

SUBMISSION for DEFENCE WHITE PAPER 2013

by

THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

In announcing that the Defence White Paper was to be brought forward to 2013 the Minister for Defence referred to:

- the increased focus of the US on our region through its Global Posture Review;
- Australia's operational drawdown in Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon Islands;
- Australia's own Force Posture; and
- the ongoing effects of the Global Financial Crisis.

While each of these factors are relevant they are not — except perhaps for Australia's own Force Posture — entirely new.

The US Global Posture Review

The US has for decades been a constant in Australia's defence picture, and is likely to remain so. It is as yet 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 a maintenance of force strength in the Pacific as opposed to reductions to take place in the NATO area. The United States government is facing considerable financial constraints. Whatever the final outcome of the US Global Posture Review and of the "pivot" there can be little doubt that the US alliance will remain a major factor in Australia's defence decision making.

The Operational Drawdown

It would be surprising if the authors of the 2009 White Paper were unaware of future operational drawdowns. The drawdowns will have most impact on the Army. It may be that Navy will continue to be deployed to the MEAO, if not in the same manner as at present then at a reduced rate as it was in the late 1990s.

It is important that any savings from the drawdowns not be seen as a potential peace dividend but rather that they be re-invested to make good some of the shortfalls arising from the last budget. The drawdowns should enable more focus on regional engagement. (in which Navy should necessarily take a leading role).

Australia's Force Posture Review

The proposals to:

- Upgrade wharves and facilities at Fleet Base West
- Enhancement of Cairns, Broome and Darwin as naval bases
- A supplementary east coast base in Brisbane for AWD and LHD are welcomed by the League and strongly supported.

Given the cost and personnel implications it is assumed that these developments will have to be spread over a number of years.

The Ongoing Effects of the Global Financial Crisis

Defence and security is the first responsibility of a national government.

The Navy League believes that government should budget to maintain defence expenditure through economic cycles. That level of expenditure should be 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 Navy League believes that in future budgets 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.

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In his address to the Lowy Institute on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2012 the Minister stated that the priority tasks for the ADF as set out in the 2009 White Paper remained relevant and would be restated in the next White Paper. The Minister indicated that the strategic basis for the 2013 White Paper was largely the same as for the 2009 White Paper. The League agrees. It is the view of the Navy League that Australia's fundamental strategic position remains unchanged.

In its submission to the 2009 White Paper the League listed a number of factors which it believed should be taken into account. The League considers they remain relevant to the 2013 White Paper.

Those factors — in some instances slightly updated, are:

- The armed forces primary role is war fighting.
- This does not preclude other roles, stabilizing fragile states, combating terrorism outside Australia, assisting the security capacity of regional countries, supporting Australians caught in conflict overseas, humanitarian missions, securing borders and resources and support for emergency services.
- Whenever possible these other roles should be treated as the responsibility of other, non-war fighting civil 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.
- It is the League's view that 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.
- Any analysis of Australia's defence task must take into account its geography and 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 coast.
- Australia is a trading nation exporting very large quantities of commodities and importing important volumes, particularly of manufactures. The greater proportion of this trade moves by sea. Because of the location of our island nation almost all of 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 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 to 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 has withdrawn from the Philippines. We have yet to see what the US Global Posture Review and the “pivot” truly mean. While firmly committed to the US Alliance Australia has moved, noting the Guam Doctrine, to a rather more self reliant defence posture.
- The rise of China and India and the resurgence of Russia may bring hope of prosperity to their peoples and to their trading partners but there are many areas of tension (most recently of a maritime nature) in the Western Pacific and South East Asia. A number of nations in South and East Asia are actively increasing their maritime capabilities.
- The longer term future would seem to pose many uncertainties. The possibility of a major conflict cannot be absolutely ruled out. To look forward 30 years with clarity is almost impossible. It is instructive to look back to 1982 and to consider how many conflicts and crisis that have occurred since then could have reasonably been forecast at that time.
- We can hope that the UN and other organisations, and developments such as globalisation and the spread of democracy may prevent war breaking out between major powers, but there are many centres of international strain. Australia cannot be certain of a benign future.
- 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.

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The Navy League believes that the proposals set out in the 2009 Defence 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 Navy League Statement of Policy — a copy of which is attached — is a current and comprehensive summary of the League’s position.

In this submission the League will not seek to repeat it’s Statement of Policy, but rather to focus on three issues, submarines, STOVL aircraft and sustainment .

The acquisition of a new class of submarine is strongly supported.

In the 2009 White Paper it was proposed that Navy acquire 12 submarines. It was contemplated that they would be Australian designed and built. It is now clear that such a programme will not deliver a new submarine until about 2030.

The Navy League believes that such an outcome would result in a gap in Navy’s submarine capability. Consideration should now be given to what is available off the shelf, or off the shelf with modification. Further, such submarines ought be built, or assembled, in batches of not more than 4. Given the length of the programme timetable, building in batches will allow for the changes and upgrades that will inevitably occur.

As is well known, the Navy League has argued that nuclear propulsion should be an option for the submarines. The League believes that nuclear propulsion is well suited to Australia’s circumstances and should be retained as an option, if only for the longer term.

It should be noted that submarines, no matter how good they are, can never be more than a part (albeit an important part) of a balanced navy.

A proportion of the projected purchase of the F35 Joint Strike Fighter 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 the STOVL version would provide the RAAF with much needed options,

including the ability to operate from small airfields or from the large amphibious ships being built for Navy.

A defence force cannot be effective , no matter what equipment it may have, unless it is well maintained. The League supports the Rizzo Report and the Coles Review. In particular it agrees that Navy engineering must be rebuilt. The performance of DMO must continue to be monitored. As noted earlier in this submission, to ensure that the defence force is adequately sustained, the necessary level of funding must be maintained.

Attached for information: the Navy League Statement of Policy