

Land Warfare Conference 31 October 2012

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

- Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen. General Morrison and Dr Zelinsky, thank you for the opportunity to speak at this year's Land Warfare Conference.
- I think the theme 'Potent land force for a joint maritime strategy' is an excellent one. As I hope you may be anticipating, my aim today is provide a view of this topic looking through a slightly different lens.
- I am convinced that Australia needs to pursue a maritime strategy and I am also convinced that the Chief of Army was on the money when he said that Australia needs its ADF more than it needs its Navy, Army or its Air Force. That is certainly my underlying position and I know it is the position of the senior leadership of the ADF. That said the ADF does need those single services and the individual war fighting capabilities that they bring to the joint fight.
- I first want to take a step back from the strategy for a moment as my real concern is that our strategic discourse is muddled in a maritime sense. I want to talk about what thinking underpins, or should

underpin, a maritime strategy. My premise is that most of our academic strategic discourse simply has not hoisted in some key issues about our contemporary geo-strategic circumstances.

- I'm going to put up a map of Australian maritime sovereignty and sovereign rights and key transport and communications lanes – and those of our neighbours – and leave it up while I talk. It is a slightly different way of looking at the ocean, recognising the areas over which Australia and our immediate neighbours have sovereignty and the areas where sovereign rights can be exercised. The two of course are very different concepts.
- I suspect for many in this room this is not the way you are used to looking at the sea. The world's oceans are not a homogenous mass, there are many nuances embedded in this map that can significantly impact our ability to operate if we do not understand them.
- I think for the ADF to have an effective maritime strategy, we need to look at things differently and truly understand all dimensions of our maritime environment including its terrain and increasingly the management of movement and communications on that terrain.
- I have been a little intrigued as to why the term Joint Maritime Strategy has come into vogue? I am not sure why we need to qualify

the term 'maritime strategy' by putting the word joint in front of it.

While we may lack an agreed doctrinal definition, one thing all the various definitions have at their core is that maritime strategy is inherently joint.

- If we need to qualify the term maritime strategy at all, I think we would gain most benefit by referring to it as an integrated maritime strategy. Integrated, because our strategy must, in the first instance, draw on all the Australian Defence Organisation's capabilities, not just those of the ADF. Furthermore, a maritime strategy must be integrated with other national capabilities – and clearly draw on all instruments of national power.
- I think one of the biggest challenges in articulating and embedding the notion of a maritime strategy in the general consciousness is to shake off the thought that a maritime strategy is all about the Navy. It falls to me, I think, as the head of the Navy to consistently and emphatically make the point that this is not the case – at least no one can doubt my motives for making such a pronouncement. If we don't get that message through then it is inevitable that people will ask the question why do you we need a potent land force in a maritime strategy?

- But, in examining the notion of a maritime strategy, we really need to understand the strength of the foundations that our strategic discourse is built on.
- Sadly for us those foundations are like old wooden piles that hold up a wharf. They support the edifice most of the time but fail when they get the slightest bump or when subjected to a rigorous engineering inspection.
- A big problem for us in thinking through these issues is that our national security discourse has been overwhelmingly land-centric, and please be assured I do not use this term in a pejorative sense. In some ways this is inevitable. Most human activity takes place ashore and that is where decisions are made.
- But our national security debate has been a largely binary discussion between the disciples of the continental and the expeditionary schools of thought. This is a discussion which skews the overall debate and ignores some important changes to our circumstances. As Michael Wesley said recently, what Australia needs is a ‘well developed maritime imagination’.
- The very notion that we have a term such as the sea-air gap in regular use and the fact that the concept has been sustained, at least in

academic discourse, for many years now is concerning. The term implies that this area of mixed sovereignty and critical communications routes is both featureless and a valueless space. The Chief of Army's description of a sea-air-land bridge at least brings the notions of connectivity and value into play.

- I have suggested in the past that we need a genuine maritime school of thought to provide the intellectual basis for a maritime strategy. A school of strategic thought relevant to Australia should have an appreciation of our geographic, economic and diplomatic situation; it should include an appreciation of our interests, relative strengths and weakness; and it must be framed by a clear statement of our national aims and the manner in which we wish to pursue them.
- Australian strategic thinking often starts with the fact that we are an island continent and that our international trade is overwhelmingly maritime. But it often does not go much further than that. In fact, it is a bit like the mandatory forward to a document – quickly read and then never considered again.
- In framing a maritime school of thought there are a few things that must be recognised:

- Firstly, it must recognise the sheer scale of our sovereignty and the area where we can exercise sovereign rights.
- It must recognise the increased pervasiveness of maritime trade and our national dependence on it for our ongoing prosperity.
- It must recognise the increased value of activity in our maritime environment, be it oil and gas installations, alternative energy generation, the value of maritime biodiversity reflected in both tourism and food security, particularly the value of farmed and wild fish stocks.
- It must also recognise that our terms of trade play a significant role in the growth of our real gross national income.
- But, it must also recognise the fundamental vulnerabilities that our geo-strategic situation exposes us to in such a highly interconnected and just in time economic system.
- Finally it also must recognise the importance of collaboration and cooperation in keeping our global maritime trading system free and open. No single maritime focused force can achieve this mission, there must be cooperative arrangements and contributions across the whole system. And of course this mission cannot be achieved

solely with the military instrument as the Australia in the Asian Century White Paper reinforces.

- Importantly, no school of thought should be reverse engineered to prop up existing force structures or used as a crutch to justify reductions when times are tight.
- What does this mean for a maritime strategy? I think the first thing to recognise is that our economic centre of gravity is not the resources in and on the land, nor the manufacturing capacity of our industry. It has always been our ability to trade, the importance of getting imports in – most obviously in a strategic sense fuel – and critically, exports out.
- That gives the ADF a central role in a crucial national mission – the protection of our ability to trade - the very thing that underpins our national prosperity.
- This is a mission that starts at home with port and critical infrastructure defence but equally involves key choke points and shipping lanes throughout the end to end global maritime trading system.

