

Chief of Navy Address at Sea Power Conference 2017 —

Service Chief Session

The Future Navy — Capable, Agile and Lethal

3 October 2017

Sydney

Welcome all to Navy's Seapower Conference 2017.

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 international naval and maritime forum.

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 of the speakers who can provide insight drawn from their national experiences.

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.

I extend a welcome to my fellow service chief, Air Marshal Leo Davies, Chief of Joint Operations, Vice Admiral David Johnston and the Chief of Army's representative, Head of Land Capability, Major General Kathryn Toohey.

The fact that we have all three services and Joint Operations Command represented in this opening session is a reminder that the Navy is an integrated part of the Australian Defence Force and we are increasingly operationally interdependent.

For those of us in uniform, this conference is also a rare opportunity to stop and reflect upon our profession.

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 sea services in which we serve.

So...In this opening session I would like to provide context for the future discussions. In doing so, I need to explain where the RAN is going and what progress has been made in keeping with the Australian governments intent.

When I spoke at the last Sea Power Conference in 2015, Navy was on the cusp of a strategic rebuilding and expansion that with the initial announcement of the government's commitment to a national, continuous shipbuilding strategy.

Since then there has been clarity about how the Navy is to be rebuilt and expanded and much has been achieved. In early 2016 the Australian Government released a Defence White Paper and this year it followed with a companion Naval Shipbuilding Plan.

These documents outline the government's vision for Australia's future naval capability.

As important, they also give fidelity to the shipbuilding and ship sustainment industry by providing a commitment to a permanent naval shipbuilding industry through three distinct lines of investment. These are:

- the investment in the rolling acquisition of new submarines, continuous build of future frigates and minor naval vessels;
- the investment in modern shipyard infrastructure, across the two construction shipyards in South Australia and Western Australia; and

- the investment in naval shipbuilding workforce growth and skilling initiatives; together with new generation technology and innovation hubs.

As a consequence of these decisions, the government announced that Naval Group will be our international partner to design the 12 Future Submarines. Already, we have formal government to government agreements in place; a functioning design centre has been built in Cherbourg (by Australian trades-people with Australian materials) and the Australian project team is in filling rapidly there.

Meanwhile, the construction site in Osborne is being secured and yard design is in progress. The project is meeting its milestones.

Concurrently, Navy's two new tankers have been selected and work will soon commence on their construction — the first ship is expected to be delivered in 2019 and the second in 2020.

Much work has been done on progressing the acquisition of 12 new Offshore Patrol Vessels.

These vessels will provide us with an advanced capability to undertake constabulary missions and be the primary ADF asset for maritime patrol and response duties.

Tender evaluation is complete and a decision expected from Government later this year. Construction of the first two vessels will begin in 2018.

We have also made significant progress on the acquisition of nine Future Frigates. These frigates will be able to conduct a range of missions, with a particular focus on anti-submarine warfare and will incorporate the Australian-developed CEA Phased-Array Radar. We are on schedule to commence construction in 2020.

All of the Seahawk Romeo Helicopters have entered service and are undertaking operations, deployed in ships in the region and beyond.

Both LHDs HMA Ships *Adelaide* and *Canberra* have been commissioned and are already proving their utility and versatility with participation in major exercises and deployments this year.

And just last week we commissioned HMAS *Hobart* - one of the most sophisticated warships ever to be operated by the RAN. She is Aegis fitted, the first in her class with two more to follow and the first destroyer for the RAN since HMAS *Brisbane* was decommissioned 16 years ago.

The delivery of such new capability has allowed the RAN to revert to its practice of complex Task Group operations. This practice offers strategic utility to government by delivering the agility and responsiveness that is at the heart of our approach to maritime warfare and enables more effects to be achieved against an ever-growing set of threat scenarios.

This year the Australian Defence Force has successfully completed Talisman Sabre 2017 — it provided us with invaluable task group operational experience and improved our training, readiness and interoperability. It also provided us the opportunity to test and prove the readiness of the LHD HMAS *Canberra*.

And as we speak the other LHD, HMAS *Adelaide* is currently leading the *Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017* Task Group deployed into the South East Asia region.

