



# TPI *News*



TPI Front Office

Gaynor Tilley receiving the  
TPI Meritorious Award

TPI House

Wayne Norton winner of the  
\$100 Monthly Meeting Prize



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"I tell you they have not died,  
They live and breathe with you,  
They walk here now at your side,  
They tell you things that are true."

#### NAVY

M.K. Fisher

#### ARMY

L. Walker

B.P. Thompson

T.M. Kendle

S.J. Norton

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OH WHAT A FEELING





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# President's Report

By Leon Eddy OAM

Greetings members welcome to 2021.

I've been holding my tongue since last November, but I must defend our diggers from the public assault they have suffered since the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Afghanistan Inquiry was made public.

This inquiry was just that, an internal inquiry of the Australian Defence Force into itself. It was not a legal proceeding as generally known in Australian legal sense. I caution against blindly accepting the findings of compelled answers. People who have answers demanded of them have often given answers that they believe the inquisitor wants to hear or at least answers that support the premise behind leading questions. The people answering the inquiry were under incredible pressure to conform with rigid military protocols. This was not a "fair trial" as the public know it.

I don't believe anybody should comment until there has been a fair trial held. This includes the laws of evidence being observed. The accused are entitled to legal representation. The accused are entitled to the presumption of innocence until it is proved otherwise. The accused are entitled to question the evidence of witnesses. The accused are entitled to be protected from hearsay.

The mooted withdrawal of gallantry awards by Senior ADF officers and politicians denies the accused a fair trial. It is a presumption of guilt before a fair hearing. People of their standing should know better than to make such comments and thereby influence any future hearing. Are the acts of gallantry that the decorations were awarded for any less brave because of the alleged illegal acts?

These are people who defend Australia, that is what they sign on to do. They put themselves in harm's way to protect you. Be careful if you repeatedly knock them because they may decide not to defend you the next time you need them to. The people who defend you suffer incredible moral damage. They regret actions that they were forced to do in your name. They regret those actions for the rest of their life. They suffer guilt you cannot imagine. But you don't want to imagine it, do you? You are safe in your little "holier-than-thou" bubble.

You display a complete lack of understanding when you say, "None of these incidents occurred in the "heat of battle". What heat of battle? Don't you understand there is no battlefield in Afghanistan at the moment, as there was none in Vietnam? Ambushes and contacts happen anywhere, and anytime, there is also no previously known start time. You are on edge and alert 24/7, and you can bet that that causes stress and mental anguish. We have recorded incidents when Afghan soldiers that we were training turned on us and murdered our troops. Many of the Vietnamese nationals embedded with Australian troops in the 1960s were not trusted and very suspect. The soldier can trust no one but his comrades. In Afghanistan, as in Vietnam, everybody but your mates is your enemy, at all times.

Stop abrogating your responsibility. You are just as responsible for any proven illegal deaths as are your soldiers. There was not a referendum held on Australia sending troops to Afghanistan. The politicians, in their arrogance, decided to do that. The politicians decided to conscript people to fight in Vietnam, there was no referendum on that. No politician can say "We didn't do that, we were not in power then", all politicians sit in the parliament, it is their duty to debate on sending troops into harm's way. If the decision is to send troops to war, it is a parliamentary decision and therefore is the responsibility of all politicians. It is about time Australia's politicians owned their responsibilities and recognised that they are responsible for any illegal actions done in their name. They should have a sympathetic understanding and appreciation of their soldiers.

Support your diggers, don't crucify them. Cheers for now, **Leon**



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# Editorial

.....J.F GENOVESE RFD



Welcome Back all,

May this be a better year than that of the last. Let's pause for a moment and think of absent friends. We certainly had some challenges during the past twelve months and whilst there appears light at the end of this COVID tunnel, I do hope you will continue to be vigilant regarding your health.

I mentioned late last year that I can see a bright future for our association. The encouraging signs are already evident in the membership support for its Committee of Management. In the 20 odd years of my membership, I cannot recall any management team that was elected unopposed; thank you all for the confidence, trust and support you have given the committee.

I foresee progress in our digital world. As the editor, communications is foremost in my mind. It is important that as an organisation we deliver the information most important to the TPI community. Whilst the TPI News has been an important vehicle in communication it will not be too long before it will be surpassed by digital means.

In the natural world of evolution, as our old veterans of WWII, Korea, Malaya and indeed Vietnam pass on to the great beyond, the print news will fade away concurrently with us; we must change with time lest time will leave us behind.

On communications or more directly on the content within the TPI News. Over this past COVID Year, you will have noticed several articles on geopolitical subjects or Opinion-Editorials (Opeds) about Australia's Area of Interest (AOI). The source is from Defence Connect an authoritative Online media subscription written by several Defence Specialists.

I believe that such information is of interest to the ex-service community of which we form part. I do hope that you enjoy the discussions papers regarding Australia's geopolitical position and the manner we respond to challenges we face given our strong ties to the U.S.A. and our allies in the Asia-Pacific AOI versus our seeming dependence on our trade with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

It is obvious and understandable that the PRC is seeking to be not only a regional power but is flexing itself to be a world power to challenge the supremacy of the U.S.A. We as a nation are caught in the middle of this power struggle. A debate, if not yet begun, will need to be had. The people need to know how the government will navigate the economic need and our defence requirements in the event of a conflict.

Whilst there is no doubt in my mind where we should place our trust in such circumstances, not being an expert in politics or economics, it would help me to understand how the nation plans to overcome this huge hurdle. I dare say many people would be more comfortable with knowledge.

