

THE

# NAVY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

**LESSONS FROM THE  
BLACK SEA AND BEYOND**

**SLIDING DOORS**

**THE WAY AHEAD  
FOR NAVY 2024**

**AUSTRALIA'S  
CRITICAL ROLE  
IN REGIONAL  
MARITIME  
SECURITY**



OBITUARY  
**COMMANDER  
ROBERT OTTO ALBERT**



OBITUARY  
**REAR ADMIRAL  
GUY GRIFFITHS**



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**Front cover:** US Unmanned Surface Vessel (USUSV) RANGER (right) and SEA HAWK during the annual Navy Innovation - Exercise Autonomous Warrior 23 at HMAS CRESWELL (Image ABIS Jasmine Saunders).

The crossed White Ensign and Australian White Ensign represent the fact that Robert Albert and Guy Griffiths served (and in the case of Guy) fought under both ensigns.

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## Who Runs Defence?

This issue of *The NAVY* comes almost a year after the publishing of the delayed and unfunded *Defence Strategic Review* in 2023, and the delayed and equally unfunded Fleet Surface Review (FSR), issued in February 2024.

This issue, has four topical papers by returning and new authors. The papers are preceded by the obituaries to two of our greats: *Robert Otto Albert*, and *Guy Richmond Griffiths*. Both born into the first third of the 20th century – reaffirming the *Golden Thread*, connecting all originating Royal Navies (including the USN) to their past, present, and futures. Futures, which extend as a common theme through this issue, including uncrewed surface vessels (USV).

The first paper and Essay Competition 2nd Prize professional entry is by longstanding contributor Captain George Galdorosi USN (Ret.) in his paper: *Australia's Critical Role in National Security*. George concludes:

The [USV] CONOPS is not a platform-specific solution, but rather a concept. While evolutionary in nature, this disruptive capability delivered using emerging technologies can provide the RAN with near-term solutions to operational challenges, while demonstrating to the Australian Parliament and other stakeholders that the ADF does have a concept-of-operations to employ the uncrewed systems it wants to procure.

The second paper is by longstanding defence analyst, contributor, and NLA Federal Vice President, Mark Schweikert, entitled *Sliding Doors*. Mark dissects recent decisions affecting the surface fleet, and the Surface Fleet Review (SFR), before commenting:

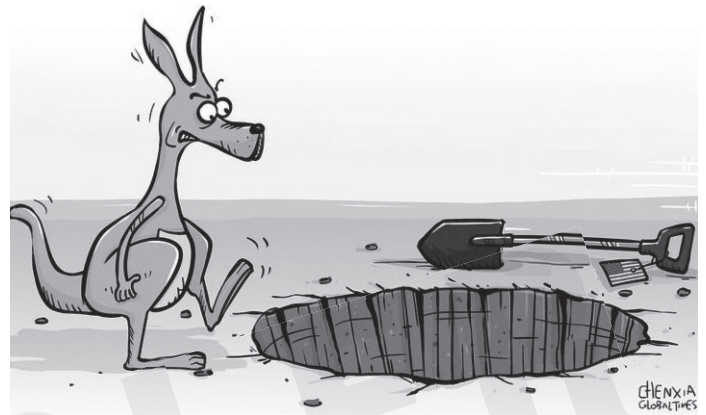
Had the decisions highlighted in this article gone the other way, then our Navy/ADF would currently be an aircraft carrier focussed fleet with a strong and capable destroyer grade escort flotilla. That aircraft carrier would be the replacement to the MELBOURNE replacement, which would have entered service recently and more than likely be equipped with F-35B JSF - and in the process taking advantage of commonality and cost of ownership aspects with the RAAF's F-35A.

Building on the first two papers, Captain Christopher Skinner RAN (Rtd) writing before the SFR, in *The Way Ahead for Navy 2024*, notes that:

An overarching requirement shown vividly in the Ukraine war is the need for adaptation to reflect changes in technology and demands of limited resources. This requires innovation of the most proactive form and that in turn requires delegation of action to hierarchical levels where the knowledge resides and empowerment of the people at that level by according to them the authority and the resources to get on with the innovation process as they think best. What is not needed is an overbearing bureaucratic hierarchy to exercise environmental, societal and governance (ESG) in any direct manner.

Finally, longstanding contributor Murray Dear (2nd Prize Essay Competition, non-professional) in *Lessons from the Black Sea and Beyond* writes:

...the threat of PLAN mine warfare operations against Australia and New Zealand needs to be considered seriously. Should diplomatic relations between China and America deteriorate



Stop Digging - Cartoon of Australia appearing in the *China Global Times*.

to such a stage that conflict appears likely, then precautionary measures need to be taken against the possibility of mine laying incursions... with particular attention paid to...flight operations over the northern approaches to Australia and New Zealand.

### FLAWED DELIVERY

The more time has gone by, the more flawed has appeared, not so much the intent and design of the DSR (and SFR) – but the way in which both reviews (despite repeated assurances) have been left unfunded and incompetently managed, at the political, diplomatic, and departmental levels.

The \$1.4B promised to underwrite the SFR is apparently included in the forward estimates and will only begin to contribute after 2027/8. In the meantime, funding is expected to come from cuts to the existing defence budget, amounting to \$2B a year, until 2032. As predicted, not funding change and adaptation – requiring 5.35% annual increases in the Defence Budget (as mandated by the DSR authors) – has led to overshoots and cost underspends. With Defence handing back a further \$1.0B in 2022/23. Underspends that are forecast to continue for the next three years, given the lack of change budgeting and Defence paralysis.

*Value for Money* has achieved its logical endpoint of *Money for Values* (and lives). The budget, in annualised real terms – dollars spent against rising inflation, cuts, and freezing (increases) – is projected to reduce Defence spending to a little over 1.5% GDP by 2027/28. This is largely ignored by the apparently defence illiterate (and innumerate) media. Let alone the impact on “real Defence” spending – for example, the inability to recruit to meet even pre-existing budgeted increases in Navy crewing. Noting the first thing Defence often cuts, is recruiting, education, and training budgets – the only uncommitted funds it owns. In the meantime, to avoid non-transferrable underspends (otherwise handed back to treasury) – spending money on such things as car parks. Presumably, to fill with the non-existent sailors it has failed to recruit (train and educate)?

### CENTRE OF GRAVITY?

There appears no longer a clear centre of (budget) gravity. As previously identified by NLA Defence analysts, there are now at least four competing Defence ministries. The most important being the PM and Cabinet (PM&C) Defence department; then that of Treasury; followed by the newly created DFAT Defence department, and seemingly of least importance, the department itself. Where Richard Marles, by decree, is not the Minister of Defence but the Deputy PM.

