



**Lieutenant General Angus Campbell AO, DSC
Chief of Army**

The Australian Army: Delivering in an age of disruption

Keynote Address to the ASPI National Security Dinner, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 29 June 2017

Delivered Version 2000hrs 29 June

Mr Peter Jennings, Executive Director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute;

The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson, Director of the Australian War Memorial;

My colleagues, Air Marshal Leo Davies, Chief of Air Force, and Dr Alex Zelinsky, Chief Defence Scientist;

The Hon Dr Mike Kelly, MP

Mr Syd Blocher, Boeing Defence;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening.

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are meeting this evening, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders, both past and present.

Thank you, Peter and the ASPI team, for the invitation to speak. Informal opportunities for our broad national security community to meet and discuss matters of strategic interest are invaluable. They add to the great work ASPI does every day.

I also wish to acknowledge, Syd and Boeing Australia, the sponsor of this event, thank you for your commitment to Australia and excellence in defence industry.

This evening I will outline how the Army is *delivering* the land force to play our part in the defence of Australia and its national interests, what we intend to do in the future, and why.

I'll start with the 'why'. Context matters. It bounds and shapes our thinking and decisions. An important context for any Chief to understand is where we are in what I'll term the Defence 'Circle of Life'.

In the early months of my first two years, the policy settings of the 2016 Defence White Paper were largely and thoroughly litigated. Alongside the White Paper came the *Defence First Principles Review*, implementation of the *One Defence* initiative, and the renewal of the *Defence Strategy Framework*. I thoroughly support the direction of these documents. It was then, and remains, a season to deliver; no longer to debate.

By mid-2015 the Australian Army was also entering an unprecedented 16th year of operational activity; globally, regionally and at home.

The performance of our people on all these operations has been overwhelmingly professional and impressive, sometimes coming at great cost to physical and psychological well-being. The work to address this legacy of war is a national effort and I greatly appreciate the continued attention it receives from many good, committed people.

Concurrently, the Army had initiated a number of organisational reforms in recent decades. These initiatives began in the late 1990s, with *The Army in the 21st Century* initiative, and the *Restructuring the Army Trial*, marking the start of over 15 years of Army reform. The evolving threat of terrorism drove the first contemporary Army organisational reform, with the raising of Special Operations Command in 2003.

Over the next 12 years the Army embarked upon four more significant, enterprise-level reforms. Their names, familiar to many in this room, were:

- *The Hardened and Networked Army (2006);*
- *The Enhanced Land Force (2007),*
- *The Adaptive Army (2008), and*
- *Plan Beersheba (2011).*

Supporting all of these plans were well researched concept papers, brimming with excellent ideas, dealing with issues such as *Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment, Complex Warfighting and Adaptive Campaigning*. The ideas at the core of these initiatives remain vitally important to Army's future. They effectively form the design of the Army In Being. The design endorsed by Government.

But big ideas are only as valuable as the effort made to deliver them; delivered through hard work over long years of consistent effort. As I recently said at ASPI's Joint Integration Conference, we haven't always been as focussed on delivery as we need to be. And much of this design agenda remains unfinished. To give you a sense of this: Peter Leahy started the thinking about the '*Hardened and Networked Army*' 15 years ago, yet we are still not a networked Army today.

We have spent the last two years very deliberately trying to progress the delivery of that Army design. With plenty of newly minted Defence policy and an incomplete Army design, it has been a season to consolidate and deliver. Jack Welch, the iconic CEO of General Electric, captures my thinking, when he said, *'in real life, strategy is actually very straightforward. You pick a general direction and implement like hell!'*

We are implementing like hell!

I set four framework priorities to focus thinking, planning and action. These were and are:

- **Support to operations:** this is why our Army exists.
- **Assist our wounded, injured and ill:** to rebuild capability and respect our people's sacrifice.
- **Modernise the force:** to give our people the best opportunity to achieve their missions and come home safely.
- **Ongoing cultural reform and renewal:** to ensure our Army reflects the highest expectations of the Nation we serve.

