



Ralph Estherby



A CHAPLAIN IN THE DEFENCE FORCE

RALPH ESTHERBY was the first ACC Chaplain appointed to the ADF. He is Senior Pastor of Breakthrough Church in Hornsby and is Chaplain to 8 Signals Regiment and the Trainee Rehabilitation Wing at Holsworthy Army Barracks. Ralph gives an insight into what it means to be a chaplain in the Defence Force and the opportunities opening up to ACC chaplains.

Her hands were shaking and her eyes refused to leave the ground. There was something that she wanted to say but she did not know how to begin. She had told the Chaplain that she wasn't religious, that she was embarrassed by the outburst of tears that had brought her to the office but she just needed to talk to someone and she knew that the Chaplain or the Padre (as she called him) was there. The Padre sat and waited, listened and waited for a few moments more, and then the deluge began. The private thoughts, hurts and sorrows which the soldier had been holding in for so long, began to flow more and more freely and the process of healing and assistance could begin.

As you look in from outside, the potential topic of this conversation could be very broad: relationship breakdown; problems at home; difficulties at work; financial issues; spiritual confusion; sexual or physical abuse; and thoughts of suicide or self-harm. In fact, it could be all of the 'normal' issues that pastors and leaders encounter regularly but add to that the potential of 'Battlefield Stress' or 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'; struggles with the military structure; family issues caused by regular and diverse postings; and

separations caused by active deployments and you start to see that ministry in a military context has a broad and challenging potential.

A Chaplain within the Australian Defence Force is a privileged position. You serve as an Officer within the ADF but you operate outside the chain of command and so are available to support soldiers, sailors and airmen throughout all aspects of their lives. You act as a role model, a spiritual support, a listening ear and a confidant and friend. You have the responsibility to advise command and to provide subject matter expertise on issues relating to morale, welfare and the spiritual health of the men and women under command.

Up until 2009 the ADF did not allow ACC applicants for Chaplaincy positions but after an initial trial phase the doors have now been opened for both Full-time and Reserve service. We now have 2 Army, 1 Navy and 1 RAAF chaplains commissioned with at least 2 more in the final stages of appointment.

Over the next ten years, the ACC is well positioned to become a significant contributor to Chaplaincy within the ADF. We need to identify good candidates who are willing and able to serve within the rigorous and adventurous environment which is the modern ADF. We desire to release great men and women who are ready to minister in a complex multi-faith environment upholding the values and standards of our movement and demonstrating the reality and the life changing power of Christ to all.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE AN ACC MILITARY CHAPLAIN?

- You must be physically fit and have highly developed people skills.
- You must be endorsed by the Australian Christian Churches.
- You must be an Ordained Minister (OMC) with at least two years Pastoral Experience.
- You must have a Bachelors Degree in Theology or Ministry (or equivalent).
- You must be willing to provide 'unrestricted service' for Full Time or reasonable availability (1 day per week + 2 weeks a year) if Part Time.

If this sounds like you and you have a sense of calling or if you would like some more details regarding this wonderful ministry contact Ralph.Estherby@defence.gov.au