

Activity 1

Responding to images

Look at these three images of women in the Australian services.

- Q. 1** *What differences in women's military service over time do the three pictures suggest?*
- Q. 2** *How might the Defence Force have been influenced by the changing roles of women?*
- Q. 3** *How might women's place in Australian society have been affected by their changing military roles?*

The implication in the most recent image is that women are operating in full equality with men in Defence. How true is this? This article will help you to investigate this question.



**Women in the
Australian Defence Force**
**Do they have
an equal role to men?**



Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Activity 1—Responding to images

Page 1 of 15

Activity 2

Identifying change over time

To understand the changing nature and role of women in the Australian Defence Forces it helps to have an understanding of the historical development of their participation.

Look at the following information and answer the questions that follow.

1901



In 1901 Australian troops were at war, in South Africa. With them were 60 Australian women—all of them nurses. They went to South Africa expecting to nurse the wounded, but usually the reality was different. Their main role was to nurse the ill, reflecting the nature of the warfare—disease as a result of unsanitary conditions caused two thirds of all deaths during the campaign.

Many of the returned nurses joined the new reserve nursing force set up after the Boer War, and set its professional tone. Their experience in South Africa had also helped to dispel doubts about the value of women

nurses in war theatres, and when world war broke out in 1914 many Boer War nursing veterans donned the scarlet and grey again to serve their country, and their fellow Australians.

World War 1 1914—1918

The range of areas of service available to women during World War 1 was greater than in the Boer War, but still limited. Australian women again served mainly as service nurses, though there were

Women in the Australian Defence Force Do they have an equal role to men?

also a number of masseuses, and many Voluntary Aid Detachment nursing aides in Australia and in Britain. At least 14 Australian female doctors paid their own way to England and worked with British Army medical units.

The nurses served in permanent or semi-permanent hospitals, hospital ships, casualty clearing stations, and temporary field hospitals. They served in England, France, Egypt, Italy, India, Salonika, Lemnos, Belgium, New Guinea, Palestine, Russia, Mesopotamia, Malta, and Greece.

They had to confront and deal with the full horror of war—the effects of mustard gas, bullets, fragments of shell, bayonets, clubs, burns, fractures, illness, mental shock, gangrene, and frostbite.

Australian servicewomen and World War 1—Statistics

- 2692 women served as Australian service nurses during the war
- 2139 of them served in the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) overseas
- 29 died on active service, mostly of disease
- 7 Military Medals were awarded for bravery in the field.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

World War 2 1939—1945

The range of service available to women during World War 2 expanded greatly.

Australian servicewomen and World War 2—Statistics

- Navy—45 800 men served in the RAN and 3100 women in the WRANS.
- Army—691 400 men served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF)/Australian Military Force (AMF) during the war and 24 000 women served in AWAS.
- Air Force—189 700 men in RAAF and 27 200 women in the WAAAF.

Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS)

Initially the first and only role for women in the war was as nurses. Service could be with the Army (Australian Army Nursing Service or AANS), the Navy (Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service or RANNS) or Air Force (Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service or RAAFNS), though by far the greatest number were in the AANS. Nearly three and a half thousand women served in the AANS between 1939 and 1945, 616 in the RAAFNS, and about 60 with the RANNS.

Their experiences included combat conditions, evacuation under fire, captivity, air and torpedo attacks on their ships, sinking, and massacres, as well as the more normal routines within secure field and permanent hospitals. As with the previous generation of war nurses, they dealt with the physical and mental impacts of battle casualties, as well as illness and disease.

For most of the war they were the only female service personnel to serve outside Australian territory.

Fifty-three nurses died as a result of enemy action during the war—41 of these during the fall of Singapore or their imprisonment afterwards—and a further 18 as a result of sickness or accidents.

Fifty-five received decorations for bravery, and 82 were mentioned in despatches for the way they conducted their duties.

Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS)

A number of women also served as nursing aides, in the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS). This organisation had its origin in the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD), raised from Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade volunteers.

In 1940 the voluntary system was ended, and the women became paid professionals.

In 1941, two hundred nurses were sent to support troops in the Middle East, and later to hospitals in New Guinea, Bougainville, Borneo, and Morotai.

At war's end many helped the recovering Prisoners of War, and some were sent to Japan with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF).

The AAMWS was disbanded in 1951, becoming part of the new Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC).

