

SUBMISSION for the DEFENCE WHITE PAPER 2015

by

THE NAVY LEAGUE of AUSTRALIA

Australia in the World

Any analysis of Australia's defence task must take into account its geography and its history.

The fundamental fact of geography is that Australia is an island nation. It is an island which nowadays has extensive ocean and seabed interests stretching well away from the shoreline.

Australia is a trading nation exporting very large quantities of commodities and importing important volumes, particularly manufactures. The greater proportion of this trade moves by sea. Because of the location of our island nation almost all this trade has to be transported over considerable distances. We have long and vital sea lines of communication.

Throughout our history Australia has always depended for its defence on our own, or friendly, control of the seas around us. From 1788 Australia has depended for its ultimate defence on the power, primarily maritime power, of Britain and the United States. Our maritime defence in World War I depended on the Royal Navy with assistance from Australia. In World War II we again depended to a large extent on sea control by the Royal Navy assisted by our own naval and air forces until 1942, when the United States Navy assumed the role in American and our interest.

Times have changed. Britain and other European powers have withdrawn from South East Asia.

The United States remains a constant in Australia's defence picture and is likely to remain so. It is too soon to say whether the US "pivot" to the Pacific means anything different or extra. Moving 9000 Marines out of Okinawa, with 5000 moving to Guam, some to Hawaii and eventually 2500 on rotation to Darwin does not represent a net

addition of US forces in the Pacific. It may be that in the end the “pivot” will in reality be maintenance of force strength in the Pacific as opposed to reductions in the NATO area. The US Government is facing considerable financial constraints. It is now increasingly engaged in the Middle East and Africa. It is inevitable that as a major power the US will always find it has obligations elsewhere, as well as in the Pacific. Since the Guam Doctrine it has been understood that allies of the US are expected to be more self reliant.

It can be argued that the more it is clear that Australia can defend itself the more our voice will be listened to in international forums and the more valuable we will be seen to be by allies and friendly nations.

Defence in a Troubled World

It is hard to think of a Defence White Paper which has been prepared against such a backdrop of actual or threatened conflict.

In Africa there are wars of various levels of intensity in Nigeria, the Central African Republic, the Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia and Libya. Some of these conflicts might be described as civil wars, though in many instances there is at least some external involvement.

In the Middle East the Israel/Gaza conflict is ongoing. In both Syria and Iraq major conflict continues. Syria and Iraq are both civil wars with external involvement.

In Eastern Europe the situation in Ukraine is unresolved. The situation in eastern Ukraine can be described as a civil war, but there is very clear external involvement. The occupation and appropriation of Crimea by Russia, however it might be dressed up, was an invasion by a more powerful state into a less powerful neighbor.

In our part of the world conflict is more threatened than actual. North Korea, of course, comes to mind but perhaps of more concern are the disputes between China and Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam. There have already been incidents in the South China Sea. Vietnam is seeking to resist China's assertion of its right to

drill for oil and gas. This may yet prove to be another example of a more powerful state and a less powerful neighbor.

To look forward 30 years with clarity is impossible. It is instructive to look back to 1984 and consider how many of the conflicts and crisis that have occurred since then, or are occurring now, could have reasonably been forecast at that time. Australia cannot be certain of a benign future.

A Maritime Strategy

Given the matters outlined above the Navy League considers that Australia should move to a higher level of capability – a capability consistent with our history and our geography - a maritime capability.

The Maritime Strategy as announced in the 2009 Defence White Paper has gained wide acceptance. It is a strategy perhaps most eloquently expressed by LTGEN David Morrison, Chief of Army, in his address to the Sea Power Conference in October 2013.

The League believes that Australia can be defended against attack by other than a major maritime power and that the prime requirement of our defence is an evident ability to control the sea and air space around our island and to contribute to defending essential lines of sea and air communication with our allies.

