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View Page 1

Australia's national security

an address to the Institute on 28 October 2010 by

Michael Shoebridge¹

First Assistant Secretary, Defence, Intelligence and Research Coordination Division
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Mr Shoebridge outlines Australia's new national security policy and modus operandi. He enumerates several recent achievements, and then describes the challenges that must now be addressed and their implications for the defence and national security agencies.

I am delighted to speak to you on behalf of the National Security Advisor, Duncan Lewis, about our national security. I will explain the changes made to our national security arrangements over the past couple of years and will recap some of our key achievements, before discussing the challenges ahead. Lastly, I will indicate the implications for the defence community.

Recent National Security Developments

Until recently, there were only two main policy departments with responsibility for national security: the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of Defence. Today, we have a large national security community. There are over 30 commonwealth departments and agencies with an interest in national security; and the national security community now includes relevant state and territory agencies and the corporate sector. This expansion reflects a more complex, inter-connected and globalised world and the growing prominence of counter-terrorism as a core aspect of national security.

Smith Review of Homeland and Border Security

These changes were triggered by Ric Smith's 2008 review of homeland and border security which addressed how Australia should respond to the changes in our strategic environment. It concluded that a Department of Homeland Security was not the best model for Australia and that, for the most part, the present arrangement of agile and adaptable agencies cooperating together worked well. Smith, however, was concerned about the absence of a strategic policy framework. He questioned whether priorities were clearly understood and whether effort was strategically well directed across the national security community. He also noted the challenge of bringing together the many diverse state, territory and commonwealth agencies to deliver cohesive and coordinated security outcomes.

National Security Statement

The *National Security Statement* delivered to Parliament in December 2008 by the then Prime Minister contained the Government's response to the Smith Review and incorporated the review's recommendations.

The statement outlined the Government's national security policy; described the scope of national security and our national security interests, principles and priorities; and outlined the Government's vision for a reformed national security structure.

The Statement reflected a broadened scope of national security, recognising traditional 'core' national security functions like defence, as well as non-traditional threats, including border security issues, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, risks associated with terrorism, cyber security and the security implications of climate change.

While the National Security Statement recognised that Australia's security needs were evolving, it articulated a number of key security interests of the Australian Government and principles that the government would strive to advance, including:

- continuing to develop self-reliance;
- the fundamental importance of the United States alliance;
- the need to further enhance our regional engagement;
- our commitment to multilateral institutions; and
- advancing our national security policy (and national interests more generally) through creative middle power diplomacy.

The Smith Review and the *National Security Statement* triggered a series of changes across the national security community, including the appointment of a national security adviser. Duncan Lewis's principal task as the National Security Adviser is to develop the national security community and to improve its strategic direction. Within this construct, his role is:

- to be the Prime Minister's single point of contact on national security and international policy;
- to be the 'glue' that drives a collective outcome;
- to support whole-of-government national security policy development and crisis response;
- to liaise and engage across the Australian Government, states and territories, business and the community; and
- to promote a cohesive national security culture, especially by developing trusting relationships with key interlocutors.

Recent National Security Achievements

Although the national security community has been living in this new structural framework for less than two

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