

**Seapower Conference 2015**  
**Chief of Navy Keynote Speech**  
**6 October 2015**

<b>A Global Navy for Global Needs</b>
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Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I speak HMAS *Canberra*, our newest commissioned ship is alongside at Townsville after completing a most successful maiden exercise. For the past eight weeks she has been at sea. Her flight deck busy with both Navy and Army helicopters. Her dock operating her water craft.

She carries a ship's company of 408. Fifty three of these are Army and Air Force. However in the last few weeks, during her Sea Series, she has carried another 634 army embarked personnel and HQ staff. At times this lifted to close to 1400.

Cooks have been producing 3750 meals per day. There have been 1474 deck landings conducted to date. By the end of this month I expect that S60Romeo Seahawk will be *authorised* to operate from her decks. Next year there will be First of Class Trials for CH47 Chinook and ARH Tigers on *Canberra*.

She has been carrying 60 medium and heavy army vehicles for her embarked force. She has moved more personnel and equipment in the last eight weeks than her predecessors moved in the last 5 years.

And in December this year we will commission a second LHD, HMAS *Adelaide*.

I am very impressed by the work of those who built and fitted out this ship in Spain and in Australia. I am very proud of the men and women of her ship's company who are hard at work becoming proficient in all the new skills needed to operate such a significant new ADF capability. Before the year's end she will be certified as 'In all respects ready' for operational deployment.

Bringing into service this class of amphibious ship and all the new capability they represent is an achievement of national significance.

Ladies and Gentlemen within that context Welcome to Navy's Seapower Conference 2015.

For some of you it is welcome back, for others this is a first opportunity to attend this biennial gathering. To friends old and new, some of whom have come from far away to be with us, I welcome your participation in this significant international naval and maritime forum.

I welcome members of the academic community, those from trade and industry, and those who will be reporting and recording what we say here over the coming days. Your presence ensures that we who are in uniform are not just talking to ourselves, rather, we are engaging with the whole spectrum of maritime knowledge, opinion and wisdom.

As I shall emphasise in this presentation, defence is a national enterprise.

For those of us in uniform, this conference is a rare opportunity to stop what we are doing in our day jobs to reflect upon our profession, to think about our vocation.

Over the next few days we can learn from national and international experts and from our peers, and remind ourselves of the context and rationale for the careers of sea service we have chosen.

I warmly welcome my international counterparts and their representatives. We operate in partnership with our friends and allies in this region and I look forward to hearing from all the speakers who can provide insight drawn from their national experiences.

I extend a welcome to my fellow service chiefs, Lieutenant General Angus Campbell and Air Marshal Leo Davies. This is the third Seapower Conference at which all three Chiefs of Service speak at the opening session. This triumvirate is a reminder that we in the ADF are really beyond joint—we are increasingly operationally interdependent

Australia's strategic military focus must remain above, on and under the sea. The distances we need to traverse remain a key consideration.

Our Navy operates around the region and the world meeting our Government's tasking. Ultimately our peacetime task, along with other navies, is to provide what the old naval prayer calls: "*a safeguard for those who pass upon the seas on their lawful occasions.*"

In practice we are playing our part to secure the freedom of the seas so that the commerce of the world can build the wealth of nations. Trade is the basis for global prosperity.

The Australian Navy has been, from its inception and will remain a global navy.

Our ships have operated—in both hemispheres and across the world’s oceans—during the last century in peace and war

In 1914 the First Fleet Unit’s ships, led by HMAS *Australia*, patrolled the Indo-Pacific and deterred raiding of our sea lanes, frustrating Germany’s ability to realise its political objectives by military or naval means.

In November 1914 HMAS *Sydney* was detached from troop convoy protection duties to engage the commerce raider SMS *Emden* which was sinking ships and blocking the movement of troops and resources across the Indian Ocean. Our first naval action at sea as a nation was a victory in defence of our troops. When our sea lanes were secured our fleet headed for the North Sea and the Mediterranean.

However maintaining a global navy with a global focus remains a continuing challenge.

Australia has a continent to defend and a small population with which to do it. Beyond our shores we have legal responsibility for an area even greater than the mainland.

Not surprisingly, over most of the RAN’s existence, we have needed to be a prudent beneficiary of the experience and investment in research and development of initially the Royal Navy and in more recent decades of the United States Navy.

