

This submission will address the following Terms of Reference:

- The efficacy of Australia’s existing strategic planning processes and associated documents including – but not limited to – the Defence White Paper, Integrated Investment Plan, force structure reviews, Sovereign Defence Industry Plan and Naval Ship Building Plan – to deliver the best and most capable Defence force that Australia can afford.
- The opportunity cost of short-term and shifting Defence priorities.
- Efficacy of bipartisan and / or independent approaches to strategic Defence planning in other nations such as the USA and Denmark (brief comment only).
- Any other related matters.

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Decision making on defence and security is failing us

MAPW believes that there are many factors that contribute to the defence of Australia, of which the capability of the ADF is only one. Key to any strategic planning processes relating to our defence and security must be an examination of the threats we face and the most effective and affordable ways of addressing them. This goes far beyond a program for acquiring the most up to date weapons systems available. Therefore this submission will address some broader issues that we believe are very relevant to *any* agreement on our defence, bipartisan or other, in addition to raising specific concerns with the proposed Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement (BADA).

An examination of the threats facing Australia is all the more important given the 2016 Defence White Paper’s observation that “there is no more than a remote prospect of a military attack by another country on Australian territory in the foreseeable future”. The obvious questions this raises therefore are:

- What *are* the major threats to Australia’s security?
- How can these threats be mitigated so that warfare is prevented?

The threat of non-state terrorism is a useful example, as it is cited as the reason for our current military deployments in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and now the Philippines also.

We have been engaged in the “war on terror” for 16 years. However the wars we continue to fight are widely believed to have *increased* rather than reduced the risk of terrorist attack on Australians¹, and yet we keep fighting them.

It is therefore difficult to see what criteria for success are applied in our current strategic planning and to decisions as to what we require of the ADF. The latter is never discussed in a transparent fashion because decisions for new ADF deployments bypass even our elected representatives in parliament. There is zero debate in parliament of the strategy, legality, likely outcome and costs of new military deployments, zero examination of the lessons that we should have learnt from our rush to war in 2001 and 2003, and zero open and transparent accounting for the incalculable losses that our recent wars have produced. One of the most egregious of these omissions is the complete absence of any official record of civilians killed or injured in the wars in which Australia fights. This is akin to treating an illness while turning a blind eye to all the side-effects of the treatment.

The point to be made is that Australia’s existing strategic planning processes are failing us. The evidence in favour of our existing or recent wars playing a positive role in defending Australia is lacking, and in fact significant harms have been caused both abroad and within Australia. The lack of parliamentary and wider debate and scrutiny of defence and security matters leaves critically important questions unanswered. It also increases the risk of mistakes being repeated.

It is hard to see a Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement (BADA) addressing this huge democratic and strategic deficit. On the contrary it would tend to reduce rather than expand possibilities for serious examination of Australia’s security and the best ways to achieve it.

Australia’s federal parliament is much more than a bipartisan grouping. There are a broad range of perspectives that are not represented by either of our two biggest political parties. Indeed, there is already strong conformity between the Government and the Opposition on security matters, in a way that many people perceive as a general aversion to being seen as “soft on defence”. However there are other voices in the parliament who have valuable insights into our security and its broader non-military dimensions. Such voices should not be marginalised further.

The profit motive

In addition, encouragement of the profit motive - which forms the basis of the defence-industry collaboration as set out in the documents to which the terms of reference refer -

¹ See for example <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/australia-could-be-the-next-paris-terrorism-expert-warns-20160303-gn9k68.html>, and <https://johnmenadue.com/john-menadue-the-terrorists-are-over-here-because-our-troops-are-over-there/>, and <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/11/30/huge-error-former-us-military-chief-admits-iraq-invasion-spawned-isis>

automatically skews thinking on defence matters towards the provision of military hardware and away from far less costly (economically and in human and environmental terms) measures such as diplomacy. It also completely marginalises major security concerns such as climate change, resource depletion and mass movements of people.

Those who are generally consulted for “expert” advice on defence matters, for example on proposals such as a BADA, are very often those who have vested interests in military approaches to security, particularly representatives of the weapons industry or the “independent” research they fund. It is hardly surprising that such representatives favour large weapons programs as the bedrock of our security. If we want to reduce lung cancer, we don’t consult the tobacco industry.

There is insufficient broader perspective from experts in diplomacy; measures such as the setting up of a mediation unit, which the Norwegian Government has done, receive little attention; the advice of experts in international aid, which can play an important and cost effective role in stabilising key communities, is ignored.

