.... I mean nothing happened. And it's very hard to document nothing (Grey 2000).

While the ADF could not provide the authors of this study with quantifiable data on sexual misconduct that occurred during the first several years after the lifting of the ban, in 1997 Defence Equity began collecting aggregate data from its anonymous telephone “advice line” that concerned sexual misconduct and harassment. Table 1 summarizes the aggregate results and the specific instances related to homosexual conduct:

Table 1: Total and Sexual Orientation-Specific Instances Received Since Inception: Formal Complaints and Advice Line Calls Regarding Sexual Conduct

SOURCE	Total number	Number involving homo- sexuality	Percent involving homo-sexuality
Formal Complaints Received (March 1997-August 2000)	494	12	2.43%
Advice Line Phone Calls (September 1998-August 31, 2000)	1642	25	1.52%

According to Director Grey, these figures, while not providing a full portrait of possible problems relating to the service of open homosexuals, nonetheless suggest that “harassment regarding sexual orientation really isn’t significant in the ADF.” Reiterating the philosophy behind the ADF’s new position on sexual behavior enshrined in the 1992 lifting of the ban, she notes that the sexual behavior policy monitored and enforced by DEO is intended for all personnel, whether homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual: “It doesn’t matter what the sexual orientation is. The reason we have [these policies] is because unfit behavior diminishes capability. We’re focused on work output and the impact on capability.” Thus, the military’s efforts to collect information and enforce sexual conduct policies do not reflect a particular concern over possible problems relating to homosexual service, but rather a focus on maintaining an appropriate environment for maximum capability and work output. Commenting on the philosophy and approach behind the ADF’s position on this issue, the Director adds:

[O]ur focus is on the work people do, and the way they do the work, and that applies to heterosexuals, bisexuals, and homosexuals. We don’t ask people if they’re homosexual because we don’t care. It doesn’t play a part in promotion, it doesn’t play a part in training, it doesn’t play a part in postings. It simply isn’t an issue. Now that doesn’t mean that we don’t have some complaints, but basically it is a non-issue (Grey 2000).

Evidence from Other ADF Commanders and Personnel

For this study, senior military officials familiar with recruiting, training, deployment, and performance were contacted for their perspectives on the impact of the 1992 decision to lift the gay ban. In this section, we review evidence from in-depth interviews with two senior ADF officials: a one-star Naval Officer with extensive command experience who now serves as Director General of Career Management Policy; and the Senior Marketing Officer of the Defence Course Recruiting Organisation, who oversees a variety of recruitment-related outreach activities across the ADF.

At the request of the authors of this study, the ADF arranged for an interview with a senior warfare officer with substantial command experience and widespread familiarity with deployments for his perspectives on the performance outcomes associated with the 1992 lifting of the ban. At the time of the interview, Commodore R.W. Gates had been in the Royal Australian Navy for twenty-nine years, having commanded a number of frigates and served in policy positions in the personnel division at Defence Headquarters in Canberra. Recently, he was promoted to Commodore (one-star Naval Officer) in the Joint Personnel area in Career Management Policy. In his interview with the study authors, Commodore Gates offered extensive and frank observations based on his experiences.

Consistent with other evidence collected for this study, Commodore Gates described the early 1990s as a time when a pro-active liberal government as well as complaints surrounding the *HMAS Swan* incident led to widespread concerns about equity and harassment in the ADF. And, like other observers, the Commodore described mixed opinions and strong emotions within the Forces at the prospect of allowing homosexuals to serve openly: while nobody would deny that homosexuals existed in the ADF, whether they should “declare” their orientation was

another matter. When the policy did change, serious protests all-but-disappeared, and formerly closeted personnel stepped forward successfully and largely uneventfully. In his recounting of the experiences of several personnel who have come out without major problems, the

Commodore offered the following example:

I must admit, after it happened, it's been an absolute non-event. We've had some major cases of people declaring. Probably the most that I recall...would be one of our executive officers of a destroyer, the second-in-command. He declared. And, I'll be frank, it created a bit of a stir. We're talking about a mid-rank lieutenant commander in an absolute critical position on board a major warship – one heartbeat from command.... That person under the new policy was certainly not removed from the ship, and in fact completed his full posting (Gates 2000).

