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Island Australia: improving resilience in a rapidly-changing region

Opening Address

A paper based on a presentation to the Institute in Sydney on 23 November 2021 by

Her Excellency, The Honourable Margaret Beazley, AC, QC

Governor of New South Wales

Patron of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales



This seminar provides an excellent opportunity to delve deeper into our defence strategy, given a rapidly-changing region and a much-less benign security environment. An appropriate response to change is vital for our prosperity and welfare. Sound decisions are required.

Key words: climate change; cyber; defence strategy; demographics; grey-zone activities; military modernisation; space; submarines.

As Patron of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales, I am delighted to open this major seminar on “Island Australia: improving resilience in a rapidly-changing region”. The topic is timely and the seminar provides an excellent opportunity to delve deeper into our defence stance and strategy, which, despite recent headlines, involves so much more than submarines.

In 1888, my predecessor, Governor Charles Carrington, became the first patron of what was then the United Service Institution of New South Wales. Carrington was a military man – in fact a former lieutenant-colonel in the Royal Buckinghamshire Infantry. He would have naturally supported the main object of the Institution, which was at that time the higher professional education of officers. He and his wife Cecilia also lived here at Government House and developed quite a reputation for fulfilling their social role with warmth and generosity. A story is told of how, during the 1887 celebration of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee, they banqueted a thousand poor boys of Sydney who received medals struck for the occasion and were modestly told by Carrington of his own family’s humble origins in 18th century trade. Lady Carrington also established the Jubilee Fund to relieve distressed women; and her management of it surprised contemporaries by a business capacity with which women are rarely credited. Quite the power couple! I am proud to continue the Carringtons’ line of vice-regal patronage and I thank this seminar’s hosting organisation for their 133-year role of successfully informing debate on defence and security studies.

If we did not know it already, last year’s 2020 Defence Strategic Update (Defence 2020) underlined the rapidly-changing region we live in and the need for a defence policy that is “agile and adaptive”. It refers to factors such as military modernisation in the Indo-Pacific, expanding cyber capabilities in the region, the undermining of confidence in the rules-based order, and the conduct of grey-zone activities, as factors that are making our security environment much-less benign than it was only five years ago at the time of the 2016 Defence White Paper (Defence 2016).

Stepping back to take an even broader picture of change, participants in the CSIRO’s 2019 Australian National Outlook, explored multiple potential futures and identified contrasting scenarios for Australia. Looking ahead to 2060, they identified six challenges, or we could say opportunities, for our nation: the rise of Asia; technological change; climate change; environment demographics; trust; and social cohesion (CSIRO

2019). These factors also have a direct bearing on the consideration of our national defence and security.

Another dimension is the whole area of space warfare, which I was introduced to recently when researching the development of space law. In 2020, the United States released its Defence Space Strategy, in which it defined space as “a distinct war-fighting domain essential for maintaining military superiority” (Defence 2020). Space has been used at least twice for anti-satellite weapon testing, the last occasion being in 2019 when India conducted asset testing incurring the ire of the United States, albeit with only a mild rebuke¹. India, of course, is a member of the strategic QUAD alliance which may explain why a stronger stance was not taken.

Although the theme of this seminar is fascinating, the subject matter is not abstract or merely academic. An appropriate response to change is vital for our prosperity and welfare. Sound decisions are required, coupled with the right actions.

I wish you well for your deliberations as you enjoy the expertise of an impressive complement of high-profile speakers including: Commander Australian Fleet; Commander Forces Command; Air Commander Australia; Commander 2nd Division; the New South Wales Defence Advocate; the Chief Executive Officer of Thales Australia, New Zealand; and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Newcastle. I commend the organising committee and I thank the Institute’s vice-patrons for their support.

I now declare the seminar formally open and I look forward to the important updates to come through the webcasting of content and publication of these proceedings.

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Island Australia: improving resilience in a rapidly-changing region

The contribution of the Royal Australian Navy to improving resilience



A paper based on a presentation to the Institute in Sydney on 23 November 2021 by

Rear Admiral Mark Hammond, AM, RAN

Commander Australian Fleet

Vice-Patron, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales

During the COVID-19 pandemic of the last two years, the personal and professional resilience of the personnel of the Royal Australian Navy, together with that of their families, has been an important contributor to the economic and security resilience of Australia and its neighbourhood and region.