Some years ago, Rear Admiral James Goldrick, one of our conference speakers and an authority whom many of you know, identified the key problem the RAN faces in the modern era. He spoke of the recurring difficulty for medium power navies being :

*the mismatch between the expertise that we can generate and sustain ourselves, and the wide range of capabilities that we need to operate.*

He suggests that at least part of the solution may be a revival of some of the shared approaches by which the original fleet unit concept prospered.

There are many like-minded navies, culturally and organizationally similar, faced with capability problems relating to scale.

We can undertake to engage in this new era of self reliance while acknowledging that we are in partnership with many others who, like us, need to pool their expertise and resources in order to equip, maintain and operate their navies efficiently and effectively. Necessity is the mother of invention.

We now have a new understanding of the opportunities for greater interdependence, which allows for an international approach to problems that are hard for any medium power with a medium sized Navy to solve on its own.

But we have been trending this way for some time. Our regional success will be very much driven by how we build architecture around our design from the outset.

This next decade presents us with expanded opportunities for building capability in partnership with others. More than ever, technology unites us; it enables us to be powerfully and seamlessly interoperable as never before.

The Government's announcement in August means the decades of building and stopping only to then restart years later – and all the waste and lost opportunity that resulted – should be over.

A generational shift in our thinking and in our understanding of what Australians can and will do to provide for our future surface fleet has begun. This is a national undertaking by a mature country. A country that does not duck a difficult task that is well within its national industrial capacity.

But as a national strategy, continuous shipbuilding is not only about its primary purpose of building a fleet of ships.

This decision also heralds investment in Australian technological industrial infrastructure. Continuous shipbuilding will be an engine of employment and stimulant to economic growth.

But at a deeper level, continuous shipbuilding unites the Navy and the Nation in a far-reaching strategic enterprise. This is because continuous shipbuilding invests the Australian Navy and the Australian nation with the means to deliver a common enterprise and at the same time to exercise a greatly enhanced global influence.

I suggest that this Seapower Conference is taking place at the most significant time for the Navy in Australia's modern history. I can state this with confidence because we have now reached this point of new departure in our national and our naval history where we will be recapitalising our fleet at a greater tempo than at any time since WWII.

Let me give you an image of just how significant this change will be.

Outside my office in Canberra hang the portraits of thirty of my predecessors. These sepia photographs show the Admirals who were entrusted by Australia to command the Australian Navy from 1913 to the present.

Of those thirty, fewer than five saw the Navy expand in capability during their time in office. Many saw a slow process of occasional ship acquisition. Most were hard put to hold onto what they had inherited and a few saw the fleet diminish dramatically. This was particularly true as the requirements of the nation fighting a war at sea came to an end in 1919 and 1945.

The first in this line of thirty was Vice Admiral Sir William Creswell. He was our professional ancestor. He argued and won the case for the Australian Fleet unit against considerable opposition. He saw a fleet built from nothing, arrive in Australia in 1913, go to war, earn the praise of the British Admiralty and return home.

My point is that only Creswell, a century ago, experienced a major fleet expansion in peacetime on the scale we will see in the decade ahead for our Navy.

This building of a new Navy will be a challenge. Professor Geoffrey Till has called Defence acquisition “*one the most demanding forms of human activity*” for good reason. Too often in the past what Till describes as “*long gestation periods and iterative tinkering with original specifications*” have caused delays and cost over runs.

Historically, once ships were operational the great challenge was to keep them that way. Availability is the critical precondition for decisive and distributed lethality. I continually argue this! Our ships need to be ready for duty in the numbers needed to undertake the missions we are given.

In the past too often new ships were fitted “for but not with” all the weapons systems and sensors they needed to make them lethal. This was not wise, and in the long run not cost effective either.

Our future platforms will be built and fitted with what they are designed to carry. They will be ready for service across the spectrum of operations from their first day of service. Flexibility will need to underpin our ship building programs, so we can adopt new technologies as they become available throughout the life of the ship.

Development in stealth technologies, in the sphere of cyber warfare and in the domains of electronics, weapons systems, propulsion systems, automation and materials technology were impossible to predict when ships – which operate today – were designed, thirty years ago.

