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# An Air Force of Influence: A Strategic Framework for the Future Air Force



A discussion paper prepared by the Air Power Development Centre,  
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## Executive Summary

*An Air Force of Influence: A Strategic Framework for the Future Air Force* enunciates the Royal Australian Air Force's preferences around strategy and education within its re-shape and re-engineering processes as it moves forward in the 21st Century. It is a statement of Air Force's intent to fashion itself into a force of influence disproportionately greater than its physical size — a strategic force. It describes Air Force's cultural, organisational and educational imperatives and preferences from a strategic perspective as a consequence of changes in Air Force's circumstances. These changes include; the way government has chosen to employ the military in a broader range of situations in the pursuit of national interests, and recent shifts in the global and regional security environments. In addition, Air Force has chosen to more actively direct its future and effectively shape and influence its environment, both within Defence and externally amongst other agencies, departments and the international community.

*An Air Force of Influence* recognises that while Air Force has historically been, and is currently, an excellent tactical force capable of delivering flexible and precise air power across the spectrum of conflict, it could be more if its perceptions of itself and what is valued change. *An Air Force of Influence* describes **why** Air Force must move beyond the constraints of tactical mastery in order to exert

strategic influence, and **how** it can achieve this kind of influence through comprehensively embracing professional mastery of air power at every level of its organisation, its workforce and its thinking.

This paper describes the attributes of a strategic Air Force of influence and why these are both desirable and necessary for Air Force as it transitions through the DCP force out to about 2018 and beyond. It also illustrates that although a product of its particular history, Air Force is not captive to it but rather, is able to shape its future in a means and a direction of its choosing. This paper proposes that an expansive understanding of decision superiority as, simultaneously, an outcome, a process, and an attribute of the force that frames all aspects of thinking and operating, is a key enabler to superior performance. In addition, it describes the change that is required in Air Force culture, education, strategy and perhaps structure in order for the force to achieve the level of strategic influence it intends.

*An Air Force of Influence* is essential reading for all senior Air Force leaders. It presents six imperatives Air Force must undertake in order to transition from an excellent tactical air force into a strategic air force of influence. It is important that all senior Air Force officers understand where Air Force is headed, how it intends to achieve its objectives and what is needed to realise those goals.

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## **Air Force's Imperatives to be a Force of Influence:**

- Air Force must comprehensively embrace professional mastery of air power at every level of its organisation and as the foundational framework of its thinking.
- Air Force must genuinely value education as the foundation from which to deal effectively with uncertainty.
- Air Force must embark on a program of cultural change through education and leadership to equip its members and future leaders with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to deliver an air force of influence.
- Air Force must undertake a thorough review of its organisational design to determine how it can be most effectively structured to deliver its chosen ends.
- Air Force will adopt the idea of decision superiority as simultaneously an outcome, a process and an attribute fundamental to enabling professional mastery, both operationally and organisationally.
- Air Force must undertake a comprehensive organisational review to ensure its present and projected force structure and capability developments effectively accord with its strategic intent as part of the larger joint enterprise of Australian security.

*An Air Force of Influence* argues that technical mastery is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Air Force to be the pre-eminent professional provider of air power to the Australian government. The Air Force is a profession of arms and professional mastery of air power is its core business. As Air Force moves into this century it has determined to enlarge and mature itself - from a force capable of technical mastery of the operation of air vehicles - to one that fully understands, embraces and applies the professional mastery of air power for Australian security.

*Air Force is a profession of arms and professional mastery of all aspects of air power is its core business*

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# Introduction

1. The general and well found perception of the Royal Australian Air Force is that of a modern, capable, professional and well respected smaller tactical force that provides first class air power to the government of Australia. This perception is bolstered by the fact that since its inception our air force has displayed tactical flexibility, operational excellence and the willingness to embrace innovative and leading edge technology and thinking to achieve its mission. As Australia's security circumstances, and our Government's response to them, have evolved in the past century, so too has Air Force's need to flexibly adapt its posture so as to remain relevant and capable of satisfying evolving national security needs and expectations. The need to evolve is relentless; the world and Australia's shaping and response to it for today and tomorrow—our posture—place an impost on a smart organisation like our Air Force to stay ahead of the game by making good strategic choices about who and what we are as an enterprise.

