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Submission: Defence WP Discussion Paper

Community Consultation Discussion Paper - Submission

The defence and security of Australia is a whole of Australian Government responsibility. It may be split into External and Internal sectors with areas of responsibility divided among several Agencies - each with separate yet inter-linked functions.

Defence and Security functions can be considered as ranging from Benign to Coercive and these are relevant to all Agencies. Tasks may be allotted to a single Agency or shared between a number of Agencies. There are three functions: Diplomatic, Constabulary and Coercive. Each Agency needs to have a policy which defines whether each particular task is peculiar to that Agency or to be shared between Agencies and how such co-operation is to work - "Who controls it?"

Diplomatic Functions

These are not restricted to the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Australian Defence Force demonstrates its power by Courtesy visits, Exchange programmes, Mutual International Co-operation and Participation in Multi-national exercises.

Constabulary Functions

These may be External or Internal. Externally these are patrolling of maritime national waters by the RAN and the RAAF, protecting against illegal fishing, immigration and smuggling and operations against piracy. Internally these are protection of territorial assets, counter-terrorism and intelligence gathering. Other Agencies will also be involved in these activities.

Coercive Functions

The prime task is the defence of Australian territory. Engagement in peacekeeping and peacemaking operations and assistance and aid in the defence of our allies and the provision of relief to countries suffering the effects of natural disasters. Also, of course, assisting the Civilian Authorities in the event of civil strife.

Manpower

Australia must have sufficient manpower to meet the predicted range of these needs and to sustain lengthy periods of involvement. Although Australia has a reasonable size Defence Force, it must be acknowledged that a large number of our Reserves are also active members of Police and other Emergency Services. This could cause a conflict of interest and priorities in any major emergency or crisis.

Equipment

The major problem I see with the inventory of Defence equipment and armament is one of the need for replacement in times of possible high attrition and use. Is there sufficient storage and production in Australia or is the geographical control with overseas manufacturers.

Terrorism

Present protective measures in place against terrorist attacks on Australia's assets seem effective. The recent explosion on Varanus Island show how misplaced was the Operator's preparedness to cope with the results of the explosion in the Gas Facility

and the non-availability of replacement parts. Mechanical and natural disasters can be as destructive as terrorist attacks.

Although in general agreement with most of the points made in the Discussion Paper, I feel that some attention be paid to the points I have raised making it a more trans-Departmental report in emphasis.

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I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report