No wonder I find these articles thought-provoking, and as you will have noticed that in most of the Opeds there is an invitation to write to the author with your view on the topic. I encourage you all to do so by becoming involved in the conversation.

**Ed.**

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# TPI Noticeboard

## NEW MEMBERS

### Navy

M. Regan, S.E. Cahill

### Army

G.M. Gluche, I.C. Pennington, M.A. Owen, N.R. Irvine, J.E. Chard

**Vale**  
Les Walker



*By Leon Eddy OAM*

It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of Les Walker. Les died at his home on Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2020.

Les joined this Association in 1999 and almost immediately volunteered to work for his fellow Veterans as a Committeeman. He remained on the Committee until March last year when forced to resign because his health had failed. Twenty years on the Committee. He served as our Deputy Secretary from 2007 until 2011 and subsequently Secretary until 2017.

**That is ten years running the show.**

In 2008 the members granted him Life Member status in recognition of his great service.

I first met Les when serving together in 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment on Active Service. We met again when both of our families lived in Darwin and we had some great times together. Very fond memories.

When I joined the Association in 2000, I was not in a good place mentally, but Les recognised that and guided me onto the road of life. Les was very good at unobtrusively putting Diggers back on track. He was the very caring first contact between this Association and many damaged Diggers.

Les' funeral had the numbers of attendees restricted due to Covid but still had a good representation of his TPI mates. We said our goodbyes at the November General Meeting by raising a glass to a fallen digger, a great man and a dear friend.

So, Goodbye my friend, we shall all miss you.



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**OH WHAT A FEELING**

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# Federation President's Report...

By Pat McCabe OAM



Happy New Year to you and your families and I hope this year is better for you all than last year was for so many. Unfortunately, over the last number of months, there have been numerous scurrilous emails circulated to many, many Veterans and their families, along with many politicians and DVA staff, that have attempted to bring the TPI Federation, as well as your Executive and Board of Directors, into disrepute. This issue needs to now be addressed. The statements in these emails are based on ill-informed information, data and unfounded preconceptions – that are not factual. This is most unfortunate and disappointing as a united Veteran community is far more beneficial to their fellow Veterans than this type of unproductive and destructive commentary.

The TPI Federation welcomes, and responds, to all constructive, and courteous, comments/suggestions from all TPI State/Territory Associations and their Members. The TPI Federation has also invited all TPI Association's Members to make submissions to represent their views/suggestions at any time. This can be made either directly with your State/Territory Association or directly to the contact details that reside at the end of this report.

It should be noted that all Veterans are entitled to their personal points of view, even if they differ from others, and all that is asked is that all courtesies be applied in your representations/submissions to everyone, including the TPI Federation and the Board of Directors. This courtesy will, in turn, be reciprocated. A well-constructed submission is more beneficial to all your fellow Veterans!

It is most regrettable, that on the 4th August 2020, TPI Victoria felt it necessary to resign from the TPI Federation. Their Committee's inopportune decision disenfranchised their many Members from enabling the TPI Federation to continue to facilitate their issues at a national level. It is hoped that this can be restored in the very near future.

The TPI Federation also invites all TPI/SRs to be a Member of any one of the State/Territory Associations. Remember, it is not essential for any TPI/SR to belong to the State/Territory Association where you reside.

With the assistance of the Federation Directors, the Federation has been successful in the advocacy, on your behalf, of the many issues and they have been directed to many politicians over the last few years. Recently, together with the Partners of Veterans Association (PVA), a submission was presented to the DVA Minister on the Productivity Commission recommendation that the Gold Card should be removed. The TPI Federation and PVA (along with many other Veterans and their families) requested that this recommendation be rejected. Thankfully, it was announced at the last Federal Budget that this recommendation will no longer be considered.

The current list of issues that the TPI Federation's Directors are advocating for, includes the Productivity Commission's recommendation to remove the option for the MRCA, TPI equivalent, the SRDP. The Veterans option to select the SRDP was a vital option and a major issue that our past-President, Blue Ryan, fought hard for in the years ~1998-2004. At the end of that fight, the option for the younger Veterans to select the safety net of the SRDP has since been available to them.

***Continued on Page 7***



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***Continued from Page 6***

This will be a major issue for this year, in the hope that the younger Veterans entitlements are not diminished as have many other entitlements and compensation benefits under all three of the Veterans' Acts.

The TPI Federation has had meetings with many, many politicians, including the Prime Minister. The meeting with the Prime Minister in March 2019 ultimately initiated the 'Independent Review into the TPI Payment', by Mr David Tune AO PSM and, even though it did not achieve the result we wanted, it was another step in the process of achieving our aims for a fair and equitable 'economic loss' compensation, which is currently 61.9% of the minimum wage. The work that the TPI Federation Board accomplishes for all TPI/SR State/Territory Association's Members on many issues is extremely vast and will be ongoing into the near future.

The Hearing Aid issue is one such issue and it is not going away. DVA and the Government have still not accepted their responsibilities in the provision of the 'clinically' needed compensation hearing aids.

The Department of Health Hearing Services Program Review has delivered interim advice to Government (and can be found at <https://bit.ly/39TFNWJ>) that did not mention Veterans once or take into account the submission made to them by the TPI Federation. The Government has continued to ignore the Veterans additional compensable needs for too long. If you are having difficulties with your hearing provider please advise the TPI Federation at the contact details below.