2. While the broader contours of the international security landscape have remained largely unchanged, since the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games the Australian Government has displayed a greater willingness to employ the ADF in a more expansive and flexible fashion than in times past. Indeed, since the release of the 1997 DFAT White Paper, *In The National Interest*, in which a whole of government approach to national security and the pursuit of national interests was first enunciated, not only has the government progressively expanded the role of the ADF in national security, but it has amended Australian law to formalise this greater role. The realisation of this national effects base approach to security, has been made manifest through the government's demonstrated preference to actively use the military as an element of national power across a broadening spectrum of operations. This is a significant break with more recent historic practice and holds great consequence for the ADF. These developments, and other long term global structural changes, such as the

various implications of globalisation, have altered the security environment in which the Air Force finds itself today. Our roles and our responsibilities within the whole of government approach to national security however, have not changed. But, we recognise that these developments have precipitated an opportunity to choose the path by which, and the fashion in which, we will plan, organise, structure and conduct ourselves to meet our obligations towards national security.

3. Faced with a choice of distinct but equally viable means of satisfying the challenges presented through these developments and afforded by this opportunity, we, the Air Force's senior leadership, have chosen to continue Air Force's maturation as a key strategic national security contributor by transforming our force into a strategic one. We call this strategic force an **air force of influence**. We have made this choice because, first, we believe it will enable the force to best meet our obligations as the premier provider of air power for Australia's security, and second, because we believe it will also best serve our interests as an organisation and the interests of our members, now and into the future. The significance of this choice is thrown further into sharp relief by several inter-related factors including:

- government strategic policy regarding Australia's national interests and the role of Defence in pursuing those interests,
- our participation in the global war against terrorism in the wake of the events of September 11;
- Air Force workforce numbers in the wake of the DER-driven downsizing; and
- organisational stresses upon Air Force in the face of significant impending capability transitions in the next decade.

*An Air Force capable of strategic influence*

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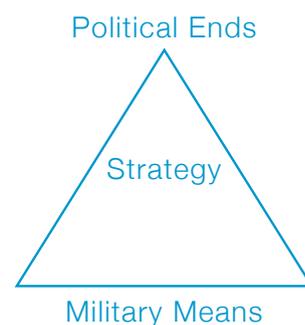
## A future of Our Choice

4. The choice that confronted Air Force concerned how we would position and organise ourselves to meet the challenges of future years – whether we would remain largely as we were, an excellent tactically focussed air force capable of achieving excellent but limited operational effect, or if we would choose to transform our force into an influential strategic force capable not only of sound tactical effect but of shaping our environment and setting our future course in a positive and self determined fashion. This choice was primarily about whether we in the Air Force would allow our future to be determined largely by our past or if we would purposefully choose our future direction to deliberately meet our strategic intent. Both options were valid for a range of reasons, both had associated risks and costs, and both would broadly achieve and satisfy government policy. The distinction between the two however, concerned the ways in which they would meet these objectives, the capacity of the force to realise the options, and the degree of discretion each would provide us in meeting our goals. Importantly, this was not simply a choice regarding the application of air power – that is, a question of means - but rather it was a choice of grand strategic direction for Air Force. There is an argument that suggests that as good as the Air Force is, there are limits to its capacity and ability to achieve the strategic objectives identified in extant government and Defence policy. These limits existed not in our ability or willingness to deliver excellent tactical forces in flexible and innovative fashion, but in our capacity to act strategically to lead in shaping the security environment to our preferences, to fashion our force structure and capability acquisition decisions, and to set and pursue a future of our own determination rather than follow the decisions and trends of others. This argument insisted that as it currently stood, it was debatable whether Air Force had the wherewithal or the culture necessary to consistently and deliberately achieve the kind of strategic effect – such as shaping and influencing - proposed in government policy. The reasons for this situation were complicated, but were in part a product of

our history, our success as a tactical force, and our understanding of our force and our role in Australian security. Air Force was persuaded by this argument and has chosen to determine its own future and to transform itself into a strategic air force of influence.

## A Strategic Air Force of Influence

5. The concept of a strategic air force of influence is perhaps a new one to many, but put simply it is a metaphor for organisations that can not only operate and produce effects within a technical and tactical domain (the technical mastery of air power), but that can operate with mastery in a strategic context as well, shaping their external environment consistent with their longer term strategic intent - moving to a fulsome professional mastery of air power in strategic contexts. If strategy is about linking military means and political ends through a coherent and deliberate plan of action, i.e. a road map for activity, then a strategic air force is one that consistently utilises strategy to achieve the political ends dictated by government through the application of military airpower consistent with a deliberate and considered plan of action. This is the type of strategic organisation we have chosen to become.