We cannot know exactly what technology, still being developed in a research lab, may be available in a decade. What we do know is that we must design ships that anticipate the need for adaptation and future enhancement.

We will build the ships we need for our time and place in the world and with our global partners we will develop the indigenous industry to sustain our fleet indefinitely into the future. We have made an excellent start with our two Canberra class. These ships not only transform the Navy’s capability they will also transform the ADF’s.

They are also fine example of international collaboration – designed and laid down in Spain and equipped and fitted out here in Australia. This has been a sensible and successful pooling of expertise.

But they are only a very impressive beginning! The first of our three *Hobart* class Destroyers will join the fleet next year. They have not been without challenges but these are smart ships with state-of-the-art Aegis combat systems and weapons fit to match.

They will provide long-range protection and lethality. They will be the teeth of a future RAN task force and they will be in Australia's service for decades to come.

But as our ships continue to be delivered our shipbuilding plans need to be future-focused—for an uncertain future.

As Prime Minister Turnbull pointed out only a couple of weeks ago, one of the emerging characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the power of disruptive technologies to provide new and completely unimagined opportunities – opportunities both to discharge existing tasks better and to take on new ways of doing things.

But capturing the advantages of disruptive technologies as they emerge across the national economy is a whole-of-nation task. Innovation, including innovation in military equipment, will only be possible to the extent that each sector of the economy can leverage developments in other, and possibly totally unconnected, sectors.

Innovation often comes from shifting to new paradigms rather than continuing in existing ones. Connecting previously unrelated technologies is the bedrock of innovation.

As I review the pace of technological change over the span of my own career, I am amazed at the speed with which we have been able to accept technological novelty and turn it into the commonplace.

Whether it is the advent of the GPS, the internet, the exponential expansion of communications systems or the power of IT technology, we now assume their availability as we await the arrival of the next disruptive technology.

These technologies, and their developmental systems, are changing the way in which traditional enterprises operate. The interdependency that underpins Navy's capabilities and their support systems did not exist when I was a junior officer.

All of you attending this conference are witness to that fundamental change in Navy's basic operating system. This technological interdependency has two significant consequences.

First, it forces capability managers, especially the Chiefs of Service, to redefine their roles as network managers and systems operators rather than the simple owners of discrete military arsenals. It forces us away from platform-think to systems-think.

Second, it forces capability managers to see the delivery of capability systems as a whole of nation enterprise.

Many of you would have followed with as much interest as I have, the ongoing discussion about naval shipbuilding among naval experts, strategists and commentators.

What many of the commentators have missed is what I might call the “joined up” nature of the modern defence enterprise, the interconnected nature of the skills, resources and capabilities that make up modern military power.

This interconnectedness is only going to grow. Education, skills development, innovation, the creation of new knowledge-based industries are already central to the evolution of military capability.

Many of you here have backgrounds in naval architecture, heavy engineering, metallurgy, avionics, logistics, weapons system engineering, propulsion and information technology. Many of us have considerable operational experience. But we are, for the most part, very conventional in our approach to capability development – evolutionists rather than revolutionaries.

Audiences at future Seapower Conferences may include nanotechnologists, behavioural scientists, biomechanical scientists, industrial designers and autonomous robotics engineers, not to mention creative designers and organisational theorists whose imagination will expand the scope of both agility and performance. In other words, revolutionaries will be welcome.

Today I have acknowledged the impact of disruptive technology on global affairs and the speed and agility with which we need to respond. The speed and scale of technological advance is impossible to disregard. And, the ramifications are difficult to comprehend.

As you may now appreciate, we in the RAN and the ADF have a massive undertaking ahead of us. To address the range of opportunities and challenges which face us, earlier this year I launched Navy’s strategy to 2018, my period in office.

This is *Plan Pelorus*, which positions the Navy to navigate the future strategic environment and provides us with our course and headmarks. *Pelorus* is a strategic plan that acknowledges the changing character of global affairs, and recognises the need for a more agile, flexible and responsive Navy. A fifth generation Navy and beyond

*Pelorus* recognises the need for technologically advanced ships to combine in the modern fleet system, to integrate seamlessly in the joint and networked environment. This is a plan which recognises the need for ships to be capable of delivering the lethal force upon which deterrence depends.

