28 October 2014

Defence White Paper 2015
R1-3-A135
Russell Offices
Department of Defence
PO Box 7901
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

Attention:  Mr Peter Jennings
Executive Director of Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)
– Chair, Expert Panel

Dear Mr Jennings

Please accept the following as our submission to the Defence White Paper 2015. This submission has been prepared by Dr Jonathan Binns, Dr Shuhong Chai, Mr Phil Leersen and myself from the Australian Maritime College.

The Australian Maritime College (AMC) is a Specialist Institute of the University of Tasmania, focused on shaping the way the maritime industry conducts its research, education and training. As such, the AMC has a close working relationship with DSTO to enable the investigation of complex and innovative maritime defence solutions. These solutions are incorporated into a variety of maritime platforms, increasing capability.

As Australia’s centre for maritime education, research and training, AMC has integrated its operations with the maritime industry. The AMC balances the needs of commercial programs with educational effectiveness and research impact to create solutions which are used. The impact of this approach creates new opportunities to industry, going well beyond the initial intended reach.

Throughout the world, military edge is sustained only through continuous innovation. There are many examples of this innovation in the defence sector within Australia, which have led to significant advantage and industry capability increase. It is also innovation that sets the priorities for capability investment by industry and allows industry to expand operations.

The role of the university sector in enabling industry to achieve the large investment required by defence is: to provide the people to conduct the research (both within the university and industry sectors); provide solutions to specific problems which are blocking further innovation; and to provide strategic, basic research to open up new markets and possibilities. The provision of these broad outcomes requires varied methods of delivery. From high level vocational training, through to PhD level researcher training; from commercial consultancies to basic research projects; industry needs to be free to engage with universities at a number of levels to make sure the highest chances of success are maintained. The development of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) needs to leverage and encourage engagement between the defence industry sector and the university sector at every level.

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To provide the link between a thriving industry, collaborating efficiently with academia, back to the end user (that is the ADF), a requirement is DSTO as an effective government based and funded technology agency. This is required both for the direction of highly technical infrastructure (such as customised research equipment) and for the provision of knowledge integration with innovation.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, developing military edge requires investment in customised research equipment. Running this equipment requires leading researchers supported with a culture of knowledge and knowledge expansion. These environments exist within the university sector closely linked to DSTO.

The combination of sustained industry investment and collaborative research with the university sector is a proven formula for a successful and long lasting defence industry. Such a defence industry is capable of providing the innovation required to maintain military edge and allow industry to develop further capabilities, benefiting immediate defence requirements and future national wealth.

Yours sincerely

 Neil Bose  
Professor of Maritime Hydrodynamics  
Principal, AMC  
University of Tasmania

cc. Dr Jonathan Binns, Dr Shuhong Chai, Mr Leersen - AMC