

National President's Column

Welcome to the second issue of *United Service* in 2024.

The aim of the Institute is to promote informed debate on, and to improve public awareness and understanding of, defence and national security. We do this in part through publishing scholarly articles in the Institute's National journal, *United Service*.

This issue of *United Service* contains several excellent articles including the strategic implications of the 2022-23 Defence Strategic Review (DSR); an update on the strategic review of the ADF Reserves as recommended in the DSR; part-two of the career of our only Australian born Field Marshall, Sir Thomas Blamey; and an interesting article on the little known within Australia but important role of the Indian Army in the Gallipoli Campaign.

To further our aim of improving public awareness and understanding of defence and national security, we are continuing to enhance the National website by including videos of lectures and seminars conducted by State and Territory based Institutes.

In the Autumn 2024 edition of *United Service*, we invited members to join the RUSI NSW Special Interest Group on Strategy. The Special Interest Group on Strategy has initiated a series of podcasts on current strategic issues including Ukraine, Gaza, Red Sea, New Caledonia and other significant hot spots. We are now publishing these podcasts - go to https://www.rusi.au/SIG_S/Strategy.php

The Australian Government recently released the 2024 National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the 2024 Integrated Investment Program (IIP). The NDS sets out the Government's approach to address Australia's most significant strategic risks based on its concept of National Defence, whilst the IIP sets out the specific defence capabilities the Government will invest in to give effect to the NDS.

Adoption of the NDS will see a "Strategy of Denial" becoming the cornerstone of defence planning. The ADF will transition from a force designed to respond to a range of contingencies to an integrated focused force designed to meet Australia's greatest risks.

There has been significant criticism of deficiencies in the NDS and the IIP. For example, whilst considerable funds will be expended in hardening our northern airbases, the planned air and missile defences of these bases have been cancelled. Likewise, the Navy's Mine Countermeasures and Military Survey project, SEA 1905, has been cancelled which together with our Huon-class Mine Clearance Hunter Coastal (MHC) vessels being paid off without replacement means that our sea trade routes and ports will lack protection against sea mines.

Finally, the proposed growth of the ADF as set out in the 2016 Defence White Paper from around 60,000 to 80,000 by 2040 is, unfortunately, a pipe dream with the numbers of full-time personnel in the ADF falling from 2017 to date. In relation to growing the ADF, it is well worth re-reading pages 16-18 of the RUSI submission to the DSR at: <https://www.rusi.com.au/documents/DSR20223.pdf>

Paul Irving AM, PSM, RFD
National President