6. Conceptually, strategic organisations may be considered analogous to a bottle of full cream milk. In this analogy the bottle is ninety percent full of milk with a thin ten percent layer of cream at the surface. The milk represents the vast majority of what the organisation is capable and accustomed to doing. This represents the technical and tactical domain; it is what, in the Air Force's case, it does the great majority of the time and which takes ninety

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percent of its effort to achieve. It also perhaps represents what a majority of organisations can achieve. The ten percent represents the extra dimension strategically focussed organisations can achieve. Attaining this level of capability is usual only in a very small percentage of organisations and is possible only when founded upon the mastery and maintenance of the ninety percent tactical substrate. The strategic dimension may only comprise around ten percent of the capability of the force but it disproportionately represents the most influential and powerful part of the organisation. To paraphrase; the tactical substrate is about doing things right, and the strategic part is about doing the right thing.

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7. The future of the RAAF is not in danger in any existential sense. The adoption of either course of action outlined above would have allowed us to continue, as we have since 1921, to deliver first class air power for Australia's security. Remaining as we were, an excellent tactical air force, would ensure this capability survived well into the future and was consistent with Air Force capacity and resources. The argument for change, however, insists that in order to meet the challenges of national security in a sustainable, purposeful fashion that not only reacts to Australia's security environment but which can positively and proactively shape that environment consistent with Australia's national interests, the Air Force needed to choose to deliberately evolve into a more capable, influential and strategic force. Such a force would not relinquish any of our current capability nor compromise our technical competence, but rather it would by design, incorporate the additional strategic dimension into what we already possess. This paper will highlight the significance and implications of this choice, and reemphasise the necessity of purposive organisational

design and the vital role leadership will play in transforming our Air Force into the strategic force of influence that we intend it to be.

## Brief Historical Background

### Historicism and the Shape of Our Force Today

8. The history of the RAAF illustrates a discernable lack of coherent strategic planning to guide the development of the service, its understanding of its core business and its vision for the future. The RAAF came to independence not out of an explicit recognition of the strategic imperative of an independent force to pursue strategic air objectives, but in large part in order to expediently meet the competing demands to support Army and Navy with air capability. The fact that the RAAF gained independence was far more the result of an inability of the government of the day to settle the dispute between Army and Navy as to who should own the air assets, as it was out of any notion of the autonomous roles of an independent force. It may be fair to say therefore, that from inception the RAAF was conceived by government, the other services, and to a considerable degree by itself, primarily within an expedient tactical context.

9. This early history, although not necessarily a limitation on the subsequent force, is consequential for the logic that underpinned Air Force as it developed, and the subsequent trajectory that it took in meeting the needs of the government and Australian security. From its beginnings in WWI through to its experiences in the Pacific in WWII the Air Force appeared content to contribute forces and capability to the various allied war efforts without adopting the organisational structure and intellectual foundation necessary to operate as an independent national air force. The record of Air Force involvement in operations during the Cold War similarly reflected an inability of the force to either appreciate the necessity of strategic analysis and planning, or to devote sufficient resources to developing indigenous

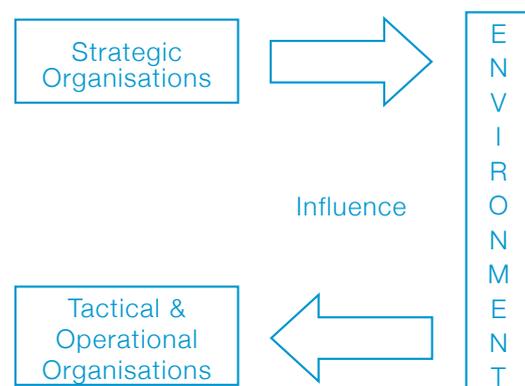
doctrine that embodied the Air Force's own experiences or needs. To a degree this inability and unwillingness to plan and think strategically reflected Air Force's lack of a mature self-identity and a lack of awareness of the strategic potential of air power. Indeed the concept of 'air power' as distinct from the power of 'air forces' is one that was not well understood or valued by Air Force and this misunderstanding acted to limit Air Force's ability to articulate a coherent vision for the future or a strategy to employ air power beyond the operational level.