The factional aspect of the Government is also becoming increasingly evident. Since the *Voice*, it would appear that the Prime Minister has created a factional “clique of three” – reportedly including himself, the Foreign Minister the Hon. Senator Penny Wong, and Minister for Finance, the Hon. Senator Katy Gallagher. Apparently freezing out and frustrating both the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP (the Treasurer) and the Hon Richard Marles MP – Queensland and Victorian MPs, respectively. From a Defence perspective, it is not directly included. Being represented by the PM, Penny Wong, and Katy Gallagher – through the PM&C, DFAT and Treasury Defence departments.

The late great General Senator Jim Molan recognised the *National Security Committee* (NSC) has no dedicated secretariat, equivalent to the U.S. *National Security Agency* (NSA). It is staffed by PM&C and its 1500+strong cohort of (permanently), largely on-loan accountant consultants, who also run its Defence department. PM&C appears responsible for delivering the DSR budget. As seen in the \$42B *Black Hole*, that mysteriously appeared after the DSR, but did not exist beforehand. Exactly as the £45B UK Defence Budget *black hole* appeared after the disastrous 2010 UK *Strategic Defence & Security Review* (SDSR) budget, but did not exist beforehand. Orchestrated by the same body of permanently-on-loan consultants in the UK Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) – from which the British Armed Forces have yet to recover.

## NOTABLE BY ITS ABSENCE

The decision not to send a perfectly adequate Frigate (despite the Navy preparing a ship to send and being able and willing to deploy vessels to the Middle East) for OPERATION PROSPERITY GUARDIAN, is a case in point. There will always be a requirements for *sailors-on-the-sea* (*boots-on-the-ground*) in such operations – even if it is to goal-keep the shooters.

The failure to deploy – with its embarrassing implications for Navy standing, and to Five Eyes, AUKUS and the QUAD – came, it would appear, because the Foreign Secretary wished otherwise. Given her longstanding equivocation on Israel-Gaza, and the wish to restore funding to UNWRA as soon as possible. Failure to send a frigate also playing into China’s view of Australia:

The *Chinese Global Times* newspaper (Dec 2024):

### Australia finally stepping out of America’s “shadow”

Jerry Grey: the move’s proved Australia was “distancing itself from the US... (Australia) has finally stepped out of the U.S.’ shadow to call for a ceasefire and could potentially act as a mediator in the conflict if needed. That opportunity will be lost if it has a military presence in the region. It is sensible for Australia to continue distancing itself from the U.S.



USS CARNEY shot down multiple missiles and drones fired by Iranian-backed Houthi rebels Oct 2023 (Image MC2 Aaron Lau USN).

Australia and *Handsome Boy’s* “good behaviour” (e.g. the politically expedient failure to represent the TOOWOomba sonar illumination incident) is seemingly to be rewarded. With the PM announcing that [China’s Ministry of Commerce] proposes lifting of tariffs imposed on the Australian AU\$1.2 billion annual wine trade. Funny old world – noting ASIO’s Mike Burgess’ previous refusal to name a, thought-to-be ex-Labor MP, cultivated and recruited by foreign spies.

## A SAILOR’S WORTH...

Katy Gallagher was the treasury lead who apparently, outwith Commonwealth guidelines, with the Attorney General (the Hon. Mark Dreyfus KC MP), advised the \$2.44M payment to Brittany Higgins. For reasons being contested in court (and referred to the anti-corruption commission).

The median payout for unfair dismissal (in Australia) is about 5-7 week’s pay – or between \$8,500 and \$12,500. The payout for sexual harassment cases (including loss of earnings) is between 11- and 22-week’s pay (\$20,000-\$40,000). The highest sexual harassment award by the NSW Federal Court (in 2023) was \$268,000 by Justice Anna Katzmann, who awarded: \$140,000 in general damages, \$15,000 in aggravated damages, \$23,070 for past economic loss, \$46,284 for future economic loss, \$3000 for future out-of-pocket expenses, and \$40,000 for victimisation. The highest ever High Court sexual harassment payout in 2019, was \$170,000 in damages (\$120,000.00 for harassing conduct and \$50,000.00 for aggravated damages).

It may be recalled that Penny Wong and Katy Galagher, with the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP (not part of the Albanese clique) were alleged members of the so-called *Mean Girls*. Who weaponized the Higgins-attack on the Morrison Government. Specifically on Hon. Senators Linda Reynolds (as Defence Minister) and Michaelia Cash. Although a counterfactual and the increasingly unethical Morrison Government (secret ministerial appointments etc.) had reached its *end-by-date* – this attack may have been sufficient to win the Federal election for Labor. When the LNP won 35.7% of the primary vote; and Labor 32.6%.

It clearly pays to be a contracted political staffer; not a Commonwealth sailor or member of the APS. So much for trust in the political inner-city elites and their associated institutes – that now control Commonwealth. And for which sailors, aviators, and diggers join to defend? As the anonymous poem recalls:

*Oh, sailor worth less than a soldier;  
A soldier less than a slave,  
and all they’re worth,  
is a common grave  
– not an adequate pension, payout, or equivalent wage.*



F-35B JSF taking off from JS IZUMO (2021), screen capture USMC.



# STATEMENT OF POLICY

## For the maintenance of the Maritime wellbeing of the nation.

The Navy League is intent upon keeping before the Australian people the fact that we are a maritime nation and that a strong Navy and capable maritime industry are elements of our national wellbeing and vital to the freedom of Australia. The League seeks to promote Defence self-reliance by actively supporting defence manufacturing, research, cyberspace, shipping, transport and other relevant industries.

Through geographical necessity Australia's prosperity, strength, and safety depend to a great extent upon the security of the surrounding seas and island areas, and on unrestricted seaborne trade.

The strategic background to Australia's security is changing and in many respects has become much less certain following increasing tensions, particularly in East Asia involving major powers, and in Europe and the Middle East. The League believes that Australia should rapidly increase the capability to defend itself, paying particular attention to maritime defence.