These priorities can be summed up under the rubric of 'people, readiness and modernisation'. Unsurprisingly, these are a common preoccupation of my counterparts in the other Armies with whom we have relationships. Giving specificity to these priorities, I directed Army's senior leaders to ten lines of effort, a few examples of which I wish to highlight:

In the *people* space, efforts to improve recruiting are clearly bearing fruit, for both full and part time personnel. Increasing the number of women in the Army is a task driven by a capability need. Quite simply, we cannot have the best possible Army if we are not getting our fair share of the human talent our nation offers. Women represent over 50% of that talent pool. We have steadily been attracting more women. This is an ongoing, low-key journey – but an unstoppable one. We have also seen a dramatic increase in our recruitment of Indigenous Australians. As the Chief of one mob of Australians, I welcome citizens from every mob to serve, as they have with honour, albeit not always recognition, since Federation.

Some question whether quality, toughness or competence suffers by this so called ‘social engineering’. I vehemently disagree with both that characterisation and the suggestion that our work is doing anything but strengthening Army capability. Give me a citizen and the best training system in the country will make that person a soldier, a team mate, a leader; ready to do their duty.

You may also have noticed Army has been active in highlighting Family and Domestic Violence. The ill-disciplined use of violence domestically is criminal, while the ill-disciplined use of violence on operations is a war crime. One begets the other: neither is tolerable. The appropriate, legal, ethical and disciplined use of violence is a core skill for soldiers. Domestic violence is the antithesis of this. Addressing Domestic Violence is specifically about the effectiveness of our capability, and it’s the right thing to do.

Professional Military Education (PME) is another focus area. The U.S. historian Williamson Murray highlights why this is important, now and always:

War is neither a science nor a craft, but rather an incredibly complex endeavour which challenges men and women to the core of their souls. It is, to put it bluntly, not only the most physically demanding of all the professions, but also the most demanding intellectually and morally. The cost of slovenly thinking at every level of war can translate into the deaths of innumerable men and women, most of whom deserve better from their leaders.

We simply cannot afford slovenly thinking; we are addressing this through the development and maintenance of a world class Professional Military Education system. Implementation of last year's *Ryan Review* has started us on this path – there is more good work to come.

To advance *readiness* we have been adjusting our force posture, to support the significant new capabilities in the White Paper to be introduced into the Army. We have also been addressing the introduction of amphibious capability and competence into Army, with Exercise Talisman Sabre a significant demonstration of what we have achieved, and how far we have to go. I would also note the renewal of our special operations capability, to ensure it remains at the leading edge of global military capability.

In the *modernisation* area, we are driving forward the development of our digital combat system. This is a quarter century long effort, 15 years underway so far, moving from an analogue Army to a digital-by-design force. This is grindingly hard work at the core of generating and sustaining a joint land effect on the modern battlefield; And, in so doing, taking ASPI's description of our '3rd Generation Australian Army' and moving it a long

way forward. Our armoured manoeuvre capability, our headquarters and our soldiers will all be sensor-decision-shooter 'nodes' on this combat system. A resilient, secure and signature managed system; a system from which we gain advantage but avoid dependency.

Moving forward, much of the next two years will look like 'more of the same'. I am determined we will be an Army that *delivers*. But we can 'walk and chew gum' at the same time.

As the 'season turns' over coming years, policy settings from the 2016 White Paper will in time be realised or come under review in light of changing circumstances. We have already begun to think, collaborate and consult, to build and contribute robust new ideas for the further development of a joint and integrated ADF, and its Army; ideas for next week, next year and for the next White Paper. Our method will be one of *questioning, thinking, innovating, influencing, partnering* and *doing*. In doing so, we need to take the long view.

While the strategic circumstances described in the DWP16 are still palpable today, some say the drivers of change described in the Paper are accelerating. I'm as yet unconvinced. Time will tell.

