



# Submission No 11

## **Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority**

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The Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Inquiry into Australian Defence Force Regional Air Superiority

### *SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY*

I regret that my submission has taken the form that it has. My attention was drawn to your inquiry only a few days ago, so I have not been able to develop my response as I would have liked. The subject of the inquiry is quite wide and so brings in many and varied interlocking facets of the subject. My submission will be limited to two broad issues:

- Firstly, the ability of the current defence organisation to manage the tasks associated with establishing and maintaining regional air superiority, if this be the political aim.
- Secondly, whether we have the skills and experience available that will be needed if we are to pursue the aim of achieving and maintaining regional air superiority

My comments and observations stem from some 35 years of RAAF service in the engineering branch, which included the largest peacetime re-equipment programme undertaken since the formation of the Service. My experience included time in operational and training units, and maintenance squadrons, as well as staff appointments in the Department of Air /Air Force Office and Headquarters Support Command. Several years were devoted to new project management. My final appointment was as the last Senior Maintenance Staff Officer in RAAF Headquarters Support Command, which continued up to the time that it became RAAF Headquarters Logistics Command.

My submission is contained in extracts from two previous papers, complemented by an addendum to highlight and bring issues up to date.

Thank you for your invitation to submit my thoughts. I wish you well in your endeavours.

Kind Regards,  
(E.J. Bushell)

## ADDENDUM

The current Defence organisation, including the existence and role of the DMO, is, I suggest from experience, to be quite unsuited to Australia's needs:

- It is too large and bureaucratic and growing daily as new areas are opened up to public service 'administration', and diverting funds from force capabilities. Its conflicting relationships with its political masters and the Defence Forces will continue to impede its ability to act decisively and in the best interests of our defence capabilities. It will continue to be unable to present a persuasive argument for the funds so urgently required by our forces, and will continue to be the 'whipping horse' and a 'soft target' for Treasury (driving Cabinet) to deny funds.
- It is too remote from those who are supposed to be supported in an 'economic, business-like, and responsive manner', and it takes overly-defensive pains to have as little to do with its 'customers' as possible, and those who might comment on its actions.
- It has placed far too much dependence on contracting in the support base and an unhealthy reliance upon Original Equipment Manufacturers and Prime Contractors to provide the responsiveness and capabilities that we need. This also works against our achieving a capable and effective local support base.
- It is far too heavily based on United States Defense organisations which are not appropriate to a small, fundamentally maintenance-based defence organisation, as against a large, production-based, one. Had the DER/DRP built on what we had, we would not have made so many mistakes that were quite obvious to those involved in support of the force at the time.

In short, the organisation as it has evolved since 1974 is inappropriate to our needs, is too large and cumbersome, is ineffective and too expensive, and there is little to give heart that things will get better.

The combination of the current Defence organisation and our hard-won paucity of skills and experience in management and technology give grave concerns for the success of the large and important undertakings that we are now contemplating.