Distinguished guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Can I start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet today and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

I am pleased to see ASPI help bring this topic to the forefront of our thinking for at least a couple of days. “Building the joint and integrated ADF” is something that in Defence we have devoted a lot of time to in recent years, because it really goes to the heart of how we must position the ADF of the future.

My aim this morning is to provoke some discussion over the next two days by proposing that we need to shift gears on a couple of key conceptual and intellectual points on this topic. You will see that I am advocating some significant nomenclature change.

More of the same won’t work for us, saddling ourselves to the latest fad that may be relevant to a much larger scaled organisation will not match up to our own scalar and resource issues.

Some of you will be aware of the significant body of work that has been underway as a result of the First Principles Review. We have come a long way since the department first pondered then started to embrace the concept of ‘One Defence’.

That work is ongoing and we are about to enter a new phase of reform with the stand up of the Joint Capabilities Group next month. This is going to make a real difference to how we manage joint capability going forward, further strengthening the reforms that we have committed to over the past couple of years.

Before we look at that however, and I know this development will likely be explored in detail over the next two days, I want to go back to how we began this latest reform program.

When we kicked of First Principles review I personally had only one priority… and it related to the Joint Force.

As the review got underway my focus was firmly on attaching proper authority to the design, development, and integration of the Joint Force.
When I came into the VCDF role I joked that then ‘Joint Capability Authority’ role featured a big J and C but a lower case ‘a’.

From my new vantage point it was evident that the VCDF simply could not definitively exercise the necessary authority in relation to the joint force – I really wanted to capitalise that ‘A’.

I also wanted to think more closely about how we use the term ‘joint’. I have said for a few years now that I’m not sure ‘joint’ is continuing to serve us as usefully as it once did.

From my perspective joint doesn’t quite cut it today given the ubiquitous involvement of the civilian component of the Department and other Government agencies in just about all we do.

Joint is an inherently military term and while the notion was a confronting and challenging one a few decades ago, it is now, in my view, a limiting descriptor.

For mine, in conceiving of the future force, we need to talk about the integrated force, integrated at an organisational level and integrated technically and culturally.

A few weeks ago I was fortunate to be in the Middle East to see first-hand what our people are doing in the fight against Daesh.

As part of that visit I was privileged to watch our E7 Wedgetail Airborne control aircraft crew on one of their 14-hour missions over Iraqi and Syrian airspace, operating one of the most advanced air battle space management capabilities in the world.

There is no doubt that this capability typifies an integrated capability rather than a joint one given the multitude of feeds it relies on, the different actors that it advises, manages and controls.

Our view of integration has often been through the somewhat superficial lens of platform and system connectivity however, this is no longer good enough.

Our people also need to be increasingly sophisticated in the way they assess, interpret and interact across both our currently interpreted and the emerging war fighting domains.

A real behavioural shift is required because those domains are blending, and we have been forced out of our respective comfort zones.

The three traditional domains of Air, Sea and Land are what we know best; they are what we have studied, what we have trained to operate in, and they are where we have traditionally prioritised our capital investment.

We have added Space and Cyber in recent years, which have gained a firm foothold in the domain debate. But when you look at the interdependencies across all five domains I think the five-domain discussion is merely a waypoint.
If you follow the integration logic, we are moving, inexorably, towards a single war-fighting domain.

Our ability to operate effectively across this ‘One Domain’ will depend on our ability to build an Integrated Joint Force by design.

With this in mind we need a new intellectual focus on the single domain concept so we understand what it means and what it looks like.

First Principles is helping us in this regard. The strengthening of the strategic centre and the establishment of a single end-to-end capability development function is reshaping how we think and act.

The challenge to gaining superiority across the contemporary battlespace is effective integration not just across our own force but also across Government and with our key ally and partners, in the context of both global and regional security.

The challenges we face are becoming even more evident due to not just the increased complexity, but also because we have a congested and increasingly contested operating environment.