Key words: Royal Australian Navy; COVID-19; economic resilience; maritime commons; maritime trade; national resilience; personal resilience; professional resilience; regional resilience; security resilience.

It is a pleasure to speak here today in such fine company. I am honoured to be delivering this speech as the Commander of the Australian Fleet. I will speak briefly of personal and team resilience in the context of service to our nation, before expanding to the larger issue of national and regional economic and security resilience.

Personal and Team Resilience

Today, as is the case almost every day, nearly 2000 men and women of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) are at sea in 22 ships and submarines, with more than 800 personnel force-assigned to the Chief of Joint Operations, serving from the coast of Australia to as far north as the waters of Japan. These people provide the visible embodiment of Australian Government policy across the Indo-Pacific region. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian Navy ships and submarines have maintained our commitment to training, certification and operational activities across the Indo-Pacific - from Canada and the United States in the east, to India and Sri Lanka in the west, and to Japan and South Korea in the north.

Your Navy's resilience and professionalism are underlined by the fact that these operations have been carried out despite the ever-present risk of COVID-19. Sometimes crews have deployed from cities in lockdown, such as Sydney, leaving families behind to face the challenges alone, while our crews deployed conducting disaster-relief, other operations and contactless port visits, sometimes returning months later straight into lockdown in their home port. This is a demanding operating context and we should all be proud of the professionalism and resilience of our people.

That said, Service is not about overcoming personal challenges in order to serve a higher purpose. It is really important that we continue to be able to operate both domestically and overseas, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and I am proud of the way our ships' companies have resolutely performed their duties.

For example, there was a request by New South Wales Health for Australian Defence Force (ADF) assistance to help with the vaccination outreach and roll in regional New South Wales. The ADF organised 70 personnel very quickly and deployed them to Dubbo in the Western New South Wales Area Health zone. The 70 personnel were divided into five vaccination outreach teams. The ADF vaccination outreach teams were able to administer 50,600 vaccinations, meaning they dealt with 50,000+ members of the public in a community that was very anxious about their own health outcomes. It was a very rewarding experience for those involved, with countless numbers of lives saved and a high level of positive community engagement by the ADF and a visible reduction in vaccine hesitancy within communities.

We also mobilised *HMAS Adelaide* at short notice to support Fiji following a devastating cyclone in December 2020. In the words of one young sailor:

"It was honestly the most rewarding thing that I've done in my career. I think these are the sorts of trips that personally I joined for. I remember that in 2016 a similar thing happened in Fiji. They had a cyclone and HMAS Canberra went for that one. I was still in training, so I wasn't able to go. I remember saying to myself these are the types of trips that I want to go on. So, I was really grateful to be able to go and, being from Fiji, it meant a whole lot to me."

As you can see, our sailors understand that their personal and team resilience directly contributes to our national resilience, but also to the wider interests of our region. As we begin another high-risk weather season, our ships and crews again stand ready to provide a broad range of assistance to the states and territories of Australia, but also to respond to our neighbours in their times of need. Whether that be evacuating Australians to avoid the effects of bushfires or floods, or deploying into the region to provide emergency relief after cyclones and earthquakes. There is also a strong connective tissue between personal, professional and national resilience.

Security and Economic Resilience

We are a maritime nation. This land, girt by sea, relies on the freedom of the maritime commons for our prosperity and, therefore, our security and economic resilience.

Our maritime context beyond our beaches is easy to comprehend – it is a series of gateways and maritime roads.

To our North lies the extraordinarily complex and diverse Indonesian archipelago – our gateway to South East Asia; to its East the Coral Sea – our gateway to the islands of the South West Pacific; and to our West lies the mighty Indian Ocean – our gateway to the subcontinent and beyond.

These are the sea based ‘roads and suburbs’ that constitute our neighbourhood and your Navy is in many respects your ‘neighbourhood watch’ – enabling connectivity with our partners and neighbours as well as timely assessment of emerging risks and issues across our vital terrain.