It is a hard-nosed plan. One that recognises the need for ships to be *affordable*, *adaptable* and *available*—ready to serve the Nation’s needs.

But, *Plan Pelorus* looks beyond individual ships. It recognises that, in the future, ships will only be entirely capable when they operate in fleet systems. In the future, the whole will be massively greater than the sum of its parts.

*Pelorus* is also about our people. They remain what they have always been: the greatest single factor in our success in operations. *Pelorus* addresses those serving now and those we need to recruit because they have skills we need if we are going to operate the systems we will be acquiring.

But none of the issues I have discussed so far can be addressed comprehensively unless we know what is the purpose of navies and what we may be called upon to do. So I also want to speak briefly of values and ethics.

Values stand the test of time. They draw us together and offer our profession a critical moral and ethical legitimacy. Our profession is committed to the defence of the values that unite our nation and is defined by them. Honour, honesty, courage, integrity and loyalty are the values of my Navy.

Without values, and without leadership imbued with a moral sense, our profession would be purposeless.

We must never forget that Seapower is not about *mere* power. Seapower is not about brute force. Seapower is about service at sea as a force for good. The prosperity of our nations and their citizens depend upon our ability to trade freely across the oceans and enter and leave the ports of customers and suppliers.

I recall Alfred Mahan, who wrote at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Seapower at its best: *enables the quiet and the weak to go about their business and to sleep securely in their beds.*

Mahan was speaking of the values that are elemental to the strategic purpose and the operational concepts around which the Fleet is designed. Australia seeks to stand beside all other free Nations in the promotion and defence of these values.

Ours is a Nation with global reach and global responsibility for defending our maritime interests, and maintaining the international systems upon which our way of life depends. Central to our *raison d'être* is that the Navy does this in concert with the other arms of the Defence Force, and alongside our friends and allies.

In the present age, as lethality is distributed across fleet systems, cooperative engagement capabilities mean that one platform can cue several, and that commanders have access to almost unimaginable destructive power.

As lethality is distributed, so is responsibility. This means, that when we operate together as the constituent elements of complex fleet systems, we must have an unbridged confidence in each other. We must share an understanding and a trust, above and beyond the level of technical proficiency.

In practical terms, we must seek every opportunity to exercise cooperatively at sea. We must take advantage of every chance to prepare collectively for the challenges that might confront us in the years and decades ahead.

Increasing regional and global connection means no nation can expect to act alone to bear the burdens of security and stability. We must look to those things that unite us, rather than to those things that differentiate us, as we work together to advance good order and observance of legal norms at sea. And at the same time, we must leverage the capability differences between us to deliver the common purpose.

Australia is an alliance partner with the United States and we continue to work closely with the USN as we have done for decades.

Australia is reaching out to partner even more closely with regional navies. This year, by way of example RAN ships have worked with Indonesian and with Indian ships in very useful bi-lateral exercises which proved that interoperability is not only possible but increasingly normal practice.

Operating together to defeat drug smuggling and piracy in the Arabian Sea and in waters round the Horn of Africa for ten years has had the beneficial effect of providing all of us with experience of maintaining a maritime overwatch in those formerly uncontrolled waters.

In addition to bilateral exercises and operations the maritime security architecture is shaped and reinforced by our maritime regional forums which build cooperation and agreement, security and stability.

Speaking regionally, I refer to the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting - Plus Experts' Working Group on Maritime Security.

Individually significant, the collective effect of these separate forums is of immeasurable importance. Each is committed to close working relationships, enhanced transparency and to the joint endeavour in which we are all engaged - the peace and prosperity of our countries and their people.

Australia and the Navy is committed to these multinational maritime arrangements and to every other opportunity we have for cooperation. Our obligation is to ensure that we advance our work together to maintain good order and justice at sea.

I have spoken today about fundamental principles, about shared problems and challenges, and about values that unite us and that inform our stewardship of the destructive power of nations.

We should recognise that we can stand together to uphold enduring and universal principles. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we work cooperatively because we are the custodians for our governments of Seapower.

We have the capacity to exercise it to provide the maritime security and international confidence that is the foundation for economic development and stability in our region.

If we do not provide security of the seas no one else can, or will, do so.

With that thought I welcome you to the Seapower Conference 2015