### The Navy League:

- Believes 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 us and to contribute to defending essential lines of sea and air communication with our allies.
- Supports a continuing strong alliance with the US.
- Supports close relationships with all nations in our general area particularly New Zealand, PNG and the South Pacific island States.
- Advocates the acquisition of the most capable modern armaments, surveillance systems and sensors to ensure technological advantage over forces in our general area.
- Advocates a strong deterrent element in the ADF enabling powerful retaliation at significant distances from our shores.
- Believes the ADF must be capable of protecting commercial shipping both within Australian waters and beyond, in conjunction with allies.
- Endorses the development of the capability for the patrol and surveillance of all of Australia's ocean areas, its island territories and the Southern Ocean.
- Advocates Government initiatives for rebuilding an Australian commercial fleet capable of supporting the ADF and the carriage of essential cargoes to and from Australia in times of conflict.
- Notes the Government intention to increase maritime preparedness and gradually increase defence expenditure to 2% of GDP, while recommending that this target should be increased to 3%.
- Urges the strength and capabilities of the Army (including particularly the Army Reserve) and Air Force be enhanced, and the weaponry, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, cyberspace and electronic capabilities of the ADF be increased, including an expansion in its UAV capability.
- Considers that the level of both the offensive and defensive capabilities of the RAN should be strengthened, in particular with a further increase in the number of new proposed replacement frigates and offshore patrol vessels, noting the need to ensure essential fuel and other supplies, and the many other essential maritime tasks.
- Recommends bringing forward the start date of the replacement frigate program to both strengthen the RAN and mitigate the local industry capability gap.
- Recommends the timely replacement and increase in numbers of the current mine-countermeasure force.
- Strongly supports the early acquisition of large, long range and endurance, fast submarines and notes the deterrent value, reliability and huge operational advantages of nuclear powered submarines and their value in training anti-submarine forces.
- The League is concerned at the very long time before the projected 12 new conventional submarines can enter operational service, noting very serious tensions in the NW Pacific involving major maritime powers.
- Recommends very early action to provide a submarine base on the Eastern seaboard.
- Notes the potential combat effectiveness and flexibility of the STOVL version of the Joint Strike Fighter (F35 *Lightning II*) and supports further examination of its application within the ADF.
- Supports the development of Australia's defence industry, including strong research and design organisations capable of the construction and maintenance of all warships, submarines and support vessels in the Navy's order of battle, and welcomes the Government decision to provide a stable and continuous shipbuilding program.
- Advocates the retention in maintained reserve of operationally capable ships that are required to be paid off for resource or other economic reasons.
- Supports a strong and identifiable Naval Reserve and Australian Navy Cadets organisation.
- Advocates urgent Government research and action to remedy the reported serious naval recruiting and retention problem.

**As to the RAN, the League,** while noting vital national peacetime tasks conducted by Navy, including border protection, flag showing/diplomacy, disaster relief, maritime rescue, hydrography and aid to the civil power:

- Supports the maintenance of a Navy capable of effective action in hostilities and advocates a build-up of the fleet and its afloat support elements to ensure that, in conjunction with the RAAF, this can be sustained against any force which could be deployed in our area of strategic interest.

### The League:

- Calls for a bipartisan political approach to national defence with a commitment to a steady long-term build-up in Australia's defence capability including the required industrial infrastructure.
- Believes that, given leadership by successive governments, Australia can defend itself in the longer term, within acceptable financial, economic and manpower parameters.

## FROM THE ANC

On 23 March 2024 in Mackay, President of the Navy League of Australia, Matthew Rowe, was privileged to present the Navy League of Australia Award for the Most Efficient Training Ship of the Australian Navy Cadets to Mackay's *TS Pioneer*.

The Navy League has had a long, and ongoing, history of supporting Navy Cadets in Australia. The award ceremony provided a great opportunity to remind those present that we a maritime nation and a strong Navy and capable maritime industry is key to our national wellbeing and vital to the freedom of Australia, some of the Navy League's central tenets.

Also present, as reviewing officer and representing the Chief of the Royal Australian Navy, was Commodore David Greaves RAN, Director General of the Australian Navy Cadets. Commodore Greaves also presented the Chief of Navy Pennant to *TS Pioneer*.

### Commodore Greaves Award to *TS Pioneer* of the Chief of Navy Pennant

Welcome and greetings to distinguished guests, parents, community members, representatives of the returned services, National Commander ANC and staff of Attack Flotilla and finally the current and former members of *TS Pioneer*, including Lieutenant Commander Paul Kelly OAM ANC current Commanding Officer.

I thank the cadets of *TS Pioneer* for being active members of the ANC Program and for being such a visible symbol in your S2 white ceremonial uniforms on parade today. Additionally, on behalf of the cadets on parade I thank the adult ANC staff of *TS Pioneer* for your volunteer service to the Training Ship and your cadets. The program would not exist without your service.

I congratulate *TS Pioneer* on being awarded the best in Flotilla for Attack Flotilla and for then being nominated with *TS Kanimbla* (Holsworthy) Waratah Flotilla, *TS Kybra* (Esperance) Westralia Flotilla and *TS Ipswich Moreton* Flotilla for consideration of the Navy League of Australia Award for 2023. On review CN awarded the Navy League of Australia Award for the most efficient Training Ship to *TS Pioneer*.

This is the second time *TS Pioneer* has won the award. The previous year was 2001. There are a number of criteria that the National Commander ANC uses to set forth his recommendation to the Chief of Navy but these can be summarised into four key attributes that the ANC believes make for a highly successful Training Ship. These being:

#### Community Engagement

This is a two-way engagement of the local community support to the Training Ship and for the reciprocal meaningful engagements of the Training Ship with its community, through engagement in local events and representing the broad Navy family at commemorative events, such as mounting catafalque parties for Anzac Day.

- A dedicated and enthusiastic Unit Support Committee, which represents the community and parents; and provides additional support beyond the role of Navy and the Commonwealth.
- The dedication of the ANC Adult Cadet Staff, to supervise and run the program, which is at the core of the Youth Development program and empowers our cadets to flourish.
- And finally, but not least, a group of committed youth and their parents and guardians who participate and support the program.

Having previously visited Mackay for *TS Pioneer* in its 60th Anniversary Year in 2019 and its exercise of its rights to conduct a Freedom of Entry to the City of Mackay, I can attest that *TS Pioneer* has all of these attributes in abundance.

Mr Matt Rowe, President of the Navy League of Australia will shortly award the shield sponsored by the League to *TS Pioneer*.

Today I represent the Chief of Navy to present his accompanying award pennant to *TS Pioneer*. This award is a Navy Signal Flag, the Flotilla Pennant which is a collective signal for a group of ships, which is defaced by the Chief of Navy's personal flag and annotated by the year of award, 2023. A very visible symbol of success and recognition.

The CN Award Pennant is to be flown from the yardarm from today at each parade for *TS Pioneer* for 12 months until a successor pennant is awarded. It is then to be retired from active service on the yardarm but may be mounted in the Training Ship as recognition of this award in 2023.

Congratulations *TS Pioneer*! Commander Todd Gavan, ANC as the recent Commanding Officer of *TS Pioneer* accepted the award pennant and transferred to the signal party for hoisting.

On behalf of the Chief of Navy – **Bravo Zulu** – Well Done *TS Pioneer*.

