

**Address to the Order of Australia Association – ACT
Ngunnawal Theatre, R1 Russell
1730-1900, 21 April 2022**

~30 minutes

Ready Now and Future Ready: the Australian Army in Service of the Nation

Introduction

Before I begin, I wish to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather here this evening.

I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

I would also like to pay my respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have contributed to the defence of Australia in times of both peace and war.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for being here.

A special thanks to the chair, MAJGEN Michael Crane (ret'd), for his leadership of the Order of Australia Association, and the many other members who contribute in their own unique ways.

It is a privilege for me to be delivering this ADF oration to this audience, all of whom have been recognised for a deep and abiding commitment to serving our nation.

It's what brings us together and unifies our rich and diverse backgrounds, professions and perspectives.

Given my role as the Chief of Army, I wish to share with you my perspectives on the Australian Army and discuss some of the important changes underway within our organisation.

These changes ensure we continue to serve our nation in the best way.

We will observe Anzac Day in just a few days' time, and people all around the country, and indeed around the world, will pause to recognise the sacrifices made in the service of the nation.

It matters because the Australian Army is a national institution and our story is an important part of Australia's story.

We are and always have been an Army for the Nation, and an Army in the Community.

And we live in a time where the character of warfare is changing rapidly – a rate perhaps faster than ever experienced before.

This is what we call **Accelerated Warfare**.

The geo-political uncertainty in our region, the strategic shock that came with the war in Ukraine, and the ongoing and escalating impacts of changes to our climate all point to the fact we are living this narrative now.

Our Army is being asked to do more things in more places, more of the time, as demonstrated by events over the past two years.

Our Army Reserve was called out for the first time in its history during the devastating bushfires of 2019-20.

Within a week, about 2,500 Army Reservists were assigned to Operation Bushfire Assist from across the country.

They were supported by 1,000 full-time people from across Army to provide capability and capacity to support State authorities and local communities.

We then had many thousands of people from across Army assisting the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In August last year, our soldiers were involved in the evacuation of civilians from the dangerous and deteriorating situation in Kabul.

They then deployed at short notice to Solomon Islands in December to help restore calm after civil unrest.

In January, they deployed to Tonga to help the recovery in the aftermath of the underwater volcanic eruption.

Recently, 5,000 Army personnel helped the people of Queensland and northern New South Wales affected by floods.

Lismore Readout

Several weeks ago I visited flood-ravaged Lismore and the surrounding area.

Our people were working closely with state and emergency services in arduous conditions, initially saving lives, and then helping others get back on their feet.

Like they did with fires and COVID support, their presence gave confidence to flood affected residents, and reassured many that they were not alone, and that all efforts were in place to help them.

This highlights one aspect of our Army responding to the impacts of climate change – a demand we can expect to increase over time, here and in our region.

We bring great capability and needed capacity to these urgent domestic crises, and our people derive great satisfaction being in the community, working with others and helping others - serving the nation.

But, given the strategic uncertainty, we must also remain focused on what it is that only an Army can do.

As part of the joint force we must be able to confidently provide credible land power options for government.

As part of the ADF we must be prepared to conduct high-end warfighting.

And this requirement is certainly more urgent, more complex, and more serious than it has been for a long time.

Army is responding to these demands of Accelerated Warfare by being an Army in Motion – a philosophy and a framework that allows us to be ready now, while constantly evolving and adapting our capabilities, workforce, training systems, organisational structures and command and control to ensure we are future ready.

Strategic Environment, Ukraine and Land Power

After an extended period of sustained commitment to the Iraq and Afghanistan theatres, our focus has returned to the Indo-Pacific region.

This is our neighbourhood, and it's where all elements of power, geopolitics, technology, and populations are accelerating and converging.

In response, there have been some important adjustments to Australian defence policy, with government identifying three strategic objectives.

To shape Australia's strategic environment.

To deter actions against Australia's interests;

And to respond with credible military force, when required.

Under this guidance, Land Power – which Army provides – plays a critical role.

As much as there is plenty of air and sea in the Indo-Pacific, there is also substantial land.

Land is where the people live, indeed over half the world's population live in this region, and it is densely populated and complex.

