

## CHIEF OF NAVY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### SEA POWER CONFERENCE 2012

31st JANUARY 2012

Thank You, Justin Before I get into my formal remarks I would like to acknowledge that there are a number of people here who were recognised in our Australia Day honours list last week. I congratulate you all for your respective achievements and for receiving national recognition in this way. I do want to single out one person and he is Professor Martin Tsamenyi, Director of the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security at the University of Wollongong. Martin, on behalf of the Royal Australian Navy thank you for your efforts in the fields of ocean policy and ocean law - you have been a very good friend of the Navy over the years, you have guided many a naval officer in their pursuit of post graduate studies in these fields and your appointment as a member of the order of Australia is fitting of your substantial contribution - congratulations.

I would also like to extend a very warm welcome and express my sincere thanks to my fellow Service Chiefs David Morrison and Geoff Brown for taking the time to come and participate in this session this morning. In 2010 our predecessors did something similar and it made an enormous impact. I thought it was a great initiative then and something that I was very keen to see repeated, primarily because there is very little that Australia does militarily that is not fundamentally a joint endeavour. The maritime domain more than any other relies on joint effects to realise the objectives we seek to achieve.

As the Chiefs we represent the interests of our respective combat arms of the Australian Defence Force, but we do that with an inherently joint outlook. The joint journey for Australia was initially largely one of financial necessity; our scale meant we could not afford to duplicate capabilities that were used exclusively in only one domain or by one organisation. As we progressed it became ever more clear, as it has to many other defence organisations, that

the power of a joint combat approach had its own compelling logic. We have managed to move through a number of phases in our joint development to the point where you will have a Service Chief arguing for a capability for another Service because of its inherent value to the joint force - even at times at the expense of another desired capability for their own service. When you reach that point you know you are well along the path to truly jointly focussed warfighting.

Today, though, I want to talk about the theme of this conference, the Naval contribution to national security and prosperity. Why, in an island continent do we feel the need to have a conference with this theme, after a couple of centuries of absolute reliance on the sea for both our security and prosperity. How is it not deeply embedded into the psyche of this nation?

Well, firstly, we are not alone in facing this dilemma. Our British friends coined the phrase 'sea blindness' a number of years ago to describe what was considered a lamentable lack of understanding by the British public of the sea and the importance of the Navy. The term has been picked up in other places such as India and it is fair to say it is a condition that we suffer from here in Australia. It is confounding that many Australians observe an array of merchant ships at anchor off Australian ports like Newcastle, but do not instinctively make the connection to our national wealth. Of course, compounding this is that much of our high value merchant traffic operates in our sparsely populated north west coast or other regional areas, largely unseen by the public, but just as unrecognized are the oil tankers that bring the petroleum on which our internal economy depends.

The truth is that most seaborne activity is invisible to the average citizen and the relationship between the assured use of the oceans and our national prosperity - indeed our national survival - is not something that penetrates the consciousness of most. Perhaps running the 'supermarket shelves' test is the best way to make the point. Take everything off the shelf that has in some

way been reliant on sea transport and see what is left. Partly this problem exists because of the nature of maritime work. Much of what maritime industries – shipping, fishing and offshore resource exploitation – as well as what the navies that protect them do happens out of sight of land. All too often it is also out of mind. This presents a perennial challenge for all navies, just as it does for maritime industry. We have had a recent lesson in the tragic loss of the Italian cruise liner Costa Concordia, the graphic images of the half sunken hull gained much more attention than had the day to day activities of a vast worldwide industry, carrying millions of people every year with a previously good safety record.

At its core it is our Navy's contribution to good order and discipline at sea that is critical. Our ability to use the the sea safely for own national interest and – vitally - for our mutual benefit is the key issue. There is very much a national dimension to this. After all, it is our economy that is at issue. But the importance of alliances, partnerships and coalitions in the maritime domain is fundamental, given that we are ALL reliant on global trading routes which no single navy can police or control. In that respect I am very pleased to see the large number of overseas delegations, Chief of Navy counterparts and senior representatives here this week - your contribution to this debate is vitally important.

