

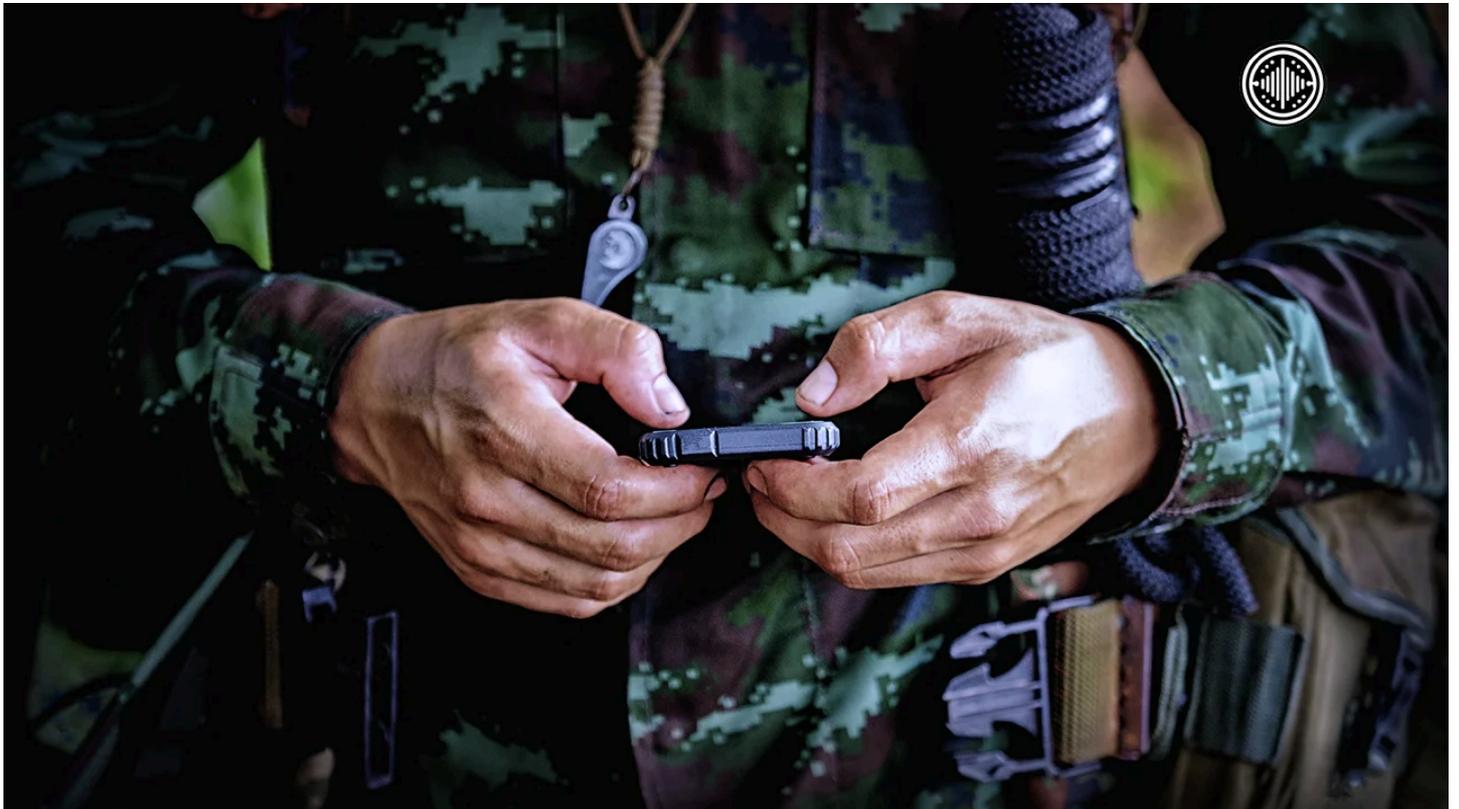
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Social Media and Gaming Boost ADF Recruitment Surge

August 3, 2025

– Categories: Defence & Security



The Australian Defence Force (ADF) sees a 15-year high in recruitment, driven by targeted social media and online gaming advertisements.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has achieved its largest single-year recruitment increase in 15 years, with full-time personnel rising by 1,868 to 61,189 in 2024-25, according to federal government data. This 17% surge in enlistments, totaling 7,059 new recruits, is attributed to strategic advertising on platforms like TikTok, Snapchat, and online games, as reported by ABC News. The campaign, targeting 17- to 24-year-olds, has tapped into digital spaces where young Australians spend their time, boosting applications to a five-year high of over 75,000, a 28% increase from the previous year, per The Age.

Defence Personnel Minister Matt Keogh highlighted the effectiveness of “smarter” advertising, noting that campaigns on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, alongside in-game ads, reached key influencers like parents and teachers. “Defence is ensuring ads are seen where young people are,” Keogh told ABC News, emphasizing the Navy’s Submariner campaign on TikTok, which garnered 840,000 views. The 2024 “Unlike Any Other Job” campaign, launched across social media, digital audio, and 3D billboards in Sydney and Melbourne, promoted over 250 ADF roles, including new positions tied to the Australia–United Kingdom–United States (AUKUS) submarine program, per the Department of Defence.

Retention has also improved, with the separation rate dropping to 7.9%, the lowest in a decade, aided by a \$40,000 continuation bonus and expanded Defence Housing Ownership Scheme access, according to The Canberra Times. However, the ADF remains below its authorized strength of 62,700, and critics, including Opposition defence spokesperson Michaelia Cash, argue the Australian Labor Party (ALP) government has been slow to address a 4,400–personnel shortfall noted in 2023. A 2024 Defence Workforce Plan aims for 69,000 personnel by the early 2030s, but achieving this remains challenging amid private–sector competition.

The ADF’s inclusion of Five Eyes nations’ permanent residents, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand, yielded 520 applications, though only three have enlisted, per ABC News. While the ALP government claims progress, the Opposition calls for boosting defence spending to 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to sustain growth. As digital campaigns continue to drive enlistments, the ADF’s innovative approach signals a shift in modern recruitment strategies.