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16th September 2008

The Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, MP
Minister for Defence
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

The Hon Arch Bevis, MP
Chair, Defence Sub-Committee, JSCFADT
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister and Mr Chairman,

JOINT SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AND JSCFADT REVIEW OFDEFENCE ANNUAL REPORT, 2006 -07

- A MEASURE OF PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE IN DEFENCE -

"The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink."
(George Orwell, Politics and the English language)

I have addressed this submission to you both, as correction of the poor governance of Defence Matters, which was allowed to become entrenched over the life of the previous government, will require well-coordinated action on the part of both Defence Management and our Parliamentary Oversight processes. It is thus important that what follows is seen, and accepted, as a problem that requires your urgent and joint attention, since its continued presence leads to breaches of one of the most fundamental tenets of our democracy, namely: *"Thou shalt not mislead the Parliament"*.

The main measure of the professionalism within any organisation lies in the clarity of its thinking and expression, both written and spoken. Within a military organisation, any lack of clarity in thought or expression becomes of major concern as false or confused information can lead directly to loss of life and equipment. Any adversary could wish for no more than to be confronted by a confused opponent, because confusion unchecked soon leads to chaos where control is lost and so the battle is lost. Indeed, both sides during WWII invested great resources in deceiving or confusing the enemy, often with decisive results, but great care was needed to ensure that self-deception did not creep in, as this was certain to result in poor military decisions and defeat.

Until recently, the importance of clarity of thought and expression was inherent in the education and training given at all levels of management and supervision in the three Services. Failure to reach the required professional standard was to place a limit

upon the member's career. The higher the member's rank, the higher the standards were set, because the decisions taken at the higher levels of management impacted all levels of the Service below.

Today, those professional management skills and experience have been all but lost, largely victims of the downsizing, reorganisation, and de-skilling of the Services that attended the imposition of the Defence Efficiency Review, the Defence Reform Program, and the Commercial Support Program. The inevitable results can now be seen clearly in the poor quality of the evidence given by Defence to the many Parliamentary Oversight, ANAO, and independent inquiries and reviews that have taken place since about 2002. The effects, unchecked and uncorrected, are now perpetuated in the evidence being put before the current Parliamentary Review of the Department of Defence Annual Report 2006-2007.

The Services and the Defence bureaucracy have now dispensed with traditional, rigorous, professional analysis and have adopted a common language, one based upon an overlap between political and public relations speak, with a primary focus on marketeering the image that must be promoted. Unfortunately, marketeering, the less than honest side of marketing, has no particular concern with truth or fact.

"Political language….is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidarity to pure wind."
(George Orwell, Politics and the English language)

Writing and speaking are now too often seen as activities distinct from thinking – activities more aligned with marketeering whatever the organisation wants to promote. To support this marketeering approach, a whole new lexicon has been developed to deceive, by obscuring, diverting, or misinterpreting the inconvenient truth or fact so that the audience might be guided along the desired path. Indeed, media advisers are now available to coach those giving evidence or dealing with the media in the techniques for fending off unwanted questions and steering discussion along the desired lines. Truth, openness and honesty soon fall victims to this approach.

An organisation that pursues this line of marketeering - orientated thinking, writing, and speaking soon finds that it must create a whole new reality of its own, and, having done so, finds that it must fight to protect that view of reality against all criticisms, no matter how soundly they may be based. Over time, the organisation becomes so detached from the real world that it becomes dangerously dysfunctional.

Most large organisations include Media/PR departments to help with, but not dominate, their marketing and business development. Within Defence, such domination is the norm and the organisation charged with announcing and defending the 'official' line was changed recently from *Coordination and Public Affairs* to *Ministerial Support and Public Affairs*, with the following charter:

"The Public Affairs Branch assists Defence stakeholders in promoting and protecting Defence's reputation by increasing public awareness of Defence's activities and managing issues effectively through integrated command, management and public affairs planning."

In a defence organisation that has been severely de-skilled, both managerially and technologically, this marketeering approach leads inevitably to failure to evaluate developing regional capabilities accurately; failure to assess alternative capability responses so as to create an appropriate and properly balanced force structure; failure to evaluate and select the right new equipment and capabilities, and implement sound project management and contracting processes; and a failure to make the requisite through - life support decisions needed to develop Australia's Defence Industry Base and, thus, self-reliance.

"In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible."
(George Orwell, Politics and the English language)

The Practice of Deception.

The terms 'spin' and 'spin doctoring' are used commonly, but often without an understanding of what spin is and how it works within the wider framework of deception.