It is this terrain through which our import/export economy passes.

We are the fifth largest user of shipping services globally; over 98% of our imports and exports – and over 79% by volume – are dependent upon shipping that travels through the Indo-Pacific, and beyond. And our financial system is largely enabled by, and reliant on, the many intercontinental cables that run along the sea floor. In pre-COVID terms this trade accounted for over \$600

billion per annum, making relevant geography in the maritime commons our vital national terrain.

COVID-19 has impacted seaborne global supply chains, while regional tensions have impacted our trading relationships. Illegal fishing has not subsided during the pandemic. Piracy, drug smuggling and other sea based criminal activities have continued, while foreign intelligence collection ships and war ships have operated in close proximity to our coast over the past two years.

Collectively, these issues manifest as risks to our economic wellbeing, national security and resilience.

In this sense our Navy’s ability to sustain maritime operations and COVID support activities despite the pandemic has projected strength in the face of adversity, and signalled our steadfast readiness to monitor and protect our vital interests. In doing so we have enhanced our reputation for professionalism and resilience - at home and abroad – an achievement all Australians can be proud of.

Conclusion

I have focused on the Royal Australian Navy for obvious reasons, but in closing I offer that the personal and professional resilience of our people across the Defence enterprise, and their families, is equally and directly connected to national and regional resilience and our economic wellbeing – as I am sure my fellow environmental Commanders will attest.

SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

Island Australia: improving resilience in a rapidly-changing region

The contribution of the Australian Army to improving resilience



A paper based on a presentation to the Institute in Sydney on 23 November 2021 by

Major General Matthew Pearse, AM

Commander, Forces Command

Vice-Patron, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales

Army contributes to the building of national resilience through investing in its most important asset, its people, to develop them and their moral and intellectual attributes, to make Army more operationally relevant and competent both nationally and internationally.

Key words: Army; Australia; community engagement; interpersonal skills; Kabul non-combatant evacuation 2021; natural disasters; professional character; warfare.

Thank you for the opportunity, as Forces Commander, to give my perspective on how the Australian Army is improving national resilience. Forces Command, with our headquarters in Sydney and units all across Australia comprises about 80 per cent of Army, including all the brigades and training centres. Forces Command is charged to raise, train and sustain our Army for peace and wartime activities as part of a Joint Force.

In addressing the topic of how Army contributes to

improving national resilience, I will first address the changing nature of war and the increased demand for Australian Defence Force (ADF) assistance during national crises. Thereafter, I will talk about how Forces Command is creating mutually-beneficial strategic partnerships with our communities and the region, to give our people the social skills needed to enable the Joint Force to operate effectively in peace and war. The Fleet Commander earlier described how the region is

becoming increasingly complex, dynamic and contested. Herein, the Army has adapted to the new challenges and has demonstrated the required resilience.

Accelerated Warfare, Natural Disasters and Community Engagement

In the current era, the military is experiencing change in the character of war at a much faster rate. The Army terms this as 'accelerated warfare'. In addition to the changes in our international security environment, our government is increasingly turning to the ADF to support the nation in times of crises. In the past few years, the ADF has repeatedly been called upon to assist state authorities and emergency services to support communities affected by floods, fires, cyclones and most recently, a national health pandemic.

As extreme weather events and natural disasters become frequent, it is likely the government will increasingly rely on the ADF to contribute to domestic and emergency responses, and operate in challenging and complex security environments. This is not unfamiliar for our Defence Force who have adapted to changing threats and requirements consistently in our history. But, the combination of accelerated warfare and the increased requirement for ADF support in times of national crises has resulted in increased uncertainty about what the ADF needs to be ready for, and we expect this uncertainty to continue.

Adaptable Land Forces

For the Army to succeed amid this uncertainty, we need land forces that are prepared to respond to demanding and uncertain environments – forces that are able to: adapt quickly; partner with not only the other Services, but other government agencies and other militaries; and take on an increasingly wider range of roles and tasks. Such tasks could range from something as benign as COVID contact tracing, to complex war-fighting against an adversary with technologies and capability similar to ours, including operating in information and space domains. We describe the need for Army to be prepared for a range of tasks in multiple context as an 'Army in Motion', continuously sensing and adapting to the changing need. This agility relies upon personnel building their individual and organisational resilience outside of wartime.