The TPI Federation is holding its annual March Congress from the 17th to the 19th March 2021. Due to the continuing COVID uncertainties, this Congress will be both face-to-face, in Canberra for those who can travel, and also via Zoom for those who cannot. Speak to your local State/Territory Association if you wish to attend as an Observer.

The TPI Federation is also holding the annual Executive election this year. The alternate elections are on even-numbered years for the National Secretary and odd-numbered years for the National President. This year the election will be for the TPI Federation's National President's position. As usual, I invite all financial State/Territory Association's, who are members of the TPI Federation, to advise their Members of the procedure to submit an election nomination form under Section 16 of the TPI Federation Constitution. Nominations must be received by the Returning Officer no later than 17th August 2021.

This year I again invite any TPI/SR DVA Veteran or their family to contact your State/Territory Office, or myself, should you have any issue of concern to you.



## WELFARE VISITS

From time to time, the Association is made aware of members, or other veterans in who need a social visit. If you would like to help, please call me direct, Mob: 0417843262 or email: [mcur3581@bigpond.net.au](mailto:mcur3581@bigpond.net.au)

Some people are unable to leave home for various reasons, in such cases, we help we do our best to help. This may involve a personal visit or arrange for assistance. We not only attend hospitals, Aged Care Facilities and often visit members at home. We cover Greater Adelaide and would like to increase our service in regional South Australia.

As you know our hospital visits had been placed on hold given the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we can visit members if we are advised that there is a member in need.

For other welfare items such as home care support, aged care decisions etc, please check the Welfare section on the Web site. If additional help needed, feel free to call.

**Communication with DVA:** As a result of COVID precautions, all State offices are still closed. We, therefore, need to accept delays with our written/emailed communication to them.

**DVA policy matters:** Trevor Parrott has been providing an excellent series of monthly presentations on DVA and Aged Care policy, process & entitlement matters. Whilst highlighting the value that these continue to be, and underlining another benefit of members attending these monthly meetings, if you have or cannot attend, the content of the presentation can be found on the TPI Website.

## FALLS AND THEIR PREVENTION

Statistics: (See a full list of statistics on the Web site)

- In 2019, 24,340 people were admitted to SA Public hospitals after a fall
- 70% were over 65 ....this is us!
- The number was 15 time greater than the number of admissions due to motor vehicle accidents....scary!

## FOR YOUR SAFETY AT HOME

- Organize an Occupational Therapist (O/T) visit to assess fall hazards in the home.  
**This is a must!**
- Check your need for a DVA supplied safety alert
- For the home, acquire non-slip socks, and use appropriate footwear when outside.
- Remove clutter from around your home.
- **DO NOT** perform jobs at home that require your use of a ladder.

## AFTER-HOURS WELFARE CONTACT

The recorded Association Answering service has the after-hours number to call for help or support. Additionally, the email address will get a quick response.

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# On the revocation of Awards/Medals

By Bob Buick

I am receiving many emails about this revocation of the Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC) to the Afghanistan veterans over these alleged atrocities that will be years from any legal action and write to I hope to explain what is most likely to happen.

The best example and precedence are Terry Lewis who what stripped of his Knighthood and two awards in regards to his service, a Google search for his biography will reveal the details.

Military personnel are awarded/entitled to:

1. Campaign medal for service in theatres and or location, or with recognised agencies like the UN
2. Service medals the Distinguished and Conspicuous Service group.
3. Gallantry medals – and
4. Unit awards

Campaign medals are not for service or gallantry and unlikely to be revoked.

Service awards can be revoked as applied to Terry Lewis. For example, I knew a Transport Sergeant awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) for his dedication to his job before Vietnam, then later revoked ( at a Courts Marshal) for black marketing in Vietnam.

Gallantry awards would I believe be exempt from revocation due to the criteria for that award.

Unit Citations are awarded to units, and those listed in perpetuity wear the emblem forever. I would suggest if an individual or group of individuals are convicted of crimes against the criteria and values to that award, and I am addressing the MUC in particular. They could be removed from the list of awardees. This will not affect that remainder, as Brereton and Campbell are spruiking. I doubt if either has much knowledge of Honours and Awards anyway.

Now, the above is my understanding of H&A for the ADF based on many years working with Harry Smith in regards to H&A for D Company 6RAR and Long Tan. It was I who suggested the Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) for the company during a tribunal review I attended in Canberra fifteen/twenty years on the basis that all deserved recognition for the individual gallantry they displayed during the battle. The UCG is like the US Presidential Citation and equivalent to each being awarded the Star for Gallantry and the US the Distinguished Service Cross.

As I am writing this from memories and my understanding on this matter, I am open to corrections or suggestions to where I have strayed

Regards

Bob Buick  
DE Coy 6RAR  
Vietnam 1966-7



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# Neither the U.S. nor China responsible for our security, we are.

By Stephen Kuper



**Many commentators and analysts have sought to blame the disruptive Trump administration, or the increasingly provocative actions of Beijing, for the declining level of Australia's security in the region. However, neither the US nor China is to blame, we are, and now the chickens are coming home to roost.**

At the end of the Cold War, Australia like much of the victorious, US-led "free world" bought into two comforting myths, first the victory of the US meant the "end of history" and the era of great power competition had forever been relegated to the pages of antiquity, and, as China continues to grow, it will shake off authoritarianism and become more liberal.

Far from Francis Fukuyama's promise of the "end of history", across the globe the US-led liberal-democratic and capitalist economic, political and strategic order is under siege, driven by mounting waves of civil unrest, the impact of sustained economic stagnation across the West, concerns about climate change and the increasing geostrategic competition between the world's great powers.