### President's Remarks on the Award to Mackay's *TS Pioneer* of the NLA Efficiency Award

I am so very privileged to have been invited here today, as President of the Navy League of Australia, to present the Navy League of Australia Award for the Most Efficient Training Ship of the Australian Navy Cadets.

The Navy League has had a long, and ongoing, history of supporting Navy Cadets in Australia. We are a maritime nation and a strong Navy and capable maritime industry are key elements of our national wellbeing and vital to the freedom of Australia.

Today, though, we are so very privileged to gather here in this special place *TS Pioneer*. This place has been looked after by you, and your Navy Cadet predecessors so well. For that you should be commended. And of course, gatherings and like Yuwibura rituals, have been taking place for millennia before you in and around this area.

Nowadays, though, in a time when we can often hear much negativity about youth, we see before us a fine example of hard work, achievement, and prospect. It is so wonderful to be in front of a group of, not only tomorrow's leaders, but these youth leaders of today, here before us so resplendent, and likely filled with mixed feelings of pride and humility.

Hold your heads high *TS Pioneer*. You have done yourselves, this great unit and your wonderful city and region, so very proud. You are today's finest.

To the supporters of these wonderful young leaders, thank you. As a result of your guidance, we see before us, a beacon for others of how to behave, how to be a good person, what is important in life and those doing it so well as to be awarded this prize, the Navy League of Australia Award for the Most Efficient Training Ship of the Australian Navy Cadets.

Of course, the prize is just a token, albeit one of substance and long standing. One you can claim forevermore. But of course, the real prize is the knowledge that within, you are better, more, improved. You have sought out and accepted a challenge, dealt with your doubts, put aside distractions, usually at great expense to yourself. Individually, at first, but then you've come together as a group, and eventually as a team. And now, so highly effective, you've been nationally successful. Your part in this is as important as each other's.

Ladies and gentlemen, proud parents and guests, I commend to you *TS Pioneer*, and ask you to join me in congratulating each and every member of the Most Efficient Training Ship of the Australian Navy Cadets.

Well done. ■





# COMMANDER ROBERT OTTO ALBERT AO RFD RD RAN

NLA NSW DIVISION PRESIDENT



Robert Albert, pictured at Alberts in 2012 (Image Edwina Pickles).

*On behalf of the Navy League of Australia, Mr John Jeremy AM writes:*

On 7 February 2024 a dedicated supporter of the Navy League of Australia and the Royal Australian Navy, Robert Otto Albert, passed away at the age of 89. Robert, or Otto as he was known to many, was born on 14 December 1934 to Alexis Albert (later Sir Alexis) and his wife Elsa. Robert's mother was Swedish, a link surviving today. Two brothers followed. Ted and Tony both predeceased Robert in 1990 and 1999.

Robert did not immediately join the family music and entertainment company, Alberts, but studied law at the University of Sydney before joining the Sydney law firm Allen, Allen and Hemsley. In 1965 he joined the Board of the Albert's holding company Albert Investments. He became chair of the company on his father's death in 1996.

Robert Albert was a generous supporter of many worthy causes including the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the University of Sydney, the Sydney Dance Company, Mission Australia, the Sydney Children's Hospital and Taronga Zoo to name but a few. The Australian Ballet also benefitted from Robert's philanthropy and he served on the Ballet's board for 25 years.

In addition to his business, Robert found time to serve in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve from 1955 to 1977, retiring as Commander RANR. He was awarded the Reserve Decoration (RD) and Reserve Forces Decoration (RFD) in recognition of his naval service.

Robert loved the sea and sailing and was a very active member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, in later years sailing his yacht *Norn* in the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron/Sydney Amateur Sailing Club Combined Half Ton Division — later the RSYS Division 3. Robert served on the RSYS General Committee from 1984 to 1990 and chaired the Election Committee for many years. He was made a life member of the Squadron in 2021.

His maritime interests extended to the Sydney Heritage Fleet, of which he was Patron for many years and very generous donor providing many millions of dollars towards the Fleet's restoration and operation of historic vessels, including the Albert family's schooner *Boomerang* which was donated to the Fleet. The Fleet's magnificently restored barque, *James Craig*, would not exist today but for the generous contribution of Robert Albert to the restoration cost.

Robert retained his contact with the naval world through his membership of the Navy League of Australia. For decades he was

the President of the NSW Division of the League presiding over an executive comprising members from the navy, merchant marine, shipbuilding and other backgrounds. The management of the NSW Division was largely in the generous hands of Albert Investments, with Robert's long-standing assistant, Liz Sykes, keeping everything on course until her quite recent death, a major blow to Robert. Through the NSW Division, Robert provided financial support for the Navy League's quarterly journal *The NAVY*, ensuring that it was available to members and the general public at a modest cost. He also generously supported Malcolm Longstaff who took on the considerable task of writing the history of the Navy League of Australia. *Keeping Watch: A History of the Navy League of Australia 1895–2015* was published by the League in 2016.

Robert was also a member of the Navy League's Federal Council, and his contributions to the discussion at annual meetings were insightful, often direct, but also wise and entertaining. His absence from the Council will be greatly felt by the League.

Robert had a way of getting things done which was usually very effective. A request from Robert, or suggestion that one might take on a certain task, was not optional, more a direction. Such suggestions were usually followed without delay and in very good spirit.

Robert Otto Albert was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1993 for services to the community and was promoted to Officer in the Order (AO) in 2001 in recognition of his philanthropic support of charitable, cultural, and educational institutions.

Robert is survived by Libby, his wife of 55 years, his son David and daughters Kirsty and Jane, and their children.

On 27 February, some 450 people gathered together at the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron to celebrate the life of Robert Otto Albert. It was an impressive and fitting tribute to a man so widely loved, admired, and respected. He will be greatly missed.

*Mr Neil Baird (Baird Maritime) longstanding member of the NLA NSW Division writes:*

The Australian maritime world has lost one of its great contributors with the death of Robert "Otto" Albert last week. The scion of a wealthy established Sydney family, Otto, in addition to his strong connections with the sea and his business and investment acumen, was a leading but discreet philanthropist. He was a generous benefactor to the arts, education, sailing and maritime history and a practical promoter of the betterment of the Royal Australian Navy.

Even into his ninetieth year, this former commander in the RAN Reserve maintained a strong and active interest in the Navy. For three decades he was president of the Navy League of Australia's New South Wales Branch and an active member of the League's Federal Executive. Most importantly, he was a very strong intellectual and financial supporter of *The NAVY*, the authoritative magazine of the NLA. Indeed, without Otto's very generous financial support, the magazine would not have survived.