According to the Commodore, in this case the lieutenant commander approached the ship's captain to explain his decision and reasons for declaring that he was gay. The lieutenant commander explained that he wanted to uphold honesty and integrity and could not continue to “live a lie.” Upon hearing the news, both the captain and troops were generally supportive, continued to respect his position as second-in-command, and moved on with their missions. Since then, the lieutenant commander's career has continued successfully—he was promoted and is now serving in the RAN as a full commander.

The Commodore attributes the largely successful transition to a broader effort on the part of top officials in the Navy and the ADF to develop aggressive new training protocols to minimize harassment and maximize equality of opportunity. Like other experts interviewed for this study, he points to both external societal pressures as well as internal missteps within the ADF as motives for the change. In the Navy, efforts began shortly after the *HMAS Swan* incident with a program called “Good Working Relationships,” followed by the new defence instruction on sexual misconduct in 1992 which was promulgated via promotion courses offered throughout the chain of command.

When asked specifically if the policy change seemed to have any affect on recruiting or retention, the Commodore replied,

In my opinion, it had no effect. It got a little bit of press back in '92, it was a normal flutter. And then something else came along, and the press moved on to something else. There was no great peak in "wasting trade" as we call it where people walked out, and there was no great dip in recruiting. It really was a non-event. I want to stress there was a lot of work in making sure it was a non-event (Gates 2000).

While he had no recollection of any specific person refusing to join or leaving the service because of the change, the Commodore noted the possibility that one or two cases might exist where a heterosexual soldier was personally offended and chose to leave. Given that the ADF included 70,000 people at the time, he considers such numbers as "very, very minor."

The observations made by Commodore Gates are consistent with the views of the recruitment director interviewed for this study as well as other recruitment officers. Squadron Leader Chris Renshaw, Senior Marketing Officer for Defence Force Recruiting, has not observed any deleterious effects of the policy change on recruiting or retention. Renshaw says that recruiting and retention rates have decreased but that the lifting of the gay ban had nothing to do with the trends. Rather, he says that government-mandated reductions in the size of the ADF as well as competing opportunities in the civilian sector explain the change.³ Renshaw says that the policy change has allowed personnel to spend less time monitoring rumors and innuendo and to devote more time to the execution of their missions.⁴

C. Evidence from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Government Officials

³ Medical Corps Sergeant Scott McLennan, who also holds civilian qualifications equivalent to Major, supervises recruitment at a training center. He makes similar observations that the drop in recruitment during the 1990s had nothing to do with the change in policy.

⁴ Squadron Leader Renshaw was contacted originally for this study as an ADF official with expertise in recruitment. During the course of the interview, Mr. Renshaw also reflected on his experiences as an out gay service-member. Additional comments regarding his personal experiences are included in Section F.

The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission is a statutory body that enjoys a relatively autonomous status in Australian politics that is analogous to courts. The Commission's members are appointed by the government and it receives its budget through the normal budgetary process but it is not accountable to the federal government, the bureaucracy, or political parties. In this section, we review evidence from just-retired Human Rights Commissioner Chris Sidoti, who made gay and lesbian equality one of the priorities of his five-year tenure at the Human Rights Commission. Although Sidoti had little authority to force organizations to change their practices, he was responsible for investigating complaints and suggesting legislative reforms to minimize and eliminate discrimination in Australia. He told us that HREOC has devoted considerable effort to monitoring sexual orientation issues in the military.

Sidoti agrees with most of the observations of military and academic experts we contacted. He indicates that there have been virtually no significant effects of the policy change on the military. In his five years as Human Rights Commissioner, Sidoti estimates that his office investigated half a dozen complaints of discrimination based upon sexual orientation. He also indicates that harassment of homosexuals also seems largely non-existent, at least at the official level.

Sidoti notes that cases of harassment and discrimination involving gays and lesbians have tended to occur when heterosexual service members have abused homosexual service members. He is aware of only one or two such cases but he cautions that the problem may be more widespread than is officially known. And, he emphasizes that although soldiers are told that gays and lesbians are welcome, one would not want to be gay and in the military. He explains that although there has been no major public scandal regarding harassment of gays, this does not

mean that such behavior does not occur: “Whether it is widespread or not, I don’t know. In some sense, it may not be as widespread as harassment of women, because gays have always been [around] and the military knows it” (Sidoti 2000).