10. Again it may be fair to say that the RAAF's ability to conceive itself as an independent strategic force capable of influencing the strategic security environment has come only recently in its history. The implications of this history have shaped the development of the present force and inculcated a culture that conceives and constrains the Air Force as an advanced and excellent, but tactical, service. Air Force has long held all the tools necessary to produce a range of tailored effects but has lacked the capacity to assemble a complete and effective toolkit that would enable those tools to be fully and properly utilised. The networked force as articulated in FASOC is a good example of how we will have to move from simply possessing the tools, to assembling them in an integrated manner to achieve fully networked effect. However, although axiomatically the product of its history, Air Force is not a slave to it, neither should decisions regarding the future force be constrained by what has gone before. An understanding of this relationship between past and present must include a recognition that the force is shaped not only by the consequences of its history, but that it can be and should be intentionally designed for the future.

## Strategic Organisations – Organisations of Influence

### Tactical, Operational and Strategic Organisations

11. In order to better understand the type of organisation the Air Force intends becoming, it is useful to elaborate on the distinction between the types of organisation that are possible and the implications of this organisational type for future Air Force operations. There is a quantifiable difference between organisations that are able to operate strategically and those that are able only to function at the operational or tactical levels. In this context the terms strategic, operational and tactical have a more expansive connotation than that usually ascribed to them in military parlance. Organisationally, these terms refer to the domain of influence commensurate with capability and intent, that is, how broad and to what ends are the actions directed. Strategic refers to the broadest and most far reaching and consequential decisions and plans an organisation can be concerned with. This encompasses a view to the future and a plan or strategy of how to achieve that future. Operational and tactical refer to more focussed, immediate and generally less consequential activities and plans. Furthermore, tactical implies externally or self imposed constraints on action, and suggests a domain of competence quantifiably distinct and subordinate in nature and extent from strategic activity.



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12. Strategic organisations, businesses, institutions or forces have the capacity, organisational structure, culture, intent and desire to be able to shape and influence the environment in which they operate. This can be a regional security environment, an international business environment, inter-departmental government environment, or any other context. They proactively fashion the type of circumstance appropriate to their context, their capabilities and their interests at a pace and in the direction they choose, and in so doing exhibit influence that far outweighs their size. Strategic organisations lead and set their agenda, and do not merely react to, or allow themselves to be defined by, agendas set by others. They achieve this by applying professional mastery to synthesise the human and technological dimensions of their organisation to achieve strategic effect.

13. Tactical organisations, conversely, are reactive. They respond to the circumstances and the environment they find themselves in. They receive direction and purpose from others and are shaped by, and fashioned to meet, the needs and proclivities of others. Tactical organisations although technically proficient within their domain, perhaps even masterful, do not determine their own trajectory, they do not decisively shape their environment, and they do not lead in their field.

*train for certainty and  
educate for uncertainty*

14. While tactical and strategic organisations may appear to be quantitatively identical, strategic organisations are discernable by the fact that they are able to shape and influence their environment consistent with their strategic intent. The hallmark of strategic organisations is the value they place in education. They understand the necessity to train for certainty and to educate for uncertainty and they are comfortable operating in uncertain and ambiguous environments. The superiority that strategic organisations are able to demonstrate is created by their capacity for analysis,

decision-making, and implementation to fashion their future. Within this understanding of strategic and tactical organisations, it is germane to note that the distinction between them is not based solely upon capability. There is a conceptual content to this distinction as well. Strategic organisations are so by design and intent. In order to become a strategic entity an organisation must first desire to be one, then implement structures, strategies and a culture to achieve this end.

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15. Tactical organisations, conversely, may be so by design or lack of it. They may have chosen to operate at this level of functionality, or they may be forced to do so by either failing to design and implement the necessary preconditions to becoming strategic, or simply not have the wherewithal to operate at that level. In either event, although there are clearly advantages for an organisation to be able to operate strategically, this does not necessarily infer a value judgement. Some organisations for a variety of reasons may prefer, and be most effective, functioning at the tactical level only. They may have neither the need nor desire to embrace a strategic dimension. Typically, this might be the case where some other organisation or market force assumes the role of setting the strategic agenda such that the tactical organisation simply reacts to that agenda, either happily or otherwise. For small organisations with a limited and prescribed mandate, this may be an effective and rational course of action.