Auxiliary services

During the war a number of women's 'Auxiliary services' were formed. This term meant that they were not part of the existing Navy, Army or Air Force units, but were additional or supplementary to them.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF)



This body was formed in March 1941 to replace male wireless telegraphy operators to release them for service overseas.

Later, while not all Air Force jobs (or 'musterings') were open to women—for example women could not actually fly aeroplanes in combat—most were. Many WAAAF members were engaged in skilled technical work—communications, signals, mechanics—though most worked in traditional female roles: cooks and mess stewardesses. Yet while women were called on to do the men's jobs, they would only be paid about two thirds of the men's wages.

The WAAAF reached its peak of membership in October 1944, at over 18 000, serving in about 200 stations throughout Australia. About one third of the total Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) ground staff were women.

Uniquely among the auxiliary services, WAAAFs paraded with the RAAF men.

The WAAAF was disbanded in December 1947. Although admitting that women were better than men in some duties, it was argued that they:

- caused problems with administration, training and accommodation
- were 'uneconomical' because too many left to get married
- were limited in their employment overseas by 'climatic factors' and unsatisfactory amenities and
- could not complete the full range of military tasks, such as guard and defence base duties.

It was also thought that men might resent being commanded by women.

Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS)



The AWAS was formed in October 1941 'to release men from certain military duties for employment in fighting units.' Members had to be between 18 and 45 years, and single. Members served all over Australia, often in remote areas. The numbers in the service peaked in 1944, at more than 18 000 members.

They served as mechanics, drivers, cooks, telecommunications officers, typists, and dozens of other occupations. Many were attached to Royal Australian Artillery fixed defence positions—in charge of the radar and

searchlights attached to anti-aircraft gun positions.

The AWAS was the only non-medical women's service to send personnel overseas during the war, when a few women were posted to Lae, Hollandia and Rabaul near the end of the war.

By 30 June 1947 all had been demobilised.

Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS)

This service was formed in April 1941.

Many members were technical specialists (often involved in top secret work), but most occupied traditional jobs—as typists, clerks, stewards, cooks, and orderlies.

There were never more than 3000 enlisted at any one time during the course of the war.

The WRANS was disbanded in 1946.

Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA)

This body was established in July 1942 to provide labourers on farms. Members enrolled full-time (for 12 months or the duration) or as auxiliaries (available for short periods at various peak times of the

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Activity 2 continued

year). The peak number of enrolments was in October 1944—with 3068 labourers.

Many women found themselves carrying out work which they had never contemplated before, and which was very useful to the war effort.

It should be noted, however, that many women traditionally worked on their family farms, and there were probably far more women working in this way who have received no recognition for their efforts.

Korean War 1950—1953

The Korean War led to the re-instatement of women's services, once again mainly to free men for active service, but now as a part of the regular forces, and not as 'auxiliary' units.

The Air Force quickly discovered that it needed women, after disbanding the WAAAF in 1947. By 1949 a plan was developed to reintroduce women to specific skilled musterings (jobs), and this was implemented in 1951, with the creation of the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF).

Enlistments for the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) began in early 1951. Women were taken on for short terms (four years) which limited promotion prospects, had to be single, received two thirds the pay, and were to be discharged on marriage (a common policy for all public servants). They were ineligible for service in combat areas, were not to be placed in situations where they commanded male soldiers, but were to be saluted by males.

The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) was reinstated in 1951, but numbers were kept low – and the two thirds pay, the limited range of tasks available, the restricted geographical area in which they could operate, and the requirement that women be single (until 1968), all made the service less than attractive to most women.

Vietnam War 1962—1972

While women were now considered a full part of the services, no women were sent to Vietnam in combat or combat support roles other than in a medical role—the traditional nursing role, supplemented now by a number of women doctors.

The Government also sent a number of women entertainers, and there were official female journalists. There were also a number of women who were in Vietnam in a private role—with churches, Red Cross, civilian medical officers, entertainers and journalists.

Q. 4 *Describe the changing roles of women in the Australian Defence Force between 1901 and 1972.*

Q. 5 *Why has war been so important a force in changing the roles of women in society?*

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Creating and testing hypotheses

One of the key features in Australian society is a belief in and commitment to equity. Is there equity for women in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) today?

Q. 6 *How would you test whether gender equity existed in the ADF today? List some criteria that you could apply. For example, you might decide that equity exists only when numbers of men and women are equal; or when pay is equal; or when women have proportional numbers in different ranks; and so on. Discuss your suggested criteria with your class mates.*

Now look at the following evidence, and apply your criteria to determine whether you believe gender equity exists in the ADF.