And controlling the land, or indeed helping control the sea or air from the land, is a critical element of the operational art for the Defence of Australia and our national interests.

Presence, persistence, and staying power are all critical elements of what land forces can provide.

The ADF's emerging concepts, and the capabilities that Army is acquiring as part of a joint force, are focused on these demands and providing more options for Government.

Whilst not in our region, the current war in **Ukraine** has shown many things.

It has shown that shaping and deterrence can fail, that assumptions can be wrong, and that events can take on a life of their own.

It shows that while the character of warfare may have changed, its nature has not.

That war is fundamentally a human endeavour.

And it has reinforced the utility and centrality of land power in modern conflict.

Indeed being strong and capable in **all domains** – land, maritime, air and space and cyber – is critical.

And when fully integrated and employed effectively, **land power** is a substantial force multiplier to generate military power, and national power.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was initially characterised by tactical errors, poor planning and coordination, ill-discipline, and an apparent inability to follow basic military procedures.

It demonstrated a failure to apply a combined arms approach, resulting in the destruction of significant numbers of out-dated military equipment - much of it through the use of armed drones and modern anti-armour missiles.

But warfare is also a story of innovation, adaptation, logistics and endurance.

Now, a more organised Russian offensive is already showing they have adapted and are applying a more synchronised combined arms approach to devastating effect in the Donbas region.

Australia has recognised the value of the combined arms approach since 1918, when Lieutenant General Sir John Monash, commander of the Australian Corps, demonstrated its effectiveness on the Western Front.

It has remained a core principle of professional militaries ever since.

But combined arms can only be fully effective when we have modern capabilities.

And this is why investment in the combined arms fighting system is so important to our Army.

The other thing we are observing in Ukraine is the value of **partnerships**.

Australia and many other like-minded nations continue to rally in support of Ukraine, where those, who in the midst of battle, fighting for their lives and sovereignty, are seeking to reinforce their land power.

The gifting of lethal and non-lethal assistance to Ukraine by Australia has been warmly received as they continue to confront the relentless offensive by Russian forces.

Partnerships – Shape

In our region, relationships between people matter. Shared interests matter.

As part of our Defence strategy, our Army engages in training with other armed forces, provides presence and builds capacity in our region through our international engagement program.

We do this to build strong relationships and to play an active role in helping to shape the region's stability and sovereignty.

Strengthening alliances and partnerships in our region is a critical element of our defence strategy to shape, deter and respond.

Over recent years, the depth, scale and sophistication of the engagements with our partners has evolved significantly.

Notwithstanding the limitations of physical engagement through the COVID-19 pandemic, relationships have been strengthened and we are rapidly returning to training and exercise activities, in bilateral and multilateral frameworks.

Recent visits to meet with my counterparts in India, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Singapore have emphasised the shared sense of commitment to enhancing exercises by increasing complexity and broadening the scope of engagement.

This week I was privileged to host my counterpart from New Zealand.

A timely visit during this lead up to Anzac Day, and one long delayed by COVID-19.

But it was a visit that reinforced the enduring and deep bond we simply know and respect as ANZAC.

We both understand the value of this unique relationship to help ensure security and enhance prosperity, and partner with friends and allies.

In the Southwest Pacific, the Australian Army's close ties with the Defence Forces of Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga is steadfast and continues to strengthen.

Indeed, I was privileged to be at the change of command parade of the Chief of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force in March, and will be

back in Port Moresby to meet with Major General Goina again next week.

Partnerships cannot ever be taken for granted.

Sometimes they are contested. Therefore, they require constant effort.

We have seen this unfold in Solomon Islands, where our respective national interests may be starting to diverge.

Australia is as committed as ever to our established and valued partnerships, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) remains central to engaging with our partners across the region.

I will share that I am very pleased that Indonesia and Australia now have exchange instructors in our respective officer academies, and for the first time this year there are two Indonesian officer cadets at RMC Duntroon.

Our alliance and defence relationship with the United States remains vital to our defence policy.

The AUSMIN discussions held in Washington DC last year cemented our Alliances' firm focus on the Indo-Pacific region – committing Australia and the United States to the advancements in defence cooperation.

