

CN SPEECH TO ORDER OF AUSTRALIA

The Navy and the Nation:

The Role Navy plays in Nation Building

June 9 - R1 Theatrette

Introduction

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, Gentlemen and fellow members of the Order of Australia. I start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I also thank Major General Michael Crane for his invitation to address you this year.

The Navy and the Nation

The Navy has featured a little more prominently in public awareness over the last few years – a lot of that is to do with submarines. But there is a broader narrative that I think needs to be considered.

One of the core themes in the narrative that I am developing as Chief of Navy has been *The Navy and the Nation*.

This is a theme which recognizes that Navy carries the public trust, and that the Navy is itself embedded in the fabric of the nation.

This is a theme that appreciates that Navy has no truly separate existence apart from the community in which it is embedded and which sustains it.

Speaking of the Navy and our Nation I recognise that our citizens constitute the Navy, that the Australian people support the Navy, and that Australian tax-payers fund the Navy.

But I speak, at a more profound level, to the values that unite us as Australians.

These are the values that unite us here in this building.

Our Order is an order conceived upon the concepts of individual merit and moral responsibility.

Our order acknowledges high human achievement and service to Australia and to humanity at large.

The Order of Australia considers values that not only inspire us to greatness as people, but that energise greatness in our societies.

And these values are assuming an ever greater significance in global affairs.

In a powerful text -- *The Shield of Achilles* – the American lawyer and theorist, Philip Bobbitt, analyses the fact that powerful democracies continue to face state-centred threats to their security.

But these threats are often distant and mostly inconspicuous. They are not as obvious as once they were. This is a reality of a 21st Century world where global markets, global connectivity and the international system have blurred once clear edges.

This concealed face of threat is significant since, without an obvious ideological contestant, we can lose sight of the values that make us great as a Nation.

In his important book, *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger offers some ideas that help to explain why values are critically important.

The Critical Importance of Values

He describes the long concord following the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and tells us that peace in Europe was derived from physical balance and moral equilibrium.

Power and justice, said Kissinger, were in substantial harmony.

This was because the balance of power reduced the opportunities for using force while at the same time; the shared sense of justice reduced the desire to use force.

But in the years before the First World War, Kissinger observes how Germany, in contrast to other nations, did not possess a shared, integrating sense of values.

With the exception of clear militarism, Germany was arguably without the values that shaped other European states.

While the British appealed to liberty and the French to universal freedom, Germany never established the premise of its national interest or identity.

So without a coherent sense of itself, the Kaiser's Germany united behind the figment of militarism—which stirs poignant reflections during this ANZAC Centennial period.

Today, we must do better. Today it is of important that we treat values seriously.

As Australians who wish to make a constructive contribution to the global order, we must pause to reflect: What will distinguish us, in this contemporary age and on this global stage?

In 1947, at the beginning of the Cold War, President Truman claimed:

Our way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The other way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression... and the suppression of personal freedoms.

Well today Australia is on the cusp of the greatest naval recapitalisation for a century, new frigates, new submarines, new patrol boats, new tankers.

And so it is fitting that we must, like Truman, seek to understand the values that define and unite our nation and which drive us to these needs.

We must have a clear sense of the values that distinguish Australian naval power as a force for good, and not merely as a brute force.

So what does this all mean? How do we, as the RAN, give expression to the values that define us as a democracy?

We do it by building and maintaining the capacity to defend those values.

And build the Navy we must!

Continuous Building: A Great Opportunity

This is an era of great materiel opportunity for the Navy, for the larger ADF, for Defence Industry, for science and technology; for the education sector and the Nation's workforce to join together in a common endeavour.

To do this we will embark on a program of continuous shipbuilding, an endeavour that will unite the Navy and the Nation in a national enterprise, But as we start I recall Admiral Sir Louis Hamilton who, as Chief of the Naval Staff of the RAN in 1948 wrote in his final report to the Australian Government:

A navy does not drop from the clouds. It is a miraculous and delicate instrument, a creation of nerves as well as steel, united with blood as well as rivets, it is in many ways the greatest expression of a nation's genius.

He is right.

Continuous shipbuilding is more than just about ships. It is a strategy that will take the Navy and the Nation a long way on the road of sovereign development and maturity.

By investing in Australian industrial and technological competence, continuous ship building is an investment in the physical infrastructure and the human expertise that makes possible the constant improvement of ships.

This is essential so that the ADF can continue to evolve the capabilities needed to carry out the policy of future governments.

Continuous ship building is a generational step change from the old ways of boom and bust building.

As Admiral Hamilton would have it: the Navy is, in many ways, the greatest expression of a nation's genius – and as I would go further: it is an expression of the nation's values.

Values in Practice

These values ultimately manifest themselves in practical detail when they are implemented in what we do on a daily basis.