16. The parallels for military forces are obvious. As organisations, they are human enterprises, they embody an organisational structure - either by design or default - they are sustained by people, possess a culture, exist to serve a purpose, and function along prescribed lines. Consequently, as organisations they may be characterised as either strategic or tactical. The implications of this distinction become

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most significant when air forces understand the difference between the two modes of operation, can accurately assess their own circumstance, then act in accordance with the type of force they are and/or the type of force they wish to be. The consequences of such self-aware action are immensely significant and entirely colour the enterprise of these organisations and their capacity to realise their strategic goals.

17. Another essential facet of the distinction between strategic organisations and tactical ones – that bears further elaboration here – is that between professional and technical mastery. Like the distinction between strategic and tactical organisations the difference is a subtle one, but one that underpins the very ethos of the organisation and is reflected in the character, form and rationale of the force. For our Air Force this is a very important distinction. We have already acknowledged the need to embrace professional mastery, as is reflected in our current doctrine, and we are working hard to develop an understanding of the difference and the implications of it throughout our members.

## Technical and Professional Mastery

18. No force can function at any level effectively without the essential foundation of technical mastery. In simple terms, technical mastery ensures that a force can carry out the functions that are assigned to it and maintain a level of capability largely determined by others. For Air Force, technical mastery provides the force the ability to operate the capabilities it possesses - it is the basis upon which the force's tactical excellence is established. Technical mastery is the necessary precondition of effective tactical forces and is an essential foundation of professional mastery. Although technical mastery may exist in the absence of professional mastery, the converse is not true. Strategic air forces set themselves apart by developing and applying professional mastery of their business.

19. Professional mastery is a superior and more expansive capability that develops from a foundation of the highest standards of technical mastery. The salient distinction between technical and professional mastery is not in the level of competence exhibited - both denote expert and authoritative skill. Professional mastery adds the dimension of strategic influence to the competence of the force, and has a far greater scope and purview. Air Force's professional mastery therefore, is the sum of the organisational and individual technical mastery within our force plus the experience, knowledge, understanding and confidence of our strategic leadership. This encompasses the ability to shape the future of the force, and the ability to conduct operations to the highest levels of proficiency whenever the force is called upon.

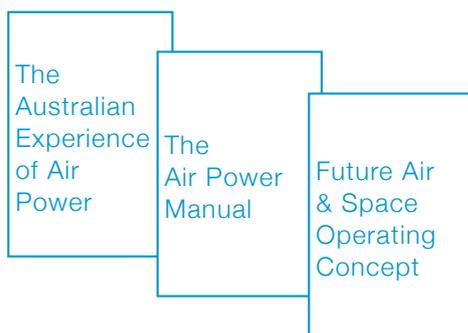
20. Professional mastery also includes the skills to develop and apply the force's technical mastery and to shape joint operations to ensure the most effective use of our capabilities. An organisation that possesses professional mastery can apply its technical mastery in ways that are synchronised with the actions of a range of partners, military and non-military, to create strategic effects. This professional mastery, in conjunction with decision superiority, will form the essential foundation of our strategic air force of influence.

## Future Force

### **The RAAF's Vision of its Future**

21. In 2007 Air Force launched its latest version of its air power doctrine. We did so with a vision and purpose not before enunciated in any previous volumes. The new doctrine set included, by design, historical, contemporary and future components articulating the RAAF's history, its current practice and our preferred aim point for the future. Of these, the future vision embodied in FASOC has been particularly influential for higher Defence strategic policy development. By design FASOC became the exemplar of future ADF operating concepts and was adopted, discretely, as

the model for the joint statement of future intent in CDF's *Joint Operations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. What allowed Air Force to exert such influence in the joint arena in this case was its maturity in using the joint functional substrate as the basis for its doctrine. This was a strategic decision that sought not only to positively shape the future joint arena but to deliberately set the course for optimal future Air Force development consistent with its intent.



### **An Ambiguous Environment**

22. It has become almost cliché now that the international security environment has become more complex, uncertain and dangerous. Certainly since the events of September 2001, international attention has been unceasingly drawn to the proliferation of WMD, the spread of trans-national terrorism and the ramifications of such threats to global and regional security. ADF strategic policy reflects these concerns and acknowledges that this uncertainty requires Defence to constantly challenge its orthodoxy and to think and act strategically – that is, with a clear eye on the broad strategic security environment and the type of future Australia envisages for itself. This strategic outlook, while not entirely new for Defence, articulates a role for Defence, within a whole of government approach to security, that is subtly different to previous policy and which has particular implications for Air Force.