Outside of war, the Army perhaps has never adapted as quickly as we have over the past two years. COVID has shown the resilience capabilities of our Army and our three services. As with every other workplace, COVID has restricted the movement of our people and tested their ability to get together to train in traditional ways. By necessity we have found ways to adapt our training, our operations and our routines to ensure continuity of our training and maintain our war-fighting readiness. COVID has in some ways forced us to rethink how we conduct our training and find efficiencies in our approach. In the response to restricted border travel, Army units located in dispersed regions of our country have adapted to decentralise training, and where appropriate, optimise on training online. I am proud of what Forces Command and

the broader Army have been able to achieve in the circumstances.

Army – a People-Centric Organisation

While continuing to contribute to the national response to the COVID crisis in conjunction with state and emergency services, the Army has been able to maintain preparedness for other contingencies. Army harnesses and coordinates efforts across all domains, including space and cyber, to help the Defence Force secure our national interests, and promote stability and security. History demonstrates that at some point it is always necessary to put boots on the ground. Army is fundamentally a people-centric organisation, and our people for us are our competitive advantage. In order to maintain the support the Army currently has with the community, we rely on the professional character of our people, their ethical and moral decision-making, and their desire to remain accountable for their respective actions. Maintenance of trust is essential for our personnel to successfully operate amongst communities, to support, to secure, to influence and, if required, engage in combat.

This professional character is the essence of what we call good soldiering. Good soldiering enables Army to quickly form teams whenever, wherever and with whom-ever is needed. To succeed, we develop many of the moral and intellectual attributes required of our people through focused training, education and experiences. These attributes encompass the development of character, leadership, communication, cognitive and interpersonal skills. They can be developed further by working with other partners. This is why strong partnerships are essential to build our capacity and resilience as an organisation.

Such partnerships span across local communities, our allies, regional partners, other government agencies, industry and academia. Army's partnerships expose our people to a variety of contexts to enhance their moral and intellectual capability. Army's partnerships are the basis of our capacity, our strategic depth and our commitment to national resilience. Within Defence there is always focus on developing our hard-edge war-fighting capability. But, exposing our teams to other contexts helps our people develop their social skills. Skills required to operate in and amongst communities; learning from and integrating experiences gained from these environments ultimately helps to improve our effectiveness. We value our connection with the nation and encourage our people to contribute to their communities whenever possible. Our engagement is multi-faceted but also multi-beneficial, enabling Army to serve local communities while also developing our people's social skills through working with partners and supporting civilian population in crises.

Recent Domestic and Regional Engagements

Despite the limitations of COVID in the past 12 months, Forces Command alone has engaged in and

supported 247 separate community activities across Australia. Of these engagements: 62 percent were with youth groups, including indigenous groups, cadets, sporting activities, and school visits; 26 percent were with veterans groups, charities and family open days; and the remainder were displays and ceremonial support. Not only do these activities develop social skills, relationships and empathy in our personnel, they also support whole-of-government welfare and development programs that help our communities to thrive. Supporting and actively contributing to local communities is a staple for Army and will continue into the future.

The Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Programme (AACAP) is a program run by Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, with support from Army to assist remote Indigenous Australian communities. AACAP commenced in 1997 and has proven a wonderful opportunity for our engineer trades personnel to work with remote Aboriginal communities to construct housing, roads, sewage facilities, airfields, telecommunications infrastructure, school facilities, potable water and other social services. In the last decade, the Army's involvement extended to the coordination of health and veterinary training and the delivery of employable skills programs for remote communities. AACAP reinforces the strong association between Army and indigenous peoples of northern and central Australia to ensure we are connected with and understand our regional perspectives.

Each of Army's brigades has established habitual training relationship with several regional military partners to improve cultural understanding and build enduring relationships. Regular training exercises with the partners and the others, including New Zealand, Fiji, PNG, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines and Malaysia enable our Army to learn from our partners, and enhance regional security and stability.

