

**Order of Australia Oration**  
**by**  
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**Strategic Environment**

- So, today I will begin with the challenges facing the Australian Defence Force as look into the future and how we are preparing Australia's military to meet this uncertainty.
- In 2009, the Government released a Defence White Paper.
- This white paper was the most comprehensive Government statement on Defence ever produced.
- It is a vital planning document that will guide our future defence commitments and our future capabilities.
- It looks at our potential security threats, highlights those most important to national security, how the ADF will respond to those threats and what capability we will require to enable the best response.
- Basically, this document details how the ADF will ensure the security of Australia for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Firstly, we look at what is going on in our region now—both in terms of nation states and threats—and how things might develop in the future.
- Some of the trends we identified were: the increasing pace of globalisation; state fragility in our near neighbourhood; terrorism; the growth of major regional powers; and emerging threats such as border protection, climate change and resource security.
- This is what we concluded.
- Firstly, it is clear that the United States will remain the most powerful and influential actor in our region out to 2030.
  - No other nation will have the military, economic or strategic capacity to challenge US primacy over the period covered by this White Paper.
  - Furthermore, we affirmed that our alliance with the United States should remain the bedrock on which Australia's national security is built.
- Within the Asia-Pacific Region, though economic growth should help foster stability and security, there are likely to be tensions between the major powers where the interests of the United States, China, Japan, India and Russia intersect.

- And while the chance of direct confrontation between any of these major powers is small, there is always the possibility of miscalculation.
- China will continue to be a key driver of economic activity both globally and in the region in the period out to 2030.
  - It will also be Asia's strongest military power by a wide margin, and China is likely to develop a significant military capability commensurate with its size.
  - Therefore, the management of the relationship between the United States and China will be critical for stability in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Within Southeast Asia and Indonesia, economic and social development will continue.
  - In fact, the evolution of Indonesia as a stable democratic state with strong social cohesion is important to our strategic interests and provides it with a strong platform for long-term stability and prosperity.
- In the South Pacific and East Timor, economic, social and political instability will continue to present challenges to our strategic interests.
  - This may create conditions in which Australia might be required to respond with security and humanitarian assistance, as we have done in the past.
- Coalition operations in support of our wider interests will also remain critical.
  - For example, we must not allow Afghanistan to once again become the unimpeded training ground and operating base for global terrorist activity due to threat posed to Australians both here at home and overseas.
- Now, within this environment that could see shifts in the alignment of global power, regional uncertainty and the continuing threat of terrorism, we also see new challenges that will face our nation out to 2030.
  - Most significantly, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is of serious concern.
  - And we see new security risks also emerging over the potential impact of climate change and resource security.
  - These trends are likely to exacerbate existing problems in developing countries.
- So, these were the likely risks we identified as being the key shapers for our future security environment.

- The next step was to ensure we were prepared as a nation to respond.
- The Government decided that Australia's defence policy will continue to be founded on the principle of self-reliance in the direct defence of Australia, but with a capacity to do more when required.
- What this means is that the ADF must be able to deter and defeat armed attacks on Australia.
  - We must also contribute to stability and security in the South Pacific and East Timor; and
  - We must be able to contribute to military contingencies in the Asia-Pacific and in support of global security.

### **Force 2030**

- But in order to achieve these tasks, we need the right military capabilities.
- And it is important to realise that the capability decisions we make today are actually going to benefit the nation some 20 or 30 years down the track.
- Because in some cases, military capability can take a decade or more to develop, procure and introduce into service.
- Added to that, is the need train our people—both to operate and maintain the equipment. Because without our people, the equipment isn't much good to us.
- It is also very expensive, and paid for by the people of Australia—so we do our very best to get it right.
- I am the first to admit that we don't always succeed, but the men and women in our very complicated acquisition and maintenance areas do work very hard and our approach is improving all the time.
- Now, the major new direction in the White Paper was to enhance our maritime capabilities and ensure that all three of our services are fully equipped and able to conduct operations far from home, for a long period of time.
- The key capability choices were:
  - to double our number of submarines;
  - build a new class of frigates that will be optimised to detect and destroy submarines;
  - provide over 1,100 new combat vehicles to the Army, as well as increasing its general firepower, mobility and survivability; and
  - equip the Air Force with around 100 Joint Strike Fighters.
- We call this Force 2030.
- Force 2030 will be a smart, potent and globally flexible military force.

- The three services will operate as a fully joint force with the ability to achieve an operational tempo and level of precision not previously possible.
- This will allow the ADF to adapt to the full spectrum of operations from high end war fighting through to peacekeeping and rapid disaster relief response.