The League believes that the Government should budget to maintain defence expenditure through economic cycles. That level of expenditure should be at least 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

It is appreciated that there are other expenditure commitments made by government. It is understood that with policy to have the budget in surplus it will not be possible to immediately raise defence expenditure from its present level of approximately 1.6% to 2% of GDP. Nevertheless the League believes that provision should be made to bring defence expenditure back to the 2% level. Without such expenditure it will not be possible to build, maintain and sustain an adequate defence force.

It determining what Australia requires as a defence force the League believes the following factors should be considered.

- * The armed forces primary role is warfighting
- * This does not preclude other roles; stabilising fragile states; combating terrorism; assisting the security capacity of regional countries; supporting Australians caught in conflict overseas; humanitarian missions; securing borders and resources and support for emergency services.
- * When it is possible, these other roles should be treated as the responsibility of other, non-warfighting organisations, such as police, customs, emergency services and law enforcement agencies. Defence resources devoted to these roles should not diminish the ADF's capacity to provide for the defence of the nation.
- * The better the ADF is trained and equipped for its primary role the better it will be able to assist when called upon for one of the other roles.
- * Though the ADF can and should be able to assist in these other roles, any consideration of the size and shape of the ADF must be based on ensuring that it is capable of carrying out its primary role.

Proposals for the White Paper

The League believes that the proposals set out in the 2009 White Paper were and remain essentially correct. The League welcomed the emphasis on maritime power in that Paper and with few qualifications welcomed the proposals for Navy.

The League believes that the level of both the offensive and defensive capabilities of the RAN should be increased and is concerned to see that the substantial surface and sub-surface capability enhancements contained in the 2009 Defence White Paper should survive the review of defence capability and in particular; a substantially strengthened submarine force; three AirWarfare Destroyers; eight new frigates (Anzac class replacements); two landing ships(LHDs) and a large strategic sealift ship; twenty offshore combatants; six

heavy landing craft and substantial numbers of naval combatant and ASW helicopters.

The Destroyer /Frigate Force

The next shipbuilding programme has the potential to provide long term security to our sovereign warship building capabilities provided that there is a continuous construction programme. A constant construction programme should be maintained with a warship launched every two or three years.

Batch building should involve a batch of three to four ships with successive batches being an improvement on the previous batch. At the launch of the tenth hull the first ship should be decommissioned and either scrapped or sold and a new class begun.

With a constant drumbeat of warship building we can not only sustain jobs but also build skills and capabilities which are not currently available.

Such ships will be built for Australian conditions and Australian requirements.. Buying other designs is essentially acquiring a solution to somebody else`s problem.

Use of existing technologies such as the CEA Radar is paramount, not only to provide a sovereign capability but also to maintain a world class and world leading technology.

The SEA 5000 warship will need to have an emphasis on ASW. It must also be capable of supporting large amphibious operations. The acquisition of the two LHDs and *HMAS Choules* mean that the RAN will be required to support the littoral battle as well as the high seas battle.

The SEA 5000 warship should not be a lesser carbon copy of the Air Warfare Destroyer. Experience has shown that the adaptation of an existing design can be as technically risky as the development of a new design. A purpose designed and built warship to provide the necessary ASW and amphibious support capability is to be preferred.

As to the Air Warfare Destroyers (AWDs) the League supports the proposals made in the 2009 White Paper to provide the ships with the SM-6 long range anti-aircraft missile and Cooperative

Engagement Capability (CEC). The RAAF's E-7 AEW&C aircraft should also be provided with CEC to fully exploit the SM-6 capability.

Consideration should be given to providing the AWDs with the long range precision strike capabilities of the Tomahawk cruise missile. Thought should also be given to a Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence capability given the growing proliferation of anti-ship ballistic missiles.

A Powerful Submarine Squadron

The acquisition of a new class of submarine is strongly supported. The 2009 White Paper proposed that Navy acquire 12 submarines. It was contemplated that they would be Australian built and possibly Australian designed. Whichever option is now chosen time is pressing.

The Collins class submarines were completed between 1996 and 2003. Even with a life extension it is doubtful that their life can be extended much beyond 30 years, which means they will go out of service from 2026. The lead time available for the first of a new class to enter service, assuming a Government decision to proceed by the end of next year, is at least 10 to 12 years. This calculation is based on the assumption that a Collins derivative is selected.