The aspirations and values that unite the Navy and the nation in the enterprise of continuous building are illustrated by the present activities of HMA Ships *Canberra* and *Adelaide* – our newest and biggest ships ever.

These ships allow the Australian Defence Force to project both hard and soft power to a degree and with a level of confidence we have never before enjoyed.

With *Canberra* we have already achieved a new level of capability for the ADF. We have embarked army's amphibious troops and their equipment and deployed them ashore from the sea.

We now have a much more robust and sustainable amphibious capability than at any time in the ADF's peacetime history.

But this new capability also has real utility in humanitarian assistance and evacuation operations.

The recent deployment to Fiji by *Canberra* in the aftermath of Cyclone Winston demonstrated the scale of what these new ships can achieve due to their advanced amphibious capacities -- both airborne and waterborne.

This capability to put troops ashore and support them, has repeatedly been essential in the stabilisation operations that we have conducted in the region over recent decades. I am thinking particularly of Bougainville, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.

In all of these operations we saw Australia's Navy operating to project force for good. Motivated by shared values, and with a large strategic perspective, our Navy is contributing to regional and to global security.

Informed by shared values, the ADF deploys the nation's naval power wisely. And today the ADF has more options to use naval power.

In terms of maritime combat power, we already have more than a taste of what is to come in the modernised *Anzac* class frigates.

Their new advanced radars, (produced in this city) and combat systems, are world leading technologies that will allow our surface forces to operate with a much greater degree of confidence against the airborne anti-ship threat.

This claim is not just idle speculation. HMAS *Perth*'s performance at the Pacific Missile Range facility in 2014, using this technology, proved the worth of the recent frigate modernization.

I am particularly happy with the recent introduction of the MH 60 Romeo Seahawk helicopter. These helicopters are now at sea in the *Anzac* class and they are a leap in anti-submarine capability – a tremendous asset that the most modern submarines will find very difficult to counter.

And, as you can imagine, I eagerly await the arrival in the fleet of the three new *Hobart* Class Air Warfare Destroyers.

The *Hobart* Class will provide a capability to dominate the maritime battlespace through their AEGIS system and their modern missiles in a way that we have never had before.

Importantly these destroyers will complement, and be complemented by, the Air Force's *Wedgetails*, which carry the most advanced air space battle management capability in the world.

The ability to share sensor and tracking data will allow them to capitalise on the full capabilities of our long range missiles. The Hobart / Wedgetail combination will allow us not only to see far over the horizon but also to strike targets there with deadly force.

Lethality

So lastly I want to raise what is often a prickly point. This naval recapitalization is about increasing the potential lethality of our force.

This is an important point. I have talked elsewhere of our need to focus on the lethality of our systems because it is lethality that creates combat power and consequently a true deterrent effect.

But lethality is also a joint effort.

A force centred on an Air Warfare Destroyer, and our other seaborne elements, supported by *Wedgetail* and other airborne systems such as the *Joint Strike Fighter*, *Super Hornet*, *Growler* and *Poseidon* maritime patrol aircraft, and backed by the weight and protection of our submarines' destructive power, will have the ability to dominate any area in which it operates.

What we are developing, in sum, is a maritime combat capability that will be able to operate as a coherent national task force, or as a major element – often a leading one – within a coalition.

It will be a collective capability that will be able to deal heavy blows to an adversary and at very long distances when government so demands.

And it will be a collective force inspired by fundamental values.

Lethal power in the hands of the ADF is a force for good on the face of the globe when our government seeks to protect our national interests.

Conclusion

Each CN has challenges to face. I consider myself fortunate that many of my challenges relate to the speed at which we need to build new ships and prepare the Navy for the rest of the 21st century.

In this speech I quoted from Admiral Louis Hamilton of the UK and from US President Truman. But to emphasize that the values of which I speak *are* profoundly Australian, I conclude my address with the words of Prime Minister Alfred Deakin.

In 1907 Deakin spoke in the House of Representatives in support of the acquisition of a First Australian Naval Fleet led by the battle cruiser HMAS *Australia*.

He made the point that the Navy is indispensable. He said:

The Empire and all its parts depend for their unity and guarantee of freedom upon the Navy. That is its first line of defence, and we in Australia are distinguished in this particular, because we must rely more upon it than any other part of the Empire.

Deakin foreshadowed what continues to be Australia's maritime strategy.

He went on to acknowledge how the Navy and the nation were linked, indivisibly, at the level of values. He said:

If we lost the whole of our financial possessions we should miss them much less than if we were robbed of liberty, constitutional freedom, civilization, and social status.

Written and spoken more than a century ago, Deakin's words still speak to us as we Australians, of this generation, provide ourselves with the means, to defend the values that establish our nation in the community of great democracies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is why we have a Navy. It is inseparable from the Nation.