## **SRP**

- However, this high level of funding for Force 2030 from the Australian Government requires a return commitment from the entire Australian Defence Organisation to improve the way we do business.
- Therefore, we are currently undertaking a comprehensive reform program that will fundamentally overhaul our entire organisation, producing efficiencies and creating significant savings, which the Government has agreed to reinvest in capability.
- It is called the Strategic Reform Program, and broadly, we are seeking to improve accountability, improve planning and enhance productivity, and ultimately, this will make Defence a better place to work.
- What this means in dollar terms, is that over the next ten years to 2019 the Strategic Reform Program will deliver savings of around \$20 billion. This money will be reinvested to deliver stronger military capabilities, to remediate areas where there has not been enough funding in the past.
- I stress that while efficiencies can be found in support areas, safety and quality will not be compromised.
- It will be very challenging, but I'm confident that everyone in the Australian Defence Organisation will deliver a very good outcome, not only for Government but for the people of Australia.
- Because delivering this outcome will give us the ADF we need to look after Australia's security, to look after Australia's interests into the long-term future.

## **The ANZAC Spirit**

- I turn now to our current operations and the outstanding young men and women of the ADF who are—as we enjoy this afternoon tea gathering this afternoon—deployed far from home to defend our nation and our national interests.
- But first, as we are less than one week from ANZAC Day, I just want to say that I think at this time of year it is always important for us to reflect upon our ANZAC spirit—and I would like to spend a few moments talking to you about it.

- I think this is important, because ANZAC day is the one national day we have that demonstrates how much as Australians we appreciate life and how highly we appreciate those who are willing to lay down their lives for our nation, our people and our values.
- It has now been 96 years since a great Australian and New Zealand tradition was born as the men of ANZAC stormed ashore into the fire of Turkish guns.
- By the end of the first day, 2,000 ANZAC's lay dead. By then end of the first week, that number had risen to 6,500.
- The number of Turkish dead was even higher—and though they were lacking combat experience and were painfully young, our ANZAC's overcame seemingly insurmountable odds.
- Looking back almost a century later, one can say that Gallipoli was vital in defining Australia as a nation.
- For our new country it was the first time we had experienced casualties on such a large scale.
- Those young men had shown the world that Australia had come of age—and Australians at the time took great pride in how these courageous young men represented our nation and our beliefs.
- The bravery and tenacity of our soldiers gave birth to a great and enduring spirit.
- A spirit of courage, determination and mateship. A spirit of teamwork and trust. A spirit of endurance and compassion.
- To this day, this spirit represents the values that Aussies now pride themselves on displaying to the world.
- At a time when Australia was searching for who we as a nation wanted to become, these young men answered the question of who we already were.
- And I am so proud that to this day our ANZACs are a source of inspiration to us—they gave us all something to live up to and strive for, particularly those of us in uniform.

### **Operations**

- I can honestly say that I don't go a day without seeing the spirit of the ANZAC's reflected in the men and women of today's Australian Defence Force.
- I could not be prouder of the men and women serving on operations under my command.
- Today, the ADF works to bring peace, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and security to many areas around the world.

- Our commitment continues with our presence in Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and our coastal waters here at home.
- Our people are serving with great distinction in the fine tradition of those that went before them.
- Without exception we are working at a very high standard and furthering our reputation with our allies as a reliable, highly skilled and professional military force.
- Australia's soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen have proven themselves tough adversaries, responding to every challenge with courage and determination.
- And when they interact with the civilian populations of Afghanistan, Timor-Leste or the Solomon Islands the men and women of the ADF demonstrate compassion, understanding and a generosity that furthers our reputation as a nation that respects and embraces culture and diversity.
- We presently have approximately 3300 ADF servicemen and women deployed around the world. Of these, 400 are actively protecting Australia's borders and offshore maritime assets.
- This rate of effort means that all three services are heavily committed preparing force elements for deployment, sustaining those deployed and rebuilding those elements that have returned.
- Additionally, we must also ensure that some of our personnel and assets remain available to respond to our domestic and regional responsibilities should a short notice contingency arise—just as they did earlier this year when we had a summer of natural disasters, but more about that in a moment.

## **Afghanistan**

- I won't go into all our operations, but I do want to talk about Afghanistan.
- Our efforts in Afghanistan continue to progress well.
- Operation SLIPPER has an authorised manning of up to 1550 personnel based within Afghanistan and around 800 additional personnel are deployed across the broader Middle East.
- In my view, our efforts on the ground are making a real difference to the people of Uruzgan province, where we are based.
- We are very focused on training and preparing the Afghan National Army so we can meet our objective—which is to transfer security responsibility to the Afghans as soon as they are ready.

