This submission is made in regard to the public call for public submissions in regard to future strategic decision making on the issue of Defence.

As is obvious from the above header I do not hold any specific qualifications that relate to this policy area.

However over the years I have followed via newspaper reporting and specialized articles commentary upon defence matters.

I wish to offer a perspective in regard to submarine capability.

From my reading and observations the initial proposal to introduce and develop the Collins class submarine has been an absolute disaster in regard to their operation capability, maintenance requirements, overall funding needs and design process.

It is not intended to dwell at length on these matters other than to offer the comment that politicians of both sides of Parliament have much to be ashamed of in regard to decision making on this class of submarine and the vast sums of public money that have been expended on these submarines.

It is absolutely essential that any future decision on submarine selection be directed towards ensuring that such decision-making strives to be elevated above petty issues and be constantly directed towards achieving an effective and efficient fleet.

At the outset it is considered that Australian policy in refusing to consider the introduction of Nuclear submarines is in my opinion nonsensical, short sighted and serves to immediately place our country in a situation whereby highly viable and extremely sensible and practical options are being denied consideration.

It is comprehended that from a political perspective the avoidance of the use of nuclear power is driven by pressures within the Australian populace that view such power source as being inappropriate. However its wide effective usage, particularly in submarine service, should at least allow for an objective overview as to the potential that nuclear submarines can offer in meeting the demands of modern strategic fleet.

The Australian populace should at least be faced with the economic demands and service constraints that arise from continuing rejection of nuclear power in submarines and the purchase of such submarines from overseas sources.

In regard to selection of submarines driven by other power sources it is considered that Australia must be prepared to explore the potential of well proven submarines produced by other countries.
It is appreciated that this approach could have a detrimental impact on local industries and such impact can result in detrimental economic forces in Australia.

This will require some form of compromise and elements of political expediency will emerge. It is vital that such expediency does not send Australia down a pathway similar to that experienced by the Collins class submarines. Any compromise program must be closely vetted against an analytical listing of the diverse ranges of areas that resulted in the Collins submarine program becoming the debacle that it is today.

The attitude of the current opposition, allied with the greens, points to significant difficulty arising in any pathway that will result in the evolution of submarine program that is highly cost effective and which will ensure that optimum levels of service are achieved.

It is appreciated that the above remarks can be viewed as being idealistic but they offered in an endeavor to at least provide an indication that an appreciation exists in some quarters of the need pursue a strategic approach to future submarine fleets that has realistic and practical objectives that embody well founded evaluation and do not result in a need for virtual bottomless pit of money to service a submarine fleet.

Peter Davies