Deception works by using one or more of four methods:

1. *Degrading the flow of information.* This method relies upon using a large number of words containing little useful information. Its aim is to use up time and space and bamboozle the inexpert and the generalist, so as to minimise the actual and relevant information conveyed to the audience.

2. *Corrupting the message.* This method relies upon presenting information that is not true. When repeated often, or if the subject is well beyond the expertise of the audience, false information is implanted instead of fact. The false statements made and repeated on the fatigue life and overall capability of the F-111 fleet are good examples.

3. *Blinding the audience.* The objective here is to blind the audience to the truth, thereby imposing a misconception of reality, usually through obfuscation, vague generalities and opinions, or otherwise irrelevant statements. Good examples include the numerous instances of evidence given to parliament where large volumes of irrelevant material have been presented to deny opportunities to discuss the actual topic at hand.

4. *The use of spin.* Spin, in all its forms, simply aims to alter the way that the audience interprets the message. Spin doctoring may be direct, usually by emphasising peripheral or half truths, thereby misleading, misdirecting, or diverting the attention of the audience away from critical factors. Extolling the few virtues of the Super Hornet while neglecting its critical weaknesses is a good example. When used indirectly, spin is much less obvious, its intended effects usually being achieved by changing the background or context to favour the interpretation being offered. Basing important decisions upon an assumption that an aircraft's performance is no longer important in a systems centric combat environment, or that all future air combat will occur beyond visible range are two good examples.

The Practice of Self-Deception.

An organisation that relies upon deception will also need to use deception techniques as part of its own management processes, which will lead inevitably to the condition of self-deception. Firstly, individuals within the organisation will have to rationalise the deep conflicts they face, their cognitive dissonance or 'prisoner's dilemma', in having to believe organisational perceptions that they know are not true. This can be achieved only at the cost of their honesty and integrity. Secondly, the organisation must protect itself collectively so as to maintain cohesion, compliance, control, and some measure of morale. Both objectives may be achieved for a time, but deception carries with it the seeds of its own failure. As the gap widens between reality and what the organisation believes and is trying to market as reality, the organisation is faced with an escalating need to justify the increasingly unjustifiable. The organisation must eventually collapse under this challenge. In the final analysis, however, deception strategies are aimed simply at maintaining and enhancing an existing power structure.

The Need for Vigilance.

Given the widespread use of deception within Defence, and the serious problems this has caused and continues to cause, it is important that all Defence statements be examined closely for the standard of the professional language used, and in particular, the nature and implications of any deception strategy employed.

Some of the more obvious differences seen between the professional language used by traditional military management and that now used by the Defence Department and Defence Materiel Organisation, follow.

In keeping with proclamations by the leadership of Defence and the DMO, the characteristics summarised below have been used to 'test the evidence' given before the Defence Sub-Committee Hearing into the Department of Defence Annual Report 2006-2007, on Friday, 29th August 2008, the results of which will be provided shortly.

Kind Regards,

(E.J. Bushell)
Air Cdre, RAAF, Ret'd

THE SHIFT IN DEFENCE PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Traditional Military Management Characteristics	*'Marketeering Management' Characteristics*
Clarity and Conciseness: - Simple and unambiguous. - Uses the active voice. - Avoids jargon. - Based upon sound logic.	***Degrades the flow of information:*** - Verbose, ambiguous, lacking in logic and contains little useful information. - Lacks documentary support. - No audit trail.
Focussed on the matter in hand: - Answers the subject fully and convincingly, without omission. - Statements and their context are clear with any equivocation fully explained.	***Corrupts the message:*** - Contains information not or only partly true, but presented as fact. - Distorts facts. - Tends to mislead and take advantage of any lack of expertise in the audience. - Encourages misperceptions. - Encourages audience to infer and thus take ownership of the deceit.
Based upon sound and well-argued logic: - Based upon rigorous, professional argument and analysis. - Supported by sound documentary evidence.	***Blinds the audience:*** - Attempts to hide the truth behind large volumes of irrelevant comment - Use of impenetrable and complex language or jargon to deny the reader comprehension of the message.
***Provides a clear audit trail for subject status** and responsibility for action:* - Supported by well documented management plans to meet stated objectives. - Independently verified and validated by domain experts.	***Employs spin.*** - Attempts to alter the audience's interpretation of facts. - Emphasises half truths or part truths. - Ignores inconvenient truths. - Diverts attention from critical factors. - Sets false baselines. - Attempts to re-write history.