They build on existing force posture initiatives that have been in place for more than a decade, notably demonstrated by the US Marine Rotational Force in Darwin, and last month hosted the commander of the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC), General Charles Flynn.

And notably last week I was pleased to host the Commandant of the United States Marine Corps here before he went on to Darwin.

These initiatives have been further enhanced with **AUKUS**, which will significantly deepen cooperation on a range of emerging security and defence capabilities, benefiting all domains.

We succeed when we collaborate with others. And this collaboration extends beyond just the partnership we share with our allies and friends,

to include focused collaboration with industry, academia and research institutes.

These help us to think bigger than ourselves, learn from the ideas and practice of others, and improve our resilience.

Two great examples are our strategic partnerships with AIS and BHP, themselves also impressive national institutions.

The partnership with AIS focuses on improving human performance across both organisations.

This is being achieved through coaching and mentoring opportunities as well as the sharing of knowledge and experiences in human performance optimisation and injury prevention.

With BHP, our focus is on people with the main objective being the increase of human capacity across both organisations.

We are doing this through collaboration in training, workforce analysis, leadership and advanced technology.

In addition, across the Defence enterprise, our **partnerships with defence industry** are improving our land power manufacturing base and Australia's supply chain resilience.

From armoured vehicles and self-propelled howitzers through to unmanned aerial systems and numerous micro, small and medium enterprises who are critical to our innovation engine.

By building and maintaining effective partnerships across the board, we ensure we are more than the sum of our parts.

With them, we are a stronger and more capable force, building increased capacity and the ability to scale to better meet current challenges and simultaneously prepare for the future.

Army in Motion and the Army Objective Force

There is an enormous amount of transformation happening in the Australian Army.

Extensive capability investments announced by government will dramatically improve our ability to generate land power options for the joint force.

Contributions of both soft and hard power.

This will give the Australian Army greater operational and strategic flexibility and the means to respond to strategic uncertainty.

A more versatile and credible combat force that is more potent and connected is increasingly becoming a reality for us.

Based on what is approved and what we anticipate from the 2020 Force Structure Plan, we expect to field an entirely new combined arms capability within the next five years.

These include the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle, Infantry Fighting Vehicles, a new main battle tank, combat engineer vehicles, Apache and Blackhawk helicopters, amphibious and littoral manoeuvre capabilities as well as air defence systems, self-propelled howitzers and, potentially, long range fires.

We are building these capabilities to ensure our land forces and special operations forces can operate in our region at long-range and up-close, across all domains, whether they be on land, at sea, in the air, or in cyber and space.

We are also harnessing new and emerging technologies, which include Significant investment in Robotics and Autonomous Systems and Unmanned Aerial Systems.

The incredible work happening in Robotics and Autonomous Systems is leading edge, propelling us to a near-term future of enhanced Human-Machine teaming.

For a small army such as ours, Robotics and Autonomous Systems, as well as Artificial Intelligence, help us generate scale, mass, effect and reach across all domains.

It is an essential force multiplier and mitigates risk.

Strengthening our organisational structures and command and control arrangements is also fundamental to realising the potential of these new capabilities.

Within the last year, Army has adopted new command and control arrangements across Aviation, Health, Special Operations and our 2nd Division – which includes our 13th Brigade in Western Australia.

We are transforming to keep pace with the changing character of warfare.

But technology and materiel on its own does not guarantee mission success.

It's the human element that brings the strength to land power.

It's our people, our leaders and our culture that gives us our advantage.

This gets us to the importance of our **people** in the Australian Army, whose dedication and professionalism is at the centre of land power.

People

Our emphasis on people and positive culture has significantly evolved.

We are guided by our motto of “Serving the Nation”, and our shared values of Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity and Excellence.

Today, 45,000 people serve in the Australian Army.

Approximately 30,000 of them serve full-time, and 15,000 part-time.

Most significantly, we see ourselves as **One Army**, and with a much improved ability to comfortably move between full or part time service generating needed flexibility and capacity.

This Total Workforce System is delivering real benefits.

Nearly 7,000 women serve in our Army today – which represents a 50 per cent increase in the past decade

Around 1,700 of our people identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and our programs and pathways are strengthening every day.