We are conscious that our future joint operations will comprise coalition force operations and inter-agency engagements with various stakeholders. Accordingly we are focusing our training with major powers – the United States, Britain, Japan, India, Canada and the Republic of Korea. Additionally, we are increasing our interoperability with Australian organisations including other government and civilian agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, state emergency services, academia, and industry; all of whom are potential stakeholders in conceivable future operations.

The 2021 Kabul Evacuation Operation

Operating with a wide variety of partners in varied environments prepares us for boots-on-the-ground roles I stated earlier. To illustrate an example, Corporal Jensen, an infantry soldier from Townsville was part of a joint inter-agency team that recently deployed at short notice to Kabul airport to assist Australian passport and visa holders to evacuate from Afghanistan. In the year leading to this deployment, Corporal Jensen and his Army team, conducted a full cycle of war-fighting training activities. The culmination was the joint international

Exercise Talisman Sabre 21 conducted in Townsville. The team also supported operation COVID-19 assist tasks in Western Australia, was involved in charity work with Legacy and with Ronald McDonald House, and routinely supported the local Townsville 'Proud Warrior' program to develop and empower indigenous and at-risk youth.

When Corporal Jensen's team arrived on-the-ground in Kabul, they found themselves in confronting conditions. Kabul airport had three entry gates geographically dispersed by about eight km, each congested with thousands of desperate people hoping to leave Afghanistan. Troops on-the-ground had to quickly assess the environment, develop a plan and execute their mission. It was arduous, dynamic and austere. They were operating for eight days with minimal rest or sleep as part of a multi-national inter-agency team. For a 12-hour period during that operation, Corporal Jensen engaged with the throng of people, single-handedly identifying members from the vulnerable Afghanistan women's soccer team of approximately 20 family groups. He found a local English speaker to translate and help him identify the team and their families from the crowd and successfully bought them through security and negotiated with various authorities for their safe passage to Australia. Those women and their families, and about 4,100 other people were evacuated from Kabul that week.

The capacity to comprehend distressing human conditions, often under heightened stress from environmental and social threat factors were critical to the success of the non-combatants evacuation operation in Afghanistan. Australian soldiers must have the skill to communicate in socially acceptable ways, develop understanding, and foster empathy with people from other cultures. Every soldier who can read and understand the non-verbal and verbal cues, anticipate changes in atmospherics and find alternative ways to communicate add significant value to achievement of the mission. Corporal Jensen highlights the critical need for land combatants to develop social skills that bridge cultural and language barriers – barriers that often need to be breached to gain access to segments of the population who need our support. We know that, in an era of accelerated warfare, our Army must evolve to be more adaptable and be prepared to confront and overcome greater range of roles required of us.

Conclusion

Forces Command contributes to the building of national resilience through investing in our most important asset, our people. We focus on developing good people with strong moral and intellectual attributes in order to make the Army more operationally relevant and competent, both nationally and internationally. We are doing this through win-win partnerships with as broad an array of organisations and groups that we can muster. We know that we need to continue to evolve; but our organisational response to COVID-19 and resilient attributes exhibited by Corporal Jensen demonstrate that the Army is well on the way to achieving the resilience it requires to be future-ready.

Island Australia: improving resilience in a rapidly-changing region

The contribution of the Royal Australian Air Force to improving resilience



A paper based on a presentation to the Institute in Sydney on 23 November 2021 by

Air Vice-Marshal Joe Iervasi, AM, CSC

Air Commander Australia

Vice-Patron, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, New South Wales

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) is inherently resilient. Forward looking, alert and ready, it adapts to change and, through the professionalism of its personnel and systems, remains relevant, credible and reliable. This was exemplified by a non-combatant evacuation operation from Kabul in August 2021.

Key words: Australia; change adaptation; credibility; professionalism; relevance; reliability; resilience; Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); Australian Defence Force (ADF).

I really appreciate the opportunity to follow on from both my great mates and compatriots, the Fleet and Forces commanders. We come from very similar backgrounds but bring a nuanced approach to the way we need to do business and that will be the sub-theme of my address. It is strength through diversity that provides us with inherent resilience.

