

# BALANCE

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## Lawyers in Uniform

**Balance offers this month an insight into a little-known feature of the profession in the Northern Territory.**

Whilst most are aware that the Australian Defence Force has legal officers amongst its ranks of regular staff, it is probably not widely known that a number of Darwin practitioners from both the public and private sectors serve as Reserve Legal Officers.

Darwin boasts five Army, four RAN and four RAAF legal officers on the Reserve legal panels. These people perform a number of functions in the ADF and are involved in almost every facet of service life.

The reserve legal officers create a pool of expertise for the ADF and its respective services. They are able to provide specialist and expert advice to Commanders, staff and individuals in the ADF in the fields of criminal, administrative, contract, commercial, constitutional, international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as land rights, arbitration and

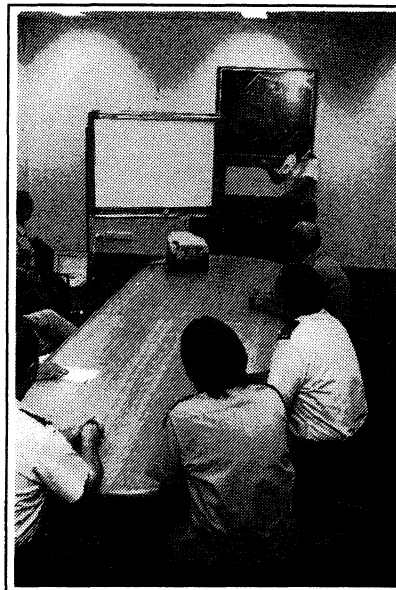


*Left to right: Squadron Leader Brian Cassells, Captain John Birch, Wing Commander Jim Moore RAAF Panel Leader, Major Lyn McDade (seated) Major Roger Gibson (standing), Squadron Leader Jack Karcewski, Lt Commander Peter Barr (standing) and Commander Terry Coulehan (RAN Panel leader).*

mediation.

Legal aid services are provided to defence force personnel by reserve legal officers.

In the ADF's court system, reserve legal officers may be called upon to act as prosecuting and defence counsel in courts martial, defence force magistrates' trial and appeals tribunals.



*Brian Cassells briefs the assembled group on the law of the sea following his attendance at a one week military course at the ADF Warfare Centre*

In addition they may act as judge's advocates, or defence force magistrates or take on the role of reporting officers in courts martial and trials.

Major Roger Gibson, regular legal officer at Northern Command Larrakeyah Barracks, says, "here in Darwin, we are lucky to have a range of expertise and specialist skills in our Reserve Legal Officers. Adding to these skills has been the objective of this year's reserve legal officer training program."

Reserve legal officers train on the last Tuesday of every month at one of the service establishments around Darwin. The objective of the training program is to increase and update not only the legal but also the military knowledge of the reservists through the presentation of topical, interesting and relevant issues. Recent training programs have included an overview of issues relating to the law of the sea, the laws of armed combat and rules of engagement. The 1st Brigade will be the topic of the next training session which will take place at Robertson Barracks.

The Reserve Legal Officer training programs can provide a forum for interaction between regular service legal officers and other members of the legal community and the opportunity for legal practitioners to inform themselves on military legal issues and to offer legal services to the Darwin and Northern Region Defence community.

The ADF is keen to recruit new reserve legal officers and practitioners interested in further information are invited to contact the Law Society in the first instance.