



**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Defence Sub-Committee
Chairman, Hon Bruce Scott, MP**

CANBERRA

21 June 2004

Committee Recommends New Defence White Paper

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade tabled its report on *Australia's Maritime Strategy* today.

The inquiry into Australia's maritime strategy provided an opportunity to examine the relevance and effectiveness of our defence objectives and strategies. Maritime strategies are significant in military planning because they provide the means to apply power flexibly over a range of contingencies and areas.

Modern maritime strategy involves air, sea and land forces operating jointly to influence events in the littoral together with traditional blue water maritime concepts of sea denial and sea control. The role and influence of maritime strategies are therefore a significant feature of credible military strategies.

The inquiry found that there was the need for a comprehensive national security strategy (NSS) which would articulate all the elements that the Australian Government has at its disposal to address issues of national security. This builds on a similar recommendation made by the committee in 2000 as part of its report, *From Phantom to Force*.

A national security strategy would address more than just issues of defence. It would address Australia's key interests such as economic, business, diplomatic, trade and environmental. The NSS should indicate where our maritime strategy fits within this 'grand strategy.'

Australia's interests are not just limited to our territory but stretch throughout the region and globally. Our defence objectives and strategy must, therefore, reflect the need to defend Australia and its direct approaches together with a greater focus on, and acquisition of, capabilities to operate in the region and globally in defence of our non-territorial interests.

The committee has recommended that the Government develop a new Defence White Paper for issue during 2005-06. The new White Paper should take into account the findings of the committee and, in particular, the need for flexible joint forces capable of littoral manoeuvre. It is pleasing that the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, among other groups, has also commented on the need for a new Defence White Paper.

In addition, a new Defence White Paper should be developed every four years through a rolling four year program. This will ensure that Australia's defence strategy will remain current and can meet developments in the global strategic environment.

The proposed new White Paper should ensure that the Australian Defence Force can implement the key features of a modern maritime strategy, including sea denial, sea control and power projection ashore for the purpose of peace keeping and regional assistance missions.

In addition to the key recommendations detailed above, the committee recommended:

- the Department of Defence should review the number of air-to-air refuelling (AAR) aircraft that it will need to mount effective operations. The committee is of the view that Defence may require more AARs than has currently been planned;
- the Department of Defence continues to examine air combat capabilities in the region and the cost of ongoing upgrades to the F/A-18A versus its fatigue and ageing. If the F-35 will not be available by 2012 then the Government should give cost details of prolonging the lifespan of the F/A-18A, and provide details on the range of options to maintain air superiority in the region;
- the Government's decision to purchase three air warfare destroyers for delivery by about 2013 is supported. The Department of Defence, however, should explain how adequate air protection will be provided to land and naval forces before the air warfare destroyers are delivered in 2013;
- if in 2006 the Government confirms that it will purchase the Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) then it should consider purchasing some short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) F-35 variants for the provision of organic air cover as part of regional operations;
- the Department of Defence should make a statement, subject to security requirements, outlining the Army sustainment model and providing the Parliament with reassurances that the model will be effective and will meet contingencies consistent with guidance provided in the 2000 Defence White Paper; and
- the Minister for Defence should make a statement outlining Army Reserves policy focusing on Reserve:
 - training;
 - effectiveness;
 - equipment and capabilities;
 - readiness;
 - transition to new functions;
 - blending with regular units; and
 - detailed cost data.

The committee, through this inquiry, is convinced that an effective maritime strategy will be the foundation of Australia's military strategy, and serve Australia well, into the 21st Century.

The report and full list of recommendations can be found at the committee website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/reports.htm>

For comment, contact Mr Bruce Scott on (02) 6277 4949 or 0427 743 126. For information, phone the sub-committee secretary, Mr Stephen Boyd on (02) 6277 2368 or visit the inquiry website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/Maritime/MSIndex.htm.