

# MERCATOR

## Maritime Domain Strategy 2040

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### OUR VALUES

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SERVICE | COURAGE | RESPECT | INTEGRITY | EXCELLENCE

*Navy acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.*

Navy recognises their continuing connection to traditional lands and waters and would like to pay respect to their Elders both past and present. Navy would also like to pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of peace and war.



This artwork was created for Defence by Kalkadoon woman, Ms. Chern'ee Sutton. The artwork is titled Caina Putut, Ilya, Wartanganha which in Kalkadoon language means "Long ago, Today, Tomorrow". It is a tribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whom have served, and continue to serve, in the Australian Defence Force. For more information on the art and artist visit [www.cherneesutton.com.au](http://www.cherneesutton.com.au).

**We Need a Maritime Domain Strategy to:**

- Increase operational effects to achieve sustained maritime presence where required
- Increase our capacity to deliver lethal effects through use of the programmatic approach and 'evergreening' (continuous capability development)
- Improve our supply-chain resilience
- Increase our sovereign industrial capability and capacity whilst leveraging emerging technologies
- Increase our breadth and depth of partnerships and alliances
- Ensure meaningful contribution to integrated campaigning in competition

# Chief of Navy Message



As an island continent, Australia is first and foremost a maritime nation. Our security and prosperity is directly linked to the oceans and seas. Controlling our seaborne approaches and supporting international efforts to assure the global maritime commons is essential for our continued prosperity.

With the increasing pace of technological and geopolitical change, we have entered into a prolonged period of strategic competition that will continue to shape our region for decades to come. We will continue to prioritise our immediate region. Doing nothing, or waiting for allies to solve our challenges is not an option.

Government has directed the implementation of a new strategic policy that signals Australia's ability – and willingness – to project military power and deter actions against our interests. MERCATOR is our Maritime Domain strategy to achieve this. Our intent to **Shape**, **Deter** and **Respond** is a coordinated national endeavour.

This is my strategy as the Maritime Domain lead for Defence. I commend MERCATOR to you and ask you all to continue to contribute to it, improve it, and execute it – together.

**Our Vision: A credible and sustainable permanent joint maritime presence, integrated with partner nations across the near region by 2030.**

An aerial photograph of the ocean's surface, showing a dense pattern of white foam from breaking waves against a deep blue background. The foam forms intricate, interconnected shapes across the entire frame.

## **Navy Mission**

**To prepare naval power  
in order to enable  
the joint force in  
peace and war.**

# Introduction

The lesson of centuries for island nations, is that in war, conflict and competition, victory at sea is essential for success on land and ultimately victory as a nation. Defeat at sea, on the other hand, leads to defeat as a nation. The sea has always been a competitive domain. Examples, such as the Pacific campaign of the Second World War, demonstrate the need to be able to deploy and sustain lethal and survivable maritime forces which are critical to campaign success. With the likelihood of high intensity conflict now less remote, the enduring strategic need to contest the seas, to succeed in the Maritime Domain is more important than ever and requires a persistent and joint effort to compete.

For 120 years our maritime forces have kept Australia safe, protecting our national heritage and sovereignty, both at home and abroad. This has helped Australia to develop within a rules based global order as a unified, secure and prosperous nation, with a proudly democratic and multi-cultural society.

**“Australia is at the centre of a dynamic global strategic environment.”  
Defence Strategic Update 2020 (DSU20)**

Noting DSU20 direction, we again find ourselves engaged in a contested and unrelenting campaign, dealing with emerging challenges such as military modernisation, technological disruption and the risk of state-on-state conflict, all the while subject to active interference, disinformation campaigns and economic coercion.

To meet these challenges, our strategic direction is clear. Defence’s strategic objectives are to deploy military power to:

- **Shape** our strategic environment;
- **Deter** actions against our interests; and
- if required, **Respond** with credible military force.