It is likely that a Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement would tend to lock in further the profit motive in favour of warfare, and reduce discussion of these and other wider policies that are essential in achieving genuine security for Australians. Such discussion should be open to all those with expertise in security matters, both within and outside of parliament, who are not hampered by vested interests.

Community input into foreign policy and defence white papers has been at times token, with poor notification of the availability of consultation processes and very short time frames involved. Reducing input cycles to every five years would further damage an already inadequate process.

It is worth noting here the important role that historians could play in strategic planning. Australia, despite spending vast sums of money on our commemoration of World War 1, refuses to learn any lessons from that war and its preceding events. The arming of Europe in the two decades before the war was all done in the name of security and deterring warfare. The great European powers roughly doubled spending on armies between 1904 and 1914.² All had plans for war that were ‘increasingly offensive’.³

Historian Douglas Newton writes “This created a huge vested interest in armed preparedness. Not surprisingly, that vested interest sought to influence political decisions and budgetary priorities. It spawned lobbies and leagues, with political and press

² David G. Herrmann, *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War* (Princeton, 1996), Appendix B.

³ David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford, 1996), p. 414, and see tables of expenditure in his Introduction.

connections, to boost the dogma of armed preparedness. Supposedly, only unmatched power could keep the peace.... Privately owned arms and shipbuilding firms became gigantic enterprises, employing many thousands. They wielded great power.”⁴

At the end of the war, Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary in 1914, concluded: "The moral is obvious: it is that great armaments lead inevitably to war."

One hundred years on, the lessons are stark, and yet ignored. Historian Henry Reynolds outlines in his book *“Unnecessary Wars”* the ease with which Australia slips into disastrous wars that have nothing to do with our security.

The opportunity cost of short-term and shifting Defence priorities

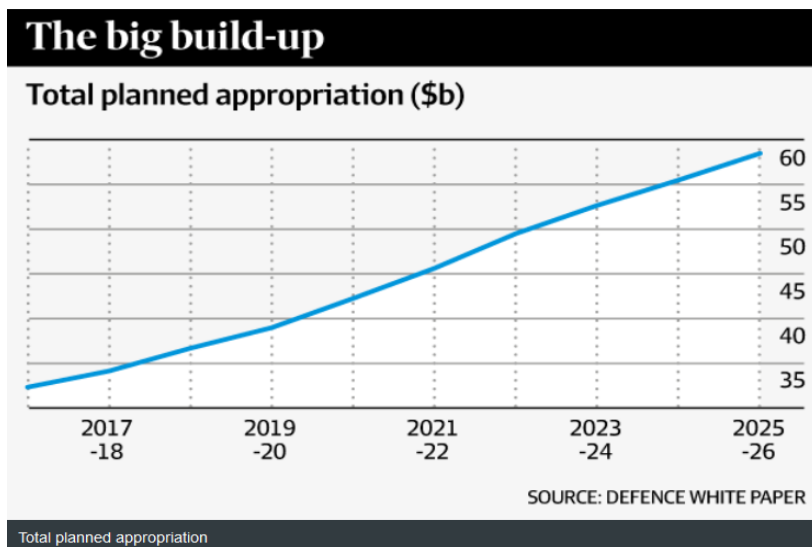
MAPW believes that Australia should have good quality, good value, task appropriate defence purchasing. The foremost priority in planning and funding for Australian defence capability should be our own national interest, which in turn is underpinned by the preservation of peace and security both regionally and globally.

However, military spending will always involve opportunity costs for other sectors of the Australian economy, especially with the current rapid increases in defence spending (see chart below) and the goal for it to reach 2% of GDP. The current increase of over 6% annually relative to the austerity faced elsewhere in the community should be subject to regular political scrutiny, given the severe constraints on almost every other sector of the economy.

Critical government funding of health, education, housing, renewable energies and many other essentials are regularly reviewed and budgets changed. Decisions that are locked into the longer term do not have the benefit of ongoing review and adjustment in the light of changing circumstances. This is not to argue that long term commitments should never be made, but that in the rapidly evolving defence and security landscape, regular review of decisions is important.

From DEFENCE ECONOMIC TRENDS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC 2016

⁴ Chapter 3 in MAPW series “War to End All Wars”, available at <http://www.mapw.org.au/news/war-end-all-wars-honoring-dead-learning-lessons-chapters-1-12>



A five yearly Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement is likely to reduce political input and the ability to modify budgets and priorities in response to the democratically determined priorities of the elected government. The main beneficiaries of bipartisan defence planning would be likely to be the weapons manufacturers, as Australia's rapid escalation in defence spending would be less likely to be challenged or changed.

