

**SENATOR DAVID FEENEY
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE**

**SPEECH – 25 MAY 2011
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA**

**LAUNCH OF THE KOKODA FOUNDATION'S "UNDER THE
SEA AIR GAP: AUSTRALIA'S ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE
CHALLENGE"**

I warmly welcome all of you here today to launch the latest Kokoda Foundation Report, *Under the Sea Air Gap, Australia's Anti-Submarine Warfare Challenge*.

This report authored by Brice Pacey, is a welcome and thought-provoking addition to the discourse on Anti-Submarine Warfare.

All too often, the "defence" debate in Australia is populated by all too few participants.

However, this morning I am pleased to see representation from both sides of politics, industry, educational institutions and the Defence and national security community, brought together by the Kokoda Foundation.

I hope that this interest will encourage robust and wider debate not only on Anti-Submarine Warfare but on broader Defence and national security issues.

This debate needs to be informed, considered and focussed on Australian national interests. It should not be divisive or partisan.

The author of the report, Brice Pacey is to be congratulated not only on the production of this latest report, but on his courage and leadership in raising issues of national importance in a thought provoking manner.

Brice Pacey has extensive experience in defence and national security matters, developed as a result of a variety of appointments in the intelligence community, the Australian Defence Organisation and in a number of teaching and executive positions.

This extensive experience and knowledge, coupled with thorough research and critical judgment, provides Brice with an enviable degree of foresight that is evident in his work.

That foresight is also reflected in the pivotal role Brice played as one of the founding Directors of Kokoda.

Brice and his fellow founding Directors saw the importance of establishing a “forum” through which security and industry professionals at all stages of their career could engage in a robust, transparent exchange of information, analysis and ideas.

The results of these discussions are reflected in Kokoda Papers and the *Security Challenges* journal.

The Kokoda Foundation fills an important space, fostering and developing detailed discussion on defence and security matters.

The importance of defence and security matters for Australia is growing, not declining.

Australia is in a dynamic region, facing threats and opportunities that in many respects echo past events.

While Australia has historically considered its geographical situation to be a strategic benefit, strategic planners have rightly been wary of relying solely on our geography as a natural defence.

The authors of the 1946 “white paper” – “*An appreciation of the strategical position of Australia*” – stated that the basic strategy was for Australia “to throw her maximum effort into the area in which her forces are most required, and the maintenance of Empire sea and air lines of communication is vital”.

As much as things change they stay the same.

Our most recent white paper affirms that the primary role of the ADF is to deter and defeat attacks on Australia.

The White Paper states that “this entails a fundamentally maritime strategy, for which Australia requires forces that can operate with decisive effect throughout the northern maritime and littoral approaches to Australia, and the ADF’s primary operational environment more generally”.

The nature of the threat has become more complex, yet the fundamental concept has remained.

This focus on a maritime strategy makes sense.

It is an approach supported by both Australia's military history, our geography, and our contemporary security environment.

In the Asia Pacific century, a maritime concept of strategy means an emphasis on joint, integrated and complex military operations for the ADF in our 'inner arc' – our archipelagic and inner arc.

It should not become a binary debate between naval and continental strategic thinkers.

Nor should it become a debate between economic nationalists and economic rationalists.

It is a discussion about what is in Australia's national interest.

It deserves our attention, and should and must involve our entire community.

As we move forward into considerations for the 2014 White Paper, Australians should be given the opportunity to understand the complex nature of an effective and comprehensive maritime strategy, including Anti-Submarine Warfare.

In Australia we quite properly pride ourselves on conducting a transparent defence and security debate.

The 2009 Defence White Paper is an open source document.

Australian strategic thinking, the Defence Capability Plan and indeed defence expenditure is transparent to both our citizenry and the world-at-large.

Australia conducts itself in this way because we believe transparency begets trust, avoids fostering unwarranted and undesirable anxieties with our friends and neighbours.

Unfortunately, others in the international community do not share this approach.

This government is committed to ongoing discussion and formal periodic reviews of our strategic outlook.

We have demonstrated this commitment by establishing the quinquennial White Paper process and within that process supporting open and informed discussion.

Let me congratulate the Kokoda Foundation and Brice Pacey on their efforts to identify issues for consideration with respect to Australia's ASW capabilities in the lead up to the 2014 Defence White Paper.

As nations in our region grow their submarine fleets in both size and capability, Australian Anti-Submarine Warfare will and must become ever more important.

ASW is a high-end, long lead time capability that requires focus, investment and close co-ordination using complex equipment and a large number of players and platforms.

I congratulate the Kokoda Foundation on adding its expertise, its passion and its considerable prestige to the crucial task that I believe faces all of us; the need to summon a reluctant nation to understanding the strategic implication of our geography and the importance of sea power in the Asia-Pacific century.

Thank you.

ENDS