MERCATOR charts our course to achieve this in the Maritime Domain. It focuses our resolve. It reinforces our unique role as Australia’s maritime force, working with supporting capabilities, Whole of Government, Industry and Academia for and on behalf of all Australians.



# Operating Environment

We must always remember that using our moral compass and acting in accordance with Australian and international law provides legitimacy, which underpins liberal-democracies and helps garner support from all Australians and partner nations.

Controlling the seas and projecting power from the sea complicates the strategic situation for adversaries and competitors. We have many unique advantages. Maritime forces are multi-mission capable and ready for the unpredictable. They deliver persistence, presence, and manoeuvrability. They provide options and decision space for national leadership.

**Our maritime forces “...must be able to project force at a long range from Australia, operate across vast distances and work closely with civil maritime security agencies to protect our borders.”**

**DSU20**

Alliances and partnerships will remain a key strategic advantage. They must be nurtured and strengthened. Increased regional partnerships will be a feature as will our continued commitment to rendering Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief.





Despite the increased focus on integrated lethal high-end warfighting, it is not sufficient to just excel in high technology conflict. People and relationships also determine our success or failure. In a competition environment, routine activities contribute to achieving strategic-level effects.

In the context of enduring competition, maritime campaigning will evolve to become even more persistent. This will include operating forward and maintaining presence. This is because trust and interoperability cannot occur at distance. Presence has a power that absence, even with promise and friendship, cannot match.

The Navy, Army and Air Force have a long history and proud tradition of service together. However, today's contested security environment and the challenges of technology and disruption, demands an even deeper cooperation, so that within the Maritime Domain we will act as a single integrated joint force.

This is a whole of nation effort for Australia. An enhanced sovereign industrial capability with stable, predictable and continuous maintenance, shipbuilding and scientific development, conducted in Australia by Australian businesses is required. We must do all we can to ensure the success of our national shipbuilding program. This must be linked to increased self-reliance within our alliance framework.

# Our People

None of this can be achieved without our people and the support of our families. We need the right people, at the right place, at the right time with the right training and our people need to be ready, willing and able to serve where and when required. To enable this, we need an inclusive, adaptive and resilient workforce that is capable of sustainably operating our future force. We need a maritime force of increased size, we also need to remain flexible and agile, ensuring our conditions of service maintain Defence's place in Australian society as an employer of choice. This will be reinforced by a culture that reflects the diversity and the best of what it is to be Australian, supporting continuous improvement, growth mindsets and ethical leadership in-line with Defence-wide cultural reform priorities. Our success in meeting our capability requirements hinges on the willingness of our people to live Our Values and demonstrate the corresponding Behaviours.

Suitably qualified and experienced people, who are engaged and supported is key to success. Next Generation Navy will continue to focus on optimising Navy culture, enabling Navy to future proof ourselves against strategic risk. By implementing a range of cultural, leadership, and performance development initiatives we will build our human capability and cognitive diversity and with it, improve our organisational and individual resilience. This can only be achieved with the support of our broader Navy Family, service colleagues and Defence partners.



# Strategy

To **Shape, Deter** and **Respond** at sea requires ready and sustainable power projection on behalf of Australia. This may be with allies and partners or alone.

**To prevail we must truly be a Thinking Navy: A Fighting Navy: An Australian Navy**

In actioning MERCATOR, our maritime forces, along with other Defence contributors in the Maritime Domain will:

- Grow in size
- Maintain our capacity to deploy globally
- Be embedded in partnerships across the Indo-Pacific
- Be deployed and present in the region to execute Australian statecraft and deliver strategic effects
- Improve our supply-chain resilience and therefore self-reliance
- Augment our proficiency to support civil authorities
- Be equipped with cutting edge and emerging technologies
- Effectively apply finely graduated force across the spectrum from cooperation through to competition and if necessary, to conflict
- Be able to counter coercive statecraft and respond to grey-zone activities
- Enhance our ability to apply lethal effects, ensuring we remain a lethal fighting force
- Be a force of influence and good

Whilst our 2030 vision will be achieved through a programmatic approach to the delivery of the capability required to meet our anticipated future challenges, we also need to be ready to **Shape, Deter** and **Respond** now with the Force in being.