This deployment will demonstrate the ADF's Humanitarian and Disaster Relief regional response capability as well as further supporting security and stability in Australia's near region through bilateral and multilateral engagement, training and capacity building.

Whilst this is not the first such deployment by the RAN in South East Asia it will be the largest coordinated Task Group operation since the early 1980s. And these deployments will become a regular part of the ADFs ongoing commitment to regional security.

Indeed, it is important to note that beyond a commitment to new capability, the Defence White Paper also foreshadows a significant increase in investment in regional engagement – with plans to contribute to maritime security in several ways.

Firstly, with programs like the Pacific Maritime Surveillance Program which will deliver up to 21 patrol boats with long term sustainment to our South West Pacific neighbours to improve maritime awareness in that region.

And secondly, with increased funds for Defence cooperation in the vast array of maritime security fora and exercises that exist to provide stability within the region through the deliberate and disciplined approach to problem solving and by reducing the chance of miscalculation.

But the generation and deployment of self-supporting and sustainable maritime task groups capable of accomplishing the full spectrum of maritime security operations calls for more than just an equipment list.

There are fundamental attributes that a credible fleet needs to demonstrate to allow this to occur.

Over the last few years the Navy has taken great steps forward in the regulated management of seaworthiness within the Fleet. This follows a similar path to the improvement in airworthiness of the aviation force.

We are better managing and sustaining our platforms, infrastructure, communications and information systems, intelligence, and other mission and support systems for our current capabilities. That's not to say we have it all right but the lessons learned are being applied to the projects that will introduce the future fleet.

We are working to have an integrated, diverse, resilient and deployable workforce that has the skills and competencies to deliver Navy's warfighting effects.

We are also improving our culture to ensure that it supports an agile, resilient and innovative Navy that actively seeks ways to better deliver our warfighting effects.

As a result, we are participating more regularly in multinational exercises and through expanding our cultural understanding and language capabilities, to understand how we can make more effective and meaningful contributions during those exercises.

This progress gives me great confidence that we are on track to achieve the long term objectives that we have set ourselves to ensure that Navy is seen as a fighting system which is part of a joint warfighting organisation and as a national enterprise.

As you can see we are building a capable, lethal and agile Navy able to fulfil the tasks required of it now and into the future.

A Navy that has the ability to deliver targeted and decisive lethality if government so requires.

A Navy that has the ability to take decisions quickly, to manoeuvre naval force with speed and flexibility, and to enhance survivability by ensuring that our warfighters are able to adapt doctrine and tactics to meet the needs of the moment.

A Navy that can adapt to the ever changing strategic environment.

Even since the last Sea Power Conference in 2015 there have been unpredictable shifts in our strategic environment.

The unprecedented missile and nuclear weapons testing conducted by North Korea, the impact of the South China Sea Arbitration and the increased possibility for miscalculations which could result in armed confrontations at sea.

The shifting of old alliances; the rapid rise in global terrorist networks in South East Asia; changes in migration patterns; the increased activities of international criminal syndicates whether it be from co-ordinated illegal fishing enterprises to smuggling illegal migrants.

These are just a few.

And so we seek a Navy that has the ability to maintain our sovereignty, defend our territorial integrity, and protect our national interests wherever they may be threatened – regionally and indeed globally from the Middle East across the Indian Ocean, through the South China Sea, and in the Pacific.

And because we know that no country can truly expect to act alone to solve the dynamic maritime challenges which are faced in our region, we seek to build a Navy that can work with and support our neighbours, friends and allies.

It is working with our neighbours to maintain and advance the internationally-recognised, rules-based global order that has been so conducive to ensuring maritime stability, and open and reliable maritime trade in our region.

We all have a vested interest in regional peace and stability, unimpeded trade, and freedom of navigation and overflight in our region.

Sea Power Conference 2017 affords us the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been done over the past two years: to consider if our current thinking about what the Navy of the future needs to be is accurate; and to develop the ideas and concepts that inform our future thinking and planning all while meeting the current and future challenges of the dynamic regional environment in which we operate.

Thank you.