Among his more prominent maritime projects was his substantial support of the Sydney Heritage Fleet and, in particular, the restoration of the historic 150-year-old iron barque James Craig from what was pretty much a wreck. He was also an active competitor and committee member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron.

His work with and contributions to the NLA were valuable and of very long standing. He was really one of its most important pillars. I met Otto many years ago through the NLA and joined his NSW Executive when we merged the NLA's Federal Advisory Council with it to form what Otto called a naval "think tank." That is what it effectively and quickly became. Led by Otto with his quick and cheeky wit, its meetings were interesting, inspiring, and fun and attracted a crew of very and widely experienced thinkers and doers. They were a mixture of maritime business people, a naval architect and former naval ship builder, a master mariner, a senior academic and several former naval officers. Its thoughtful, innovative, and practical intellectual output, much of it published in *The NAVY* magazine, was highly regarded. It is sad that recent generations of RAN leadership failed to act on most of its recommendations. Had they done so, the RAN would undoubtedly be in much less of a mess than it is now.

Given his wide spread of interests and the numerous beneficiaries of his generosity of spirit and wit, Otto will be sadly missed by many and well beyond his own immediate family.

*Deborah Jones, writing in the Sydney Morning Herald, 21 February 2024 writes, inter alia:*

**He didn't seek recognition or accolades. Robert was a direct person but also a very humble one**

Ian McRae, general manager of the Australian Ballet

Businessman and philanthropist Robert Otto Albert, who died in Sydney on February 7 aged 89, was a fourth-generation member of the fabled music publishing house that bears the Albert name.

He was an ardent sailor, fine pianist, wine expert, dedicated follower of the performing arts and selfless donor to myriad causes, but above all came family.

Robert's life was anchored by his wife, Libby, their three children and 11 grandchildren. There were the younger brothers who shared the rigours of boarding school with him, and their children.

The Alberts story started in 1885 when Robert's great-grandfather Jacques Albert, a Swiss immigrant, set up shop in Newtown as a watchmaker. He was also an extremely good violinist and music was soon a family tradition.

Robert graduated from the University of Sydney with an arts/law degree in 1961 and joined law firm Allen Allen & Hemsley, specialising primarily in commercial law and conveyancing. He lived at St Paul's College while at university and kept a close connection with it. Robert was St Paul's College bursar for 15 years from 1987 and a member of the college council for 21 years.

The establishment of St Paul's College Foundation in 1977 was one of his most transformational achievements. Among its roles is the administration of a scholarship program and if there wasn't enough money for all deserving applicants, Robert would quietly make a personal contribution.

In 1965, he became a director of Albert Investments Pty Limited (AIP), the holding company of Alberts. In 1984, along with his lawyer brother Tony, he found the lure of working full time with Alberts too strong.

After his father's death in 1996 he became chair of AIP. He held the position for the rest of his life.

Alberts always had a strong philanthropic streak but Robert's personal interest was kickstarted when he was in the Naval Reserve, starting in 1955 and ending in 1977. "He would do two weeks' paid annual training. It was tax-free and Dad says he decided each year to give away the money, and always gave it to the Sydney Day Nursery, which delivered early childhood education, child care and other services," said his daughter Jane.

Robert believed committed, annual giving had the possibility of doing most good. He adored being on the water and enthusiastically embraced causes associated with the sea. He was a devoted member of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron and a long-time committee member.

He gave to the Navy League, the Maritime Museum and Sydney Heritage Fleet and was instrumental in the project to restore the 1874 barque James Craig.

The Reserve Decoration (RD) and Reserve Forces Decoration (RFD) were awarded for naval reserve service. The University of Sydney made him an honorary fellow in 2002 and in 2021 the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron made Robert a life member.

Robert is survived by his wife of 55 years, children Kirsty, David and Jane and his grandchildren. David is currently Alberts CEO, Kirsty an Alberts executive director and Jane a journalist and member of the AIP board.

*The Editor writes:*

**Always steer for the sound of the guns**

As lead of *The NAVY* editorial board Robert's advice was consistently sage, and pithy – "always steer for the sound of the guns," his unwaivering advice. As befits a senior naval officer.

Robert also maintained a family tradition of service from the beginning of the RAN and the tragic death of his Uncle Otto Albert in 1914, after matriculating at RAN College CRESWELL in 1913 – as an inaugural member of the famous *Argonaut* intake. For which the Otto Albert prize for Seamanship is still awarded by the College. In this regard, naval service by the Albert family uniquely connected the 20th and 21st centuries. A rare achievement.

You will be missed old friend – plane sailing as you cross the immortal bar and are welcomed to shores beyond our horizons. Which you will, no doubt, swiftly make ship shape.

*Aeneas Blake*







USS VIRGINIA (SSN 774) On Launch.

## PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE

As outlined in the editorial (*Crows' Nest*) the more the projected changes of the DSR are examined – and those of the FSR – the more they stay the same. Where same is disastrous.

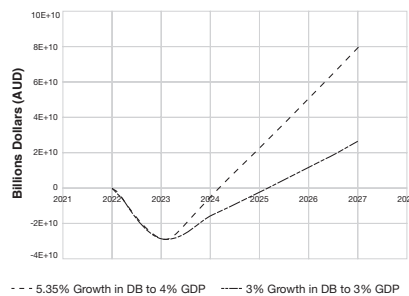
The DSR budget stripped out from Defence \$3Billion a year until 2027/8 – including an annual overshoot handback, of \$1 Billion a year. Due precisely to the cuts and freezing of the Defence budget – warned of by NLA Defence analysts. Including Defence, and the DSR Authors – Stephen Smith and Peter Dean. Houston has gone missing in action – which is, perhaps, no surprise given that many of the disasters the DSR sought to correct, occurred on his watch as CDF, 2005-2011.

The extra \$1.4Billion promised to Navy to implement the FSR does not start being funded until the forward estimates, in 2027/8. Similarly, the circa \$20 Billion signed off for the AUKUS Submarine programme (22 March) is not funded until the forward estimates. While sounding like a lot, the reality is that this represents about 20% of build costs, for a programme (from end to end, 2032 (???) to 2075) that is expected to cost \$300 Billion. In planning terms, Defence has already run out of the 21st Century. And time is not on our side.

## FREEZE FORWARD

Under the forward estimates, the DSR cuts, freezing, and inflation will remove \$45B from Defence. Effectively removing one full year (at about \$50B a year) of Defence funding over four years – four for the price of three?! Allowing for Defence budget increases from 2027/2028 in the order of 6% (as recommended by the DSR), all of the annual budget increases (about \$2.5 Billion a year) will be absorbed by the *Hunter-class* and AUKUS. With nothing left for the rest of Defence.

