



General Sir Phillip Bennett *AC KBE DSO*  
Chairman

30 September 2002

Senator Sandy Macdonald  
Chairman  
Defence Sub-committee  
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



*Dear Senator,*

Thank you for your letter of 24 September and your reference to the Defence Sub-Committee current inquiry into Maritime Strategy.

I have not read or examined the Defence 2000 White Paper and have had no input to any aspect of Defence or Military Strategy since 1987. I expect that my currency in any developments since that time would be limited to material published from time to time in all forms of media which I have always invariably found to be inadequate and often misleading.

Accordingly, I doubt that I have much to offer your Inquiry except to stay that I consider there is a continuing need for Australia to address all aspects of a National Maritime Strategy leading to clear guidance on priorities and capabilities required of the Australian Defence Force.

You may recall that, as Chief of the Defence Force, I established a Joint Maritime Command in the mid 1980s to replace the relevant functions of RAN Fleet Headquarters and some senior Maritime Warfare staff from RAAF Operational Command. This proved to be an outstanding success and focused the ADF for the first time on the coordination of all aspects of Joint Maritime strategy operations. It led to important links being established with the US, UK and NZ including the high level exchange of security and intelligence information.

In 1985, I also tasked the Chiefs of Staff Committee under my Chairmanship to produce and distribute "A Military Strategy for Australia". This document, MS85 of 6 November, 1985, set out the joint views of the then Service Chiefs on all aspects of the Military Strategy inherent in the strategic guidance leading to the issue of the 1987 Defence White Paper following the Dibb Report. It included a major section on control and set out a broad Maritime Strategy for the ADF.

The then Minister for Defence, the Secretary and his relevant staff declined to endorse or comment in any way on the Military Strategy Paper produced by the Chiefs of Staff Committee and proceeded to draft and issue the 1987 Defence White Paper. This was based on the Dibb Report and contained little input from outside the Department of Defence staff directly responsible to the Secretary of the Department.

I have contacted your Committee Secretary to give him further references to the Military Strategy document identified above.

Finally, I tend to the view that the present tempo of operations and the latest developments in revolutionary, unconventional warfare, ie terrorism, do have a considerable influence on defence priorities. This includes all areas of force development; strategic, operation and tactical capabilities including increased availability of special forces; specialised logistic, manoeuvre, communication and personal protection systems and high technology reconnaissance and intelligence gathering systems and related equipment.

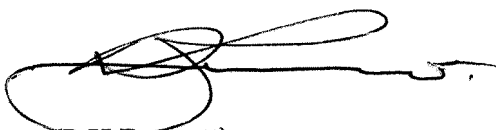
In summary, the strategic options we face are not between regional defence and distant deployments, but rather a balance between both of these possibly conflicting strategic demands. The long term favours the defence of Australia and our region of primary security interest. Thus, the fundamental defence capability requirement of our nation is to develop and defend our national interests and the security, welfare and safety of our population.

The defence of Australia must therefore be a long term and coordinated national objective in all aspects of international cooperation and diplomacy, trade, overseas aid programmes, control of illegal immigration, adequate surveillance systems and sophisticated intelligence acquisition systems within our region.

National and ADF capabilities must provide the required information, intelligence, influence and control of our strategic environment, and particularly for the foreseeable future, in the air and maritime approaches to Australia.

I hope this reply and the MS85 Paper of 6 November, 1985 may be of some assistance to the work of your Sub-Committee.

*Sincerely,*



(P H Bennett)