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LETTER

Need for an Australian national strategy

I enjoyed Ian Crawford's opinion piece on the need for an Australian national strategy and comparison with the French government's example [*United Service* 64 (1), 5, March 2013]. I am a planning aficionado and instinctively agree with his perspective, but I wonder just how practical such an approach could be in Australia?

It seems to me that such a strategy would be severely hampered by our three-year federal electoral cycle and our five-year federal budget outlook. If a national strategy were developed, could it be bipartisan and durable? I look to our Defence White Papers and Defence Capability Plans that have suffered tremendously at the hands of changing governments with different perspectives and priorities. With three levels of government, I also wonder whether vertical alignment and commitment could be realised. It seems to me that our Australian 'check and balance' is that the state and federal governments tend to cycle between the major parties. Having said all that I wonder how much the recent publications – *Australia in the Asian Century*, the *National Security Strategy*, and the *2013 Defence White Paper* fit the bill as far as a national strategy is concerned? It will be interesting to see how long those documents survive as policy direction after the next federal election.

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18 April 2013