Sidoti believes that the lifting of the ban may have had positive implications for military effectiveness. Not only does the policy shift “improve the career prospects of gays,” but “It’s bad for morale to have your guys snooping on other of your guys” (Sidoti 2000). He concludes that the 1992 policy change is indicative of and contributes to broader social change. “The military is the last bastion of traditional male values. These developments contribute to broader social acceptance for all” (Sidoti 2000). However, Sidoti notes that there are areas of military personnel policy in which progress has not been made such as the recognition of partners and the extension of benefits.

D. Opinions and Observations of Academic, NGO, and Other Informed Observers

Academic Observers

For a number of reasons, few scholars have examined outcomes associated with the 1992 policy change in detail.⁵ Professor Hugh Smith, of the School of Politics of the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, remains the leading academic authority on matters relating to the policy change and military performance.⁶ In addition to interviewing Professor Smith, we also sought to contact other scholars at major Australian universities who maintain a professional interest in gender, the military, and sexuality. As a

⁵ Several respondents said that reason for the lack of scholarship in the area is that Australian academics who are concerned with issues of human rights and equity have focused on more pressing issues in recent years.

⁶ Professor Smith has been involved in examining the issue since before the ban was lifted, and was a consultant to the parliamentary committee that considered revising ADF policy in the early 1990s. He has published a number of articles relating to homosexuality in the ADF over the last decade (Smith 1992, Smith 1995, Smith 2000).

result, we identified and interviewed two additional academics who have conducted related research.

Based on his research and observations over the last eight years, Professor Smith believes that the lifting of the ban has not led to any significant effects on military performance, combat effectiveness, or unit cohesion. Like other respondents, he characterizes the outcome of the policy change as a virtual “non-issue,” with little remaining salience in government, media, or military circles. The lack of quantitative empirical data regarding the policy change constitutes, in his opinion, a form of evidence. In Professor Smith’s words, “This is not a subject that has troubled the Defence Force to the extent that they have felt that studies have needed to be done on it. The lack of evidence is evidence” (Smith 2000). He explains that when government ordered the military to lift the ban, some officers said: “Over my dead body, if this happens I’ll resign.” However, Smith says that there were no departures and that the change was accepted in “true military tradition”(Smith 2000).

When pushed by the interviewer to identify any possible negative outcomes associated with the lifting of the ban, Professor Smith acknowledged that there “may have been one or two resignations,” but that close government scrutiny of ADF policy implementation did not find any real effect on performance. While there have been occasional reports of coming-out incidents that may have made peers “a bit nervous,” Professor Smith does not believe that there have been any notable incidents of gay bashing or harassment (Smith 1995). To the degree that problems of sexual misconduct and harassment continue in the ADF, Professor Smith believes that they are mostly related to the treatment of women in the ranks and incidents of hazing (referred to as “bastardization”) in the Academy.

Professor Smith's views about the harassment of women are consistent with the findings of Dr. Katerina Agostino of the sociology department at Macquarie University in Sydney. Dr. Agostino, who has consulted with the ADF on sexual fraternization policy, argues that women who work in charged military environments such as ships often face cultural and institutional obstacles when their male peers equate heterosexual masculinity with effective military performance. Her research suggests that gay and lesbian personnel, like heterosexual women, may encounter difficulties when attempting to integrate fully into traditional military culture. However, her research also shows that women and gays can and do adopt a variety of strategies to negotiate these difficulties and integrate themselves into a changing environment that is, very slowly, becoming more egalitarian and less entrenched in masculinist beliefs (Agostino 1997, Agostino 1998a, Agostino 1998b, Agostino 2000). Nonetheless, instances of discrimination and harassment still occur, especially when individuals do not conform to traditional masculine stereotypes. In her interview with the authors of this study, Dr. Agostino was able to identify an example:

There is a senior naval officer that I know who's very good at what he does, but he's been unable to get promotion. It's quite clear from his reports that he is very good at what he does. He dyed his hair blond, but you can see his natural color at the roots. He dresses "gay" when off-duty.... He feels strongly that his opportunities have been curtailed since he's openly outed himself.... He was called up before his commanding officer, because the C.O. had heard through the rumor mill that his hair had been dyed pink. The C.O. saw it wasn't true. [The friend who is an officer] wasn't censured but he was certainly told off about it and told that he was being openly gay. He was also told there's nothing wrong with being gay, you just can't look so gay.

