The purpose of this Submission is to generate discussion by the White Paper Panel in a number of topical issues that are raised by the author and have been raised in the public domain. It is not intended to address each and every part of the Issues Paper in this Submission. The views contained herein are those of the author.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. A lot has changed in our region and the wider world in the years since the 2000 Defence White Paper.

1.2. In the intervening years, a number of Asian countries in our immediate region have increased defence spending considerably and have acquired capabilities to match or in some cases better our own.

1.3. Australia can now field a fully-fledged Brigade of warfighting quality and rotate that Brigade with others in accordance with operational requirements and the task at hand.

1.4. However Army still lacks the strategic depth and force multipliers needed to make it a true hardened fighting force with both offensive and defensive capability, able to conduct operations independently from another military partner (like the US).

1.5. The overall decline of the political and military influence of the US over time coupled with the rise of China makes it imperative that Australian forces have the tools needed to protect our interests in the event US support is unavailable.

1.6. In addition, the rise of religious extremism (again) generates concern in my mind as to how vulnerable Western Australia is to a terrorist operation.

1.7. It is time for the government to consider basing a full-time regular Army Regiment in Perth. Such a regiment could also form the basis (eventually) for a fourth active Army Brigade.
1.8. The submarine replacement discussion has been characterised by highlighting the inefficiencies of the naval shipbuilding sector. The problem with this mindset is that a naval shipbuilding industry is an industry worth having.

1.9. The government seems determined to try and leverage Australia’s new Free-Trade Agreement with Japan in these submarine discussions, which will no doubt upset China, but we should care less about what China thinks about our defence procurement: it is, quite frankly, none of their business.

1.10. Foreign policy shouldn’t dictate or influence defence procurement decisions – especially when your own industry is at stake.

1.11. The Soryu class boats themselves will not be state of the art when they are in-service circa-2025. Any future submarine must better or at the very least match the boats they will be replacing.

1.12. It is an appropriate time to conduct a study into the acquisition of an appropriate Close Air Support aircraft. US experience in Iraq and has demonstrated that a gunship with long loiter time based on a rugged and proven airframe saves lives on the battlefield and can provide a crucial edge in defeating an opponent.

1.13. The resistance to Self-Propelled Artillery needs to be reconsidered, or at the very least, considered in context with an alternative system such as a battlefield missile system with a capability in the 100-200 kilometre range.

1.14. The ADF must continue its hard work in reforming the culture of the services and eradicating the mindset that sexual and racial abuse and discrimination is acceptable.

1.15. However taking advantage of the ADF’s position as a leader in our communities, the ADF could be seen to be a leader in reforming society’s attitudes in this area. Moreover, recruitment and retention rates can and most likely will be effected by a failure to address these issues in the ADF – regardless of whether the problem is perceived or actual.
2. **Outlook**

2.1. A lot has changed in our region and the wider world in the years since the 2000 Defence White Paper. Having been distracted by a costly and bloody Global War on Terror for 10-12 years, the ADF needs a period of reset to take stock of what it has, who it is and where it wants to be in order to tackle the challenges that lay ahead.

2.2. In the intervening years, a number of Asian countries in our immediate region have increased defence spending considerably and have acquired capabilities to match or in some cases better our own. This period has also seen the rise of China as a major geopolitical and military power.

2.3. Similarly, ongoing unrest in the Middle East region poses a problem globally and has the potential to be a long-term, cataclysmic humanitarian crisis that must be addressed.

3. **Army units and distribution**

3.1. Defence has spent a lot of time and money reorganising the Army into Combat Brigades and this finally appears to be paying dividends – Australia can now field a fully-fledged Brigade of warfighting quality and rotate that Brigade with others in accordance with operational requirements and the task at hand. The Army has finally been brought into the 21st century and is hard enough and flexible enough to conduct operations on its own. As the Issues Paper rightly points out, it should not be construed that State-on-State violence will never occur in the future.