- Recently, our Mentoring Task Force has expanded their partnered mentoring program and they are continuing to live and work closely with the Afghan National Army 4th Brigade in its Forward Operating Bases.
- We have seen solid progress in the 4th Brigade capabilities. We now have over 3000 Afghan soldiers in the 4th Brigade operating across the province, being mentored and partnered by Australian and Coalition forces.
- As well, reconstruction continues to deliver improved services; in particular, we run a trade training school that teaches locals valuable skills in areas such as carpentry, plumbing and concreting.
- We are also disrupting and limiting the ability of Taliban insurgents to operate in the area and, together with the Afghan National Army, we are providing security to the local civilians, so that they can rebuild and move forward in a secure and stable environment.
- In fact, just last week a joint operation between the Afghan Provincial Response Company and the Special Operations Task Group resulted in the detention of a highly-influential district-level commander.
- This builds on the achievements of Operation TEVARA SIN 24 last month, during which two district-level insurgent groups were disrupted and a regional-level insurgent cell operating in the western Uruzgan region was effectively dismantled.
- These recent efforts have resulted in a significant blow to the ability of the insurgents to facilitate planting of improvised explosive devices and to plan and prepare for the coming fighting season.
- The insurgency in Uruzgan is now less capable after a winter period where many of its caches were discovered and destroyed. As a result, the insurgency will now find it more difficult to construct home-made bombs and attack civilian and ISAF targets.
- In terms of our broader deployment to the Middle East Area of Operations, we also have a Navy ship, HMAS *Stuart*, deployed to conduct maritime security, counter-terrorism and counter-piracy operations with the Combined Maritime Forces.
- Last week, HMAS *Stuart* interdicted a Yemeni-flagged dhow and rescued three crew members who were being held hostage by Somali pirates off the Horn of Africa.
- Fifteen Somali pirates surrendered to HMAS *Stuart*'s boarding party and during a search of the dhow, the boarding party located 11 AK-47 assault rifles with 16 magazines, a large quantity of small arms ammunition and a Rocket propelled grenade launcher.

- I conclude my remarks on Afghanistan by reminding you that establishing an effective government and security structure in Afghanistan was always going to be an extremely challenging task.
- A warrior culture, a history of conflict, a harsh environment, an important geostrategic location, complex social structures and relations, high unemployment and poverty, and a wide variety of ethnicities and conflicting religious beliefs all combine to make this area of operation one of the most complex in which to effect lasting progress.
- Nothing about this is easy—but good progress is being made.

### **ADF response to natural disasters**

- Finally, I flagged earlier that I would talk about the ADF's response and recovery operations in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory following a summer of natural disasters.
- An important point to make here is that this was the largest ADF response to a civil emergency to date. All told, we were able to deploy the equivalent of an entire joint brigade group of about 3,500 people at short notice and during a period where our people are normally stood-down for the Christmas/New Year period to spend time with their families.
- Our people undertook a range of diverse tasks. They went door-to-door to deliver warnings and advice; built sandbag levies; evacuated residents; conducted aerial reconnaissance; assisted with clean-up; re-built critical infrastructure; cleared roads; delivered emergency food, water and other cargo such as laptops, mattresses, tents and stretchers; surveyed waterways; re-directed creeks; conducted damage assessments; and assisted with search and rescue operations.
- With little warning the ADF was able to ready and then deploy a substantial force, which we then sustained for the best part of two months.
- All of this was achieved concurrently with the 3300 ADF men and women we have deployed around the world, and emphasises the importance of ensuring we have assets available for unforeseeable requirements to support domestic security and emergency response tasks.
- I am extremely proud of how quickly we were able to respond and what our people—some of whom were themselves affected by these disasters—were able to achieve.
- Their actions, conduct and professionalism have rightly earned them much admiration from their fellow Australians, especially those who benefited from their immediate and compassionate support.
- And I conclude by saying that, as always, we stand ready to provide further assistance that may be required of us.

## **Women in Combat**

- Now, just before I close and while I am on the topic of operations, I want to talk about women in combat.
- Currently, 93 per cent of all ADF employment categories are open to women and women have been deployed on operations for many years.
- In fact, about 230 women are currently deployed on operations overseas, including in Afghanistan where they are supporting frontline operations.
- What we are now talking about is looking at the standards required for the remaining 7 per cent of roles, so that they can be opened to women who meet the necessary standards.
- I know the community is divided on this topic, but I am firmly of the view that women should be able to work in any position in the ADF for which they meet the demands of the job—and that includes direct combat roles.

## **Conclusion**

- I will leave it there for today.
- I am so pleased you were able to here at Russell Headquarters this afternoon.
- I thank you again for your outstanding contribution to Australia as evidenced by your membership in this Association.
- And I also thank those military members here today and encourage you all to join the Order of Australia Association.
- I realise that I haven't addressed all the issues that you may all be interested in, but I am now very pleased to take your questions for about 10 minutes before we enjoy our afternoon tea.
- Thank you.

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