At the heart of the FRP implementation has been the Capability Life Cycle redesign, which is heavily focused on tailoring, streamlining and better integrating our capability solutions. It is equipping us to take that conceptual journey towards a single domain.

As the VCDF, I am accountable for any successes and setbacks that we might have on that journey.

My role is still evolving, shifting from the ‘Joint Capability Authority’, to the ‘Joint Force Authority’. I am pleased to say that the A has been well and truly capitalised with real decision authorities.

The Joint Force Authority has been boosted on two fronts; one being the stand-up of Force Design Division last year and the other being the transferal of full C4ISR Design Authority to me – with the resources to enable it.

Supporting these two functions are staff that provide me the means to understand, direct and assure the integration and interoperability of our Force Design and the delivery of it across the CLC.

What it means to have a dedicated Force Design workforce within VCDF Group cannot be overstated.

The focus they bring to capital investment and capability prioritisation decisions underpins the effectiveness of Strategic Centre and together with our Joint Capability Management and Integration team they ensure this is not a static process.

Force Design has become a business as usual function; an almost continuous ‘Force Structure Review’ focused on identifying potential capability and integration gaps
before they arise. In this they are supported by a robust contestability function that in my view is adding real value.

Integration of course is the force multiplier that allows the relatively small force like the ADF to maintain a higher operational tempo, optimal agility and superior manoeuvrability.

As programs advance we are ensuring integration remains front of mind, not just for current platforms but across the ADF capability development process. As challenges arise and solutions are developed, knowledge is now flowing both forward into the plans executed by Capability Managers and back into the Force Design process.

This feedback process is particularly important, because it is forces us to think about how a program fits into the bigger picture, rather than simply assessing just the task at hand. It is a major behavioural shift.

As I mentioned earlier, up until now we have often viewed integration as a largely technical endeavour.

But as I also touched on earlier true integration is far more than just technical. Those aspects of increasingly complex, congested and contested environments means we have to find better ways of integrating across our Force, and across the warfighting Domain.

Technical integration is certainly important, I am not denying that and the 5th generation capabilities coming into service will test that. But integration at its core is not about primacy of one aspect – it’s about how it all works together. So how we integrate with our people, how we train, and how we use whole of nation capability to produce more efficient, effective and agile outcomes cannot be overlooked.

Essentially, what we need is to step back and think about what integration for a force of our scale means. From where we sit now there can be little doubt that true integration begins with a robust intellectual underpinning.

So let’s go back and examine our domains.

First, we need to face up to the fact that previously when we spoke of domains – sea, land, air – it was really giving us an ability to continue to talk about the Services while looking like we weren’t.

I think we were all guilty of it; our Service is after all what we know, what we have based our careers on, a big part of how we see ourselves.

But our scale, and the complexity of our operating environment means maintaining that staying in that particular comfort zone is no longer viable.

The emergence of Cyber and Space has certainly challenged this Service-orientated mindset a little and in our doctrine we even have the human domain.

Left unchecked we will have further domain proliferation and proliferation will only muddy the waters even more and undermine the utility of the domain construct.
Is Space, at this time, in the Australian context (please note those very deliberately chosen caveats), a domain or is it an enabling function like logistics – critical to the fight but for us, right now, hardly a warfighting domain.

From my perspective until we move from being a ‘customer’ of space products (including the bearers it provides) to possessing serious space capabilities, its status as a domain in the Australian context is contestable.

Cyber is a different story, we have real capabilities and are generating effects from them. We have a clearer and more sophisticated view of the role we want to play, how we operate in it and where we can influence.

But multi-domain thinking has its limitations. I would commend a very recent and thoughtful article by Erik Heftye on Multi Domain Confusion which you can find at the Strategy Bridge web site.

I am not an adherent to the multi-domain warfare construct, its smacks a little of a fad. The bottom line is that as long as we talk and think in a segmented framework (such as domains) we inevitably think in a sectorial way, one that leads to a focus on the ‘seams’ rather than the system as a whole.