Evidence A—The role of women in the ADF today

Royal Australian Navy (RAN)

In 1975 (International Women's Year) the Government ordered the Navy to investigate ways of increasing opportunities for women. A report recommended that women should be able to serve on active service at home or abroad, but not in a combat role. This exclusion effectively kept women from sea-going duties, but also opened up a far greater range of occupations than before.

In 1984 the passing of the Sexual Discrimination Act created near equality in employment opportunities and conditions for women sailors, and in that year the WRANS as a separate service ceased to exist – all were now part of the RAN. Several ships were nominated as non-combatant warships, and for the first time women took to the sea.



By 1998 women made up 15 per cent of the RAN and 30 per cent of recruits.

Women are now restricted only from the Clearance Diver category. In 1991 the Westralia, with seven women sailors aboard, took its place in the Gulf War fleet.

The first woman to command a ship, Lieutenant (later Lieutenant-Commander) Jennifer Daetz, took charge of the survey vessel Shepparton (II) in October 1997. In May 1999 twelve women officers joined submarines Collins and Farncomb.

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)

In 1977 the WRAAF and the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) were integrated into the RAAF—men and women were now in the same air force, with the same ranks, same duties, and same pay.

The first female air force pilot, Flight Lieutenant Robyn Williams, graduated in 1988. Today, 97 per cent of air force jobs are open to women—the only exception is the Airfield Defence Guard.

The ratio of women to men has risen from 5 per cent in 1976 to 13 per cent in 2000. Today 22 per cent of Air Force cadets at the Australian Defence Force Academy are women.

Australian Regular Army (ARA)

In 1978 equal pay was instituted, and more positions made available. The WRAAC ceased to exist as a separate corps in 1984, when women became a fully integrated part of the Australian Army.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Activity 3 continued

In 1988 the RAANC was made an officers only corps, with other ranks allocated to the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC). RAANC personnel had to carry arms on parade, and to carry a personal weapon while in the field.

Women in the Army can now serve in all occupations with the exception only of a few front line roles.

Evidence B—The numbers of women in the ADF at 30 June 2001

Category	Navy		Army		Air Force	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Trained Force (Officers)	1935 (At sea 450)	408 (At sea 100)	3758	576	2875	495
Training Force (Officers)	249	66	521	122	372	59
Trained Force (Other Ranks)	7435 (At sea 3000)	1187 (At sea 400)	15808	1704	7225	1347
Training Force (Other Ranks)	744	239	1749	122	704	63
Totals	10363	1900	21836	2524	11176	1964

Evidence C—Extract from an interview with Air Commodore Julie Hammer



Equity in the ADF does not necessarily mean equality in numbers. There are many areas still in the Australian workforce where women's representation is comparatively small. In the engineering profession for example, women comprise only 6% of the

workforce. On such matters, the Australian Defence Force tends to be a reflection of what we see in Australian society.

However, what we do expect is that women are treated fully equally to men in positions where they are doing the same job—that means in pay, in conditions, in development and training, and in promotion opportunities.

That is certainly the case in the ADF today.

The ADF has a positive culture of equality, a zero tolerance level for discrimination and harassment, and mechanisms for any complaints to be fully investigated and resolved if found to be justified.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Evidence D—Extracts from an interview with a Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) scientist



Hi, I'm Dr Pina Dall'Armi-Stoks, and I'm a research scientist with the (DSTO) Defence Science and Technology Organisation. We are not soldiers but are scientists and part of Defence. Many people do not realise that we have a large scientific research and development organisation within Defence, and that many of the organisation's scientists are women.

Women scientists work in a variety of fields—such as physics, chemistry, biology, engineering and psychology. Many of us have come from private industry, and appreciate the excellent atmosphere and working conditions we have here. As well as working on projects, many women scientists are project leaders, responsible for the efficient and effective working of research teams. There are many pathways to get into DSTO. Most people are selected through job advertisements, but we also take on university undergraduates for 12-week vacation employment blocks, and supervise projects for many final year engineering and science students. You certainly do not have to be a PhD to work here, and we have many scientists whose work leads to further qualifications. The work is tremendously rewarding. I love the challenges of the tasks. At the moment I am part of a team working on an Electronic Warfare project, computer wargaming the impact of electronic

systems on land operations. This involves developing computer algorithms for a variety of electronic systems and then, by using computer wargaming, examining the impact that these systems will have on the battlefield commander in order to help him or her make the right command decisions. It's very exciting 'cutting edge' work, and the thrill of achievement is what keeps us all going. If you are interested in a career in science, I would have to say that the DSTO is an area that you should really consider.