Resilience in RAAF Terms

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction defines resilience as: “The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management”¹.

In this centenary year of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), one could argue that it is inherent in the RAAF’s DNA to be resilient. Between its formation in 1921 through to the start of World War II, our then Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Richard Williams, spent a majority of his time arguing the case for the retention of an independent armed service for the provision of air power. Thus, Air Force has always been adapting to the environment within which it existed. The critical issue, however, is are we resilient by design as an Australian Defence Force (ADF), in particular as an Air Force? So, in the design criteria, we need to address those attributes identified in the definition of resilience.

The ADF, including the RAAF and Air Command, is a medium-to-small entity when compared to defence forces globally. We are not a defence force of mass.

Without mass as an inherent redundancy or resilience measure, we have to cope through quality, a critically important measure of our success. The quality of our systems and our people to adapt to and cope with the environment as it changes over time becomes a key measure of our resilience – what we colloquially call within Air Force “bombs on target, on time”, i.e. the delivery of precise effects on time. Our true measure of resilience is our ability to deliver quality on time – it is the critical design criterion within Air Command.

Adapting to Change

Never before in our careers has there been such an alignment from strategy to task in terms of what we need to do. In the 2020 Defence Strategic Update (Defence 2020a), there are three strategic defence objectives: to shape, deter, and respond. The Force Structure Plan (Defence 2020b) outlines major capital acquisition projects and, importantly for our government, reaching out and touching others who might be our competitors within our part of the world. Then, finally, the Defence Transformation Strategy (Defence 2020c) talks about the way the ADF needs to perform. These three documents represent strategy, capability and reform. Within Air Command, we view strategy, capability and reform through three key questions; we need to ask ourselves: are we relevant, are we credible, and are we reliable? The test of relevancy is are we doing what is actually expected of us? That is maintaining alignment with and being attuned to, not only our government and its expectations, but more broadly expectations around the world.

The ADF, if you consider it as a biological entity, does not exist in its own ecosystem. It is connected with other entities in a broader ecosystem. To be able to adapt quickly, we need to have enough sensors out there attuned to the wider ecosystem that we inhabit. It goes beyond taking a specific direction from govern-

¹United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction at <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/resilience>, accessed 28 December 2021.

ment; the ADF must also think. But, in order to think and be prepared, not only do you need those sensors out there from a diverse and inclusive workforce, you also need to have information from as many sources as possible. The motto within Air Command is to “be alert and ready”, but as we collectively say, you cannot be ready if you are looking at your shoes. You can only be ready if you are looking ahead. Our ability to be resilient is also our ability to predict – to make military judgements about changes within the world in which we live – and how quickly we can adapt to those changes.

Hence, we need to be looking far enough ahead to give us sufficient indicators and warnings about whether the system we have created remains relevant over time. We have plenty of people employed within the Department of Defence involved in strategy beyond the 10-year time horizon. They give us the general steer about the future vision for the ADF. We need that broad strategic vision to give us a central line of advance for the force-in-being.

The force-in-being is the force that we have today. We fight with what we have, not what we wish we had, nor what we think we have. It is what we employ in the real world and our time horizon extends out about four years, the time horizon for official projections. Within this timeframe, we can make real changes to our course. Importantly, four years generally goes beyond the tenures that most commanders and leaders have in their respective positions. Hence, we always need to look beyond our tenure to ensure that we continue to evolve over time. The strategic thinkers can give us indicators with a longer lead time to develop capabilities to address nuts we cannot crack now and point to broader capabilities we will need to develop.

ADF Relevance, Credibility and Reliability

One way to view the role of the Chief of the Defence Force is to ensure the ADF, as an institution, endures over time and remains relevant, credible, and reliable. Therefore, we must always be looking ahead, and that is where the Fleet Commander, the Forces Commander and I are challenged day-to-day.

To remain relevant, we must ask whether we are picking up on the changes in the environment, whether we are evolving. And once we are attuned to those changes, we must focus on how we articulate them in a way that makes sense to our leadership and to the government. That, then, is our first resilience consideration, being attuned to the environment.