## **Fleet Optimisation Program**

The intent of this initiative is to optimise the Fleet-in-being. The ability to provide the right forces, at the right time capable of fighting and winning at sea will be achieved through a focus on the availability, sustainability and lethality of our Fleet



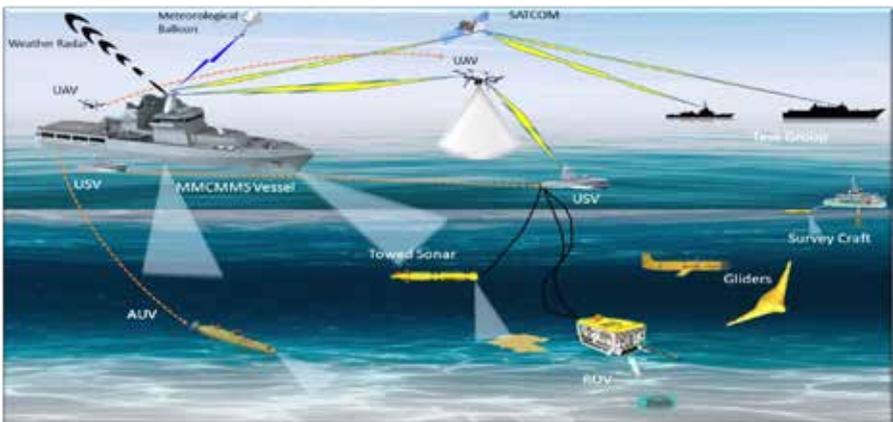
We are focussed on optimising maritime capabilities to meet emerging challenges, ensuring the Australian Defence Force continues to defend Australia and its national interests in order to advance Australia’s security and prosperity. The five Maritime Domain program visions and exemplar capabilities detailed below clearly demonstrate the journey we are on.

**Maritime Mine Warfare Patrol and Geospatial Program**  
An effects focussed Mine Warfare, Patrol and Geospatial capability that delivers a highly innovative and adaptive contribution to the Joint Force

SEA1905-1: Maritime Mine Countermeasures and Military Survey will deliver a holistic capability with the procurement of versatile mission packages that include robotic and autonomous systems and specialist variants of the Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel. These mission packages will:

- conduct mine countermeasures in a ‘stand-off’ mode;
- conduct Military survey from shipborne and robotic and autonomous systems; and
- deliver mine countermeasure and military survey effects.

As part of the largest recapitalisation of the Royal Australian Navy in modern history, underpinned by a continuous National Naval Shipbuilding Enterprise, SEA1180-1: Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessel is delivering new ships which provide a significant increase in capability, enhancing our capacity to patrol our maritime territory and near region.



## Maritime Combat Support and Amphibious Program

Amphibious combat and maritime combat support capabilities delivering vital and potent joint force manoeuvre, presence, posture, projection and persistence options for tactical and operational commanders

Amphibious, sea lift and sustained sea-based expeditionary capability is key to Australia's maritime future and joint force operational effectiveness in our maritime-centric region. To project and sustain joint forces persistently in scalable packages, Australia needs to operate far from home, potentially without friendly land bases and ports.



Deployed joint forces are necessary for protecting, taking or holding military objectives, and/or imposing military costs on adversaries. Frequent and persistent deployed maritime (and para-military) presence effects and mobile lethality enhances military and strategy options for Government, and underpins the Shape-Deter-Respond operating model.

Amphibious and combat support ships with a Fleet-common suite of sensors and effectors leverage efficiencies for Navy and Fundamental Inputs to Capability.