Evidence E—Interviews with some current serving personnel

Navy



➤ I'm Jasmine Angus, and I am a combat systems operator aboard an ANZAC Class ship.

That means I might be looking at surface contacts, and communicating the overall picture; or I might be involved in air contact, telling the friendlies from the hostiles; or I might be in the electronic warfare area,

picking up emissions to identify friend and foe.

I guess you can say we are the eyes and ears of the ship. We know everything and see everything. It's very satisfying to know you are looking after your mates who are doing their jobs as well.

I joined the Navy because I love Australia, more than anything in the world. I think it's fantastic and makes me so proud to be able to get on a warship and defend it for all its worth.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?



➤ I'm Emily Ruffin, and I'm an electronics technician. Electronics technicians work on a variety of electronic systems including the ships weapons systems (missiles). I specialise with communications gear, radar, navigation aids, GPS, wind speed direction indicators, the gyros—they tell us where the ship is, when, and how to get back home—the lot. It's a

great job, and I love it. It's sometimes hard work, but the ship relies on these systems, and when they're working well, I know I have done my job well.



➤ Hello, I'm Cate Leggett. I am the Principal Warfare Officer.

That means I am in charge of the Operations area. I train my team to get the required standard to conduct an operation in combat.

It's a great feeling to see the team fire their weapons, and achieve their mission, and do the job they have been trained for.



➤ Hi, my name is Cheryl Picot, and I am a marine technician.

My main job is being part of the engineering team which looks after the mechanical aspects of the vessel. I look after the turbines and engines on the ship. The role is to find any faults and fix them.

My other role is being part of a boarding party which boards other vessels. Once aboard I am part of a bridge security team—that means I have to protect others in the boarding party and make sure anybody on the boarded boat does not try to harm us. If required I also look after the mechanical side of the boarded vessel if we have to commandeer it.

I love the teamwork associated with all this. You make real mates, who are really supportive and close.



➤ I'm Carol McQueen, a communications information systems sailor.

My job is to receive broadcast traffic, and get messages to and from the ship. I'm the ship's link to the world.

I also communicate with flags and flashing lights where there is visual contact possible.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Army



➤ My name is Naomi Warncken, and I am an administrative clerk.

I am the main point of contact for personnel with administrative needs or problems. You have to really be able to think on your feet, and keep good interaction with people.

There is a tremendous variety of things I do. I spend some time in a

base office, but also go out into the field. As well as doing my clerical job I do normal infantry training to develop skills, fitness and such.



➤ My name is Ursula Edwards, and I am a medic.

People come to see me with whatever injury or sickness they might have. If it's something readily able to be treated, I will do that. If it's something serious, I will organise for them to see a doctor.

It's a challenge having to deal with an ever-changing variety of problems, and I get great satisfaction from the gratitude of people you can help.

The highlight in my career so far has been my six-month service in East Timor. To be able to bring help to people who had very little was very rewarding.



➤ I'm Leah Hoisler, and I drive trucks. I drive all sorts, right up to the big Macs with a 20-tonne trailer.

I love the outdoors, and love driving. From Darwin I've had drives to Queensland, and once even to Western Australia.

I'm not a typical image of a truckie—I'm fairly small in build. Once I was

taking a Mac hauling a 20-tonne trailer with two Armoured Personnel Carriers aboard, and another truckie wanted to know who the 'little girl' was driving the army vehicle. Well, it was me!



➤ Hi, I'm Gayle Walkom. I'm an electronics technician.

That means I look after the repair of communications equipment. I install radio communications equipment in all sorts of vehicles, and make sure that the equipment is working well.

I started by doing an apprenticeship in the Army at Albury Wodonga with on-job

training at a unit then after I completed this I was posted to a unit.

Each day is different. I might be setting up a phone link, fixing a radio, or in an Armoured Personnel Carrier installing the radio. No two days are the same.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Air Force



➤ Hello, I'm Elizabeth Pataky. I'm an air movement and logistical officer. I co-ordinate the management of a load team—that means everything from cargo to passengers. The job is a challenge and I love it, but the best element is the friendships that I've made. It's so rewarding to be part of a team, working together and getting the job done.