Adding further fuel to the fire is the global and more localised impacts of COVID-19, which range from recognising the impact of vulnerable, global supply chains upon national security as many leading nations, long advocates of 'closer collaboration and economic integration', grasp at the lifeboats of the nation-state to secure their national interests.

Ironically, it is often these same nations and their respective media and strategic policy communities that have levelled intense, seemingly unrelenting criticism against the disruptive, bombastic US President, Donald Trump for acting in a similar way, promoting 'America First' policies – actively emphasising a return of US jobs and critically, a scaling back of US participation in costly, foreign conflicts.

This policy shift in Washington has seen myriad hostile responses from traditional 'allies' of the US, nations that have become dependent upon the overwhelming and unrivalled economic, political and strategic might of the US for their security, all of whom have seen such actions as an attack upon their "right" to live under what has become known as 'Pax Americana' or, the American Peace.

**Continued on Page 16**



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Warren Featherby visiting Dennis Taylor at Eldercare Woodcroft



Ray Lamming receiving the monthly meeting \$100 prize



TPI GOLF - Jerry Jonnek and Garry Johnson



TPI VIC Visitor Mr Gregory Petersen and  
TPI member (SA), Mr Mick Leckning OAM

### BELOW SOME MONTHLY MEETING ATTENDANCE WINNERS



Leon Eddy



Geoff Howard



Raynor Guse



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**DAWN SERVICE 0615 – 0700**

**BREAKFAST 0700– 0845**

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**BUS TRANSPORT FROM MARCH TO TPI HOUSE – 1130**

**NO LUNCH IS SUPPLIED – CLOSURE 1400 Hours.**

**COORDINATOR: Gary POPE**

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# 'The emerging front line': ADF must be battle-ready as China-Taiwan tensions flare-up

By: Charbel Kadib



**The recent escalation in tensions between Beijing and Taipei has underscored the need for ADF preparedness, with the threat of conflict more present than ever, ASPI executive director Peter Jennings observes.**

Since the turn of the year, Chinese warplanes have repeatedly entered Taiwan's south-western air defence verification zone (ADIZ), prompting fears of an imminent confrontation.

In response, the US Department of State condemned Beijing's military posturing and reaffirmed its support for Taiwanese independence.

"The United States notes with concern the pattern of ongoing PRC attempts to intimidate its neighbours, including Taiwan," a spokesperson from the State Department said.

"We urge Beijing to cease its military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan and instead engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected representatives."

The Biden administration stressed it would advance "shared prosperity, security and values" in the Indo-Pacific region, including a "deepening of ties with democratic Taiwan".

"The United States will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues, consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people on Taiwan," the spokesperson added.

## **PROMOTED CONTENT**

"The United States maintains its longstanding commitments as outlined in the Three Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances.

"We will continue to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defence capability."

The spokesperson concluded: "Our commitment to Taiwan is rock-solid and contributes to the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and within the region."

Beijing, however, was undeterred by the Biden administration's tough rhetoric, sending warplanes into Taiwan's ADIZ on three further occasions following public condemnation from the US.

According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's (ASPI) executive director, Peter Jennings, the spark up in tensions suggests that US President Joe Biden's first international crisis may be over the future of Taiwan.

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**Continued from page 14**

"Beijing has been positioning for this outcome for months by steadily increasing military pressure against Taipei," he writes.

Jennings believes Chinese President Xi Jinping is hoping to "exploit a window of opportunity" created by the COVID-19 pandemic and domestic instability in the US.

"The Chinese Communist Party's objective is to have Taiwan under its control by 2049, the centenary of the party's takeover in Beijing. Xi won't be around then, but in 2021 he has built a military already dominant in the Taiwan Strait and faces a temporarily weakened US focused on other priorities," he says. "Does Taiwan matter as much to Biden as cutting a paper deal with Beijing on climate? Xi intends to find out."

Jennings says President Xi is preparing the PLA for a confrontation with Taiwan and has built "nationalist enthusiasm" for a takeover. "Xi has nothing to lose. If, as is probable, the US stands firm with Taiwan, Xi can revert to the 2049 timetable," he adds.

"If Biden blinks, Xi might just commit a military blunder of globally disastrous proportions."

ASPI's executive director expects Beijing to continue testing Biden's resolve, hoping that the new administration would abandon the former president's Taiwan strategy.

"Thus far the Biden administration has looked prepared and like it is intending to continue Donald Trump's overt support of Taiwan and more active military role in the South China Sea," he says.

"China will keep pressing for ways to weaken US determination on the defence of Taiwan. Welcome to the new normal for Indo-Pacific security."

### **What this means for Australia**

Jennings goes on to criticise the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) failure to condemn China's recent invasions of Taiwan's ADIZ.

The ASI director urges DFAT to "hurry up" and respond appropriately to the sudden escalation in tensions.

"Whatever Biden does about Taiwan, he will expect Japan and Australia to be there. There is no exit strategy from our region," he writes.

Jennings welcomed Defence's recent commitment to investing \$1 billion in the early development of long-range anti-ship missiles, extended range surface-to-air missiles, advanced lightweight torpedoes and land strike capabilities.

As part of the investment, the nation's current and future submarine and surface fleets are set to be fitted with anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles with a range of approximately 370 kilometres, and maritime land strike missiles with a range of approximately 1,500 kilometres.

"This is an important and welcome development. It shows that Defence is hastening to add new range and hitting power to its arsenal as other countries, primarily China, do the same," Jennings observes.

