Defence White Paper 2014 Submission

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1. F35

I write as a research engineer with a lifelong interest in aviation and more than 25 years’ experience as a licenced pilot.

The Australian government’s abysmally poor decision to purchase a large number (75+) of F35 aircraft need to be scrapped as a matter of urgency.

It is not simply the cost though this is an issue. The F35 was originally intended to be a relatively low-cost fifth-generation fighter that the US was prepared to export, compared with the F22 which was seen as a high-cost high-performance aircraft not available for export.

F35 costs now exceed that of the high-performance F22, and the F35 fails on every acceptance and performance criteria. Just a few of these are:

- Limited stealth capabilities do not extend to all aircraft-radar orientations.
- Limited stealth capabilities do not extend to all radar bands
- Limited stealth capabilities fail with external stores
- Poor range and internal storage would require use of external storage in any operational capacity in or around Australia.
- Poor speed, range, agility and performance compared with all other fourth and fifth generation fighter aircraft
- Aircraft weight limits fuel and weapons
- No thrust vectoring. Engine lacks both stealth characteristics and improvement options.
- Complete dependence on mediocre BVR (Beyond Visual Range) offensive and mediocre-at-best ECM defensive capabilities.
- Complete failure in any within-visual-range combat scenario.
- F35 is vulnerable to fourth generation aircraft with modern avionics and weapon systems

The one success of the F35 has been to hire an army of lobbyists and to ensure that production is spread across 48 of the 50 states of the USA both aimed to ensure that however strong the case against the merits of the F35 vested interest will win out.

In its flight performance F35 is indeed the Brewster Buffalo of the twenty-first century. However as an essentially corrupt enterprise it is something much worse.
What must be done: Scrap the F35

What should be considered?

Option 1:
Acquire additional fourth-generation aircraft.

The Sukhoi 35 S is a clear leader in most performance categories, but there are several choices and it should be noted that fourth-gen aircraft have had successes against even F22s in exercises in within-visual-range scenarios (note: German Eurofighter Typhoon successes against F22s in Red Flag Alaska).

Note: The ADF and RAAF in particular have excellent records of extracting maximum performance from weapon systems including RAAF aircraft.

Option 2:
Fifth generation air superiority potential aircraft options are:

- F22 (unavailable)
- Sukhoi T-50 PAK-FA
- Chengdu J-20

Possibilities could exist to cooperate in the development or refinement programs for both the latter two options, the Sukhoi PAK-FA with Russia and perhaps India, and the Chengdu J-20 with China. The Sukhoi is in pre-production and the J-20 is still in the prototype phase, so a realistic delivery timeline particularly for the J-20 would be quite some time off. Nonetheless both offer massive improvements in every parameter when compared to the F35.

It also needs to be considered that at the moment the USA is the only nation with operational fifth generation aircraft, the F22 (The F35 does not qualify). And the F22 will be outclassed by the PAK-FA when it becomes operational.

Both the F22 and the PAK-FA have experienced serious functionality issues in their relatively short lives.

Note: Options 1 and 2 are not mutually exclusive. Australia could acquire additional fourth generation aircraft (hopefully with capabilities beyond the F-18 series such as SU 35S), and consider involvement in and possible subsequent acquisition of Sukhoi PAK-FAs.
2 Submarines

The next generation of Australian submarines needs to be built in Adelaide. And there needs to be local involvement in the design and management of the project, even if the basic design and some or even most of the components are sourced from other countries.

While not advocating or opposing a nuclear power option I think it needs to be considered in detail rather than flatly excluded.

Manufacture of submarines in Adelaide will, in simplistic terms, be more expensive than potential off-the-shelf purchases from overseas. But in the wider view the submarines are only part of what is being acquired and the skill and resource bases established and catalysed by such a project are immensely valuable - and cannot be otherwise established.

Moreover having these capabilities available within Australia significantly strengthens national security.

The British DOD estimate was, I think, that 40% of direct costs for local manufacture are returned directly in taxes. The employee/supplier multiplier effect will more than double this 1.4 estimate – of which a significant amount of which would be directly returned in taxes.

So even without considering the costs and benefits of creating a nationally significant skill and resource base, the direct costs of local manufacture could, superficially, be three times (or more) than that of foreign tenders and still represent a bargain, and it would be foolish (in both financial and security terms) in the extreme to let such an opportunity pass.

Moreover the skills associated with local manufacture ensure that ongoing upgrades and maintenance requirements (which can exceed the cost of the original purchase) can be provided locally, and that such services would also serve to enhance Australian capabilities and opportunities.

3 UAV

The muted plan to acquire a fleet of UAVs to help with monitoring and surveillance of Australian deserves attention.
4. **Treaties and Foreign Bases**

The ANZUS treaty although straightforward and relatively robust has served Australia poorly primarily because of a lack of political maturity that has seen Australia unquestioningly keen to make additional, non-treaty, offerings to its treaty partner in the form of military involvement in wars of the partner’s choosing and a host of supporting activities in the vague, unrealised, unfocussed, and essentially sycophantic, hope that somehow we would ingratiate ourselves or improve potential treaty benefits that may accrue.

Vietnam and Gulf War II are but two examples of this.

Also the permanent presence of foreign troops on Australian soil, aside from exercises and manoeuvres, is an insult to Australian sovereignty. And there has been no offer of a reciprocal arrangement for Australia to establish a military base on US soil.

So while recognising the debt owed to the USA during WW II in helping to vanquish an existential threat, the ANZUS treaty and its unwanted baggage needs to be rejected.

It may be worth noting the apocryphal words of Breaker Morant that the Australian forces were “Good fighters in a bad cause”.

5 **Regional Cooperation**

Details still to come.

6 **Domestic Limitations**

Limitations need to be in place to restrict and provide parliamentary oversight on any domestic activities of the ADF- in particular the DSD.

7 **Legal Support**

Details still to come.