



## **Stuart Robert MP**

**Federal Member for Fadden**

**Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel**

### **\*\*MEDIA RELEASE\*\***

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#### **MINISTER CAN'T TRACK TROOP NUMBERS**

New documents have revealed the extent to which the Gillard Labor Government has lost control of the Defence portfolio, with revised budget documents confirming that it has miscalculated the number of personnel in uniform by a staggering 2,500 over the next three years.

Shadow Minister for Defence Science, Technology and Personnel, Stuart Robert, said this latest issue further illustrated the inability of the Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, to manage his own department and the security of Australia.

'Not three months have passed since budget documents revealed the ADF's manning levels over the forward estimates period. But yesterday, new figures revealed a discrepancy of an astounding 2,500 uniformed personnel,' Mr Robert said.

'When the Defence Minister doesn't know how many men and women will be in uniform in any given year, that presents as a serious problem for the security of our nation. A 2,500 difference in military numbers also has significant financial implications for the government.'

Mr Robert said the seriousness of this miscalculation can not be underestimated and it was about time Minister Smith took responsibility for his management of the Defence portfolio, rather than constantly trying to shift blame onto others.

'It is telling that the revised numbers were sneakily presented out of sitting, no doubt in an effort to avoid responsibility for such a serious error and to try and shield Minister Smith from further embarrassment,' Mr Robert said.

'How can a department be expected to improve its attitudes towards responsibility and accountability when its Minister sets such a poor example by ducking an issue such as this.'

'One thing is clear, the problems with Defence are only going to continue until such a time Minister Smith starts taking responsibility for his own department.'

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