



**THE 2012 ORDER OF AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION – ACT BRANCH
SECOND ANNUAL AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE ORATION ~**

**“DIVERSITY AND INNOVATION IN LEADERSHIP:
CELEBRATING AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE ADVANCEMENTS.”**

DELIVERED BY

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*** As Delivered ***

Mr Len Goodman AO, Mr Derek Robson AM, General Peter Gratton AC, OBE, Air Marshal Mark Binskin AO, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed an honour to have been given the opportunity to address you this evening. As worthy recipients of Order of Australia recognition you have all provided an outstanding service to your community, to fellow Australians and to Australia as a whole. Your services have been recognised at the highest level and I am proud and honoured to once again recognise your achievements in this forum.

This evening I have been asked to address the topic of *‘Diversity and Innovation in Leadership: Celebrating Australian Defence Force (ADF) Achievements.’* This may seem a somewhat unlikely topic if you are keen followers of broad-stream Australian media where Defence is often portrayed as failing our members and failing to meet contemporary management practices. Tonight I hope I can reassure you that Defence and the ADF is a contemporary employer who is embracing diversity and in fact striving to become a leading player in providing a safe working environment where diversity is valued.

A cynic amongst you might suggest that having me as the first female Rear Admiral in the Royal Australian Navy deliver this Oration is perhaps somewhat tokenistic in nature but you should be reassured that I do not believe this to be the case. Without seeming to sing my own praises my promotion, like that of all senior officers, was based on ability and not as a result of any aspirational gender quota system. However I do believe that I bring additional talents to the senior Navy and more broadly the senior ADF leadership as a result of my gender. More of that a little later.

Why should the ADF embrace diversity? There is no lack of talented men and women in the ADF and it has been long recognised that companies that take proactive steps to avail themselves of a broader mix of skills, experiences and backgrounds on their Boards and among Senior Executives’ ranks, will have a competitive edge. Board diversity encourages integration and cross-fertilisation of ideas and thinking. In contrast, group think occurs when individuals of similar backgrounds, experiences and values work together and reinforce belief systems without questioning that the underlying belief system is in fact correct.

Leadership is the ability to set strategic direction and awareness of the broad strategic trends impacting on the organisation. The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) and Service Chiefs have clearly recognised over recent years that leadership does not only reside in infantry soldiers, fighter pilots and principal warfare officers who have traditionally held the most senior roles in Defence (and who traditionally also had no experience outside of the military) but that leadership is enhanced when other viewpoints are heard. And more importantly, when they question the rationale behind all of what we do.

I am such a person. My background is from a non-military family – in fact my mother fell off her chair when I told her I was enlisting in the Navy at the age of thirty-one. I had graduated from medicine and spent some nine years working as a doctor in the Queensland Public Health System and for a short time as a general practitioner prior to joining the navy. I would suggest my experiences in the civilian health sector brought a new perspective to my military medicine role. I would also suggest that Defence and the ADF obtains significant value from encouraging and promoting diversity of talent within the Senior Leadership Group.

A learning organisation values diversity and tolerates differences by maintaining a safe working environment and by taking action against inappropriate workplace behaviour, including discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. A learning organisation provides work arrangements that helps meets the needs of all employees, for example, parents and carers. A learning organisation nurtures and develops their employees and I put to you that Defence and the Defence Senior Leadership is striving to do all of this.

Females in Defence - as at April 2012 women made up 13.9% of the permanent ADF (navy 18.4%, army 10.1%, RAAF 17.1%) and 40.4% of the Defence Australian Public Service is female. At 01 April 2012, 11.3% of personnel deployed on operations are women. Currently 93% of all ADF employment categories are open to women. The previously announced removal of gender restrictions will see Defence opening up the remaining 7% of roles to any ADF member – male or female – with the capacity and desire to do the work. Roles that will now become open to women include: Navy Mine Warfare and Clearance Diving Officer, Air Field Defence Guard and Ground Defence officer and Army Infantry, Armoured Corps and some Army artillery roles.

A robust and agile ADF relies on every member having the opportunity to contribute fully and equally to Defence operations and capability. All ADF members deserve the opportunity to be judged on their physical and psychological capacity to do the work, not on their gender. Whilst it is unlikely that an influx of women will join these categories (which is reflected by the Canadian Defence Force experience) there will be some who will have the physical strength, endurance and capacity to become very effective members in these work groups.

Independent scientific work by the Defence Science & Technology Organisation and the University of Wollongong is underway to determine the gender neutral Physical Employment Standards for the combat trades. This work will determine the particular physical capabilities that are required to do the work with no reduction in standards or competencies.

These proposed changes are expected to occur within the next twelve months with the initial places in the combat trades being offered to currently serving females who may wish to transfer to a combat category. The CDF has indicated that he sees this as a long-term plan that will be implemented over the next five years in a considered way.

A wide range of flexible work practices (such as job sharing and part-time leave without pay) available to all ADF personnel make remaining in the service both practicable and achievable for women, rather than separating after having a family. Initiatives such as the New Generation Navy program, whilst not specifically gender focused, help to improve family and lifestyle stability and work to enhance the work/life balance for all Navy personnel, both male and female.

