To whom it may concern,

UNSW RESPONSE TO DEFENCE ISSUES PAPER 2014

UNSW Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the “Defence Issues Paper: A discussion paper to inform the 2015 Defence White Paper”.

1. Introduction

The focus of this submission is on one of the six key questions asked in the Issues Paper related to how Defence should invest in its people. As Defence relies principally on the quality of its people to discharge its formal responsibilities to the nation, investment in training and education is vital to both recruitment and retention, and developing a workforce that is marked by initiative, creativity and resourcefulness.

Maintaining a strong defence tertiary teaching and research program is essential. The Defence White Paper must recognise that UNSW’s research and teaching in defence and defence-related areas are critical in underpinning the future defence workforce and infrastructure for a secure Australia.

One critical element in the Defence personnel strategy must be a modern, effective and efficient approach to the education of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and civilian Defence employees.

The White Paper must recognise that UNSW Canberra plays, and must continue to play, a key role in the attraction and recruitment of high quality people, the development of their professional skills and the retention of Defence staff.

2. UNSW’S Strong Relationship with Defence

UNSW Australia is uniquely positioned to respond to the Issues Paper because of our continuing strong relationship with Defence primarily through UNSW Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy. UNSW Canberra is a unique partnership between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and UNSW Australia which has been providing training and education for the future leaders of the Navy, Army and Air Force for over 45 years (since 1967), as well as some of our international allies. UNSW Canberra currently reports annually on its performance against the contract with Defence and has regularly been assessed as performing well beyond the minimum requirements.
The military training combined with the university education students undertake, ensures Defence personnel possess the knowledge, skills, professional abilities and qualities of character appropriate to Officers in the ADF. Furthermore, as part of a critical investment in future capability, the White Paper must recognise that UNSW Canberra plays, and must continue to play, a key role in the attraction and recruitment of high quality people, the development of their professional skills and the retention of Defence staff.

Undergraduate training:

UNSW Canberra currently has approximately 1000 undergraduate students enrolled and produces around 40% of the officer intake for the ADF.

The White Paper must recognise that UNSW Canberra provides the framework of progressive academic study at a campus of UNSW, allied with ADFA military training and skills development. Objective measures clearly show that UNSW Australia is rated amongst the highest in the country for delivery of quality education, a key factor in attracting future officers. ADFA officer cadets and midshipmen are introduced early in their career to the concept of lifelong learning which will also form part of the Officer Education and Training phases of their employment within the ADF.

Postgraduate training:

UNSW Canberra has approximately 1300 enrolled postgraduate coursework students and education is delivered to over 600 serving officers and Defence personnel every year, with over 75% studying externally. Over the last three years, this number has increased significantly, allowing Defence to highlight postgraduate education as an effective recruitment and staff retention tool.

The Service-sponsored provision of education to serving Officers and civilian employees at UNSW Canberra achieves a number of purposes:

- Defence is seen to be an Employer of Choice, focusing on career development and providing ready access to internationally recognized academic qualifications.
- ADF personnel remain at the forefront of their profession and can also specialise in key areas such as logistics, project management or information systems.
- Civilian personnel have access to higher qualifications which enhance their promotion prospects and allow mobility within different employment streams in Defence.
- Flexible learning techniques and alternative delivery methods such as intensive and distance modes contribute to the retention of officers and civilians, attrition rates are reduced and skill shortages can be targeted.

Individualised training-education portfolio

An individualized training-education portfolio needs to be introduced for each ADF member outlining the courses and programs of study they have completed, providing a prioritized inventory of the opportunities that exist for further training and education, and noting the member’s own aspirations in terms of personal and professional development in the nearer and longer term. In addition to creating pathways for continuing learning, the introduction of training/education portfolios would enhance the corporate culture in Defence and allow the employer and employee to agree on specific competency targets, to guarantee a specified level of investment in training and education, to encourage and inspire Defence members to become life-long learners thereby deepening their commitment to Defence and its objectives. Such an innovation, and it is being developed for students in the primary and secondary education sectors, would demonstrate Defence’s

1 See http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings for more information
commitment to individuals and allow it to mold a workforce shaped by present and emerging operational demands. The present system is based on the achievement of minimum standards, relies on personal interest and, to some degree, the individual’s assessment of their post-Defence employment prospects.

Research & Research Training

UNSW is ranked 48th in the 2014 QS World University Rankings and has a strong reputation in research which underpins the quality education provided to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This has allowed our students to be inspired by and to learn first-hand from academic staff, who are involved at the frontiers of knowledge and, who can convey the intimate research discovery experience that cannot be learnt from textbooks.

Students are able to acquire the skill sets and ethical dimensions to leadership, that enable them to learn what questions to ask, how to obtain knowledge, how to synthesise information, how to push the boundary of knowledge, and therefore how to solve new problems and handle unforeseen circumstances. This is particularly important for developing future ADF leaders in this age of a rapidly evolving world and the ever expanding role of the ADF.

As a member of the Group of Eight research-intensive universities, UNSW has identified “Defence and Security” as a research strength which is underpinned by a broad range of areas including: national security, uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAVs), hypersonics, quantum computing, financial markets, law & human rights, e-security (cyber-security), complex systems, international politics and terrorism.

More than 50 defence-related research projects are currently being undertaken by UNSW across a wide range of Faculties including UNSW Canberra, UNSW Engineering, UNSW Science, and UNSW Arts and Social Sciences, and we receive funding for defence research from a wide base including the DSTO, Australian Research Council and from the United States. Current research ranges from in-depth studies into the applications of Information Systems to Homeland Security and Defence, to the work conducted by the Australian Centre for the Study of Armed Conflict and Society that examines the complex issues surrounding armed conflict and military engagement. These research programs will significantly improve our abilities to maintain the operational advantage of Australia’s security agencies through superior capabilities in threat detection.

UNSW has a strong collaborative relationship with DSTO and this has directly benefited the education of ADF personnel and increased the research capability of future operations in the ADF. The ADF can only maintain a technological edge over any likely adversary by investing in UNSW and other tertiary institutions to harness the research talents and innovations in defence-related research.

UNSW would welcome the opportunity to contribute further to the development of the White Paper should the Expert Panel have any questions. UNSW consents to the publication of this submission by Defence, in whole or part.

Yours Sincerely,

Professor Les Field
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

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2 See http://www.topuniversities.com/worlduniversityrankings/ for further information
3 See www.go8.edu.au for further information