In addition to a "son of Collins" option, consideration should be given to those submarines which are available "off the shelf" or 'off the shelf with modification". It is possible that the 10 to 12 year timetable could be bettered if the decision was made to have the submarines built overseas. However, given the requirement for US weapons and combat systems fitout will have to occur in Australia.

The new submarines capability should include land attack cruise missiles and mines.

As is well known, the Navy League has argued for nuclear propulsion for the submarines. The League accepts that before nuclear can be a viable option for Australia the following must occur:

- Gain political acceptance

- Negotiate a deal with the US or UK for nuclear technology transfer
- Establish a Naval Nuclear Regulatory framework for Australia
- Decide a procurement strategy –import complete or part build in Australia
- Decide on a base location and complete all environmental and security assessments
- Define the nuclear specific facilities required for the build location
- Achieve local acceptance of a nuclear presence
- Commence a training programme for civilian and naval nuclear engineers

The Navy League considers that these tasks should be progressed in parallel with the construction of the Collins replacement submarines so as to provide the option for a future nuclear submarine squadron.

Amphibious Capability

HMAS *Canberra* and HMAS *Adelaide*, the two LHDs mentioned in the 2009 White Paper, are about to join the Fleet. They will provide Australia with a greatly enhanced amphibious capability.

The acquisition of RFA *Largs Bay* – now HMAS *Choules* - was welcomed by the League. The requirement for the large strategic sealift ship has been met by HMAS *Choules*.

All three ships need to be provided with the necessary self defence measures, both hard and soft kill, to enable them to operate in all possible scenarios.

The Offshore Patrol Force

The patrol boat or offshore patrol vessel force must be capable of operating in all Australian waters.

Whilst the OPVs as conceived in the 2009 White Paper were deleted in the 2013 White Paper, the Navy league believes that the Armidale class patrol boats should be replaced in due time by rather larger robust vessels of greater sea-keeping ability and range. Sufficient size to operate a helicopter is desirable, suggesting a ship of about 2000 tonnes as envisaged in 2009.

AORs

The League believes that there is an urgent need to replace HMAS *Success* and HMAS *Sirius*.

While it is the League belief that as far as practicable we should build the ships the RAN needs in Australia, it accepts that there are cogent reasons for placing orders overseas for two support ships.

In its submission to the Senate Economic References Committee the League said that “extending facilities at great cost and harnessing resources to build a limited number of ships of considerable size is likely to be an expensive and time consuming exercise of little benefit to the long term industry capability objective. The decision to construct the hulls of the two 28,000 tonne LHDs in Spain therefore made sense.....the decision of the Government to call restricted tenders for the construction of the two ships to replace HMAS *Success* and HMAS *Sirius* appears essentially pragmatic. It is a decision which faces the reality of shipbuilding in Australia”

The Royal Australian Airforce

P-8A Patrol Aircraft

While eight aircraft, combined with UAVs, may be adequate for ocean surveillance, it is not clear that eight aircraft will be sufficient to replace the previous 20 P-3s in the anti-submarine role. The League supports the acquisition of additional aircraft to enhance this capability.

Maritime UAVs

The acquisition of seven MQ-4C Tritons is welcomed.

STOVL aircraft

The Navy League believes that a proportion, perhaps 16 – 18, of the projected purchase of the F35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) should be the STOVL version. Such an acquisition would greatly enhance the operational flexibility of the RAAF. The inclusion in the JSF purchase of a number of STOVL aircraft would provide the RAAF with much needed options, including the ability to operate from small airfields or from the LHDs entering service with the Navy.

The Force Posture Review

The proposals in the recent force Posture Review for:

- The upgrade of wharves and facilities at Fleet Base West;
 - The enhancement of Cairns, Broome and Darwin as Naval bases;
 - A supplementary east coast base in Brisbane for AWD & LHD;
- are welcomed by the League and strongly supported.

It is recognised that the cost and personnel implications will mean that these developments will have to be spread over many years.