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Why did you choose to apply for the ADF Gap Year? In Year 9 I remember hearing about the Army Gap Year and thinking how awesome - I could join the army and basically be paid to stay fit. I carried that thought through Year 10, however, with the demands of Year 11 and 12 the idea slipped my mind. After much discussion with my parents about what my gap year might entail, mum reminded me of the Army Gap Year. I read the information on the website, watched a few of their videos, and the challenge presented appealed to me, I saw that the army wasn't just about getting paid to be fit, that I was going to learn so many life skills and qualities that would be of benefit to me for my future employment and I would also be able to save funds whilst doing so. The decision was made relatively quickly as I also discovered that the applications closed the following week. The following day I put in my application and the enrolment process started.



What has the gap year been like so far and what duties do you undertake in your job? During my gap year with Defence I have been faced with many challenges. Some challenges I never thought I could actually do and others I found much easier than I thought. Sometimes I thought why did I choose this for a gap year? And other times it felt like this has been the best thing I have ever done – it has certainly been a time of mixed emotions. I have certainly found out a lot about myself.

The first 3 months was basic training which started with renouncing privileges such as use of mobile phones, contact with family and freedom to do what you want when you want. It was a controlled environment but with time and hard work you earned the privilege of using your phone again, going on day leave, enjoying lollies and chocolate, and watching television and listening to music. I realised how I once took these for granted! This initial training involved the basic discipline and learning on how to be an Australian soldier.

Many of the tasks were repetitive drills to enforce the qualities of a soldier. I was taught survival skills such as how to stay out in the bush for 10 days on ration packs with no personal hygiene, learning how to stay safe and protect yourself and your mates, how to fire different weapons, learn the operational aspect of tasks, handle pressure in tough situations plus so much more. Overall this required an enormous amount of discipline.

The second phase of my gap year was 'Initial Employment Training' which involved learning how to drive trucks. This phase wasn't as intense, with weekends free and phone use which meant contact with family and friends and some social life again, however these privileges could be denied at any time with no notice and limited explanation.

Finally, where I am now. I have been posted to beautiful Brisbane! I love it! I am currently with the Military Police. I mostly work in an office (which isn't really what I have been trained to do). I work alongside soldiers of various ranks, which was daunting to begin with as it takes time to learn your place. I am working in Operations which means I have been able to see how important it is to have well planned and organised exercises, and support from other units for success.

Highlights from this year so far? I have loved meeting people from all over Australia and developing unique friendships. There is a special bond between us as we have all been through tough experiences together and I know I can always rely on these people. The Army has provided me with the skills to tackle challenges and achieve my goals. I have an appreciation of what I have in my life, I treasure my weekends and make the most of exploring Brisbane and spending time with friends and family.

Personal skills you've developed: Courage: To be strong, speak my mind. Initiative: To try things which I may have never thought I could achieve. To be a leader. Respect: Myself and others. Teamwork: The importance of working together towards common goals. Looking out and supporting others. Determination: Hard work can open up lots of opportunities. Resilience: When things are tough sticking it out!