Like Professor Agostino, Dr. Jindy Pettman of the Australian National University observes that women and, quite possibly, gays, still face informal obstacles as they attempt to integrate into a traditionally masculine heterosexual military culture. Based on her research and observations, Dr. Pettman notes that the largest conflicts and challenges to the ADF in the early 1990s concerned gender equality; questions of sexual orientation were secondary. When the

possibility of lifting the gay ban was raised, military officials who were opposed to integrating women raised similar objections to the inclusion of gays and said that homosexuals would jeopardize unit cohesion, threaten the privacy of soldiers, and lead to performance problems. However, she says that after women were permitted to serve in most deployment environments and after the ban on gay and lesbian soldiers was lifted, the flurry of concern immediately died off and both issues fell from public attention. Dr. Pettman believes that this relatively uneventful adaptation, while not indicating the disappearance of all forms of discrimination, suggests that military culture is slowly becoming more inclusive (Pettman 2000).

Observations and Evidence Provided By Interest Groups, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Other Observers

For this study, all major interest groups, veterans associations, journalists, and non-governmental organizations that have been involved in public or policy discussions relating to outcomes of lifting of the ban and its consequences were contacted for their observations and any documented evidence they might possess. Interviews and supplemental documentation were obtained from five sources: the national president of the Returned and Services League of Australia, a major veterans group analogous to the American Legion; a well-known activist and co-convenor of the Australian Council for Lesbian and Gay Rights; a journalist who has written three major stories on gay/military issues in the last year; and a New Zealand-based consultant who is a specialist in gay/military integration issues and who has provided consulting services to the Australian Defence Forces. Additional resources were obtained from the International Lesbian and Gay Association and the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group.

Two of the individuals interviewed and their respective organizations have held divergent opinions regarding the lifting of the ban. The Returned and Services League (RSL) was an early

and active opponent of proposals to lift the ban, arguing that doing so would jeopardize morale, unit cohesion, performance, and decency in the Armed Forces and would hasten the spread of AIDS. Major General Peter Philips (ret'd), the current RSL president interviewed for this study, still opposes the participation of open homosexuals. Mr. Rodney Croome, on the other hand, was a vociferous gay rights activist who lobbied for the removal of the ban. Interestingly, however, Major General Philips' comments on outcomes associated with the lifting of the ban are more optimistic than those of Mr. Croome.

In a telephone interview with one of the study authors, RSL President Major General Philips reiterated the group's position and rationale behind opposing the removal of the ban. As summarized in the RSL's "Standing Policy of the RSL in Australia," the organization opposes open homosexual participation for four major reasons: (1) the presence of homosexuals will lower morale and military performance; (2) personnel will be at greater risk for contracting HIV; (3) homosexuals engage in predatory behavior; and (4) the military does not need to engage in social experimentation. However, when asked which of these or other problems relating to the lifting of the ban he or the organization believe have come to pass, he responded that, "It's [homosexuals serving openly] not been a significant public issue. The Defence Forces have not had a lot of difficulty in this area" (Philips 2000). When asked specifically by the interviewer whether he knows of any evidence that suggests that allowing homosexuals to serve might affect military performance, combat effectiveness, or unit cohesion, he replied,

We haven't fought in any wars since Vietnam, but we have been involved in some UN peacekeeping operations, most recently in East Timor. . . . If the issue had arisen, it would have in East Timor. I haven't heard of any gay issues in that (Philips 2000).

Major General Philips acknowledges that some gay personnel have come out to peers but disagreed with assertions made by some groups that there were significant numbers in combat units.

While he cannot identify any concrete data on the matter, Mr. Croome also believes that the lifting of the ban has not contributed to any negative performance consequences for the ADF as a whole. Generally, the change helped reduce the climate of fear and allowed some gay service members to come out to trusted colleagues. However, based on reports he has received, Mr. Croome also asserts that the change has been uneven: instances of discrimination and harassment have been reported, and entitlements for same-sex couples have yet to be granted. Regarding harassment issues, Croome states,

Of those that are about harassment, some have to do with people who are out, and some are from people who are not out but are being gossiped about or suspected of being gay. The harassment is just like any other sort of workplace harassment, but there are no policies to deal with it (Croome 2000).

In recent years, Mr. Croome has been one of the most active critics of the implementation of the new sexual conduct policy, arguing that the ADF's enforcement of the equal treatment laws is imperfect and incomplete.