### **Understanding and Shaping – Strategic Objectives**

23. One of the most significant changes to Defence strategic policy in recent years

is the emphasis toward 'understanding and shaping' the strategic security environment within the context of a whole of government approach to security.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on 'shaping' in particular, infers a substantial role for the services in projecting influence beyond Australian territorial shores to potentially, the full extent of Australian interests abroad. While the more traditional roles of 'deterring, defeating, denying and assisting' articulated in *Joint Operations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* fit comfortably into the capabilities and rationales of the services - and have been the cornerstone of Air Force doctrine and strategy for many years - the less tangible notion of 'shaping' is at once a more challenging and subtle role. Shaping, too, has been a key element of Air Force doctrine and strategy for some time, however, the shaping that the current security circumstances demand is a more nuanced and subtle approach than that traditionally employed. Of course, military forces have always shaped their environments, either by design or simply by virtue of their presence. The RAAF shaped political conditions in South East Asia during the 'Konfrontasi' conflict, again during the Vietnam War and certainly shaped the circumstances surrounding events in East Timor in 1999 – 2000, by its presence and its actions. But this shaping is a discernibly different effect to that described in current Defence policy. Although the outcome may be the same – that of conditioning the actions of an adversary or potential adversary – what is proposed in *Joint Operations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and other classified statements is a proactive forward leaning posture that can project influence without necessarily physically positioning forces forward. The difference is a cognitive one.

24. The threat of force has always been a potent influence and means of shaping the actions of an adversary short of violence. The proactive shaping that Defence now proposes however, is a more long term and nuanced approach that does not rely solely on the threat or implied threat of violence, but which positively conditions the security environment

<sup>1</sup> *Joint Operations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Canberra, 2007, p.12.

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through a variety of subtle, perhaps subconscious means. The ability to responsively and quickly provide humanitarian relief through agile airlift throughout Australia's immediate region and beyond is a persistent, subtle and powerful shaping force. The capacity to deploy a squadron of advanced fighter aircraft across the globe with indigenous AAR and logistics support is also a powerful non-violent shaping force. Similarly, commanding an agile, networked and capable air force is also a potent influence on Australia's regional security environment. These are examples of how Air Force can and must shape and influence its security environment consistent with government policy – what follows from this requirement is the perhaps less well understood need for Air Force to become a particular type of force to perform this role effectively for the long term.

*"The failure of airpower in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war was not that it promised too much or that it did not deliver. It was instead a grand strategic failure in the application of force against terrorism."<sup>2</sup>*

### **Strategic Forces are Shaping Forces**

25. In order to effectively and intentionally shape its security environment, in a fashion consistent with government policy and Australia's articulated national interests, Air Force must exhibit the characteristics of a strategic organisation – that is, we must become a strategic air force of influence disproportionate to our size. While there is little

doubt that even a sound tactical air force can and will shape its immediate environment, it will do so in a fashion and to ends that it may not control. Again, this is the conceptual dimension of strategic organisations – they determine how, when, and why they shape their environment by design and through deliberate intent. Unwittingly perhaps, Defence through its enunciation of the need and desire to shape and influence Australia's security environment, has articulated a fundamental requirement of Air Force, and the other services.

## **Force Options**

### **Possible Paths for the Future Force**

26. Within the broad alternatives of strategic or tactical organisation as presented thus far, it was assessed that there were a number of force options open to Air Force in fashioning itself to meet CDF's intent and stated government policy. In essence, these options ranged from the force maintaining its contemporary capabilities, structure and focus, through to adopting a fundamentally different philosophy for force development and capability projection. Air Force has chosen its force option – to become a strategic air force of influence - but in order to better understand the rationale behind and implications of that choice it is useful to briefly examine the options as they existed.

### **The Status Quo**

27. The first and perhaps most obvious course of action was to simply deny that current policy implied a need for fundamental changes to the Air Force. This line of reasoning suggested that for over 80 years Air Force has been meeting the needs of government and Australian national security by providing modern, capable and effective air power consistent with its charter and capability. By this logic, Air Force has, historically, continued to shape its environment through the provision of tactically excellent operational capability and needed no conceptual or structural change

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<sup>2</sup> Arkin, W. Divine Victory for Whom? Air power in the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War, Strategic Studies Quarterly, Winter 2007, p. 131.