Last month, former CDF, Admiral Chris Barrie, was quoted in newspapers saying:

What I see are a lot of larger-scale movements that remind me a lot of the lead up to war in 1914, and I agree with Professor Clark from Cambridge when he

writes in 'The Sleepwalkers' about the leaders just falling into the Great War scenario.¹

The lead-in sentence to this article was equally challenging. It said:

Former defence force chief Chis Barrie says the world is on a countdown to war and a "complacent" Australia will not be ready when it comes.²

Let me be clear, I do not see complacency in our national security leadership. But Admiral Barrie is not alone in his concerns.

The World Economic Forum publishes *The Global Risk Report* annually. The Forum's Head of Geopolitical Affairs, Espen Barth Eide, writing about the 2016 report said:

Without a concerted effort to properly address current trends, the world is at risk of sleepwalking into a future of widening chaos with growing danger of interstate conflict.³

Concern about a more dangerous world is global. Henry Kissinger said in a November 2016 interview:

¹ Walker, Jamie (2017). 'Australia is sleepwalking to war, Admiral Chris Barrie warns', *The Australian*, 21 May 2017, accessed at <http://online.isentialink.com/theaustralian.com.au/2017/05/21/b1732435-c2ce-47fb-a4a4-062ab63f1929.html> on 21 June 2017.

² *Ibid.*

³ Eide, Espen Barth, (2016). *Are we sleepwalking into geopolitical turmoil?* The World Economic Forum, accessed at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/how-can-we-prevent-the-world-sleepwalking-into-geopolitical-turmoil> on 20 June 2017.

The world is in chaos. Fundamental upheavals are occurring in many parts of the world simultaneously, most of which are governed by disparate principles.

We are therefore faced with two problems: first, how to reduce regional chaos; second, how to create a coherent world order based on agreed-upon principles that are necessary for the operation of the entire system.⁴

Recent testimony by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, to the House Armed Services Committee brings the focus tighter. And closer to Australia. He said:

The most urgent and dangerous threat to peace and security is North Korea. North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them has increased in pace and scope. The regime's nuclear weapons program is a clear and present danger to all, and the regime's provocative actions, manifestly illegal under international law, have not abated despite United Nations' censure and sanctions.⁵

Secretary Mattis is a direct speaking man who chooses his words carefully. While Committee testimony is in part about messaging and resourcing, he clearly means what he says. Mattis further stated that he saw: '*...a more volatile security environment than any I have experienced during my four decades of military service*'.⁶

⁴ Goldberg, Jeffrey (2016). 'World chaos and world order: Conversations with Henry Kissinger' in *The Atlantic*, p. 10 of 51, accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/kissinger-order-and-chaos/506876/> 18 June 2017

⁵ Mattis, James (2017). *Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis Senate Armed Services Committee written statement for the record Tuesday, June 13, 2017*. U.S. Senate, Washington DC, accessed at <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/mattis-06-13-17.pdf> on 17 June 2017

⁶ *Ibid.*

Building on this, Alan DuPont was quoted last week, saying Australia faced more pronounced danger than any time since World War II:

*In 40 years...I have never seen so much strategic volatility and instability globally, and including our region...Superpowers ensured that none of the regional conflicts got out of hand. That is changing now... as we transition from the old world order to a new one, the contours of which we can only dimly see.*⁷

So how did we get here? It was not that long ago we had Francis Fukuyama's *End of History and the Last Man*. An account of which Sir Lawrence Freedman described earlier this year as 'the triumph of the liberal order' in the latter half of the 20th Century.⁸

Freedman believes promotion of liberal norms by the West met too many counterexamples and disappointments. These gradually eroded the liberal model and its aspirations, '*bringing world order to its current questionable state.*' He concludes:

*We may just be at one of those inflection points in history, not because of a dramatic event...but because of an important shift in attitude.*⁹

Here in Australia, respected journalist Paul Kelly speaks of:

...the tribulations of a West divided over the challenge to its values, moral order, its security, how to halt the decline of middle-class prosperity and, ultimately, how to

⁷ Cited in: Miranda, Charles (2017). 'We can't rely on US Defence', *The Daily Telegraph*, Sydney, 24 June 2017, p.20.