Jennings notes that local production of long-range missiles would be essential in the event of a full-scale conflict, lauding Defence's commitment to identifying and developing joint-production options, most likely with the US, which he says "cements closer alliance co-operation" and "makes practical military sense for our forces".

The analyst also endorses Defence's decision to explore options for jointly developing new weapons including a sea-launched weapon able to hit land targets at ranges of up to 1,500 kilometres.

"We should look to develop the ability to fire weapons from many different types of platforms, drawing on shared technology and support systems," he observes.

"Could this even extend to the navy thinking about using the new long-range anti-ship missile just bought for the air force? Absolutely it should."

Jennings adds that Defence must now plan for the real military challenges it could face in the near future.

"It's possible that many Australians may be more comfortable thinking of their military handing out sweets to children in the relatively benign peacekeeping and stabilisation missions of the 1990s," he says.

"Those images were far from the whole story and they are even further from our strategic world today. Jennings concludes: "These latest military manoeuvres around Taiwan are, in fact, the emerging front line of Australia's defence."



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## Continued from Page 10

### Australia, in this instance, is no different.

While the nation's geographic isolation, encapsulated by the 'tyranny of distance', has provided Australia with a degree of protection from the major, epoch-defining and empire ending conflagrations of the 20th century, the economic, political, societal and strategic challenges of the 21st century hit far closer to home.

Nowhere is this more evident than across the Indo-Pacific as an emboldened Beijing continues to punish Australia for pursuing a global inquiry into the origins and China's handling of COVID-19, while also leveraging the comparatively diminished presence of the US military in the region to project power and intimidate both Japan and, critically, Taiwan.

Recognising the perfect storm of factors impacting Australia's economic, political and strategic predicament, Peter Hartcher in a piece for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, titled ['Trump and China force Australia to secure its defence closer to home'](#), details the problem with consistently deferring to what is described in psychology as an "external locus of control".

Hartcher explains the predicament Australia finds itself in: "When Australia entrusted its national survival to the United States decades ago, it wasn't counting on Donald Trump. Whoever wins the US presidential election next week, the US alliance remains Australia's strategic Plan A. But the election of the self-described 'very stable genius' four years ago has pointed up the danger inherent in betting the nation's existence on any one country.

"At the same time, Xi Jinping's China presents Australia with the stark reality that it confronts a big, hostile power that respects no country's sovereignty but its own. Together, these facts have pushed Australia to start work on a Plan B. What's the plan? To bring together as many other countries as possible to 'balance' against China's power."

### Prudent policymaking means accepting real responsibility for our security

Australia's relationship of dependence upon great powers has been the status quo and foundation of the nation's strategic policy since Federation, from the British Empire and the US following the Second World War, Australia has served as a loyal deputy, operating under the assumption of "I scratch your back, you scratch my back" that saw the nation drawn into costly engagements.

While the Commonwealth has moved to reassure both the Australian public and its alliances around the world with the announcement of the \$270 billion [2020 Defence Strategic Update](#) and supporting [2020 Defence Force Structure Plan](#).

Despite this new paradigm of "Shape, Deter, Respond", the evolving global and regional power trends mean that Australia's policymakers will need to do more in order to respond to the comparative decline of our primary security benefactor.

That is not to say that Australia should forgo its relationship and role within the Australia-US alliance, rather that the nation needs to be prepared for the eventuality that the US may be, at least temporarily, limited in its ability to directly support or provide the umbrella of tactical and strategic freedom the nation is used to and prepared to actively defend and promote its sovereignty.

However, Hartcher speaking to ANU emeritus professor Hugh White, explains, "Or, as ANU professor emeritus Hugh White put it, 'we no longer repose our trust in America alone, and if America fails us then we will look not to ourselves but to our Asian neighbours'.

"White is sceptical that Australia's Plan B – or its enhanced Plan A as the Defence Minister prefers it – can work as a credible military strategy to deter Beijing's domineering behaviour. Especially if Australia's own forces are inadequate."

As quoted by Hartcher, White writes in *Australian Foreign Affairs*, "In the world of power politics, how much help you can expect from an ally depends a lot on how much the ally can expect you to help them.

Again, this approach advocates a return to the tried and true method of deferring to an "external locus of control" and is reinforced by comments made by Defence Minister Linda Reynolds to Hartcher:

**"The Defence Minister, Linda Reynolds, prefers to call Australia's new strategy 'an enhanced Plan A'. Australia has nourished relationships with a wide range of Asia-Pacific countries for decades, she points out, so that's not new. But 'we are strengthening them in new ways'.**

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"We are shaping the region in favour of respect for sovereignty and the rules-based order – it's the most consequential realignment since World War II,' she tells me. 'We are actively, assertively working for stability in the region'.

"The plan is to put together what I've earlier described as 'a posse of other deputies and like-minded nations who want to keep the peace'. To which Paul Keating said: 'Good luck with that'."

It is important to recognise that in no way should Australia abandon important alliances and relationships with regional partners, particularly increasingly important economic and strategic partners throughout southeast Asia, rather we need to take more direct responsibility for our own economic, political and strategic security rather than continuing to as Hartcher states, engage in "learned helplessness".

### No reason to give up on the Aus-US relationship, but incentive to grow our role

The nation's approach to strategic policy continues to be heavily based upon the formalisation of the Defence of Australia (DoA) policy as identified in the 1986 Dobb report and then enshrined in the subsequent 1987 and 1994 Defence White Papers in particular, with tweaks made in every Defence White Paper to date.