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to continue to meet government policy or intent. This *status quo* argument was naturally a superficially appealing and achievable option, at least in part because it admitted no systemic shortcomings past or present. As noted earlier, Air Force justifiably holds a very favourable domestic and international reputation. A 'do nothing' option would have seen Air Force maintain its tactical excellence and operational focus, and continue to develop capabilities and workforce structures in the fashion it always had. This position argued that being a tactically proficient air force is not only a valid and sustainable proposition, but given its limited resources, and in particular the constraints on its personnel numbers, would be the only viable option for a force of its constrained size.

28. The implications of maintaining a status quo approach would have been controversial. Proponents of the status quo philosophy would have argued that the system was not substantially deficient and needed no major adjustment. The force clearly delivered superior, (if limited) air power, met government direction and was on parity with the other services. The contra argument proposed that whilst the Air Force does indeed deliver excellent tactical forces and capabilities able to meet broad government direction, it was unnecessarily self-constrained in its ability to shape its own ends and influence its environment. Thus Air Force was unable to fully meet the implicit requirements of strategic policy. The crux of the matter therefore appeared to be two fold. First, that Air Force was constrained in its ability to act strategically, and secondly, that extant strategic policy explicitly requires it to be able to act strategically.

29. The consequences of an organisation's inability to act strategically may be dire or negligible depending on what it hopes to achieve and what it is required to achieve. For Air Force, the consequences of not shaping its environment or directing its own future, while potentially not evident in the short term, would have proved dire in the long run. History and commonsense would suggest that there will always be a multitude of actors willing to provide Air Force with guidance, to prescribe

its future course, or to suggest activities and outcomes it should pursue. Lack of direction, typically, is not a quality government agencies lack. The issue for Air Force, however, was who sets those parameters and to what extent would Air Force set its own vision, and pursue the courses of action it best believes fulfils its obligations. If, as Air Force believes, it is required to shape its own future and to positively and deliberately influence the security environment it inhabits, then it should also acknowledge that it needs the wherewithal to do so.

30. Similarly, the consequences of not fulfilling its obligations to contribute to shaping the environment as directed in strategic policy, would eventually prove catastrophic for Air Force. Defence strategy as described *inter alia* in *Joint Operations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is predicated on the government of Australia, through coordinated inter-agency effort, understanding and shaping its regional and potentially global strategic security environment. The extent to which any single agency or government actor fails to effectively contribute to that whole of government effort fundamentally weakens Australia's capacity to pursue its interests. Should Air Force fail to contribute effectively to shaping and understanding the security environment then it would not only lose the opportunity to positively influence its future but it would eventually lose the confidence of the government, the respect of the other services and possibly the trust of the Australian public. This would have amounted to strategic failure of the organisation.

## **Structure Around the US Alliance**

31. The second broad option available to Air Force, and one that held particular appeal to certain sectors of the government and Defence, was to develop the force so as to provide niche capabilities to our major coalition partners, in particular the US. The logic behind this approach was centred on the reasonable belief that Australia's involvement in any major confrontation would be as part of a larger coalition effort. Thus its force should be tailored to smoothly integrate into a larger coalition force, fulfilling vital niche

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capabilities – commensurate with its size – for the overall effort. The nature and particular significance of the Australia-US alliance is of course the backdrop to this line of argument, and provided the underlying rationale of Australia's special relationship with the US and the implications of this relationship for Defence. Quite reasonably, the previous government had consistently advocated a close defence relationship between Australia and the US. The closeness of this relationship allowed the ADF to enjoy certain privileges with regards to US technology, intelligence sharing and capability development. It also tended to shape the nature and direction of ADF force structure and capability development, even to the extent that ADF doctrine acknowledges the probability of coalition operations and the need for Australian forces to be able to integrate seamlessly with the Americans. The pursuit, therefore, of ADF capabilities, structure and strategy that fit this coalition model appeared a reasonable and sound proposition that would be consistent with government policy and ultimately advantageous to the ADF and Australian interests.

