

**DEOMI review and recommendations based on readily available Australian Defense Force experiences with the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”**

*The effects of including gay and lesbian soldiers in the Australian Defense Forces*

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**Background:**

In 1992, the ban on homosexuals serving in the Australian Defense Forces (ADF) was lifted; however, this decision was met with strong opposition from service members and ADF service chiefs. In addition to spreading AIDS and encouraging predatory behavior, it was suggested that the lifting of the ban would jeopardize recruitment, mission effectiveness, and group cohesion.

**Effect of Lifting the Ban:**

It has been concluded 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 any other measures of military performance” (Belkin & McNichol, 2000, p. 2). On the other hand, the lifting of the ban may be attributed to an increase in work productivity and the overall working environment of the services. Within the ADF, senior officials, commanders, and military scholars view the lifting of the ban as a successful policy change that contributed to effectual working relationships and greater equality. While there has been no pattern of disruptive behavior identified, when individuals report disruptions due to the lifting of the ban, these have been resolved through the normal management procedures.

The ADF did not see a significant increase in the coming-out of officers and enlisted personnel in the years immediately following the lifting of the ban. It was not until the late 1990s that a significant number of officers and enlisted personnel came out to their colleagues. Self-identified homosexual soldiers, officers, and commanders report good working relationships and environments, even during their deployments in East Timor. Of all formal complaints received by the ADF regarding sexual harassment, bullying, and other sexual misconduct, less than 3% of the complaints involve sexual orientation. Further, less than 2% of all calls received on the Advice Line (intended to help commanders with potential misconduct issues) are regarding issues concerning sexual orientation. Most observers view problems associated with female soldiers to be more serious than problems faced by gay service members. In fact, most view the participation of gay service members in the military as a non-issue.

A current debate now facing Australia is whether to extend equal benefits to partners of homosexual service members.

**Reference:**

Belkin, A., & McNichol, J. (2000). The effects of including gay and lesbian soldiers in the Australian Defense Forces: Appraising the Evidence. Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military. Retrieved from [http://www.palmcenter.org/publications/dadt/the\\_effects\\_of\\_including\\_gay\\_and\\_lesbian\\_soldiers\\_in\\_the\\_australian\\_defence\\_forces\\_appraising\\_the\\_evidence](http://www.palmcenter.org/publications/dadt/the_effects_of_including_gay_and_lesbian_soldiers_in_the_australian_defence_forces_appraising_the_evidence).