The principal intellectual construct we use when describing this challenge is the notion of sea lines of communication, or SLOCs. Historically, this is exactly what they were, the routes connecting nations and empires on which people, material **and** information was carried - it was, of course, for maritime nations, the only means of communicating. Today the only real sea lines of communication are the undersea cables that carry internet traffic and e-commerce. The traditional surface SLOCs are really lines of trade or, in keeping with this conference, lines of prosperity. One thing we might ask ourselves this week is whether SLOC as a term actually does us any favours in

articulating navies' contribution to security and prosperity - is it time to find a more contemporary term that better describes what we are talking about?

I see here a parallel to the way in which, for a while in the dot.com boom, the 'old economy' was neglected and decried in favour of the emerging wonders of the digital universe. Inevitably, the realization had to come that those who operate in an electronic world must have a material existence as well. When people now talk of 'communications', particularly the young, the conscious and unconscious association is with electronic transmission and the speed of light. We need to find new ways of describing the maritime world of ships and cargoes and our utter dependence upon their safety and movement that succeed in conveying the realities involved of mass, scale and time. If I may put a challenge out to present day thinkers and writers on maritime strategy, it is for them to devise arguments that can get this message to the national audiences of 2012.

Sticking to current nomenclature, though, SLOC security really endures as the main maritime game. Freedom of navigation along those SLOCs remains one of the central tenets that many of us hold dear. When I use the term freedom of navigation, I use it in its broadest sense, it is not simply a discussion regarding nation state interpretations regarding maritime jurisdictions but the ability to navigate on the global commons on lawful business in lawful ways without interference. Through the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea we have developed a legal architecture to help us manage this.

From a naval perspective the maintenance of our security and prosperity is achieved through three key activities, sea control, sea denial and maritime power projection. Going back to my opening comments, for any small to medium sized Defence Force, these are not the purview of the Navy alone. For some reason we have not been good at publicly articulating these elements of naval strategy. All too often they are seen as independent rather than highly inter-dependent activities. This is where much of the

commentary on strategic maritime issues comes unhinged, particularly that which focuses on the balance required in our overall force structure.

Notwithstanding, Sea Control is the primary naval task in SLOC security. It spans all levels of operational intensity from peacetime constabulary tasks, where it is as much an inter-agency activity as a naval one, through to high end war-fighting. It is time consuming because it is largely about creating conditions for the use of the sea - that requires sustained presence. It applies equally to major trading routes, to maritime choke points and, in our own EEZ, around our critical offshore infrastructure and resources.

Sea control is often localised either geographically or temporally – it is about allowing the use of the sea area involved, not dominance just for its own sake - but what it needs to be effective is a balanced force structure. Successive Australian Governments have endorsed a balanced force structure for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and, in particular, for the Navy. There are those who argue for more specialised force structures, most often these structures are built around denial capabilities. The reason these pundits have never got sustained attention, nor their ideas much traction, is that their proposals introduce additional and unacceptable levels of strategic risk and they fail to understand the inter-connected nature of these maritime concepts. For example, many components of our Air Force's force structure have a key role in sea control, particularly the MPAs, AEW/C, tankers, the fighter force and, in the future, the high altitude long endurance UAVs – they are all a key part of the force structure balance required for effective sea control.

Sea denial is, of course, an important option to have available strategically, but alone this approach cannot guarantee our SLOCs and thus cannot underwrite our national security. For a maritime nation such as Australia where there is a need to **use** the sea and not just to deny its use, sea denial is in fact very much a concept that operates at the higher end of the operational

intensity spectrum and one that in our strategic circumstances would invariably be used in conjunction with sea control. Again, it is not solely conducted by the Navy; both Air Force and Special Forces have distinct roles. Sea denial is also not solely, in naval terms, about submarines either, nor is it purely or necessarily a defensive strategy. Furthermore, offensive sea denial against an adversary in that adversary's back yard requires assets with the appropriate reach and endurance to conduct it.