3.2. However I am concerned that despite the “Hardening the Army” initiatives taken in the past decade and the subsequent Plan Beersheeba to transform the Combat Brigades, the Army still lacks the strategic depth and force multipliers needed to make it a true hardened fighting force with both offensive and defensive capability, able to conduct operations independently from another military partner (like the US). This is a message
that was heard loud and clear following Australia’s military deployment to East Timor in 1999/2000.

3.3. The term “offensive capability” should not be construed as a dirty or undesirable term, because a successful and strong defence force is one that is able to conduct offensive operations as a part of a wider defence strategy. Government should never soften its policy or terminology in terms of offensive capability of the ADF in response to political correctness. Rather, it should be underscored.

3.4. The overall decline of the political and military influence of the US over time coupled with the rise of China makes it imperative that Australian forces have the tools needed to protect our interests in the event US support is unavailable.

3.5. In addition, the rise of religious extremism (again) generates concern in my mind as to how vulnerable Western Australia is to a terrorist operation.

3.6. There is no doubt the Police and the Commonwealth intelligence apparatus have a handle on what is likely, and unlikely to happen, however I do have a concern that the physical ability to respond to a major terrorist-related incident (or even an act of belligerence by a foreign military power) may not be substantial enough.

3.7. The WA Police Tactical Response Group have only 40-50 personnel in total, and all of them may not be available at any given time. Currently, the TRG has vacancies.

3.8. The SAS Regiment in Swanbourne is the only full-time Army formation in Perth, and these personnel are often away on exercises or operations elsewhere.

3.9. 13Bde in Karrakatta is a part time Reservist brigade. These men and women have full time jobs elsewhere. In a time of a state crisis or emergency needing a local military response, it would take days for this unit to achieve readiness.

3.10. I believe it is time for the government to consider basing a full-time regular Army Regiment in Perth. Such a regiment could also form the basis (eventually) for a fourth active Army Brigade. This in turn would provide benefits for the Army as a whole, in
the event another high-intensity conflict is entered into involving our Combat Brigades – an additional Brigade will soften the operational tempo on the rest of them.

4. Submarines

4.1. The former government in 2008 got the ball rolling on the question of replacing the Collins class submarines, because by 2025 the lead boat of the class will be due for retirement having been in service for just over 30 years.

4.2. The problem with the discussion being had at the moment is that the government is having the wrong discussion.

4.3. The previous government was dead-keen on supporting local naval shipbuilders by building the next class of submarines in Australia. It would have been either a locally built off the shelf model (i.e. MOTS) or an “evolved” Collins class boat, leveraging the knowledge and experience gained from building, modifying, fixing and repairing the Collins class boats. Cost would have been huge, but it would have assured continual support for our naval shipbuilding sector, and our ability to build warships. This is important in the event we get cut off from overseas shipbuilders because of war or another form of significant global disruption (i.e. economic problems).

4.4. The Government has been courting the Japanese Government and the builders of Japan’s Soryu class submarines with the intent of buying between 6 and 10 of these boats off the shelf, straight from Japanese shipyards. Their reasons for this – which are legitimate reasons I might add – is the cost of building the vessels locally will be almost double what it will cost from the Japanese shipyard ($36 Billion locally versus $20 Billion from Japan) and Australia’s naval shipbuilders haven’t exactly had a great track record of late with getting things done on time, on budget, and without problems.

4.5. So much so, Defence Minister David Johnston announced that two replacement fleet replenishment ships for the Navy will be put out to tender, but only two builders were invited to submit a tender – both of them were offshore.
4.6. He classified this decision as a “warning shot” across the bows of Australian naval shipbuilders to get their collective acts together, or else they won’t be getting more work.

4.7. The problem with this mindset is that a naval shipbuilding industry is an industry worth having. Much like the car industry, which we fought for, a naval shipbuilding industry provides that strategic depth to our manufacturing and industrial base that we need to be able to continue to design, engineer and build things off our own bat if the chips are down and we need to fall back on our industry to save us.

