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ADF Recruitment Surges, Targets 69,000 by 2030s

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The Australian Defence Force reports its largest recruitment surge in 15 years, growing by over 1,800 personnel in 2024-25, exceeding targets to reach 69,000 by the early 2030s.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has achieved its most significant recruitment increase in over a decade, adding more than 1,800 personnel in the 2024-25 financial year, according to a Department of Defence statement on August 4, 2025. This growth puts the ADF ahead of schedule to expand its permanent and reserve force to 69,000 by the early 2030s, as outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy. The surge, which saw 7,059 new permanent full-time enlistments, the highest since 2009-10, reflects effective

retention initiatives and targeted recruitment campaigns, despite concerns about the Albanese government's broader defence policies.

Air Commodore Davin Augustine, Acting Head of Military Personnel, highlighted the success of retention programs like the continuation bonus, which offers lump-sum payments for extended service commitments. This initiative, taken up by 5,778 personnel during its pilot phase, has reduced separation rates below the 10-year average, as reported by GlobalSecurity.org. The Defence Assisted Study Scheme has also encouraged personnel to stay longer, with ADF Careers receiving over 75,000 applications in the past year, the highest in five years, per the Department of Defence. These efforts have bolstered the ADF's workforce to 61,189 full-time personnel as of July 1, 2025.

The recruitment boom comes amid strategic shifts, including a policy allowing permanent residents from Five Eyes nations to join the ADF, effective from July 2024 for New Zealanders and January 2025 for those from the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada, as noted on Wikipedia. This policy aims to address skill shortages, particularly for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), which requires significant growth to support new capabilities like nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS agreement. However, critics argue that the Albanese government's focus on rapid expansion risks straining resources, with the \$38 billion plan facing scrutiny over long-term sustainability.

The ADF's growth signals a robust response to regional security challenges, with initiatives like targeted social media campaigns on platforms like TikTok contributing to the uptick, as reported by The West Australian. While the recruitment surge is a positive step, ongoing challenges in a competitive labour market highlight the need for sustained investment to maintain this momentum.