Mr. Eugene Moore, Director of Full Spectrum Ltd., a New Zealand consulting firm that addresses sexual orientation issues in the workplace, has been working with the ADF Defence Equity Organization during the past year to provide training and educational briefings to staff and service chiefs on how to best manage concerns relating to sexual orientation. Like other observers, Mr. Moore notes the lack of concrete data on outcomes of the policy change. In his view, the absence of data suggests in part that the ADF did not aggressively follow through with implementation and enforcement in the first several years after the ban was lifted. Moore says that gay service members' unwillingness to reveal their sexual orientation during the first few

years after the ban was lifted may have contributed to perceptions that the policy change was a “non event.” Regarding military performance issues more directly, Moore does not believe that any significant problems have occurred even as more service personnel have come out to peers in recent years.

The experiences of a journalist who covered the issue of gays in the military during the past year provide more direct evidence regarding the welfare of combat units with actively serving self-identified gay personnel. Mr. David Mills has interviewed service members for several stories dealing with same-sex partner benefits and combat service in East Timor. For his investigation of East Timor, Mr. Mills spoke with gay soldiers who had served actively. He was aware of seven or eight active duty soldiers serving in East Timor who self-identify as gay, and he recalls speaking to an enlisted Army soldier who worked as a firefighter:

I spoke with a guy who is serving in the Army, a six-month stint in East Timor, speaking about his experiences. He was an interesting guy who said there is a lot less homophobia in the Armed Forces than you might think, although he was pretty selective about who he was open about his sexuality with.... He said he didn't have any problem with that [coming out] whatsoever, although there was an element of surprise when he told people” (Mills 2000).

4. Experiences in the Field: Out Personnel, Their Commanders and Peers

Drawn from the opinions and observations of ADF officials and other observers, the evidence presented above strongly suggests that military performance—including recruitment and retention, harassment and sexual misconduct, and unit cooperation—have not suffered as a result of the 1992 decision to allow homosexuals to serve openly. However, the experiences of self-disclosed homosexual personnel themselves may offer the most direct and revealing evidence over how the policy change has impacted unit performance. Using a snowball sampling technique based on initial contacts provided through a gay servicemembers’

organization, seven current and former out ADF members were contacted and interviewed for this study. They include six actively serving members of the three main service branches – Army, Navy, and Air Force — at the ranks of Squadron Leader, Captain, and Flight Sergeant. An additional former enlisted ADF member who self-identifies as gay and who maintains active contact with currently-serving homosexual personnel was also interviewed. Their experiences, while representative of varying ranks, times, and service branches, can nonetheless be characterized by a number of shared qualities.

1. Self-identified gays and lesbians currently serve as enlisted personnel and officers in a range of positions in all of the major service branches of the ADF.

The snowball sample of respondents described here is small and possibly unrepresentative of the larger population of out gay servicemembers in the ADF. Nonetheless, the diversity of backgrounds and positions of the respondents, coupled with their frequent references to out peers in other units or services, suggest that out gay servicemembers are found at all levels and in all branches of the ADF.

Furthermore, most of our respondents have actively served in both troop deployments and managerial/administrative positions during their careers. One respondent, Squadron Leader Michael Seah, and colleagues of several others, actively served in what is widely considered to be Australia's most "combat-like" and successful deployment in recent years — The United Nations's peacekeeping operation in East Timor. As Medical Corps Sergeant Scott McLennan, who served in a peacekeeping exercise in Bougainville, New Guinea, comments,

Looking at the current operation in East Timor, I've got a number of gay and lesbian friends in an operational situation. I have served in Bougainville, and there is no problem. We all get work professionally, and it's our jobs that come first. You don't look at it from a gay or lesbian point of view, you don't look at it from a straight point of view. You're there to do a job, and you work together to ensure that the job gets done (McLennan 2000).

2. *Currently serving self-identified gay and lesbian service members have experienced largely uneventful coming-out processes and describe professional, friendly, and cooperative relationships with their peers and commanders.*

All of the self-identified gay and lesbian active personnel we spoke with describe their experiences of coming out as largely positive and uneventful. While some describe initial uneven reactions among their colleagues and commanders—ranging from warm acceptance to puzzlement to unease—over time all of our respondents experienced a transition to full acceptance. As one respondent who served in East Timor put it:

From the discrimination point of view, I haven't faced any overt discrimination. Most people I've come across...have been very supportive, certainly haven't treated me any differently. I've found it quite refreshing (Seah 2000).