4.8. However, the Defence Minister’s point is pertinent. Why reward a poorly performing sector with more work, when there is a fairly good chance it will encounter problems with it? The mindset of supporting the local industry before someone else’s is valid and noble as well, but it should not come at any cost. This creates a huge dilemma for any decision maker. Nuclear power is a non-starter and always will be.

4.9. The government appears determined to try and leverage Australia’s new Free-Trade Agreement with Japan as well as build a political bloc to offset the rise of China. Buying Japanese submarines will no doubt upset China, but we should care less about what China thinks about our defence procurement: it is, quite frankly, none of their business. However, the Prime Minister said recently that industry policy should not determine or dictate defence policy. In my view it works both ways, you shouldn’t let foreign policy dictate or influence defence procurement decisions.

4.10. The other folly is the Soryu class boats themselves. Yes, they may be a state of the art diesel-electric submarine, the best in the world right now, but for argument’s sake in 2025 (or later) when they start entering service in the RAN, will they still be state of the art? No, they will be yesterday’s hero and their capabilities will be matched (or even bettered) by new diesel-electric or nuclear submarines that are on the drawing boards with other navies in our region. Plus the off-the-shelf version of the Soryu doesn’t have the ability to carry cruise missiles, which both Liberal and Labor governments wanted. Japan’s intent to start decommissioning their own Soryu class boats from 2025 creates a question mark over whether this vessel is indeed the right tool for the job.
4.11. Any future submarine must better or at the very least match the boats they will be replacing, be capable of carrying and firing cruise missiles, and have the range needed for the huge distances involved with patrolling in both Australian waters and further afield.

4.12. We need to support our industry. But we need to safeguard precious taxpayer funds, and we need to ensure the Navy gets a submarine that can do the job. Critically, the right decision must be made on the basis of meeting the Navy’s needs, not supporting a political relationship.

5. Force projection

5.1. I believe it is an appropriate time to conduct a feasibility study into the acquisition of an appropriate Close Air Support aircraft along the lines of the Lockheed AC-130 gunship or a MOTS example from a European manufacturer. US experience in Iraq and Afghanistan (and probably our troops as well, they have benefited from CAS from these aircraft) has demonstrated that a gunship with long loiter time based on a rugged and proven airframe saves lives on the battlefield and can provide a crucial edge in defeating an opponent. Such a fixed wing CAS aircraft would perform a different role to the Tiger helicopter currently in service and one would not negate the usefulness of the other (in fact complement each other).

5.2. I also believe that the resistance to Self-Propelled Artillery needs to be reconsidered, or at the very least, considered in context with an alternative system such as a battlefield missile system with a capability in the 100-200 kilometre range. The US-made HIMARS system using the MGM-140 missile is an example. This would give Army revolutionary ability to both support itself on operations and for battlespace control, in that 100-200+km arena. This is important in the event that CAS is unavailable.
5.3. The purpose of SPA or a HIMARS system is not to replace a towed artillery battery, but to complement it and add an additional layer of defensive and offensive power to our Brigade Combat Teams which are now highly mechanised and highly mobile.

6. People

6.1. All of the defence capability and policy in the world is not going to be of great use to the ADF if one critical ingredient is missing: good people. The ADF must continue its hard work in reforming the culture of the services and eradicating the mindset that sexual and racial abuse and discrimination is acceptable. In a modern society like Australia, it is clearly not acceptable.

6.2. Notwithstanding this we hear almost on a daily basis of cases of sexual assault and discrimination, and racial vilification. It can be said that the armed services of a country reflect the overall culture and attitudes of the society from which its personnel are drawn. The servicemen and servicewomen of the ADF need to know that this is not their responsibility alone for them to bear; it is a problem that the whole of society must take responsibility for. However taking advantage of the ADF’s position as a leader in our communities, the ADF could be seen to be a leader in reforming society’s attitudes in this area. Moreover, recruitment and retention rates can and most likely will be effected by a failure to address these issues in the ADF – regardless of whether the problem is perceived or actual.

End of Submission