

**Chief of Navy Address to  
the 8th Biennial Conference of the Submarine Institute of Australia**

15 November 2016

Shine Dome, Acton

*An expanded submarine fleet: Meeting the challenges*

Distinguished guests, Submarine Institute of Australia President Mr Andy Keough, friends and partners from industry, fellow Service personnel and Defence colleagues—including our close United States allies, our friends from France, ladies and gentlemen.

I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Ngunnawal people of the Wiradjuri Nation, both past and present and to acknowledge their stewardship of this extraordinary continent of Australia.

The last twelve months have been a period of significant change for the Navy, for the ADF, and for Defence.

To prepare my remarks for today, I had a look back at the speeches delivered to the past SIA conferences by a number of my predecessors. As you would expect, each of them argued the case for submarines as part of the ADF's and the Navy's force structure.

And so too did I when I addressed this conference in 2014.

But much has now changed.

I am in the fortunate position of having a clear and unequivocal decision by government to build a force of 12 submarines.

These are submarines which will provide Australia with the decisive lethality in the maritime domain that the nation needs if it is to guarantee its long term strategic security.

As I am sure you all know, I spent a fair amount of last year working some of the key policy ideas that will take the Navy into the strategic complexities of this century, while positioning the Navy to deliver the capability that government has mandated for us.

In my various speeches I have articulated how lethality, interoperability, interdependence and a totally inclusive and cohesive approach to ship-building formed what I have called the national naval enterprise.

Underpinning the strategic highpoints, I am acutely aware of the need to bring not only the members of our service along with us as we transition to a more demanding and more efficient future, but also to bring the broader community along with us, too.

For the plain fact is that now, as never before, we need the total engagement of Australia's technological, industrial, educational and research communities to work with us seamlessly to deliver a Navy appropriate to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So let me start with a bit of context.

The 2016 Defence White Paper provided the biggest shift in our nation's submarine strategy since government first decided to feature submarines in the ADF's modern force structure in 1959.

It was almost sixty years ago that the Defence's then Joint Planning Committee concluded "the institution of a submarine service would be a valuable addition to the Australian Defence Force."

And what a great addition the *Oberon* class submarines proved to be.

But how did we make such a success of the *Oberon* capability?

In large part, the answer to that question was directly dependent on the ways in which we partnered with the Royal Navy, learning from them how to operate and how to sustain a boat that delivered a strategic edge.

The RAN did build support infrastructure for its *Oberon* submarines, but arguably we did not take over from the Royal Navy the major duties of being ‘parent’ to the class.

So, for the next two decades, the RN continued to foster the RAN’s fledgling submarine service.

There are two points here: First it was the RAN’s submarine service. Second, the RN offered invaluable help.

It was the RAN’s submarine service, because all the elements that supported submarine capability belonged to the same organisation—Navy. These elements included directorates managing submarine policy and resources, the submarine squadron, submarine maintenance and repair, naval design (coordinated by a dedicated submarine manager), parts of Naval Support Command, and parts of the Naval Overseeing Organisation.

Each of these agencies maintained specialists in submarine capability.

And the RN offered critical support since each of the Australian submarine elements had direct reach-back to the RN's equivalent organisation. The support system was ultimately underpinned by the RN, even to the extent that the RAN drew on the RN stores system to supplement its inventory.

The system was imperfect, but appropriate given where we had started from.

But priorities were set and problems were solved by the one skilled, determined organisation — and this proved invaluable.

As many in this room know, acquisition of the *Collins* Class was then a major evolutionary step forward.

*Collins* was a submarine designed to meet Australian requirements, and it was built in Australia.

At the time, *Collins* was the biggest system integration task undertaken in this country.

And after the mammoth task of building, it took more than a decade for Navy to wholly realise the magnitude and complexity of the burden which falls to the parent navy.

I think that it is fair to say that the obligations of parenthood are now properly grasped right across the Navy, and Defence, and they are now well met. I might add that acquiring this proficiency was a very painful experience!

We have now evolved well beyond those fledgling days.

This means that after much reflection, and not a little anguish across the whole of the service, we now speak of a national naval enterprise—an enterprise that embraces the submarine service as the key to the Navy’s ability to strategically deliver decisive lethality—and the fleet as a whole to enable us to distribute that lethality.

These are central concepts to the nation’s war fighting ability.

The idea of the enterprise speaks to the collaborations we have formed and fostered with industry—and to the sense of partnership we have fostered between the different organisations within Defence who share in the responsibility for our submarine capability.

And why is this significant?

Because in order to meet demands, which will follow from the Future Submarine, we must look to the lessons—to the continuities—of both the *Oberons* and *Collins* in order to make a success of the Future Submarine.

