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 To the Secretary, Defence Sub-Committee  
 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2601

THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
 Incorporated

Submission 26

Locked Bag 18  
 DARLINGHURST NSW 2010  
 18 October 2002

Mr L. F. Mahony  
 National Secretary  
 Royal United Services Institute of Australia Inc.  
 GPO Box 105  
 CANBERRA ACT 2601

21/10/2002  
 6266 2866

Dear Mr Mahony,

Thank you for your letter of 8 October 2002 concerning the Commonwealth Parliament's inquiry into Australia's maritime strategy.

Following discussion of the matter by the Institution's Council on 14 October 2002, the President, Vice Admiral D. W. Leach, AC, CBE, LVO, RAN (Retd), and I have drafted the following points which we request that you consider including in any RUSI national submission to the inquiry.

- **Context:** The Defence White Paper 2000, which enunciates the current role of maritime strategy in Australia's defence policy, was developed after wide community consultation, the outcomes of which are reflected in the White Paper. Little has changed in Australia's fundamental strategic circumstances since that time, except that the position is now more volatile with increased emphasis on the threat of international terrorism, including the potential availability and use of weapons of mass destruction. Further, political instability associated with weak governments and ethnic and religious unrest, continues to be a feature of much of the archipelagic chain in our region of direct strategic interest, as does the need to be able to contribute militarily to multi-national forces further afield under United Nations auspices. There continues to be a strong need to provide border protection and protection of Australia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), including the Antarctic fishery and environment.
- **Maritime Strategy:** It follows that the maritime strategy must not only be capable of defending the sea-air gap around continental Australia, but in addition be able to support:
  - border protection patrolling of the sea-air gap and the off-shore islands;
  - patrolling and enforcement of the EEZ;
  - military and humanitarian operations in the archipelagic chain, including the lodgement and sustained maintenance of a force of at least infantry brigade group strength (based on the recent East Timor experience); and
  - deployments as part of a multinational force to places such as the Middle East.
- **Capital Programme:** Recent experience has shown that the force-in-being lacks significant capabilities needed to support a maritime strategy of this scope. Deficiencies exist in amphibious and logistic transport, airborne early warning and control (AWAC), and capacity to patrol the Southern Ocean. For example, half of the PC3 Orion platforms are more than 30 years old and need to be replaced, and an AWAC capability, due to be acquired around 2005, needs to be expedited. A deficiency also exists in our capacity to support an amphibious lodgement or withdrawal in that we do not have the ability to carry sufficient ground attack and troop carrying helicopters in the one hull. Further, three air defence destroyers (Perth,

Hobart and Brisbane) have recently been paid off and replacements for them are not expected to be in service until 2012 – an unacceptable delay given the strategic situation. Also, the patrol boat replacement program must not be delayed given the importance of the patrol boats to border protection. Another deficiency is likely to be adequate reserves of ammunition of all natures needed to support sustained conflict, particularly in the archipelagic chain.

- **Australian-Flagged Merchant Shipping:** There has been a dramatic reduction in Australian-flagged merchant shipping in the last decade. This has serious implications for our capacity to take up ships from trade in an emergency to support maritime operations, as the British needed to do in the Falklands War and we needed to do to lodge and maintain our force in East Timor. It would be unsound to assume that foreign-flagged vessels that normally operate from Australian ports and in Australian waters would be available to be taken up from trade in an emergency, given both likely political and insurance considerations involved. The refusal of a foreign government to allow ammunition manufactured in its country to be used by Australia in the Vietnam War is a direct parallel which should not be forgotten. The development of an Australian merchant marine, with a culture of, and contingency plans for, being taken up from trade for defence purposes, should be a key part of our maritime strategy.
- **Recruitment/Retention:** Recruitment and retention are currently problematic throughout the Defence Force. Unless the Defence Force can recruit, train and retain sufficient full-time and part-time personnel to give effect to the strategy, it will be to no avail. The issue is bigger than just maritime strategy but is fundamental to it. The rigidities in the current training system need to be removed and replaced by emphasis on competencies, including greater recognition of civilian trade/professional qualifications; conditions of service need to be reviewed with emphasis on making service life-style more attractive to families; retention bonuses warrant re-examination; and contingency plans are needed for the use of call-out provisions to make Reserve units and sub-units (as opposed to the current reliance only on individual Reserve volunteers) available during sustained operations.

I commend the above points to your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



D. R. LEECE  
Brigadier (Retd)  
Secretary