28 November 2014

Defence White Paper

RE: Defence White Paper – Science and Technology

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Defence White Paper Expert Panel.

I provide this submission on behalf d3Medicine who is actively working to support the establishment of an indigenous Medical Countermeasure (MCM) capability which will develop products to treat, vaccinate and diagnose civilian and military personnel. d3Medicine LLC is a stakeholder in a recently proposed public private partnership (PPP), Medical Countermeasure Products Australia (MCPA). MCPA comprises self-motivated participants from industry, academia and Government. The proposed PPP came about because of the great work by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) to understand and map the national MCM development capability, capacity and infrastructure as part of its contribution to the international MCM consortium under the CBR Memorandum of Understanding.

CBR Threats, emerging infectious diseases and pandemics pose imminent real and serious danger to Australia’s healthcare, economy and national security. Australia is geographically positioned as an important sentinel for these threats and we should be using our strength in research and development to position ourselves as a leader in the South East Asian region. Changing climate and escalating cross border travel has led to an expansion of disease-carrying vectors and an increase in the number of cases of pathogens traditionally acquired overseas being acquired locally. Yet the Australian government has only considered these threats in terms of surveillance and containment. There has never been a proactive preparedness product development program.

We understand that DSTO has a small MCM program and we believe that by leveraging capability from industry and academia, more could be done to develop products for military personnel and for the health/national security of the civilian population. MCPA is the perfect mechanism for DSTO to maintain a leadership role yet have access to a network of industry skills, best practice and advice in the evaluation, development, acquisition and deployment of MCMs. MCPA is actively working to establish a whole of government approach for the delivery of MCMs which would provide a beneficial impact on the Australian labour market, skills network, economy and national security.

From review of the open source literature, it appears Australia has always relied on obtaining MCMs that have already been developed, approved and on the market. From our discussions with international partners from the US Department of Defence and US Health and Human Services, there have been indications that there will be no guarantee of the availability of MCMs for Australia, as
their needs will be met first. Furthermore, we believe that the Federal Government should be cautious about its dependence on other nations for MCMs as there are a number of endemic diseases which are of limited interest to the major international MCM manufacturers.

We believe that MCMs should be included in the Defence White Paper as an integral part of Science and Technology Program to support the Australian Defence Force and the nation’s Health Security. It is clear that the current Ebola crisis has demonstrated the importance of developing products which will protect, diagnose or treat first responders (military and civilian) and the wider community against chemo/bio-threats, either natural or man-made.

It is hoped that through whole of Government support, especially the Defence Department, MCPA will act as a functional nexus to harness the expertise, capability, and capacity to support indigenous MCM solutions.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or wish to discuss our comments in detail. I would also be happy to brief you further on the activities of Medical Countermeasures Products Australia should this be useful.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Craig Rayner
CEO – d3Medicine
Development Committee Chair – d3Medicine