

# OpenVoiceNews Australia

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

## ADF Misses Recruitment Goals Despite Best Numbers in Decade

August 3, 2025

– Categories: Defence & Security



The Australian Defence Force (ADF) fell short of its 2024-25 recruitment targets by over 1,000 personnel, despite achieving its highest enlistment and retention rates in 15 years, raising concerns about national security readiness.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) enlisted 7,059 full-time personnel in the 2024-25 financial year, marking its best recruitment haul in 15 years, yet it missed its target of 8,105 by more than 1,000, according to a Department of Defence brief obtained by The Canberra Times. With a workforce of 58,284 as of May 2024, the ADF remains 4,400 below its authorized strength, per The Guardian. Defence Minister Matt Keogh acknowledged to The Guardian that only 10% of 75,000 applicants were hired, citing a cumbersome recruitment process and strict standards as key barriers. The Australian

Labor Party (ALP) government's \$1.4 billion contract with Adecco, a Swiss-French recruitment firm, faced "teething issues," contributing to the shortfall, Keogh noted.

Efforts to boost numbers include targeted social media campaigns on platforms like TikTok, aimed at 17- to 24-year-olds, and a lateral recruitment program that added 185 personnel from foreign militaries in 2024-25, per The Guardian. Chief of Defence General Angus Campbell told Senate estimates in June 2024 that separation rates dropped from 11.6% to 10%, and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) reached a 20-year high in personnel, per Defence Connect. However, the Army and Royal Australian Navy (RAN) continue to struggle, with the RAN growing only 1.3% since 2020, per Australian Defence Magazine.

Coalition defence spokesperson Michaelia Cash criticized the ALP, stating to The Canberra Times that it has "no effective strategy" to address the crisis, despite a \$40,000 retention bonus for personnel staying beyond four years. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR) warned that recruitment will deteriorate without faster processes, recommending enlistment in days, not months, per Defence Connect. Senator David Shoebridge highlighted to Senate estimates that the ADF's 238 generals for 58,000 troops—1 per 245 personnel—far exceeds ratios in the U.S. and U.K., suggesting top-heavy leadership diverts resources.

With a goal of 69,000 personnel by the early 2030s, the ADF's shortfall raises questions about its capacity to meet strategic challenges. The Opposition calls for streamlined recruitment and a focus on service traditions to attract recruits, per The Strategist.