I welcome the initiative for citizens to submit to defence planning.

Specifically, I would address the submarine force planning, along the lines of

1) Deployment  flexibility
2) Manning

The vast coastline and potential operating spheres that Australian subs face demand fast speed of advance. An essentially static “hole in the water” platform, that diesel/electric subs provide, will not have the capability to rapidly deploy to remote locations, without detection.

While a credible threat when correctly positioned, no battle plan should be predicated on the enemy doing what we expect.

Currently, the Australian navy has at its disposal a D/E sub (Collins class) with long range and reasonable capabilities. It has been reported, however, that these boats often are not deployed because of a lack of crew(s). This does not lend confidence to the notion that an expanded sub fleet could be properly manned.

If we are to face manning problems, let the boats we do use be the best available. Have two crews for each. Quality, not quantity.

Conclusion; despite the difficulties in ‘selling’ the concept to the Australian public, the next class of boats should be nuclear. Every effort should be made to procure Virginia class attack boats from the USA. This would help support sub building and servicing in the US, along the lines of supporting the F35 platform in aviation. Australia is engaged in the nuclear fuel cycle, for better or worse. Let us use it in the most appropriate application.

The benefits of cross training with operators with a similar platform, if realised, could be the strongest benefits of such a plan. This sort of benchmarking works in aviation, for the same reasons, it should work in the submarine force. Similarly, revealed weaknesses and upgrades that fix them, should be organic to a cooperative training and development program.