Maritime power projection is a critical capability for the ADF, particularly in its regional role of contributing to the security and stability of the South Pacific and East Timor. At its heart is the delivery of force from the sea, be that through naval bombardment or the use and support of land forces in an amphibious activity. Power projection does not always involve the use of military forces in a 'hard power' way. HADR of course is a manifestation of the same foundation techniques and capabilities used for harder edged power projection missions in getting capabilities where they are needed, when they are needed.

All three services play vital roles in maritime power projection, but Army and Navy in particular must operate hand in glove in this domain. What we are seeing now is a fairly rapid maturation of a relationship that has been developing over the last 30 years. The catalyst for that maturation is of course the quantum leap in capability that we will see with the arrival of the LHDs in 2014. At this conference two years ago, the then Chief of Army gave a very clear indication of where Army was headed. The current Chief has taken that vision and started to turn it into reality with the recent announcement that the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment will, in effect, form the nucleus of an amphibious battle group. Through the Joint Amphibious Council, which the Chief of Army and I co-chair, we are seeing significant movement towards where we need to be.

The LHD will be a truly joint capability and their introduction into service is already testing us on a number of levels. In Navy the worst thing we could do

is to think that 'we know boats'. There is a level of complexity in the LHD that we have not seen at sea since operating the carrier MELBOURNE. There are very few of us left who served in MELBOURNE and most of us were very junior officers or junior sailors at the time. HMAS CHOULES, our newest warship, is a magnificent capability bridge to the LHD. She brings with her a dock and electric pod propulsion - something we can gain experience with over the next couple of years in the lead up to the first LHD. Until then, both CHOULES and TOBRUK will play an important role in preparing the Navy and the Army for this transition.

But the tendrils of the maritime power projection issue extend much more deeply into the defence organisation. The Vice Chief of Defence Force has the task of being the Joint Capability Authority and making sure that all the other aspects that will make the ADF amphibious capability work are in train. We are all very focused on ensuring that the transition to the new force is smooth.

But what we must not do is to think that this is the sole focus for the ADF's endeavours over the decade. The amphibious capability is most certainly a game changer; it will challenge the way we have operated amphibious capabilities and change the way we train as an ADF, but it is not the only capability transition challenge we face. There are several other major maritime capability developments that will require a deal of effort.

In the maritime context, and for the Navy in particular, the introduction of the Air Warfare Destroyers, a key sea control and power projection capability, will also bring with it significant challenges as we get back into the area air defence game. The interaction with Air Force's AEW&C and eventually F35 capability will be critical if we are to optimise the joint effect that is available for us. More specifically for Navy, the development of the offshore combatant vessel over the coming years will challenge some entrenched positions and, of course, the vigorous debate we have seen over the last few months regarding the future submarine is but a taster of the national level challenges that lie ahead of us.

All this falls coincident with our single greatest focussed effort on rebuilding and reinvigorating our engineering capabilities and technical workforce and restoring the importance of technical integrity in our day to day business. We are doing this through embedding a unifying seaworthiness construct and ensuring that our culture continues to develop under the New Generation Navy change program to what is required to attract and retain our people in a contemporary war-fighting Navy.

I know that many of the other Navies and services represented here are facing a range of challenges just as complex. And I think that we have much to learn from each other. At the end of the day, the best way for us to maintain our collective security and prosperity is for us to understand each other's needs and interests. To do that we need to talk and interact, we need to exercise together and operate together on the global commons. We need to continue to embrace the notion of maritime security as a collective maritime endeavour, as we have seen around the Horn of Africa. There may be different models at work in achieving that purpose, but all of us involved share the same aim.

Underpinning all this is the continued importance of the development and maintenance of maritime domain awareness, our ability to see and understand what is happening around our coasts and out at sea. Technology is clearly becoming an enabler for improvements in MDA for all. We are now bumping up against other constraints which are more human in nature, the need to know battles the need to share. It is a significant challenge for us all but one that we can overcome.

I have attempted to set the scene from an Australian naval perspective and I am looking forward to hearing the other service chiefs. There are some fascinating sessions planned for the remainder of the conference. I hope that they generate some robust and constructive discussion and help us all better articulate to our respective countries the importance of the naval contribution to security and prosperity. Thank You.