

Check out the Defence Force

“The ultimate 12 month challenge”

The brochure reads: “A lifetime of experiences in 12 months.”

Snapshots of service men and women, some smiling, some intently focussed, riding in a speedboat, rock climbing, on a ship with a helicopter hovering in the immediate background.

The Australian Defence Force Gap Year is the “ultimate 12 month challenge.” The opportunity for those recently out of secondary school to get a taste for life in the Australian military.

Launched in 2007, the original idea of the program was to boost dwindling numbers of recruits. Now, in only its third year, the Defence Force has had to refine its recruiting process to cater for all the interest. The program is a year long ‘try before you buy’ of the Army, Navy or Air

Force. Participants serve as fully-fledged members of the military with no obligation to stay when the year is up.

Lieutenant Ashley Wallin, helicopter pilot for the Royal Australian Navy and recruitment officer with the ADF describes it as an opportunity to be part of the defence force, being “exposed to all the challenges and teamwork” with the chance of seeing all the different facets of the military and the way they work together. Sitting in his green Defence Force jumpsuit, the Australian flag patched onto the sleeve, Lieutenant Wallin joined the ADF looking for more of a challenge. Like a lot of school leavers, he was uncertain of where he wanted to go career-wise and “sort of fell into aviation down the track.” He came to the military after doing an aviation/

business course and finding he “needed something more.”

His experience has proved the decision to be the right one.

“You come home, people are sort of doing the same old thing, you’ve been away, you’ve deployed, you’ve flown a helicopter off the back of a ship, you’ve dropped off aid to people, you know, you’ve really gone out there and done your job and certainly had a lot more experience than the guy next door in the building in the suit and tie.”

The ADF Gap year is designed for those aged between 18-24, who are planning their future. Corporal Debbie Grylls, whose primary role is a physical training instructor at the defence force, now also works in the careers promotions team as a defence recruiter. She got involved

with the military through the recommendation of a friend who knew her as “kind of adventurous and sporty.”

“We offer all the way up to \$43,000-\$45,000 depending on what job and what service you entering for that twelve month experience. Subsidised accommodation comes with that, so does your free medical and free dental, because you are recognised as a full-time serving member,” Grylls says. Recruits will also be given the chance of travelling around Australia and for Navy applicants there is the possibility of travelling overseas.

Current round of ADF Gap Year offers now closed. Next round opens May 1, 2010. Check out defencejobs.gov.au

Chris Best and Samantha De Groot



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