A lesbian Squadron Leader in the Air Force assessed her situation similarly:

People, when they do find you're gay,...some might be a little bit weary, but...it very soon disappears, because what you're judged on is your professionalism and your ability. Who according to your sexual orientation you find attractive is not an issue (Renshaw 2000).

All of the respondents explain acceptance by their peers as a reflection of a shared respect for professional competence and capability: in the end, one's peers and colleagues come to recognize that one's sexual orientation has nothing to do with the ability to do one's job.

I've had nothing but support. It's an initial thing, but then they work with it, and they see you in an operational point of view, and they see your skill level, and they have no issue. If they cannot fault you professionally, they will not look for faults with you personally (McLennan 2000).

The fact that these people were there had no effect whatsoever on the effectiveness of the units, unit cohesion or morale. People are accepted for who they are and, as long as they can do the job, who cares. That's pretty much the view of most, I would say, in defence, here in Australia. As long as you are capable of doing your job, they don't care what you're doing in your spare time (Stuht 2000).

Once a gay soldier is out to his or her peers, his or her sexuality usually becomes largely irrelevant to professional identity. Perhaps the single most common way respondents describe their sexuality on the job is as a “non-issue.” As Army Captain Renshaw paraphrases it, “No one

gives a damn, no one worries about it. Totally a non-issue...Here people just don't care" (Renshaw 2000).

To the degree that evidence of their sexual orientation becomes a point of discussion, respondents described a number of ways in which the new policy has allowed their identity to be normalized as simply one aspect of their lives. A welcoming and open environment allows gay soldiers to spend less time monitoring their comments and more time focusing on their work:

Well, you can be more honest. That's one of the key things about being in the military — honesty and integrity. Because you haven't got to worry about if someone's saying something behind your back, or is someone gossiping or something, because if they gossip, I don't care. So I'm more focused on my job, I'm more focused on what I'm achieving here, and less worried about the [stories] and what people think. In terms of productivity, I'm far more productive now. Things like when you come into work and people say, what did you do over the weekend. Oh, what was her name... all that stuff disappears. What did you do over the weekend. Everything's out in the open, no fear, no nothing, no potential of blackmail, no security implications...nothing (Renshaw 2000).

The majority of respondents also report that the newfound honesty they are permitted allows for more frank and sometimes even playful exchanges when uncomfortable situations do arise:

I took my ex-partner to the work Christmas party...I did the courtesy of telling my boss beforehand that I was going to do it. And, he just looked at me with a bit of a pained expression and said, "I expect you to behave." And I just sort of looked at him and said, "Look, knowing the other people that work on this floor and how they behave with booze, you're worried about me." Point taken.... (Renshaw 2000).

I'm quite open about my sexuality. Sometimes the boys decide to give me a bit of a ding-up with a joke or something like that, but that doesn't bother me. We work really well together, and I'm sure it's the same for other gay and lesbian soldiers and sailors who are out, and they're accepted by their peers. O.K. — they're the object of ridicule sometimes, but everybody is (Stuht 2000).

Other respondents also describe examples in which their orientation becomes integrated as one aspect of who they are, taken no more or less seriously than any other aspect of their lives.

3. While the ADF has succeeded in introducing new directives extending equal treatment to gay and lesbian soldiers, most self-identified personnel are aware of individual incidents of possible discrimination or harassment at the unit level.

While all out personnel we spoke with described their work environments as generally untroubled and productive, most were aware of scattered instances of anti-gay discrimination or harassment suffered by others since the new policy was introduced. Most of these incidents relate to isolated remarks made by individual peers, but there have been occasional references to alleged inappropriate conduct by commanders or officers. Perhaps the most dramatic example is the case of suspected promotion bias offered by Dr. Agostino (see section D, above). A second case is described by RAAF Flight Sergeant Livingstone, who recalls attending a training session where an Army warrant officer defended a homophobic response to a hypothetical scenario by claiming that the Army “did not care” about the changed policy on gay service (Livingstone 2000). Livingstone did not attribute an exact date to the event, but the comments were made in the mid-1990s. Other sources familiar with Army life acknowledge some individual instances of early resistance to the policy change but do not believe they are representative of a systematic pattern.

Generally, respondents report that incidents of discrimination or harassment brought to the attention of commanders are handled appropriately. Several respondents identified incidents in which peers who had made inappropriate remarks were disciplined by superiors promptly and without reservation. Based on the experiences of peers in a variety of units, several personnel we spoke with believed that most of the unevenness in treatment could be ascribed to the differences in particular work environments. As a former ADF service member familiar with the experiences of a number of gay soldiers remarks, “It is totally determined on the work environment of the individual. We’ve got some senior officers who are great—they deal with and address their [gay service members’] problems or whatever, and always work to offer help.” (Edwards 2000).

