

Williams Foundation Conference Sharpening the Edge of Australia's National Deterrence Capability

30 March 2023
National Gallery of Australia

Updated 23 March 2023

Aim

The aim of the March 2023 seminar is to explore what deterrence means to Australia and its interests in the context of being a globally respected, responsible, non-nuclear weapon capable middle power.

It will consider all national means that contribute to deterrence - diplomatic, economic and military - and discuss the limits to deterrence as a national strategy. In doing so, it will examine what a characteristically Australian deterrence looks like, balancing the need for a defensive posture and the ability to strike into the broader region, and the implications for the national industrial base.

Background

For a decade, the Sir Richard Williams Foundation seminars have focused on building an integrated 5th generation force. In air power terms, the ADF force structure substantially 'locked in' for the near to medium term, there is now a need to prepare for the next generation of technology.

However, new thinking is required to ensure the ADF can fight tonight as well as being prepared for the future. Air power history suggests there will be a highly innovative phase (Generation 5.5) before we get to the next transformative change. But where will that innovation come from? And can we afford to wait for the next generation to arrive?

Emerging geo-strategic, economic, and demographic trends continue to impact the environment in which Australian air power must raise, train, sustain and operate, demanding an increasingly sophisticated and balanced approach to the development of technology, workforce, policy, and process. As covered in previous seminars, this will involve the increased influence of space and cyberspace.

While technology will continue to drive the development of air and space power, a focus on technology alone is not enough to win in strategic competition. It will require an approach which is able to make best use of Australia's geography, a relatively small but highly skilled population, existing and new partnerships, and creative thinking to provide credible options and choices at the lowest possible level of political risk.

In 2023, the theme of the seminars will therefore shift focus towards the challenges and opportunities in an Australian context, and through an air power lens exploring the following themes:

- Shaping the force for high end deterrence and action;
- Articulating the case for modern asymmetric force;
- Survivability in terms of people, basing, platforms, communications and networks;
- Novel technology 'pathways' to fielded capability (from requirements, through acquisition to operations); and
- Affordability in the context of a global economic challenges.

These themes will necessarily drive the exploration of future technologies at various maturity levels, including for example quantum and nano technologies; laser and other-directed energy technologies; propulsion systems; and AI.

This will also be necessary to identify national vulnerabilities, including the need to understand the environment (physical and virtual); how to generate scale and mass; the dependency on space (particularly for PNT); logistics writ large (fuel, basing, supply chains, planning etc); workforce trends and data dependency and interdependencies.

The Seminar

The March seminar will focus on deterrence from first principles and explore the strategic need while paving the way for the September seminar, which will get into the detail with the 'Future Requirements of a National Deterrence Capability.

The opening session will introduce deterrence in strategic terms and provide an update in the context of emerging Government policy and international arrangements such as AUKUS. It will examine the importance of balancing a fundamentally defensive posture with the need to strike across domains and with purpose into the broader region.

The middle session will introduce industry partners and the need for a broader perspective of Defence industry as an integrated part of the deterrence apparatus. It will also examine the need for alignment with international partner policies, concepts, and force structures in the spirit of both interchangeability and interoperability.

Finally, Service Chiefs are invited to offer their perspectives on the emerging challenges, priorities and opportunities in the context of a characteristically Australian deterrence concept.

Industry Perspectives

Industry participants are invited to contribute to the discussion about deterrence in terms of either policy, process, technology, infrastructure, and workforce, or a combination of all. The intent is to promote industry as being more than simply a fundamental input to capability but more as an essential element of national power.

Topics for industry consideration are:

- Workforce Management and Development
 - System Readiness
 - Training System Effectiveness & Mission Rehearsal
 - Communication and Network Resilience
 - Decision Superiority
 - Future Technologies
 - Basing, Logistics & Supply Chains
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| Time | Topic | Speakers |
|-----------|--|--|
| 0800-0830 | Registration and breakfast | |
| 0830-0835 | Welcoming Remarks | AIRMSHL Geoff Brown AO (Retd) Sir Richard Williams Foundation |
| 0835-0840 | Introduction and MC | SQNLDR Sally Knox Sir Richard Williams Foundation |
| 0840-0910 | Fundamentals of Deterrence | AIRMSHL John Harvey AM (Retd) |
| 0910-0940 | Deterrence from a UK Perspective | AIRMSHL Harvey Smyth, CB, OBE, DFC Deputy Commander Operations, Royal Air Force |
| 0940-1010 | Resilience and Deterrence | Mike Pezzullo, AO Secretary, Department of Home Affairs |
| 1010-1040 | Integrated Deterrence | Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach USAF Commander Pacific Air Forces, HQ Pacific Air Force |
| 1040-1110 | Break – Morning Tea | |
| 1110-1135 | Reinvigorating the Industrial Base | Dr Alan Dupont AO Chief Executive Cognoscenti Group |
| 1135-1155 | Manufacturing Deterrence | Ken Kota, VP MFC Lockheed Martin |
| 1155-1225 | Defence and Industry Policy Implications | Kate Louis Australian Industry Group |
| 1225-1245 | Deterrence by Detection | Jake Campbell AM Triton Program Director Australia, Northrop Grumman |
| 1245-1305 | Operating critical infrastructure in space | Nick Leake Head of Satellite and Space Systems, Optus |
| 1305-1310 | Presentation 2022 Dr Alan Stephens Air Power Literary Prize winner | Dr Alan Stephens OAM |
| 1300-1400 | Lunch | |
| 1400-1420 | Title TBC | VADM Jonathan Mead AO, RAN Chief Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce |
| 1420-1440 | Chief of Army Perspective | LTGEN Simon Stuart AO, DSC Chief of Army |
| 1440-1500 | Chief of Air Force Perspective | AIRMSHL Robert Chipman AM, CSC Chief of Air Force |
| 1500-1520 | Formal Close | VADM Tim Barrett AO, CSC (Retd) Sir Richard Williams Foundation |