⁸ Freedman, Lawrence (2017). Speech: 'Is the Post War International Order coming to an End', Part of the *Strategic Studies Series*, Bologna Institute for Policy Research, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 27 February 2017. Accessed at <http://www.bipr.eu/FILESUMMARIES/20170227.pdf> on 20 June 2017

⁹ *Ibid.*

*sustain the ethics of liberalism and conservatism – ideas that made the West successful and underwrote its political systems to the benefit of all.*¹⁰

Kelly dismisses the idea Australia can remain immune from what he describes as the malaise affecting the great democracies. The possibility Freedman and Kelly are describing is one in which both *political* decision making, and *predictable* decision making, are getting harder. If true it has the potential to make the strategic calculus of nations far less assured and more prone to miscalculation.

Eminent professionals – a politician, a strategist, a journalist and a military leader - are all saying there may be serious problems ahead. These are *strategically important* problems. Whether these experts are ultimately right or wrong, each has earned the right to be heard and considered.

There is, of course, an alternative or qualifying perspective. The one I offer tonight comes from Allan Gyngell. Speaking at last week's *Crawford Leadership Forum*, he observed:

*It is the conceit of every generation that the time they live in is uniquely fluid and uncertain...We should be alert but not alarmed, and that's not what you get from a lot of the commentary that's out there.*¹¹

Allan's wisdom and measured judgement is reassuring, and there are men and women of good intent hard at work all across the globe seeking to make it so. But Allan, and other

¹⁰ Kelly, Paul (2017). 'Corbyn and Trump – Symptoms of the same malaise' in *The Australian*, 14 June 2017, p.14.

¹¹ Cited in: Wroe, David (2017). 'Nothing's predictable, so keep calm and carry on' in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 June 2017, p.16.

reassuring voices, can occasionally be wrong. As the Chief of Army I have to think about the consequences of what 'occasionally wrong' looks like; which is to say, I work with my colleagues to advise government and build for Australia a *modern* and *ready* land force, a component of a joint force.

Our Army and the ADF will always be relatively modest in size. The Army will always operate as a component of the ADF. And the ADF will always operate as a component of the Australian national effort; a national effort that historically has always been part of a Coalition. The logic of this is irrefutable, it is the only way we can generate sufficient strategic weight for the most pressing of problems.

Following the White Paper lead, Army is focused on engagement with partners, on our people, and on the readiness and modernisation of the force. As we face the future we will not be alone. Our Allies, partners and friends will be there. The Army is first and foremost a 'people' force. By engaging internationally we enhance capability, sustain Australia's influence, generate security partnerships and enhance security resilience within our region.

We train for joint coalition warfighting. Exercise Talisman Sabre is an exemplar. The focus on warfighting is important. While we can always adjust 'down' to meet simpler tasks; we cannot quickly and easily 'adjust up' to meet our ultimate responsibility to the nation.

Key to our success in the future will be the considerable intellectual talent Army possesses. There is a vibrant and exciting debate and discourse about tactical,

operational and strategic ideas and concepts occurring right now among our people. This is something I strongly encourage.

Most of this professional discourse is not happening in 'old school houses' or traditional Army venues. Nor is it centred on our senior leadership, although they are involved. This vibrant and informative debate is happening among our younger soldiers and officers: our 'digital natives'. It is happening in the spaces of the information age – on blogs, digital forums and in the twitter sphere. We need to embrace a digitally savvy workforce, and the potential it offers.

The people who will win the important fights of the 21st century are not those who have mastered the processes and concepts of last century, or even of today. They are the people who will be able to look into the intense competition already occurring in our world, and in future wars, and see things in them we cannot see. We need people to think in new ways and see new chances; who seize opportunities to innovate and create winning edges.

To Peter and ASPI, thank you for this opportunity to talk about the work of the Australian Army, work which is going on quietly in every corner of the country and across the globe.

We are delivering today and planning for tomorrow, as part of one national defence team. Success in this disruptive world will require an Army of high quality people, equipment and ideas.

I'm quietly confident but there is much to do. The last two years have flown by and no Chief ever believes the job is done. Tomorrow, and each day, we start anew, building the best Army we can for Australia.

Thank you.