The second theme, about the credibility of what we do, is actually ensuring that not only do we retain the soft skills that keep us attuned to the community and be part of the community, but also that we develop the hard edge as a defence force as well. The ADF is the only mechanism that the Australian Government has to deliver hard power. The only branch that is authorised to kill people and blow stuff up. We must ensure that we are able to do that if called on. It does not mean that our sole focus is on mayhem, but, when called on to deliver

it, we must be prepared to use force. Being credible also ensures that we are providing the government with confidence that we can deliver hard power.

We can test our credibility, in part, by being relevant to the government and turning up to do the things that it requires of us. In the last couple of years, the ADF might be viewed through the lens of international rescue. There has been no mission, no task, no crisis too big or too small that we have not demonstrated an adaptability to tackle *e.g.* reconstruction efforts after disasters in Pacific nations; disaster responses within Australia and to the global pandemic. How we and our people have coped is inherently our job. It is to do what government directs and to do it well.

The third theme is reliability – we say what we mean and we mean what we say. Defence in the past has been criticised for not being able to clearly articulate, or for lacking transparency, about what it does, *e.g.* why are you spending \$10,000 on coffee machines? This can be a distraction from the investment in time, people and resources to be trained and prepared to do the difficult things that we need to do. Reliability, though, is also keeping a connection to the community and to the taxpayer – taxpayers to whom we say we are spending your money wisely.

When we, the ADF’s current senior commanders, joined up in the in the mid-to-late 1980s and early 1990s, the world was raging peace. Most of us lived through what was a wonderful environment. But there were always questions about why we needed a defence force. A defence force has always been like an insurance policy. As with any insurance policy, unless you draw on it, over time, you question why you should keep putting money towards it. So, we need to go back to theme one; we need to remain relevant and, while some tasks might not necessarily be about delivering hard power, they keep us relevant to our current government and keep us relevant to the Australian nation as well.

Now I don’t think many of us could foresee the incidental, experiential benefits that could have arisen as a consequence of supporting Australia’s response to the pandemic through the COVID task force. We had women and men interacting with the Australian community; all aspects of the community, with all socio-economic means and needs, people stressed, people with other problems as well. It is a true testament to the women and men of the ADF that they are able to show a great level of empathy and professionalism and provide support directly to their fellow Australians. In the case of those involved in the COVID task force, I think all of them would say it is something that was deeply personal for them. They could see that they were doing something that was benefiting their fellow Australians. So, when the Australian people can see that the Australian Government through the ADF is helping them, it provides the people a level of confidence that the ADF is doing a good job and represents the best of the nation. That also provides a

level of confidence about how capable, adaptable and resilient the nation is. So, while the military is just one part of national power, it is the most visible part from a human dynamic perspective. And the level of confidence that provides about us as a nation, from an identity perspective, is absolutely crucial.

ADF Professionalism

The ADF's reformation over the last 10 to 15 years from a workforce diversity and inclusivity perspective also has helped it with community integration. I look at the RAAF today and I will steal a comment from a mate of mine that the Army we have today is the Army he wished he had joined; and I have a similar view about the Air Force. The Air Force we are in today is the Air Force I wish I had joined. We are a far more professional outfit: we are attuned; we understand. We present in a way that demonstrates confidence to the Australian people.

As an example, in late August 2014, we were just on the backward swing of the first peacekeeping task in Afghanistan, the world was going into its next phase of raging peace and then Iraq turned sideways. The Australian Government decided that we needed to come to the aid of Iraq and their elected government. Operation OKRA was initiated and an Air Task Group was formed within Air Command in September 2014. Normally, for that type of mission, we would have required a minimum of 35 days notice to move – to prepare our resources, train for mission certification, and get going. As the operational commander, at that point, I had a call from my chief saying you have 28 days. Oh, that is going to be tight. 48 hours later another call: it is now 14 days to go. In another 24 hours, it changes to 7 days. We ended up deploying an Air Task Group as part of the Joint Force that encompassed a KC-30 multi-role tanker transport, six Super Hornet fighters and the E7 Wedgetail. Our force development had foreseen a need for us to be self-sustainable and deployable; we were able to mobilise and deploy to the Middle East within 7 days. Astonishing! Within an additional 7 days, we were operating within the theatre itself, seamlessly tapped straight into the operation. 7 days later, at the 21-day point, we dropped our first weapon on our first target, being still 14 days inside of what our normal notice to move period was mandated. That we were able to do so was a testament to the quality and adaptability of the workforce, but was evidence that our training processes and procedures combined with the foresight of our capability development decisions were relevant, credible and reliable.