4. Gay personnel who were in the forces when the ban was lifted, or know of others who were, describe substantial, sustained changes in formal and informal understandings and procedures conducive to better work environments.

All of the respondents who were familiar with life in the ranks for homosexuals before the ban was lifted concur that working environments have improved markedly in the last eight years. While many of these improvements came as a direct consequence of formal implementations of the Defence Instruction issued in 1992 on sexual misconduct, others are seen as reflective of subtle but still important changes in military culture. Respondents concur with other observers interviewed for this study in describing an operating environment that now takes equality of opportunity and treatment quite seriously — for women, for ethnic minorities, and for homosexuals. While pockets of discrimination and unequal treatment still exist, most respondents feel that the ADF has come to embody the same commitment to human rights, equality of opportunity, and diversity (what the ADF calls “Equity”) that now characterize Australian civil society as a whole.

The current situation stands in sharp contrast to the atmosphere of fear, uncertainty, and betrayal that characterized military life for many personnel suspected of being homosexual prior to 1992. Squadron Leader Renshaw and others who joined the ADF before the ban was lifted identify a number of painful personal and professional consequences of being closeted — to oneself and to others — in order to safeguard careers. Seaman Colin Edwards, who was forced to leave the Royal Australian Navy in 1981 after voluntarily disclosing his homosexuality, recalls investigations designed to compel his friends to identify other homosexuals. One colleague, a heterosexual, committed suicide shortly after being investigated for his association with Seaman Edwards (Edwards 2000).

5. *Although gay personnel are generally satisfied with the new policy, they feel frustrated and marginalized by the failure of the ADF to extend equal treatment and benefits to same-sex partners.*

During their interviews, most out gay personnel spontaneously raised the topic of current debates over extending benefits to same-sex partners. Like other observers we contacted, gay soldiers interviewed for this study were largely untroubled by original concerns over morale, unit cohesion, and retention that surrounded the 1992 decision to lift the ban. Rather, they are focused on pressuring the ADF to fulfill what they believe to be legally binding obligations to extend equal treatment to same-sex domestic partners under Australian law. In fact, when asked to speculate on how the lifting of the ban may have affected the well-being of the Australian Forces, most respondents first focused on their frustrations over same-sex partner issues. Tellingly, these reactions suggest that most out gay soldiers, like the ADF and Australian society more generally, find the question of whether allowing gays to serve has reduced the performance capabilities of the Armed Forces almost impossible to fathom. They have instead moved on to other, more germane concerns.

5. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Systematic evidence concerning the lifting of the Australian ban on gays and lesbians in the military is scarce. This report attempts to redress the gap by drawing together and comparing the findings and observations of informed observers from a variety of vantage points in the policy domain. Certainly, any one piece of evidence by itself cannot stand as a comprehensive appraisal of outcomes associated with the change. Nonetheless, taken together, the data presented in this report make a convincing and credible case that, notwithstanding uneven and partial implementation of the policy, the 1992 inclusion of self-described gay and lesbian

soldiers into the Australian Defence Forces has not led to any perceptible decline in operational effectiveness, morale, unit cohesion, retention, or attrition. In fact, ADF officials and a number of other observers, including commanders and soldiers, believe that changes associated with the policy have contributed to a working environment that is freer from the burdensome and unproductive consequences of mistrust, misunderstanding, and misjudgment that at times compromised the integrity of units in the past. As part of a broader commitment to equity in the ADF, then, the policy change has been a success.

While the general consensus in the findings above is clear, a close look at the evidence also reveals a number of concerns. Isolated instances of discrimination and harassment still exist, and some service branches may be less proactive in their policies than others. These difficulties may be even more pervasive among the ranks of heterosexual women, who experience higher rates of harassment than gay males. From the perspective of gay and lesbian soldiers and their allies, the failure of the ADF to extend benefits that are accorded to heterosexual spouses to same-sex partners stands as a reminder of a partially-fulfilled mission. At the same time, however, the fact that the debate over gays in the military has shifted away from the question of whether homosexual soldiers undermine military performance also stands as a testament to the success of the inclusive policy.

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