This largely isolationist policy focused entirely on securing the sea-air gap as a strategic "buffer zone" for Australia, enabling the reorientation of Australia's strategic and broader defence industry posture, which now serves to leave the nation at critical crossroads as the region continues to rise.

While successive Australian governments have sought to evolve the Defence of Australia doctrine and the nation's critical strategic partnership with the US, the very premise of the doctrine continues to inform the foundation of Australia's strategic policy to this day.

This new geostrategic reality is best explained by [Paul Dobb](#) himself: "We are now in a period of unpredictable strategic transition in which the comfortable assumptions of the past are over. Australia's strategic outlook has continued to deteriorate and, for the first time since World War II, we face an increased prospect of threat from high-level military capabilities being introduced into our region."

To its credit, the government's new \$270 billion plan as identified in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update and the Force Structure Plan, unlike many others before it, puts its money where its mouth is. It articulates what the Prime Minister describes as budgetary certainty and supports the ambitious, 'big-ticket' defence acquisition and modernisation programs identified in the 2016 Defence White Paper.

Building on this, the new strategic plans and the associated force structure identify some drastic departures from previous doctrine, something Geoffrey Barker explains, "Particularly impressive is the clear alignment and logical consistency between the revised strategic appreciation and the planned 10-year, \$270 billion investment program, which includes long-range (possibly hypersonic) missiles, to improve the lethality of the Australian Defence Force."

It is also true to say that while the new policy identifies and responds to the "rapid deterioration in Australia's strategic environment" over the past decade or so, it fails to adequately adjust the size, shape and structure of the ADF accordingly – particularly as the US continues to flirt with isolationism and the qualitative advantages traditionally enjoyed by the US and its allies dwindle.

In recognising this now a brutally apparent reality, is the Defence of Australia doctrine, which abdicated Australia's forward presence in the region, enough to ensure that Australia's diverse array of economic, political and strategic interests are protected during a period of mounting geostrategic competition?

### Economic interests and sovereignty need to be accounted for

Australia's dependence upon China is by now well known, particularly as the nation scrambles to adjust to blatant threats of economic coercion in the aftermath of Prime Minister Scott Morrison calling for an independent and international inquiry into the origins of COVID-19 following its cost of life and continuing impact on the global economy.

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COVID-19 also served to dramatically highlight the lack of true economic sovereignty and resilience within the national economy, as well as the impact the nation's limited economic diversity has upon national security.

Hartcher comes to the conclusion some prominent members of the Commonwealth government have come to, when he articulates: "Indeed, Australia should embrace a full work program of measures to protect its democracy from Xi's efforts at influence and interference. The Morrison government has only just started to enforce its foreign interference laws – the investigation into NSW Labor politician Shaoquett Moselmane is its first such effort.

"Other vital measures await. These include tightening Australia's absurdly ramshackle political donations laws, introducing security screening for new MPs and senators, and developing a national resilience agenda.

"Australia's vulnerability to China for critical medical supplies has been newly exposed, for instance. So, too, its over-reliance on China as an export market."

This point is further enhanced by a poignant and timely question raised by Senator for NSW, retired Major General and long-time advocate for a holistic National Sovereignty Strategy, Jim Molan, AO, DSC, who recently told [Sky News](#): "The point that I make is that if we need to put \$270 billion over the next 10 years into defence, what other parts of our society, of our nation, do we need to address to match whatever this \$270 billion is going to buy us in the end?

"The basis for our national security is the economy. The problem I have is how does a government know risks it is taking by not funding certain aspects of national security if it doesn't know what we absolutely need?"

Building on these points, Hartcher adds, "Australian activism is an indispensable element in its defence; Australian competence in planning and building would be even better. Luck can not break a naval embargo; hope intercepts no incoming missiles.

"Whichever candidate wins the US election next week, Australia cannot return to its long posture of learned helplessness."

## Your thoughts

Australia is defined by its economic and strategic relationships with the Indo-Pacific and the access to the growing economies and to strategic sea lines of communication supporting over 90 per cent of global trade, a result of the cost-effective and reliable nature of sea transport.

Indo-Pacific Asia is at the epicentre of the 21st century's era of great power competition and global maritime trade, with about US\$5 trillion worth of trade flowing through the South China Sea and the strategic waterways and chokepoints of south-east Asia annually.

For Australia, a nation defined by this relationship with traditionally larger yet economically weaker regional neighbours, the growing economic prosperity of the region and corresponding arms build-up, combined with ancient and more recent enmities, competing for geopolitical, economic and strategic interests, places the nation at the centre of the 21st century's "great game".

Enhancing Australia's capacity to act as an independent power, incorporating great power-style strategic economic, diplomatic and military capability serves as a powerful symbol of Australia's sovereignty and evolving responsibilities in supporting and enhancing the security and prosperity of Indo-Pacific Asia.

Australia is consistently told that as a nation we are torn between our economic relationship with China and the longstanding strategic partnership with the US, placing the country at the epicentre of a great power rivalry – but what if it didn't have to be that way?

*Get involved with the discussion and let us know your thoughts on Australia's future role and position in the Indo-Pacific and what you would like to see from Australia's political leaders in terms of shaking up the nation's approach to our regional partners.*

*We would also like to hear your thoughts on the avenues Australia should pursue to support long-term economic growth and development in support of national security, get in touch with [Stephen.Kuper@momentummedia.com.au](mailto:Stephen.Kuper@momentummedia.com.au) or at [editor@defenceconnect.com.au](mailto:editor@defenceconnect.com.au).*



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## Op-Ed: Apache selection tells a broader tale of Australia's defence mindset

By: Jim Molan



NSW senator and former Major General of the Australian Army, Jim Molan, weighs in on the government's recent decision to replace the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter with the Apache Guardian.

