



## **Submission No 31**

### **Inquiry into Australia's Maritime Strategy**

**Name:** Dr Alan Ryan

**Address:** 20 Maitland Street  
HACKETT ACT 2602

**ADDITIONAL COMMENT PROVIDED TO MR BEVIS  
BY DR ALAN RYAN**

**A response to a question put at the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing  
Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's  
Maritime Strategy on  
Tuesday 25 February 2003**

**The following brief comment is my response to the question to what extent do we effectively control the non-military components of national security? I would be pleased to expand on these comments further if required.**

I do not believe that our system of government makes adequate provision for integrating non-military threats into a coherent vision of national security. Australia faces a range of transnational and environmental threats that are not capable of being resolved by military means alone. These threats include, amongst other things, pandemics, crime, pollution, unregulated population movements, non-state terrorist activity and cyber vandalism. It is important to note that all of these threats can be either 'self-generating'—in that they might not be initiated by a state—or they can be used as weapons of war by states and non-state actors. As Dr Alan Dupont of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the ANU has noted:

[T]he agencies responsible for formulating and implementing national security policy are often poorly equipped, intellectually and organisationally, for dealing with transnational issues which tend to fall across bureaucratic jurisdictions rather than neatly fitting into them. Many are complex—most are beyond the authority and competence of defence and foreign ministries and require whole-of-government responses. Security is becoming the concern of a far greater range of actors, placing a higher premium on effective coordination and cooperation.

As I suggest in my submission to the Committee, we need to design a National Security Council that is within our system of parliamentary government that can deal with the simple issue of security. For too long we have used 'defence' as the alternative to developing a national security policy. Accordingly, the only strategic policy that we have developed has been too narrowly drawn and focused on conventional military threats. Any responsible government must make preparations to deter and defeat military threats, but as the United States has found, you may be the most powerful military power in the world and still be vulnerable to the most primitive form of attack. White powder in envelopes, fertiliser bombs, computer viruses, crude propaganda and cyber attack are the weapons of choice of the efficient adversary. Security threats may not even be volitional, in the sense that they are phenomena, not planned attacks. No whole-of-government policy covers all of these threats, and no standing body consisting of properly-qualified staff provides coherent and inclusive advice on these issues to government.

For historical reasons, Australia has 'stove-piped' its security apparatus. This approach was tenable in a security environment dominated by states whose own

national interests dictated restraint in their conduct. It is no longer the case that potential adversaries or transnational security phenomena will be best dealt with by maintaining independent capabilities in disparate departments of state. The three armed services have learned to work together jointly and conduct integrated operations. They have been able to do this because they share a joint, standing headquarters. This sort of cohesion must be introduced across all arms of government. Consequently, instead of relying on cross-departmental cooperation which is at best ad hoc and part-time; cohesive advice and direction needs to emanate from some central organisation. The best model for this is not the United States' Department of Homeland Security. This organisation is almost purely pre-occupied with the threat of terrorism and is designed to deal with the problems of a complex system of federal government many times larger than our own.

What is needed is a small department, or division of security experts covering the gamut of likely threats to national security. Ideally this group will answer to the Prime Minister, as national security remains the government's first priority. The head of this organisation will act in a similar role to the National Security Adviser within any United States administration. As in the American system, this is not a generalist bureaucratic function, but will require the services of a career security specialist. Ideally, this person will possess a combination of intellectual and managerial expertise to allow them to work across the issues that would immediately confront such an organisation.

The military is an integral part of our national security posture, but it is not the only element. In the contemporary strategic environment discretion and discrimination are required to develop policy and plans to deal with security issues. A specialist central clearing-house is required to coordinate military and non-military security preparedness. Until we possess such an organisation, no Australian government can claim that it has effective and coordinated control over all aspects of national security.

**Alan Ryan**  
**18 March 2003**