Efficacy of bipartisan or independent approaches to strategic Defence planning in other nations

Brief comment only will be made on the example of the USA. If the US teaches us anything, it is a reinforcement of President Eisenhower's warning against the dangers of a powerful military-industrial-complex (which some observers now refer to as the military-industrial-Congressional complex). The US spends vast wealth on fighting its continuous wars, with some of the economic costs – such as the costs of veterans' health care for many decades to come - being largely hidden. (The latter comment applies also to Australia, on a much smaller scale.)

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter project illustrates the fact that bipartisan defence agreements are no protection against poor decision making. This program has produced a plane that is long overdue, massively over budget and technically deeply flawed⁵. The Canadian government has made moves to withdraw from its F-35 contracts.

⁵ **F-35 Continues to Stumble** Center for Defense Information at POGO http://www.pogo.org/strauss/issues/weapons/2017/f35-continues-to-stumble.html#officials_hiding_truth_about_f_35 Accessed 6th November 2017

Bipartisan defence agreements also do not provide immunity to pork-barrelling and anti-democratic corporate influence, which are both rife in the US. Weapons companies such as Lockheed Martin have for many years conflated US best interests with the best interests of the company, so it is not surprising to see this same persuasive language arising in Australian circles. In 2016 Lockheed Martin spent US\$19 million in US political donations and lobbying.⁶

Any other related matters

The “jobs” argument

A further negative aspect of Australia’s strong focus on preparing for and fighting wars is the conflation of “security” and “economic growth” as if they are one and the same. Large weapons projects are promoted not because there is evidence that they will keep us safe (the submarine project being a case in point, with no consensus even about their purpose, let alone whether they will achieve it) but because they will bring “jobs”.

A major gap in research in Australia is in comparing the numbers of jobs produced by expenditure in different sectors such as defence, health, education, public transport, clean energy and environmental remediation. Indeed there is evidence from elsewhere that military spending in fact performs very poorly in terms of creating jobs⁷.

Jobs are intrinsically good, of course, but the assumption that building weapons is the best way to create them is based on ideology, not evidence. In the absence of such evidence, political pronouncements and widespread newspaper and online advertisements that link the expenditure of hundreds of billions of dollars on building weapons with creating jobs are misleading and politically driven.

Increased risk of sparking a regional arms race

The steep increase in military expenditures referred to above is particularly remarkable in light of the 2016 Defence White Paper’s observation that Australia is not at significant risk of invasion. Increasing spending to 2% of our GDP means that we are greatly outspending our neighbours. This risks sparking a regional arms race, which would greatly undermine our security.

⁶ The Center for Responsive Politics Washington <https://www.opensecrets.org/orgs/summary.php?id=d000000104> Accessed 6th November 2017

⁷ The U.S. Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: 2011 Update <https://www.peri.umass.edu/publication/item/449-the-u-s-employment-effects-of-military-and-domestic-spending-priorities-2011-update> Accessed 20th November 2017

SUMMARY

- Consideration of the requirements of the ADF should flow from an assessment of the threats facing Australia, and the most effective and affordable ways to mitigate them, with an avoidance of warfare as a primary goal.
- Current decisions regarding the roles to be assigned to the ADF – particularly its new deployments – are made in an undemocratic fashion. They do not appear to be based on evidence of the very serious consequences of earlier conflicts. The “war on terror” is a prime example.
- Defence and security matters should be more widely and transparently discussed and scrutinised, especially (but not only) in our parliament.
- Those with vested interests in weapons agreements tend to skew discussion, not surprisingly, towards corporate gain. This should be recognised and actively countered. The profit motive should not be playing a role in determining how we defend Australian interests.
- Other essential areas of Australian budgets do not have bipartisan commitments locked in for 5 years. Defence programs should be subject to the same degree of regular review as other sectors, especially as our defence spending is rapidly rising and as the defence and security landscape rapidly changes.
- Australian politics are not simply a bipartisan matter. There are other voices in the parliament whose views should be heard.
- The example of the US illustrates the problem of a high degree of anti-democratic corporate influence over decisions on weapons programs, with sometimes terrible outcomes.
- There is some evidence that weapons programs perform very poorly in terms of creating jobs. Research on this in Australia is lacking. If the “jobs” argument is to be used, it should be supported by independent research comparing expenditures in different sectors and the jobs created in each.
- A Bipartisan Australian Defence Agreement would, if anything, tend to entrench, rather than improve, many of the above concerns. Therefore MAPW opposes such an agreement.