The DSR authors recommended an adaptive budget that invested in change (at between 5-6% increases per annum, from 2023). A position subsequently supported in commentary by Stephen Smith, Peter Dean, and Kim Beazley. This would have achieved an *adaptive change budget*, see figure 1, that would have enabled the DSR to be realised.



**Fig 1: AUKUS DSR Adaptive Budgets envisaged by Stephen Smith (to 4% GDP) and Kim Beazley (to 3% GDP)**

The reason that the DSR was not invested in is complicated and, as is becoming increasing apparent, tied up not so much with national interests but politics. As it always was. However, in this case it is tied up in Labor factional politics. Richard Marles is not part of the inner factional clique – and would appear to be neither the actual DPM, nor the real Minister of Defence.

## WHO'S CLIQUE – WHO'S INTERESTS?

The Albanese inner clique, led by the Prime Minister, allegedly includes Senators Penny Wong, the Foreign Minister, and Katy Gallagher, the Finance Minister (junior to Dr Jim Chalmers, as Treasurer). The two have been dubbed the actual Deputy (or co-Deputy) Prime Ministers.

The National Security Committee is formed from Ministers across Government, and – up and until March 2024 – included the head of ASIO, Director-General Mike Burgess, and the head of ASIS, Director-General Kerri Hartland. Their removal as standing members of the committee and to “invited,

only status” – like CDF and the individual Service chiefs – is problematic. The question is why?

An emerging reason appears to be that Labor is shaping up for an election – latest May 2025, and that it wants to move closer to China. Without the warnings inevitably being raised by Burgess and Hartland. Without them, they have a freer hand to make political changes, in party interests.

## NSC OR BUST?

On the NSC, sit nine Ministers including the PM. The wider clique around Albanese – including Penny Wong, Katy Gallagher, and Chris Bowen (see *Red Duster*) – dominate and control the key ministries. Including Defence. Richard Marles is marginalised, as is Jim Chalmers. In effect, Katy Gallagher has become the *de-facto* Treasurer. As witnessed by the dance being played in Treasury, to allow Chalmers to be seen to be in charge – when, in actuality, it is Katy Gallagher. The PM essentially owns three of the four Defence Departments (PM&C, Treasury, DFAT) – so completely marginalising Defence and Marles. Even if Richard Marles was to fight for Defence – which he has palpably failed to do, so far – he is completely cut out.

Clare O'Neill and Mark Dreyfus have their own performance problems – regarding the failing turn-back-the-boats policy, and the release of detainees onto Australian streets.

The NSC (unlike the U.S. National Security Agency – it is in actuality run by PM&C. All roads effectively lead to PM&C – and PM&C has duplicated all departments. The only unsung, effective Minister on the NSC is Pat Conroy – one of the few to make any sense. But he is so far removed as to be almost irrelevant.

## ARE YOU THERE MORIARTY?

There is an old Mess Game – now banned from all messes – entitled “Are you there Moriarty?” The game begins with two contenders both blindfold, although one is not. Both also have rolled up newspapers – although one has something more solid in theirs. The game begins with the call “are you, their Moriarty?” by one of the contenders. To which the contender replies “Yes”, and his contestant then seeks to wack him with his rolled-up newspapers. Sadly, newspapers are now a thing of the past in most messes – like mess games, and fun!

The real blindfolded contender seeks out and generally misses or achieves a gentle tap. In response the non-blindfolded contender with the “heavy” newspaper achieves a massive hit. And so the game goes on, until eventually it dawns on the poor contender that he has been hoodwinked. In reality, he has no sight, control, nor influence on what is going on.

So it appears with Defence. The vast body of APS and APS Contractors (16,000 plus 34,000) turn up for work every day, along with “ADF Canberra”. They collectively put on their blindfolds and politely – genuflecting first to Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) – call out to each other. They arm themselves with the news of the day – from their social media – and start going about their business. Seeking to land blows for Defence. The vast majority (of APS and loyal contractors) are honest, hardworking souls, who place non-Canberra soldiers, sailors, and aviators front and centre. They also know that there is no time – that we ran out a long time ago – and that, at the same time, there is no money.

### Hypercompetitive

In this hypercompetitive environment, not only is one hand tied behind their backs and they are blindfolded and lying flat on the ground – unable even to rise to their knees – but the weapon they thought they had, has been taken away. To be replaced by Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). A Billion dollar “enterprise” now consuming 1000s of people – further freezing any actual adaptation or change. Precisely by freezing all planning and designing – as a means of controlling the budget. A non-adaptive budget, since there is no contingency funding for change and all the money is committed.

So, there is your fine, well paid Public Servant at the centre of the Canberra universe (or bubble – take your pick). The hits just keep on coming, thump, thump, thump – the stressors of bad behaviours, similarly keep growing. No wonder, then, that Canberra is apparently (and tragically) suicide-centre for many APS and ADF.

Think of the poor benighted ADF Canberra and APS/Consultants genuinely trying their best – and being continually hit over their heads. They are effectively being administered traumatic brain injuries (TBI), day after day. Moriarty is indeed there – alive and well. Though not in Defence or the ADF – and the blindfold is never removed. Tragically, the joke is on the rest of Australia.

### DAYS TO GO BUT FEW...

Readers will know, that for five years *The NAVY* – and indeed others in ADF and the country – have advocated for the resignation of CDF. This he has failed to do – inflicting grave damage on ADF, and preventing two generations of fighting, thinking, senior officers from being drawn forward. He had many occasions to resign – and to lance the boil. His staying challenges the ethical and moral base of the CDF position, without which Defence has no standing.

The same cannot be said for VCDF, who – thrice promised the CDF position, and thrice denied – would have been just the right



HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH (R08) Entering Rosyth for emergency docking repairs March 2024 (Image RN).

person in our history. He has done both too long (6 years) and, at the same time, so much. He will be known as “the best CDF we never had”. He would, if he had been appropriately elevated in 2022, have become the first RAN CDF in over two decades..

Best wishes Vice Admiral David Johnston AO RAN on your well-deserved retirement later this year. Those who know, know you have done a fabulous job – despite it all, landing some fine blows on the grim Moriarty. Time to take your bows.

### WONG ON AUKUS AND CHINA

In a wide-ranging interview between Penny Wong (PW) – the actual co-DPM – and James Curran (JC) (at the *Australian Financial Review* Business Summit in March), the following edited comments were made:

PW: What is the motivation for everything we do? Our motivation is always stability. It is always peace ... And how do you achieve stability? We started with talking about a region where “no country dominates, and no country is dominated”? I mean, part of that is wanting to ensure that no country ever makes the calculation that the risks of conflict, the benefits of conflict, outweigh the risks. Central to the stability we are working towards, you need both deterrence and assurance. And both foreign policy and defence operate in the world of deterrence and assurance in their different ways.