The intention to purchase the Apache Guardian helicopter is, of course, the right decision and I congratulate the Minister and our government. It was a decision that should have been made 20 years ago and the Apache was Army's (and my) preference at that time.

Again, the decision for the Apache or the then Viper should have been made about 10 years ago when it was totally obvious we were getting no combat capability at anything like an affordable cost from the Tiger, but Army leaders procrastinated. Now to the credit of this government and this minister, at least the decision has been made but we will have to wait until 2025 for a phased introduction.

The decision 20 years ago, from my memory, was made by the National Security Committee of Cabinet on the basis that of the two options at the time, the Apache and the Tiger, the makers of the Tiger claimed cheaper operating costs. We combat operators knew what the battle-tested and continuously improving Apache offered then and since we could see how long experience of operating the Apache would provide more reliable cost estimation than a paper aeroplane, but we ended up with the Tiger.

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To the credit of the pilots and the engineers in the Army, they finally got the aircraft working after about 15 years, but the cost remains prohibitive. Who would have guessed?

Interestingly, the decision says as much about where we are in terms of national security as it does about a new helicopter.

First, disappointingly, the Apache is still being called an Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter. As a helicopter pilot and a combat commander, I only had a vague idea what that term meant when it was used 20 years ago.

Our Tiger was the “lighter” of two Eurocopter versions, the other being designed to fight in Europe. We used the term Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter because we spent decades in serious denial that our military at some stage was going to have to fight head-to-head with a demanding enemy.

That time has now arrived and thank Providence our government and the Minister recognise it, at least in this way. If the Tiger was truly an armed reconnaissance helicopter, we used to ask what was it conducting reconnaissance for? Was there something behind the ARH that could fight and defeat an enemy: a very small number of tanks perhaps, some light or pathetically mechanised infantry, some towed artillery that would have lasted minutes in a serious fight?

For most of that period, we who commanded these capabilities and who knew intimately that the combat cupboard was pretty-well bare, acceded to government preference for the term Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter because they were frightened of using the correct name, which was “Attack Helicopter”.

Governments were scared of stating what the aircraft was brought for and how it could be used, so they hid it with vague names. The Apache is an attack helicopter and we should not be afraid to use that term.

In our current strategic environment where a war between the US and China is not just possible because both sides are armed to the teeth, but far more likely than most are prepared to admit, thinking like this from a different era where we could pretend that our helicopters did not kill our enemies but were armed just for reconnaissance, reflects a national weakness we cannot afford.

The Apache is an attack helicopter, it is used throughout the world as a combat helicopter to destroy enemies. I was Chief of Operations of a US force in Iraq that used them, along with tanks, in what was called an insurgency.

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Australia got away with being ashamed or embarrassed about combat capability from a previous era where there was little threat and no real regional enemies. Now, in the most strategically uncertain period for 75 years, when not only may we have to support alliance forces by deploying small combat forces to distant parts of the world as we have been doing for decades, but must also now have a military that is ready to fight a peer or near-peer competitor, such as China.

We need a robust working attack helicopter and we need it now. Let's start realistically calling these machines what they are, otherwise, we might start to believe our fears, and think that they can only be used for armed reconnaissance.

Change the name to make it honest and we take one very small step towards shaping an attitude to combat and winning that Australia desperately needs.

Second, we seem to have decided to buy 29 aircraft. That might have been the right number for the strategic environment we faced for the last 75 years, but in the last few years, our strategic environment has significantly changed.

Twenty-nine helos enable us to send niche forces with maybe eight Apaches overseas at a time, supported by the US, but they do not enable us to defend this country in the war that is growing in likelihood.

The ADF is the best it has been for many decades in terms of combat capability and much credit for that goes to the Coalition government since 2013, but for future regional wars between our ally the US and China, or in a fight for national survival, the ADF lacks lethality, mass and survivability. We are not strong enough, we are not big enough and we cannot fight for long enough.

Even the \$270 billion that has been allocated to the ADF over the next 10 years may enable the ADF, in 10 years' time, to perhaps win a battle or two, but not win a campaign or win a war.

I supported the PM's brilliant speech on 1 July last year when allocating the \$270 billion over 10 years to the ADF, but the sentiments in the speech and what we as a government are doing or not doing now, do not align. We should all be thinking of the implications of what the PM said in that speech, and ask ourselves: Are we achieving what he spoke of?

Third, this purchase of a US aircraft shows that those who still go on about Australia having to choose between our main trading partner and our main security partner are not paying attention. We have chosen. In fact, we chose more than 75 years ago.

Fourth, the fact that we are buying Apaches through foreign military sales (FMS), rather than trying to half make aircraft in Australia, just as the RAAF buys almost

*Continued on page 22*

all its aircraft on FMS or at least the ones that work, means that when Apaches arrive, they will work, they will be upgraded with US forces, and we will have access to spare parts for as long as we can keep our air and sea routes open (which may not be very long so let's hope we have stocks in this country).

Fifth, the government is to be commended for making a hard and expensive decision, but this purchase again proves that there is no national security strategy at work anywhere behind the scenes. If there was, we would at least have recognised that the ADF has perhaps three future tasks:

- to prepare to send forces capable of serious fighting overseas with our allies to deter or defeat a peer regional potential military such as China;
- to be prepared to defend this nation from collateral attacks on Australia from within a war between the US and China; and
- to be able to expand to a sizable modern military to defend this nation from direct attack if we and our allies are not successful in deterring or defeating regional military aggression.