That is the leap we need to make, that is why a One Domain concept is intellectually important if we are to design and build an Integrated force.

I am not saying we don’t need to think about specialist issues, nor am I saying that we should simply have one warfighting Service. Our specialist and Service building blocks will always be crucial and I think the post First Principles Review era has absolutely reinforced the crucial role of the Service Chiefs.

This is a discussion about our intellectual starting point in designing the force and what constructs are useful and what are not.

We do not have infinite resources and so integration prioritisation in our investment decision-making is critical.

Our geo-strategic realities setup an inherent tension between our ultimate role in the physical and self-reliant defence of our homeland and that of our daily operating reality which sees us working collaboratively in coalitions far from home to ensure the former is never required.

In a small force such as ours we need appropriate levels of horizontal interoperability across the Services, particularly when it comes to ensuring effective C4ISR. But, we do not need everything to talk to everything else.

Of course the majority of our war fighting and our day-to-day operations, is conducted within a coalition in a component based construct where what I would call vertical interoperability up the component chain is crucial.
There is a challenge in getting the investment balance right between the vertical and horizontal demands as we struggle to understand what ‘appropriate’ means on both axes.

This is complex work but the sophistication of the force we are acquiring demands innovative and deep intellectual engagement, open communication and collaborative behaviours across all stakeholders who are a part of our Defence Fundamental Inputs to Capability, including industry.

With this in mind I see two other key roles as the VCDF—firstly as the Joint Force Authority as already mentioned, and secondly as the Chair of the Defence Investment Committee.

As the Joint Force Authority I ensure the analysis of our Integrated Force needs is centred on assessments of our future operating environment; promoting pragmatic and useable concepts that include both long term perspectives and more specific challenges we are likely to encounter within the next decade.

My team now has the lead on Joint Experimentation and Force options analysis to ensure an integrated Joint Force by design.

Obviously the Domain expertise held within the Services feed into this and they remain our key enabler and delivery organisations. We rely deeply on that expertise to provide the intellectual rigour and innovation necessary to deliver against our future challenges.

But as I emphasised earlier, moving forward we need that intellectual input to be applied across that one war fighting domain, focused on that single Integrated force. This is where designing our C4ISREW architecture and having authority over that design, through integration and interoperability assessments and standards development shows it real value.

The continuous capability review cycle underpins the interdependencies of the new Force Design process and functions.

Assessing and prioritising gaps and opportunities is always front of mind, with designing our response as force options and deciding, with Government approval, our future force structure.

Certainly there is no perfect plan; no matter the amount of thought that goes into design it is inevitable that we will need to make trade-offs as the dynamic strategic environment and the budget envelope change.

As the Joint Force Authority I am accountable for ensuring that changes are considered and prioritised across the One Domain so that one capability is not blindly traded against another.

This brings me to my other key role as the Chair of the Investment Committee.
The committee has both accountability and assurance functions that encompass all Defence capital investments, including Infrastructure, Estate and ICT, in addition to force capability acquisitions.

Together with my colleagues, we coherently, for the first time perhaps, have a powerful opportunity to look across all aspects of the capital investment program (that I would suggest the largest in the country) and have a deliberate conversation to attack these challenging issues through the single war fighting domain lens.

The discussions in this committee are becoming deeper, more intellectual, collegiate and strategic. The conversation is significantly enhanced by the presence and contribution of very senior representatives from Departments of Finance and the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

That presence and participation has also transformed the dynamic between central agencies and Defence which has had a materially positive impact on the capital investment approval process in both time taken and providing Government a more strategic view of Force Structure decisions outside of the formal White Paper process. But we undoubtedly still have a way before we can realise all the benefits that true, and appropriate, integration brings to our force.

That is why conferences like this are so important. And that is why I am very grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Thank you.