*Australia will eventually acquire a nuclear submarine fleet under the AUKUS pact unveiled in 2021.*

PW: ... I think we have had a pretty sorry history over the last nine years of defence acquisition. I’m from South Australia, so I followed the submarines debate very closely. This is our third plan. Remember, there was going to be the Japanese, and then it was

going to be the French, so we lost too much time under the previous governments, and there were three prime ministers. But one of the important things about the optimal pathway which was announced is obviously it means the capability gap which was potentially there, is not there.

JC: What about sovereignty? Mr Marles believes that so long as there is an Australian flag put up near the periscope, they’re ours, but Kurt Campbell is on the public record as saying, even if we give the submarines to Australia, “they’re not lost to the US”.

PW: Well, hang on. I think Kurt said a lot about working with allies and partners for stability and for the rules-based order and one of America’s strengths is its alliance network. Yeah. Richard Marles did a very important statement to the parliament about sovereignty, and he made the point that this is a capability which would be owned, maintained, regulated and operated and remain under Australian command.

### CUTS

In March, the US DOD announced a reduction of 50% of Virginia-class nuclear-powered attack submarine orders in fiscal year 2025, a drop from the two-per-year required to meet the Trump era demand to create a 100-strong submarine force by the mid-2030s. Based significantly on the *Virginia-class*.

Peter Dean (co-author of the DSR, and director of foreign policy and defence at the Australian-U.S. Government funded US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney) is a historian, ex-Army reservist, with a PhD in military strategy from UNSW. Writing in *The Australia*, 22 March, he accused the “Anti-AUKUS mob of being blinded by incoherence and confusion,” given the announced submarine build cuts – following the





passage of the 2024 National Defence Authorisation Act (including AUKUS) on 15 December 2023.

As Peter will know, there can be room for two truths: that AUKUS has been signed up to – but that U.S. shipyards may not be up to supporting the combined submarine build program. Something *The NAVY* (and NLA) have been raising as a concern for over a decade. That does not make “us” anti-AUKUS. *The NAVY* and NLA support for AUKUS and nuclear-powered submarines is on record, and goes back over three decades. A time when all but *The NAVY* and the NLA dismissed such thinking as absurd and “we” were attacked for promoting. Including by academics.

### Real concerns

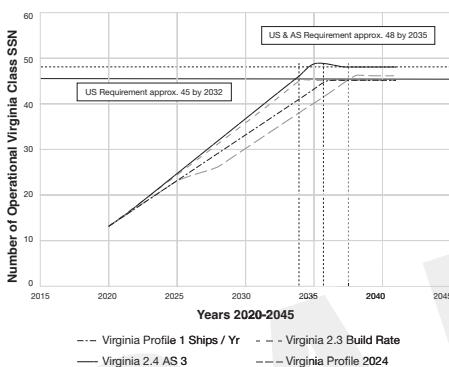
There are very real concerns that AUKUS might not deliver, on time or ever. There are also identifiable factions within Labor, for whom this would be an entirely acceptable result. Dean would have been better addressing these factions and building the case for AUKUS and potential Australian alternatives, including new UUV, and new shipyards, that might deliver on time. He may be wise to read this article from an empirical perspective. As an Army man, he will know “hope is not a plan.”

### By Editor.

Peter, you previously contributed to *The NAVY* in 2015, as a junior academic and would be very welcome to respond.

### In Actuality...

...the order rate needs to be higher, estimated at ordering 2.3 submarines a year, to deliver 45 *Virginia-class* submarines by 2032, as older ones decommission.



**Fig 2: Virginia-class build requirements necessary to meet US, and AS needs under AUKUS – Placing the Program at high risk**

The decrease, reflects two factors: the antiquated and inefficient nature of U.S. shipbuilding and associated logistics bottlenecks. With the two private shipyards that produce the *Virginia-class* -- General Dynamics and Huntington Ingalls Industries -- facing mounting backlogs due to limited capacity and personnel shortages. With no planning to expand, modernise, or create

new (additional) modern shipyards. At the same time, the Pentagon is under massive pressure to counter the China buildup while under fiscal limitations.

The two-boats-per-year pace, did not address U.S. demand. To cater for AUKUS, the U.S. needs to construct 2.4 submarines per year. According to the *Congressional Research Service*, the actual delivery rate has averaged 1.2 boats per year for the past five years.

Assuming that the US build rate is cut to one from 2024 through to 2028 and then recovers to 2 submarines a year (not yet achieved), the USN will not reach 45 submarines until the late 2030s. In actuality, it might be worse.

If the U.S. is to deliver three *Virginia-class* submarines to Australia in 2032, 2035, and 2038, and maintain its own submarine rate of production, it will need to build 2.4 submarines a year, to deliver 48 by 2035. As earlier submarines are de-commissioned at end of design-life.

At a rate of 2.4 a year, this is twice the rate of production that the U.S. has achieved in the recent past. It is therefore highly improbable, given existing constraints. Chief amongst them being the supply chain necessary to build, maintain, and sustain the most complex existential artefact built by “mankind.”

The clue may be in “mankind” – since the next generation SSN may need to be optionally crewed. Giving rise to a new industry – rather than building on old infotechnologies, increasingly obsolete if not obsolescent. As were pre-Dreadnoughts, a hundred years ago.

The U.S. Defense budget request included \$4 billion in investments in the submarine industrial base, which the Pentagon described as “a historic investment in supplier and workforce development as well as infrastructure expansion and technological advances.” This is assessed as being 10% of the actual investment required – to generate at least two new, modern shipyards over the next five years. In reality, “we” are out of time, without the parts/logistics networks necessary to recreate this sovereign technology. Hence the need to do something differently – as Einstein might have observed.

### PREPARING FOR TAIWAN

In early 2024, for the first time the Pentagon requested funding related to Taiwan in the form of drawdown authority, an executive power that allows supplies to be sent to foreign partners. The funding would enable the U.S. Armed Forces to replenish its dwindling inventory of munitions and equipment that have been transferred to Taiwan (Ukraine, and Israel).

This drawdown is now causing grave concerns to U.S. planners, with an estimation in years to replenish U.S. stocks alone. Unlike in WW1 and WW2, the U.S. is having to underwrite the Global West’s arsenal – without the resources and budgets to do so. Or the massive transfer in Gold from the Allies to the U.S., that occurred in both world wars. Leaving the British Empire bankrupt. This is something China, Iran, and Russia are all working towards – to bankrupt the U.S., at the same time as breaking the U.S. Dollar. This is not yet the end of the beginning – and the U.S. is ill prepared. While at the same time witnessing the significant breakdown of its society at home – unable, it would appear, to secure its own borders, let alone police the world’s.

