DEFENCE WHITE PAPER 2015

Thank you for the opportunity for contributing to the public consultation process under the auspices of the Royal United Services Institute in Sydney yesterday (Tuesday 29th July).

As requested by your facilitator, RADM Goldrick, I am submitting a summary of my comments to the forum under the following headings;

- Objectives for the ADF, and Strategic interests;
- International relationships;
- Personnel/Defence Culture;
- Defence and Regional Australia;
- Force Structure and Preparedness;

Objectives for the ADF and Strategic interests

It would be helpful if the preamble to the White Paper clearly and unequivocally stated who we are as a nation, what we stand for, and what we aspire to.

The linkage to our Constitution should ideally be made (either in its present form, or as amended by any future referendum). A draft of such a preamble follows for consideration. It has been influenced by the presentation by the Director of the AWM (Dr Brendon Nelson) earlier yesterday, pertaining to our status as a medium sized power, but one with global influence; one that can influence other countries and cultures, but not to dictate to them.

“Australia is a robust and vibrant Commonwealth; a democracy within the Westminster tradition. It has a proud history, and is confident of its future, both nationally and internationally. The Australian Defence Force acts to defend the country and its institutions, and to contribute internationally to global stability and peace.”

International Relationships

The role of forging relationships at Staff Colleges should not be underestimated. I would advocate the fostering and expansion of such institutions with increased participation by ADF and civilian personnel in corresponding colleges in Beijing, Tokyo, Islamabad, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Jakarta and Port Moresby (in addition to the traditional UK, Canada, NZ & US houses of tertiary military excellence). This should be accompanied by reciprocal and enhanced representation(s) by such countries at our Joint Staff College at Westin Creek.

I rate the value of a putative CDF/CA picking up the phone in the event of a crisis, and speaking to the colleague that he/she met as an O5 at Staff College, to be as important as that of an ADF Division.
Personnel/Defence Culture

There would appear to me to be a need for enhanced cultural and language training for our personnel. In particular, I would advocate the need to engage with the Islamic leaders for both the education of our personnel serving in countries under Islamic jurisdiction, and for the recruitment and training of Islamic Australians into the ADF.

Defence and Regional Australia

In my discussions with the forum, although not directly related to the Department we discussed, inter alia;

- The potential role of Australia as a safe and secure repository for toxic (including nuclear) waste;
- The need for increased awareness of the relevance of secure water, food and other resources, with particular emphasis on the need to enhance our presence in Northern Australia;
- Promoting our national interests in Antarctica (from the perspectives of Sovereignty, Resources, Scientific Research); and,
- The role of climate change.

I realise that these are not of direct ADF relevance, but should be cross referenced (and actively supported where relevant) to other Government documents in the White Paper.

Force Structure and Preparedness

I write from a perspective of being the 3rd (of 4) generation Navy, with an emphasis on Defence Health, Naval Aviation and International Disaster Response.

Australia is essentially a maritime nation, and we are fortunate that we share no international borders. Not surprisingly, I would advocate continuation of the present emphasis on development of maritime defence capability, on, over and under the sea, in the real-time battle-space, and in cyber-space.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,

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Councillor RUSI (NSW)