We have learned. Indeed, we have evolved.

More importantly, we continue to learn, and we continue to evolve and to mature.

The government’s decision to construct an Australian submarine capability around a force of twelve boats, gestures to an increased awareness of the submarine as a core element of Australian Defence strategy in an increasingly challenging environment.

As we know, the rolling build philosophy has been identified as a keystone of this program.

This program reflects a strategic policy that will impact upon Australian industry, upon the national economy, upon our technology, innovation and education sectors, and ultimately upon the Australian community as a whole.

The *business* of submarines is now very far from being the exclusive business of the Australian Submarine Squadron. The business of submarines is an enterprise that depends upon almost countless constituent and interlocking parts.

This is exactly what an enterprise is—reliance on the way we always have done things will not work if we hope to design, build, support, sustain, crew and operate a force of twelve submarines.

As I am sure you all appreciate, this is not a simple doubling of our historical submarine effort: it is a quantum change that takes us beyond segmented force structure planning and delivery, to a systems approach to the operational art.

From a naval perspective, I need to ensure all our efforts are directed toward achieving capability at sea.

Our submarines will be very capable. The bar is set very high.

At the last conference, I spoke about availability. This had been my focus. You may recall I emphasised, “availability, availability, availability.”

And as we heard MINDEF say last night, “we have achieved benchmark standards.” This has been an outstanding effort, and I pass on Navy’s thanks to John Coles and all those who have stepped up to lead, contribute to and support this success.

The high standards of availability, which we have now accomplished with *Collins*, establish a minimum benchmark for the Future Submarine. For, as every submariner knows in his or her DNA, ‘availability’ is but a stepping-stone to capability.

So my new focus is on the capability.

Capability, capability, capability.

To realise continued and expanding capability will be a significant undertaking, requiring innovation, discipline and deep knowledge of all the aspects of submarining.

Capability recognises that a submarine force is more than a collection of hulls.

A submarine capability includes workforce, command and control systems, safety systems, combat systems, weapons and decoys, training capacity at sea and ashore, search and rescue capability, and, of course, effective logistic and support structures.

And doubling the size of our submarine force—and transitioning to new platforms—demands that we focus our energies on ensuring that we get it right from the outset.

This includes the necessary training systems, appropriate through-life support arrangements and adequate shore-based infrastructure to produce and sustain our future submarine. We simply *must* get these systems, arrangements and infrastructure right if we are to realise the Future Submarine capability.

Balancing the generation of Future Submarine’s supporting systems and infrastructure with the concurrent sustainment and operation of *Collins* will be a challenge.

But achieving force continuity throughout the transition is a major strategic priority for me as Chief of Navy—it is not option.

As we transition from *Collins* to the Future Submarine, there will valuable lessons to bring from the past.

But as I said earlier, we will not be able to go about this business as we've always done.

Rather, we must be prepared to simultaneously sustain and operate two classes of submarine—and this will demand innovation from the start. We need to think differently.

As the naval capability manager, I am responsible to government for delivering the naval capability necessary to contribute to our deterrence efforts, and to respond to threats should deterrence fail.

This means that I must also be looking ahead to the shape of the future force—since the responsibility of capability management is not just a responsibility in the here and now.

Indeed, ship repair, maintenance and modernisation are all fundamental to the challenges of capability management. It is therefore an easy argument to make that we must develop and sustain indigenous construction, repair and maintenance capabilities.

Continuous shipbuilding and rolling acquisition programs will enable Navy and industry to deliver a far more efficient and more effective maritime defence system. The practical effect that the rolling build has on submarine operations and strategy will be profound.

It is the keystone of our operating system—since acquisition, operation and sustainment come together under the single umbrella of a rolling acquisition program.

All in all, a rolling build program will ensure the regional superiority we pursue can be attained and endure.

It's about capability.

As Chief of Navy, I have a responsibility to ensure that Navy delivers the necessary platform systems, and their supporting architecture and facilities, against the significant national investment the Government has made.

The success of our Future Submarine Program hinges on sound program arrangements, experienced leadership, and disciplined program management. It also hinges on dependable undertakings by industry, and the solid and supportable assurance that execution will proceed as planned.

Delivering available, reliable, capable and deployable submarines—including robust and effective asset management—will require a clear and singular focus from all elements of the national naval enterprise.

But ultimately, our strategic success will depend upon effective *common* enterprise—an enterprise inspired to produce available, reliable and regionally superior submarines that can sustain operations across our region.

And this, as you all know, is precisely what the Submarine Institute is all about.

Thank you for having me here today and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the remainder of your conference.