### GREENWICH STATION

HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH failed to sail in February for a major NATO exercise, STEADFAST DEFENDER. HMS PRINCE OF WALES, was similarly withdrawn after being abruptly scrambled and then scratched from the exercise. The concerns for HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH appear to be similar to the propeller and shaft issues that took HMS POW out of commission for over a year.

The UK Ministry of Defence did not give a reason for the delayed departure of HMS PRINCE OF WALES, saying in a statement that the aircraft carrier was “due to sail from Portsmouth soon, subject to suitable tide and weather conditions”.

From protecting vessels against Houthi militants in the Red Sea to deterring Russian and Chinese aggression, the Royal Navy is seeking a central role in conflict flashpoints across the world. Yet long-standing government underfunding has impacted the Royal Navy's combat readiness.

Admiral Lord West, former First Sea Lord (Chief) of the Royal Navy and previous Minister, Labour Parliamentary Under-Secretary (junior Minister) for Security and Counter-Terrorism, 2007-2010 noted the cuts had “had a serious impact” on the RN’s ability to respond to global threats. He also listed other issues including:

- an aging fleet of ballistic missile submarines
- precariously low weapon stocks
- insufficient engineering spares;
- a gaping lack of personnel.
- Insufficient ships, particularly destroyers and frigates.

The UK’s aircraft carriers are dependent on foreign allies for support vessels on operational deployments and during NATO exercises. ■



## MUA POLITICAL ACTIVISM CONTINUES?

Following its injudicious attack on Israel in November, the MUA appears to have become somewhat silent on the matter. Potentially because it views the current Government's stance as being supportive. Noting the Foreign Minister's delayed and curtailed visit to the Middle East. Which appeared to achieve little but to attract criticism from both sides. Or is it because, Labor caucus is being intimidated and is now doing the unions' bidding? Noting Federal MPs are increasingly in the sights of pro-Palestinian protesters, demanding the government do more to stop Israel's attacks on Gaza. In March, Labor frontbencher the Hon. Dr Anne Aly (Cowan, WA), Minister for Childhood Education and Youth, was targeted by protesters, calling her a "coward" and attacking Labor.

Failure to hold pro-Gaza (and Hamas) protesters to account – as seen on October 9 at the Opera House – is leading to more division, and unrest. In the UK, pro-Gaza/Hamas threats against MPs have placed Parliamentary governance into disarray. Largely because of the lack of action by UK Police Forces. Who, like the NSW Police on 9 October, looked the other way. And/or made arrests of those remembering the humans murdered, raped, kidnapped, and assaulted on 7 October, or carrying an Israeli flag. Carried out by a terrorist organisation that has found succour, secure areas, and funding through UNWRA – paid for by the West. For which Australia resumed funding in March.

## JOUSTING OR JOKING AT WINDMILLS?

The unbridled MUA support for offshore windfarms off Portland and Bunbury continues apace. Despite increasing local opposition due to the damage being done to fishing and pristine seascapes around the country – while delivering yet more expensive intermittent power. At the cost of future generations – no longer able to afford the choice between cooling/heating and eating. Exactly because of the political attack on *reliables* such as Coal, Oil, Gas, and Nuclear (COGN). While continuing to import highly dirty (to manufacture and dispose of) turbines and windmill blades from China. For which, in another placatory move by the PM, the Government announced the dropping of its anti-dumping action against Chinese wind turbines.

According to the increasingly discredited – even by his own Department – Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, extensively championed by the MUA's Victoria Branch Secretary, Rob Lumsden:



The Philippines says Chinese boats are 'swarming' reefs in the South China Sea March 2024 (Image Philippine Navy).

*The declaration of this offshore wind zone kicks off a process that will deliver and sustain many thousands of long-term and rewarding jobs for Victorian maritime workers.*

*The expertise and skill of MUA members has built and sustained the offshore energy sector for generations, and the new jobs on offer through offshore wind will bolster this already thriving industry of skilled seafarers, offshore workers and dockers who keep the lights on for people and businesses throughout the nation.*

Perhaps the lights Lumsden is referring to are those of union members? He should be reminded of basic physics. To support intermittent renewables, requires base load reliable (COGN) energy generation of 60-70%.

*When the wind don't blow, or the sun don't shine (at night or during storms), there is no or minimal power generated.*

The costs of this is going to make swathes of the Blue Collar workforce unemployable and Australia even less able to compete on the international playing field. Despite all its comparative advantages – and an ability (if powered in Australia) to reduce carbon smelting costs by up to 10 tonnes of carbon, for every tonne of steel. Given that the dirtiest producer on the planet is China.

## ENOUGH'S ENOUGH?

Writing in *The Interpreter (Lowy Institute for International Policy)*, Baird Maritime (21 March), and *The Australian* (22 March), Peter Layton wrote:

It's time to send a signal to Beijing that a crisis is approaching.

China's use of greyzone tactics is intensifying. This worsening trend line has been evident for several years and seems headed towards an unintended violent incident, a crisis, and possibly armed conflict.

Attempts need to be made now to persuade China to desist. Quoting Sealight (Stanford University), Layton suggests that Chinese actions that could be reciprocated.

*An advantage of reciprocating is that Chinese complaints would appear hypocritical.*

Reciprocation would, he suggests, hopefully send a strong message to China to wind down its grey zone activities. However, it may not work. In reciprocation one can, possibly, see the hallmarks of Deterrence – punishing bad behaviours and encouraging good. As in trust but verify through reciprocity?

An advantage of reciprocating is that Chinese complaints would appear hypocritical. If an action is good enough for China, surely others can follow in its footsteps?

Chinese escalation through the use of violence would be hard to justify, since the other nations aren't escalating, they are simply reciprocating. There would be an argument for publicly warning China that its grey zone actions might be reciprocated. Such uncertainty may in itself induce caution.

There is little likelihood that this Government, though its current signalling to China and its eye on the Chinese vote at the next election, will support any of our near neighbours in pushing back, let alone reciprocity. In fact quite the opposite. ■







**RE-MATCH:** JS KAGA (DDH184 / C184?) is undergoing trials off Virginia after small aircraft carrier (CVL) conversion for F-35B aircraft (Image JMSDF).



**DESPATCH:** C-551 ITS GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI (C-551) To Decommission - entering HMNB Portsmouth for NATO Exercise Steadfast Defender Feb 2024 (Image Royal Navy).



**DESPATCH:** HMAS ANZAC (F150) to Decommission (2024) due to crewing shortages and the impacts of the DSR and SFR (Image SGT Craig Barrett).