Examples of harnessing sovereign Australian world-leading capabilities, evolving command, control, communications, computer and intelligence capabilities and optimising the current fleet include:

- CEA Technologies Active Electronically Scanned Array
- Saab's 9LV Next Generation Combat Management Systems
- Alignment with Fleet weapon, Satellite Communications, Electronic Warfare, Identification Friend or Foe and Link upgrades

### **Maritime Surface and Above Water Combat Program**

The Maritime Surface and Above Water Combat Program will provide the ADF with lethal, and sustainable surface and above water combat capabilities that are integrated and interoperable with Joint and Allied Forces

The program will maximise Australian industry participation, with sovereign manufacturing and maintenance capabilities being developed for the spectrum of the program from surface combatants and combat systems to guided weapons.

SEA1300: Navy Guided Weapons will deliver technologically advanced maritime strike, integrated air and missile defence weapons and undersea warfare in the short to medium term.

These capabilities will:

- integrate into the Combat Management Systems being acquired for Navy's present and future Fleet;
- be interoperable with other ADF assets and those of Australia's allies; and
- ensure Navy's guided weapon capabilities are lethal and serve as a deterrent to adversaries threatening Australia or our national interests.

SEA5000-1: Hunter Class Frigates, optimised for anti-submarine warfare, are key examples of sovereign industry participation. Construction of the nine frigates, delivered in three batches out to the 2040's, will establish a continuous naval shipbuilding enterprise in Australia.



## Undersea Combat and Surveillance

A regionally superior, sovereign and lethal undersea warfare capability providing strategic deterrence and warfighting superiority against current and emerging threats

The Undersea Combat and Surveillance Program will deliver regionally superior submarines, highly interoperable with the United States Navy enhancing Australia's strategic deterrence capability and contributing to regional anti-submarine warfare.

These highly advanced lethal, long range platforms provide the necessary capability to hold an adversary at risk at long range from Australia. They will be able to sustain presence in the region, over prolonged periods of operation, to protect Australia's interests.



SEA5012-1: Integrated Undersea Surveillance System will support Theatre Undersea Warfare and maritime surveillance, improving awareness of our northern approaches and sea lines of communication. This capability will progress interoperability objectives with our allies and deliver:

- decision support systems to improve mission planning, intelligence fusion and command and control of undersea surveillance assets;
- mobile, fixed and deployable wide-area undersea surveillance systems, including specialised ocean surveillance ships;
- enhanced processing, analysis and dissemination of data and acoustic intelligence; and
- investment in innovative, future technologies such as autonomous vehicles, advanced acoustic data processing utilising artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data analysis.

**Maritime command and control, communications, computers, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and electronic warfare (MC5ISREW)**

The MC5ISREW Program is delivering a broad and complex suite of cutting-edge technologies and capability effects that will shape the Joint Force's ability to respond to, and deter against, the accelerating technological and warfighting advances in Australia's regions of interest

The program is:

- delivering enhancements to the Nulka anti-ship missile decoy system;
- modernising Maritime communications systems and the Fleet Information Environment; and
- delivering enhanced Electronic Warfare capabilities.

Across all of these capabilities the program will:

- employ continuous capability development (evergreening) processes to ensure capability effects remain contemporary and tactically relevant to address emerging challenges in our region; and
- ensure the right people receive the right training and are employed in the right places to best deliver the requirements of the Program.

Collectively, these endeavours are contributing to the Joint Force's ability to operate effectively in a complex, congested and contested electromagnetic, cyber and space environment, and achieve and sustain interoperability and interchangeability with our allies and partners.



## Our Success

Success requires our maritime forces to be highly capable, flexible, sustainable and scalable so as to provide a clear message of national intent. We must also recognise that new and emerging technologies have complicated the maritime domain, but that Australia's strategic need to compete and succeed at sea, and to keep our competitors and potential adversaries at a distance, hasn't changed.

**We are On Watch. Contest and competition are our persistent companions.  
Our motto is to fight and win at sea. We serve Australia with Pride.  
Together as one, we have the Ship.**





# WE FIGHT AND WIN AT SEA