The Services have also established various women's leadership and mentoring programs, senior women's forums and have made conscious decisions to ensure appropriate female representation on all senior committees and promotion boards. In 2005 there was one female in the star ranks in the ADF – there are now ten. There has been a three fold increase in women at the Colonel (equivalent) level since six years ago (then there were twelve, there are now thirty-eight). There are almost 70% more women at the Lieutenant Colonel (equivalent) level now than six years ago (then there were ninety-four, now there are one hundred and fifty-eight) and there has been a 100% increase in women at the Warrant Officer One level since 2005. These achievements are due to both the capabilities and attributes of the women, as well as testament to the focus on the importance of diversity by the Defence Senior Leadership.

Fairness and Resolution Branch initiatives – the ADF has allowed members who are gay or lesbian to serve openly since 1992 and the ADF is committed to the recognition of same-sex relationships. In 2005 we recognised same sex interdependent relationships, providing many of the benefits that married couples receive, such as housing. From 1 January 2009, the *Same-Sex relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – Superannuation) Act 2008* was enforced and ensured that same-sex couples are treated the same as opposite-sex couples for the purposes of the *Defence Forces Retirement Benefits Act 1948* and the *Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Act 1973*.

In July 2009, same-sex couples were recognised as partnered for the purposes of the *veterans' entitlements act 1986* and the *military rehabilitation and compensation act 2004*. Furthermore, the *safety, rehabilitation and compensation act 1988 (srca)* has been amended to recognise same-sex interdependent couples.

By 2009 we extended the entitlement to include all benefits married couples receive, such as compensation, superannuation, death benefits, and home assistance loans.

The Department of Defence is a foundation member of Pride in Diversity, Australia's first and only not-for-profit workplace program designed specifically to assist Australian employers with the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees.

Indigenous Affairs – the ADF has a long and proud Indigenous history, with Indigenous ADF members having been engaged in all major conflicts since the Boer War. Across the Top End, Indigenous soldiers have played a significant role in the Regional Force Surveillance Units "protecting country" and on border protection command operations such as Operation RESOLUTE. The CDF and Secretary have confirmed Defence has an ongoing commitment to the Federal Government reconciliation efforts including a 2.7% Indigenous Defence representation by 2015.

Defence has a number of programs aimed at increasing Indigenous representation within our ranks. Defence has recently launched an Indigenous Handbook for Defence Commanders, Managers and Supervisors to inform them of Defence's strategic approach to Indigenous Affairs.

Defence conducts a memorial service each year during NAIDOC week at the Australian War Memorial to honour past and present Indigenous servicemen and women.

Defence has a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander network and provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network (ADF and APS) personnel to gather at an annual conference. This conference provides Defence with a valuable internal consultative body and it provides delegates with an opportunity to positively shape Defence policy and programs.

Army is developing a framework for an Army Regional Indigenous Network which will build on the success of the Defence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander network by providing an informal and fluid forum for Indigenous Army members to contact, mentor and support each other as needed in their local area.

The Indigenous pre-recruitment course is designed to prepare participants who have clearly indicated an interest in the ADF (having completed the initial Defence Force Recruiting assessment), and who meet initial suitability requirements for enlistment. Even though the participants are sourced nationally, the course is preferably conducted in NSW and takes up to twenty-four participants per course.

The Defence Indigenous Study Tour informs potential officer candidates of the standards and entry requirements to become an officer in the ADF. The tour is designed for Year 11/12 students that have expressed an interest in the ADF as an officer or desire to continue their tertiary study and includes partaking in activities at the Australian Defence Force Academy, the Royal Military College and Defence Force Recruiting. There are three four-day tours per year and each tour takes up to fifteen participants.

The Defence Indigenous Development Program develops trainees from remote locations to be job ready for employment either in their community, the private sector or in Defence. The program runs for seven months and trainees undertake a range of training including vocational education and training Certificate II courses, targeted language, literacy and numeracy courses, life skills and an introduction to the ADF. Participants usually come from remote or regional locations however; some are currently from large regional and urban locations. This program has been underway since 2009 in Katherine and since 2010 in Cairns.

Disability – the Defence Disability Network was formed in September 2009 and is an informal network open to APS and ADF members with and without disability. Membership is open to all with an interest in progressing disability issues in defence. Consultation activities to date include addressing systemic issues with assistive technology and assisting the Chief Information Officer Group with mechanisms to access the ICT help desk.

Defence also supports the employment of people with intellectual disabilities through a contract with Koomarri. Koomarri provide business services such as: mail outs, conference packs, bulk photocopying and collation. This initiative provides meaningful work for people with a disability in a mainstream workplace.