Our Australian Army Cadets, our amazing youth development program that has more than 18,000 cadets and some 2,000 adult volunteer staff all around the country.

It is another Army in the Community program I am very proud of.

But to be Future Ready, we must transform the means and ways Army generates and maintains its people to deliver land power.

Our workforce is becoming increasingly specialised and technical, with Science Technologies Engineering and Maths being in high demand.

Our Future Ready Workforce plan recognises the enduring challenges in recruiting and retention of workforce and embraces a range of initiatives inherent within it.

We must offer an Army Value Proposition that is competitive within the Australian labour market by ensuring a sense of purpose, aligned values, leadership, world class training, and a satisfying career that offers professional development, job flexibility and family support.

We must continue to embrace a culture of innovation, and one way we are doing this is through the introduction of innovation hubs in each state as part of our Makerspace Program.

We recognise our people are our greatest asset and the key to unlocking our potential.

It's our people who are adaptive, innovative and pragmatic; they get platforms and technology to work (and keep working) in arduous, complex and contested land environments.

Good culture and leadership is central to this, ensuring our people realise their potential and strengthening traits that are fundamental to who we are as a professional volunteer force.

We call it **Good Soldiering**, which is our shared values, attitudes and beliefs that shape how we operate, adapt and succeed.

It must be who we are.

When Australians volunteer to serve the nation, we owe them the resilience, teamwork and leadership attributes needed to succeed in the brutal reality of modern war.

Our soldiers must have strength of character, which is reflected in our ability to make sound ethical and moral decisions and be accountable.

To do the right thing, and sustain trust in each other and cohesion in our teams.

We must always understand our unique responsibility to apply controlled lethal force when required, a responsibility which demands physical, moral and intellectual standards of the highest order.

We know what happens when we don't get this right, and I specifically refer to the Inspector General ADF's **Afghanistan inquiry** (also known as the Brereton Report).

These findings were confronting for me, and all Australians, as they do not accord with who we are as an Australian Army and as a national institution.

But the Brereton report cannot diminish the totality of our 20 year commitment to the war in Afghanistan.

It is important that we acknowledge that the vast majority of our people did an outstanding job during that dangerous and difficult mission.

We cannot change the past.

We can only recognise it, learn from its confronting and painful lessons, and channel these into our doctrine and organisational approach to ensure they will never happen again.

This is our commitment to strengthening our profession, and our approach to effective command and leadership.

This ensures we develop the very best leaders for the Army to lead our institution into the demanding future.

I am pleased that we have established the Centre for Australian Army Leadership in 2019 to enhance our approach to meet both contemporary and anticipated needs.

Here is where we equip, empower and enable our junior leadership, who are closest to our troops, and closest to the problems we are trying to solve.

This includes giving them the foundation for how to lead teams of specialists and generalists through to how we ethically team with Robotic and Autonomous Systems and machines that think in nanoseconds.

Army's leadership model resonates with the Australian culture of authenticity, competence, diligence and mateship, and is founded on strength of character and shared values.

Exemplary character allows for trust and unlocks potential in our people, and ensures our leaders are competent and professional.

From inspiring people to conduct extraordinary and selfless acts in the presence of the enemy, to ensuring the right culture and climate is maintained in barracks.

Army's leaders must create environments where we trial new things, learn quickly from failure in a safe environment, and share lessons with others.

They must understand and use risk to their advantage.

The future demands it of us if we are to succeed.

Conclusion

So as we approach Anzac Day and the end of my tenure, I reflect on the incredible men and women who serve, have served, and who will serve in the future.

My obligation has been to ensure we provide the best lived experience to optimise their capability, and set them up for success in what will be an increasingly demanding future.

We are doing that.

We are Ready Now and we are on a path to being Future Ready.

We are evolving our structures and our thinking, embracing emerging capabilities and technologies, and placing people firmly at the centre of everything that we do.

What I know is our people are amazing, inspiring, motivated, exceptionally clever and adaptive and when well led, never let you down.

I am proud of them, thankful to our families and to those who support and sustain us all, and humbled to serve with them.

Thank you.