

30 Jan 2013

Today a report into the civilianisation programme by the Office of the Auditor General has been released. The report confirms what you had already told us: we could have handled the change better so that you were not impacted so greatly.

The changes brought about by the civilisation programme contributed to the increase in attrition and lower morale across the organisation. Many of you felt the changes breached the social contract the Defence Force had with you after years of dedicated and loyal service.

The 2010 Defence White Paper outlined the shift to the Total Defence Workforce approach, including the requirement to transfer a significant number of jobs from uniform to civilian posts. While we couldn't avoid this change, the OAG report indicates we should have approached the changes more gradually to lessen the impact on you.

We have accepted NZDF could have implemented the programme better and with hindsight, if we had to go through this process again, there are many things we would do differently.

This is one of the reasons we altered the civilianisation process at the end of Phase 1 and why we said any future change will be implemented more gradually – largely using attrition rather than redundancy.

I am pleased to note that our latest internal survey results (OAtS) reveal morale has improved for the third quarter in a row. It is not yet at the level of pre-civilianisation, but we are heading in the right direction. In line with morale, and at near pre-civilianisation levels, there has been a reduction in people's intention to leave for three continuous quarters. Notably attrition rates across NZDF have now fallen from a high of 21.6 percent mid 2012, to 17.7 percent in January.

Looking to the Government-set target for reinvestment in Defence, we remain on track.

These types of results are a credit to the dedication and commitment of all the men and women in the Defence Force.

Lieutenant General Rhys Jones
Chief of Defence Force