- It means the protection of critical offshore infrastructure, which in the future may exist up to 350nm from our shores, let alone sovereign territory such as our island territories.
- Militarily it means we need an ADF that has both reach and endurance. It is crucial for example that we have frigates and submarines that can be operated and sustained where they need to in this system, that we have ISR assets that can do likewise, and that we have the ability to deploy and sustain credible and potent land forces to support the broader national objectives.
- In my potentially biased view, the 2009 Defence White Paper proposed a balanced force structure to deliver these very attributes. Minister Smith at a speech to the Lowy institute in August reaffirmed the Government's commitment to delivering the core capabilities of that balanced force structure. From any read of the white paper it is clear that a potent land force is part of that balance.
- A key conclusion for me from appreciating Australia's national strategic circumstances is that Australia's strategic centre of gravity has a significantly larger maritime component than most have envisaged in the past. Given many of the factors I have mentioned, I suggest that decisive outcomes in a campaign against Australia can

be achieved by effects applied at sea and not necessarily ashore and not necessarily proximate to the Australian continent.

- Our society and economy simply cannot function if our fixed and mobile maritime infrastructure is targeted and disrupted.
- I am not saying that all the decisive outcomes will necessarily all be at sea, they won't, but I am saying that actions taken at sea now have far greater strategic significance than before, which I believe, represents a fundamental shift from our previous thinking.
- This is one of the reasons that the 2009 Defence White Paper took a different approach to the traditional Defence of Australia formula.
- While protecting our trade and contributing to the protection of SLOC more broadly is fundamental to a maritime strategy, so too is the ability to project power across the spectrum of conflict. The two go hand in glove.
- There is no doubt that the maritime power projection capabilities of the LHD, when combined with other parts of the broader ADF force structure will significantly enhance our ability to execute a maritime strategy.

- I think Army's approach to the step function increase in capability that the LHD brings to the ADF is terrific. The decision to orientate 2 RAR toward amphibious operations has been one of the most important taken in recent years.
- Maritime power projection is a critical capability for the ADF, particularly in its regional role of contributing to the security and stability of the South Pacific and East Timor, so a dedicated focus on further developing the competencies needed is crucial.
- At the very heart of maritime power projection is the delivery of force from the sea, be that through naval fires or the use and support of land forces in an amphibious activity. Power projection however does not always involve the use of military forces in a 'hard power' way. HADR and non-combatant evacuation operations are of course a manifestation of the same foundation techniques and capabilities used for harder edged power projection missions in achieving important non-combat missions. In the LHD we will have the core of the ADF's hard and soft power projection capability.
- As important as this capability will be for the ADF, and as big a challenge as it will be to exploit its full potential, I do think we run the risk of being somewhat consumed by it at the expense of the other

individual domain war fighting disciplines that we must maintain to deliver the overall joint effect.

- In each domain we have particular skills that we must excel in, we cannot afford to lose sight of that.
- Of course we have followed a maritime strategy before. Last week the Chief of Army correctly pointed out the defence of Australia in the Pacific campaign of World War 2 was a sophisticated maritime campaign. I agree with him that there was no antipodean Jutland that rescued us but I think that the fascination with decisive battles that has kept naval thinkers occupied for centuries is actually misplaced when in fact it is the cumulative effects and benefits of sea control that is an important enabler in a maritime campaign.
- But our first real foray in a maritime strategy, albeit nested within a broader empire approach, goes back to 1909, when, in one of the biggest acquisition decisions for the new Commonwealth Government, Australia decided to acquire its first Fleet Unit – and next year we will celebrate the centenary of its arrival in 1913 in Sydney Harbour at the International Fleet Review and associated exercises.

- The Fleet Unit, consisting of a battlecruiser, light cruisers, destroyers and submarines, was one part of the force structure for what was then Australia's maritime defence strategy. The Commonwealth Naval and Military Forces had three roles as part of this strategy.
- First, Port Defence – a task undertaken jointly by the naval and military forces. Besides my enduring gratitude for the real estate it enabled Army to bequeath to Navy, I think this aspect should not lightly be forgotten – Vital Asset Protection, as we would now understand it, is a crucial element to national defence, as it is an important part of maintaining our ability to trade. The complexity of that task, particularly as our maritime infrastructure ventures further and further into our offshore economic zones, will only increase.
- Second, Regional Security. The Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was an early example of what we would now understand as the Joint Force In Being.
- The third role was Alliance warfare through our contribution to empire defence.
- In 1914, Australia carried out all three of these roles. We deterred the Germans from attacking our ports. We conducted regional security operations to deny them the ability to operate against us in

the region in that oft forgotten part of World War 1 before the 25th of April 1915. Indeed we did so with such success that the German Asiatic fleet left the theatre of operations entirely. And then, having secured our immediate environment, we were able to contribute to alliance operations further afield.

- So while we do not often think of it that way, Australia's strategy for the First World War was most definitely a maritime strategy – and we all know how essential the contribution of land forces were to its outcome.
- I want to finish by going back to 1998 and quoting Michael Evans who wrote a most prescient piece about the role of the Army in a maritime concept of strategy. He wrote that 'Only through understanding the joint nature of maritime strategy can the role of Australian land forces be fully appreciated.' I would go further.
- Only through understanding the role of all the instruments of national power in a maritime strategy, and the opportunities, dependencies and vulnerabilities that come with it can we continue to manage our security and ensure our prosperity. That is why I think we need a maritime school of strategic thought for Australia.
- Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your time.