The purchase of such a small number of aircraft in our strategic environment, without reference to how they might be used and what we are buying them for, proves that we lack even the basis of a national security strategy. It indicates to me that we do not know what war we are preparing for. Still, it is far better than nothing.

In the PM's 1 July speech, he referred to the years between the wars, the 1920s and 30s. On 25 January 1942, Australia ordered full mobilisation after the Pearl Harbour attack and the predictable failure of the Singapore strategy, another period where we denied the facts of the strategic environment and had no workable national security strategy. This week then is the 79th anniversary of that event. Let's not forget that Australia has never in its history been prepared for any war it has been involved in. That is a disgrace and must end.

The parallels between the inter-war years for Australia and the last decade are stark. Perhaps we could have gotten away with being unprepared in the past because we have been lucky to have the US as an ally. US power made us prosperous and secure. As Ronald Reagan said: "Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the US was too strong."

But US military capability is severely reduced since 1991, the end of the Cold War and the growth of China, Russia, Iran and North Korea should deserve a little bit more constructive paranoia than is being shown by Australia at the moment. The first step can only be a National Security Strategy.



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# Bad Luck Boat -USS Swordfish

By Les Laub.

## USS *Swordfish* (SSN-579)

USS *Swordfish* was a Skate Class Submarine, was the second submarine of the United States Navy with the name *Swordfish*. She was launched on 27 August 1957 and decommissioned on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1989. *Swordfish* had an interesting life, full of "screw-ups".

On 22 June 1977, *Swordfish* launched a Mark 14 homing torpedo which located the biggest target in the area – USS *Swordfish*! The torpedo made a beautiful circular run and came back to hit the port screw. Fortunately, it was an exercise torpedo without an explosive warhead. *Swordfish* limped back to port for 24 hours, did a crew change, and snuck back to sea with a red face.

One year later, the Washington Post reported (11 September 1978) that a 54 cent paint scraper cost Navy \$171,000. According to UPI:

*"It cost the Navy \$171,000 to fix a problem in the nuclear submarine USS Swordfish caused by a misplaced 54-cent paint scraper, the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard Log reports. The vessel was dry-docked for a week because someone left the paint scraper behind after working on the sub and it fell into a torpedo launcher, jamming it, the publication said. "Jammed up in her launcher," the Log said, "between the piston and cylinder wall, was a Navy "garden variety" paint scraper which is selling today in shop stores for 54 cents. That little 54-cent paint scraper cost about \$171,000 to locate and*



*remove. When the jammed piston was discovered divers tried for over a week to remove the scraper while Swordfish was waterborne. They cut it with an underwater torch and used a 40-ton hydraulic jack to try and free the piston. No luck. That's why she docked, so we could use our 'big guns' on it, so to speak." The Log theorized the scraper could have gotten lodged in the launcher by being sucked in but said the "most likely thing is that the tool was left somewhere in the superstructure" and fell through several passages until it got stuck.*

Not to be outdone, in late October 1985, *Swordfish* was delayed in departing Pearl Harbor due to the failure of the drain pump. A replacement was obtained but *Swordfish* put to sea before the pump was fully connected and tested, and the crew could not get the pump to operate. Since the engine room bilges could not be pumped, by the evening of 23 October, the first day at sea, the water in the engine room lower level bilge was over the deck plates (more than four feet). The crew tried to use a portable submersible pump but were not successful.

When the water level got high enough to get up into the bottoms of the motors, the Captain came aft and saw the situation and decided to take the boat shallow to allow pumping bilges. When the planesmen put a slight up-angle on the boat to come to shallow the water in the bilges instantly rushed aft, causing an up-angle of about 45 degrees.

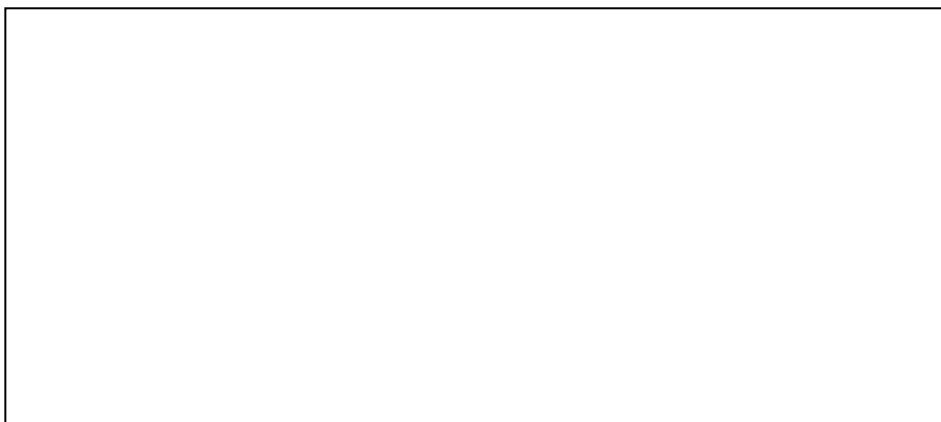
The extreme up-angle caused the ship to quickly stop and begin moving backwards, sinking stern first. The Engineer saw the depth gauge indicating a rapid increase in depth, and ordered "Ahead Full" on his initiative, and opened the starboard forward throttle himself in an effort to drive the ship to the surface. *Swordfish* surfaced successfully.

I suspect that her disposal through the Ship Submarine Recycling Program at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in 1995 came as a relief.



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