➤ My name is Kate Ramsbotham, and I am an Airborne Electronics Analyst. My job involves flying above the nation's coastline in a P3C Orion, using sophisticated electronics equipment to make crucial decisions during surveillance missions. I take surveillance photographs and collect, analyse and distribute information during flights, as

well as being involved in search and rescue operations. To do this, I work with a complex suite of sensors including radar, the Infrared Detection System, a Magnetic Anomaly Detector, the Identification Friend or Foe system and acoustic sensors.

It is a far cry from my first job as a bank employee!

I first decided to join the Air Force in 1986. I didn't really know what jobs there were in the Air Force, I just wanted to be around aircraft. I became an aircraft technician, then left the Air Force to spend more time with my young family and then after a three-year break joined the Air Force Reserves for six years. In 2000, I returned to full-time work in this job.



➤ My name is Tania Horton, and I'm a crew attendant. This makes me responsible for the comfort and well-being of the passengers and crew. I think this job is the best-kept secret in the Air Force! One day you can be looking after the Queen or the Prime Minister on a flight, and the next carrying troops to England or the USA.

I've been to many countries, and spent weeks travelling all over. It's awesome!

Q. 7 From these interviews and the other evidence in this unit, what can you say about women in the ADF and:

- the variety of jobs available
- the qualifications and training required
- the experiences and rewards available
- the interviewees' attitudes to their experience
- the interviewees' satisfaction with their jobs and workplace?

Q. 8 To what extent do you now think there is gender equity in the ADF in:

- occupations available
- training
- conditions of service
- promotion?

If you have access to the web, you can get more information to help you answer these questions. Just go to the Defence Careers website www.defencejobs.gov.au.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Analysing representations

Q. 9 Here are some recent images showing women in the ADF. From the information you have gathered in this article, to what extent do you think they are a fair representation of women's role and participation in the ADF today?

Women in the Australian Defence Force
Do they have an equal role to men?



Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Activity 5

Deciding on the future

In 1999 the reality of the place of Australian servicewomen was dramatically illustrated by images on television and in newspapers of armed women troops as part of the INTERFET Peacekeeping force in East Timor.

Women are now almost fully integrated into the Australian services. Australian service personnel, men and women, can increasingly be expected to take on the role of peacekeepers as the Australian Government commits forces to such operations, and as women increasingly make up a greater percentage of the total armed forces. In doing so, both men and women perform most specialised roles as drivers, engineers, cooks, pilots, radar operators, etc.

However, women are presently excluded from serving with Navy Clearance Diving teams, Air Force Ground Defence units, and Army Combat units—including Infantry, Armour, Artillery and Combat Engineers.

Only a few nations allow women in some combat roles. Some of them are: USA, China, Canada, Holland, Iraq, Iran, Norway, and Israel. The sociological, religious and political reasons that account for this are mixed.

In 2001 an internal Defence Force report recommended that women be admitted to combat roles if they met the same capability standards required of men. The proposal has created much heated discussion.

Organise a Debate

Topic: That Australian service women should have the same front line combat roles as men.

On the following page are a number of headings that you could organise your ideas under. You will need to research some of these to create coherent arguments. The comments in the table opposite the headings are typical examples of the sorts of comments that you



might come across in your research. These comments are not necessarily true statements, but may just be people's opinions. You will need to decide from your own research whether you agree with them or not. It will help your research if you can put different sorts of comments into different categories, using the suggested headings.

See if you can match each of these comments to a heading. For example, comment 1 would be an example of heading C.

Here are two useful pieces of evidence to help your research.

Women in Combat survey:

Are you in favour or against women being allowed to serve in combat roles in the Australian Army?

Attitude	Total (%)	Sex (%)		Age (%)		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50+
Strongly in favour	34	33	35	43	39	24
Partly in favour	29	28	30	38	29	20
Total in favour	63	61	65	81	68	44
Partly against	11	10	12	6	12	15
Strongly against	20	23	17	8	15	35
Total against	31	33	29	14	27	50
Uncommitted	6	6	6	5	5	6

(Newspoll survey *The Weekend Australian*, June 9-10 2001)

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Headings

A Cultural	Does the Australian community want this?
B Equity	Will this make women truly equal to men in pay and promotion possibilities?
C Hygiene	Are there special problems with feminine hygiene in the field?
D Increased danger	Will women face greater dangers and be more likely to be captured, raped, tortured?
E Mission efficiency	Will men be over-protective towards women and sacrifice the mission to protect/save the women members?
F Morale	Will mixed gender units perform efficiently, or will there be personal rivalries as a result of relationships?
G Physical	Do women have the required strength and endurance?
H Social	Is this contrary to women's nature and personality ('carers and nurturers')?
I Standards	Will physical standards need to be reduced to meet women's capabilities?
J Training	Must it be changed to accommodate women?
K Unit efficiency	Will women members reduce unit efficiency through greater absenteeism on medical grounds?