Another initiative of which I am very proud is the ADF Paralympic Sports Program and the ADF Paralympic Sports Association. The ADF Paralympic Program is a new Joint Health Command program providing high level rehabilitation and support services as well as adaptive sport for members who have acquired a disability through battle wounds, injuries or disease. This program supports all serving ADF members with acquired disability to adopt an active lifestyle, regain their physical fitness and participate in adaptive sport right through to elite paralympic sport. ADF paralympic sports program activities are considered to be an extension of the member's physical and psychological rehabilitation. We deliver these services through a strategic partnership with the Australian paralympic committee, giving us access to subject matter expertise and elite coaching services throughout Australia.

The ADF paralympic sports program aims to assist severely injured ADF members regain and maximise their functional independence by:

- facilitating and supporting the attainment of physical fitness and an active lifestyle by conducting high performance camps and participating in sport;
- assisting members to meet the physical fitness requirements of the ADF policy on physical fitness, and other single service requirements;
- the development and distribution of support and information resources to support severely injured members and their families;
- delivering of the mates mentoring program which enables suitable current and former ADF members to mentor colleagues with similar injuries and assist them along their rehabilitation path;
- providing the mechanism for networking amongst ADF members with an acquired disability; and
- the provision of adaptive sport pathways.

The development of ADF Adaptive Sport Policy and the ADF Paralympic Sports Association provides mutual support to the ADF Paralympic Sports Program and this enables the ADF Paralympic Sports Team to gain access to greater funding through external sources in the form of sponsorship and donations.

As an example of this work we recently sent eight ADF members with adaptive disabilities to participate in the USA Marine Corps wounded warrior trials in California. Attendance at these trials is restricted to ADF members who have been seriously wounded, injured or ill and as a consequence of their injuries satisfies the classification criteria for participation in an adaptive or paralympic sport. Over three hundred wounded and ill marines, veterans and allies competed. Our team combined with the Allies and the ADF members won nineteen medals (fourteen gold, three silver and two bronze) representing the highest contribution to the Allies tally.

Another activity, Exercise Wounded Warrior 2012 was a Canadian Force sponsored activity to which we sent three personnel this year to participate in a veterans' learn to ski festival at Mount Washington Alpine Resort, Vancouver Island in British Columbia. These activities are characterised by the Defence spirit of equity and diversity and a fair go for all, regardless of disability.

Previously members who did not meet the medical fitness deployment requirements were medically discharged. Today we have lengthy rehabilitation programs that allow personnel who wish to remain in service whilst we rehabilitate them to their previous job, a new trade or prepare them for civilian life. Adaptive sports play a significant role in encouraging and lifting the esteem of our most seriously wounded, injured or ill.

All organisations experience episodes of behaviour which are considered unacceptable and it is not possible to completely eradicate these behaviours. What a learning organisation does is respond to and address these unacceptable behaviour issues.

Tonight it is not my intent to pass specific comment on the recent ADFA Skype incident issue or the ensuing reviews into Defence Force culture such as the DLA Piper Review into unacceptable behaviour. What I will say as a consequence of these reviews the CDF and Secretary have committed Defence to a pathway for change strategy that commits us to being our best on all days, and in all ways. This strategy builds on Defence's collective strengths while recognising that there are some cultural changes that we must make if we are to continue to mature and evolve as an institution and as a community of professionals. That is a learning organisation. The reviews into Defence as an employer of women by Carmel McGregor, the Broderick Reviews into the treatment of women, and the review of ADF personal conduct all provide direction as to how the ADF and Defence can continue to evolve as a learning organisation. The ADF is building on the momentum of these reviews and past initiatives to break down remaining barriers to the full realisation of the goal for a diverse and innovative organisation and is proud to see and support a diversity of talent undertaking senior leadership roles.

At the start of my talk I indicated that I would come back to how I see my contribution provides value to the senior leadership of Defence. A personal example of this evolution occurred in my role as a Chief of Navy Senior Advisory Committee member. I had been briefed on an early version of a major initiative that had significant changes to one of our previously male dominated categories. In discussion I asked where there was any flexibility in how the course modules were to be administered which would facilitate flexible entry, for example, for members coming back off maternity leave. This suggestion was not initially thought to be of significant merit by the staff developing the program. However twelve months later when the final implementation program was briefed the flexibility of the modular approach to suit female members was presented as a triumph. The importance of this issue is not that I made the suggestion but that after initial dismissal the idea was taken on board and then introduced as a positive workplace initiative that had been adopted as their own.

It may also be of interest to you that come the end of this year I will be supported by three female One Stars as the Director Generals of Navy, Army and Air Force Health. Commodore Liz Rush Brook, Air Commodore Tracy Smart, and the soon to be Brigadier Georgina Whelan. Each of these women has been promoted because of their competence and experience. But it is also interesting that now in the ADF health world at least, our male counterparts are suggesting that perhaps there should be positive male discrimination with respect to promotion and to ensure gender equality!

In closing tonight we should all remember the 3,300 ADF personnel deployed on eleven operations in support of our nation – men and women whose dedication and courage and commitment to our nation is unquestioned and where their background, religious or personal beliefs are of no relevance. I do believe Defence and the ADF is a learning organisation that values diversity and continues to strive for improvement every day and I hope that I have provided some evidence tonight that this is the case.

Thank you.

Ends.