A second example is a non-combatant evacuation operation we took part in recently in Afghanistan. It is a true credit to the women and men directly involved in that they have changed the lives of 4100 Afghans and the second and third-order effects go into the tens of thousands of indirect benefits. On Friday 13 August 2021, we got the call that it was on, and within 36 hours

we had personnel from a joint force moving from Australia. What was extraordinary was that at that point in time we had been living in a COVID environment for the past 18 months along with the rest of the world. The RAAF's workforce was working both virtually and physically distributed to minimise workforce exposure to COVID. We also had a lot of our women and men deployed to the COVID task force. We were able to gather them up and deploy a force forward in a 36-hour window. Absolutely astonishing!

To add to that context, the nature of air power is that we move routinely between states and internationally. Over the previous two years of operations through COVID, every time we moved internationally or between states, we incurred a quarantine bill based upon each nation or state's restrictions. As of today, Air Command alone has accumulated over 200 years worth of human time in quarantine. Leading up to that point on Friday 13 August 2021, we had an accumulation of people repeatedly going into and out of quarantine, with one person having completed 160 days of quarantine alone. Fortunately, we have a very attuned workforce; we knew who was available, who was not, and how we could get up and get running. Therefore, the fact that, within 36 hours of that task being notified, we were up, operating and deployed was extraordinary. That workforce had to assemble from various states, they could not even concentrate in one place before they deployed. They first consolidated at our Middle East bases where they got together, adapted and the rest is history. Once again, this underlines the quality of the systems and the personnel that we have and their ability to adapt and adjust rapidly.

The Future

Where are we going and what is important for us? There is a good book by Ed Catmull, president of Pixar and Disney Animation. Catmull was one of the founders of Pixar Animation, the company responsible for *Toy Story*. He did an analysis of what made Pixar successful, what made big companies successful and what made big companies at the height of their power fail. When Pixar developed *Toy Story*, it was a world-leading product. When they went on to develop *Toy Story II*, they thought they had a repeatable process. The supposed winning formula almost broke their company. What had not been recognised was that in a first-of-type event, all employees are willing to do whatever is necessary to make a successful product, but they couldn't back that up the second time around.

We need always to be checking our 'homework'. When an entity or an event has been successful, we need to understand and analyse the reasons for its success and whether it is repeatable and sustainable over time. We, as a nation, need to check our own homework. It is great to get the pats on the back, but the danger is if you are blind to something that is going wrong or could fall off the rails.

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RAAF contribution to improving resilience...

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In the future, I will be looking deliberately for things that we know are not working, and for things that we are not looking at hard enough or asking ourselves the tough questions about true resilience. Not only do we need to check our own homework but, equally importantly, we need to get others to check our homework, too.

Conclusion

We are completely aligned within the ADF about what is necessary. We have wonderful women and men of whom you should all be proud. They are extremely capable. The keys to our success are always being attuned to our environment, our strength through diversity, our strength through insights, and our strength through partnerships with our nearer neighbour nations.

We live in a complex ecosystem, so we need to be attuned to what is going on elsewhere – situational awareness. You gain situational awareness by listening, not by talking. When we go to the region, we need big ears and a little mouth. We need to be attuned to what really matters to those within our region so as to work out ways that we can best partner with them.

Hopefully, what you have seen in this seminar is that you have a very capable ADF whose personnel are not resting on their laurels and are always willing to adapt and change.

References

- Defence (2020a). *2020 Defence Strategic Update* (Department of Defence: Canberra).
- Defence (2020b). *2020 Force Structure Plan* (Department of Defence: Canberra).
- Defence (2020c). *2020 Defence Transformation Plan* (Department of Defence: Canberra).