Comments

1	Women are more susceptible to infections after long periods in the field with primitive conditions.
2	Women are not by nature violent, and the front line may need violent people.
3	Many women are as strong as or stronger than many men, and can do the job well.
4	Most women do not have the strength required to carry the heavy loads that are part of front line reality—a heavy pack, and maybe a wounded comrade over their shoulder.
5	Male soldiers would be more likely to look after the safety of a woman than another man—it would be a distraction that could compromise the safety of the whole unit.
6	Women have a right to have equal access to situations which end up accelerating promotion. This is only fair and equal.
7	Women have a greater rate of absenteeism due to medical conditions—and this can destroy the unity and efficiency of a tightly-knit unit.
8	There is a fear that, for political correctness, the standards of combat efficiency will be lowered.
9	Society is not ready to face the image of the shattered and mutilated body of a woman on the battlefield.

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?

Views from the top



Now let me talk to the issue of women in combat. It is clearly one of the most vexatious issues we face... The policy on the employment of women in combat was reviewed in 1998... in the 'Ferguson Report'. Rather than being seen as a gender issue [we approach] it as an equity issue focusing on employment competency and the requirement to maintain combat capability... The research found that the arguments against widening women's employment in the ADF had no empirical evidence to support them—they were simply based on emotion... The result of this study was that employment options for women in the ADF were expanded, with the only restricted areas being those linked directly to combat operations. Women are now able to serve in 88 per cent of ADF employment categories. The exceptions are:

- for the Navy in the Clearance Divers
- for Army in Armour, Artillery, Infantry and Combat Engineers, and
- in the Air Force—Ground Defence Officers and Airfield Defence Guards.

We have had to place some other restrictions on the employment of women for occupational health and safety reasons. For example, the use of embryo-toxic substances for surface finishers and electroplaters within the RAAF does pose an unacceptable risk until we can find a better way of doing these processes. In the process of increasing opportunities by removing artificial barriers, the need to maintain our duty of care cannot be ignored.

The important and the central issue is that gender should not be an issue in deciding whether any individual can do any particular job.

The overall result of the review has been a decision that the Australian Defence Force employment policy would be competency based. And that means right now that physical competencies are being developed for the ADF combat arms categories. They're the ones I just mentioned—Combat Engineers, Artillery, Armour, Infantry, Airfield Defence Guards and Navy Clearance Divers... As part of this process, gender should only be a consideration when making judgements about

how units and organisations can operate effectively as social and work groups. When we talk about integrating women into more roles in the Australian Defence Force, we need to consider whether or not adequate social and psychological support will be available for individuals to be able to perform to their potential... We do need that 'critical mass' of women in particular specialisations or units to facilitate the process of opening up combat employment categories.

Finally on this issue, at the end of the day, the decision on women in combat is not one for the Australian Defence Force or the Department of Defence to make. It is one for the Government and the Australian people to make and I think that this is an important factor that we must not forget.

Extract from a speech by the then Chief of the Defence Force Admiral C.A. Barrie, 26 July 2000 in Parliament of Australia, Department of the Parliamentary Library, E-Brief, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group – Women in the armed forces: the role of women in the Australian Defence Force
<www.qph.gov.au/library/INTGUIDE/fad/women_armed.htm>



Women should be allowed to fight on the front line, Defence Minister Robert Hill has said. It is believed to be the first time an Australian defence minister has supported placing women in direct combat roles... Senator Hill said he philosophically supported the move. 'If women want to serve in the front line, I don't think they should be excluded simply because they are women,' he said... His assistant minister, Danna Vale, was overseeing studies into the requirements for key military roles, 'not distinguished by sex, but physical capabilities', Senator Hill said...

The question of employing women in direct combat roles was also a cultural and social one, Mrs Vale said.

The government would not make a final decision until after public debate. Defence Force Chief General Peter Cosgrove said placing women in front line combat roles was a 'matter for the government and the community'.

The Age, 20 September 2002

Women in the Australian Defence Force—Do they have an equal role to men?