32. The special Australian-US relationship is, of course, a very valuable one but it would be naive to believe that it does not come at some cost. That cost, from an Air Force perspective, concerns the degree of autonomy that we would have to surrender over the determination of our future. A future that prescribes a close and integrated relationship with the US incurs opportunity costs and potential obligations. None of this is meant to suggest these obligations are inconsistent with Australian national interests, or contrary to a direction Air Force is happy to pursue at present, but in choosing to tie itself to US development plans Air Force needed to be mindful of what freedoms we would surrender for tomorrow. As Lord Palmerston famously once opined, Britain does not have permanent friends only permanent interests, and in similar fashion Air Force as an organisation must at all costs ensure it retains the ability to shape itself to assessed need, unfettered by obligations other than Australian interests.<sup>3</sup>

33. The implications of Air Force choosing to adopt an approach that valued its ability to provide niche capabilities to coalition operations would have been significant on several fronts. We would have continued to produce excellent tactical capability and would continue to be held in high regard as a credible force. In many regards our force development decisions would have been simplified, as the primary objective would be to remain interoperable with the US. Our force structure also would follow the functions we chose to fulfil as a niche contributor. This structure, however, might not have been ideally suited to Australia's long term interests as they evolved in the future. Possibly, so long as the relationship with the US remained of paramount importance then it would have proven useful, if restrictive. To a large degree this model would have resembled that adopted in the Pacific theatre during WWII. Australian forces were credible, capable and well-led at the operational level by Australian commanders, but the strategic direction and highest command resided in the hands of Australia's allies. Today, such a course of action may still be a sound and rational decision, so long as the consequences of surrendering the organisation's ability to function as a strategic force were recognised and the possibly dire consequences accepted.

### **A strategic Air Force**

34. The third option available to Air Force was to decide to become a strategic air force of influence. By choosing this option, we decided to develop the wherewithal and announce the intent to not only shape our own future by design, but to shape the external security environment in which we operate in concert with others. As a strategic air force, the RAAF will undertake a range of necessary changes to our culture, our focus and our force structure, in order to achieve the ability to transcend the constraints of the tactical domain and shape our own ends through strategic design. The characteristics of strategic organisations have already been rehearsed, but the implications for the RAAF bear further elaboration. As an

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3 Quote attributed to Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of

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England, London, 1848.

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influential strategic air force the RAAF will retain all of its current tactical excellence, experience and reputation. No strategic force can exist without the firm foundation of tactical excellence. Consequently, nothing that Air Force currently undertakes to achieve this will be diminished or halted. What will change, however, is the culture that sustains the force, the organisational structure that implements its ability to generate and sustain air power, and the strategic intent that guides the force to the envisioned future. These changes will see Air Force transform from a force that exhibits technical mastery to one that possesses true professional mastery of every aspect of air power. As a force that embodies professional mastery, Air Force will be capable and expert at operating simultaneously at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. It will do so to achieve synergy of effect through the coordinated and aligned effort at all levels of activity, within an organisational framework that is designed to optimise decision making and structured to connect strategic intent to tactical effect.

*As a strategic force, we will be guided by an enduring and systematic strategy that links government intent to militarily achievable objectives, within a national effects based approach, through the coordinated and sustained application of air power effects, be they first, second or third order effects.*

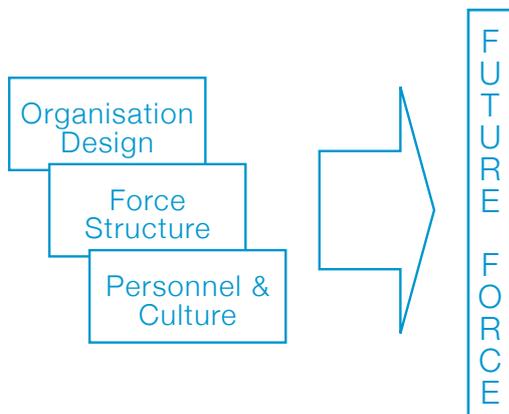
35. From an external vantage point, Air Force as a strategic organisation may not appear very different to that which exists today. Internally however, the force will function and

think significantly differently. As a strategic force, we will be guided by an enduring and systematic strategy that links government intent to militarily achievable objectives, within a national effects based approach, through the coordinated and sustained application of air power effects, be they first, second or third order effects. The Air Force vision, and the strategy to achieve that vision, will not only be articulated throughout the force, but would be explicitly connected to every activity performed within the organisation such that at every level, every activity, mission and task is logically linked from intent to effect, from top to bottom, tactical to strategic, vertically and horizontally. Force structure, capability development and acquisition, and workforce education and training will all reflect the seamless connectivity and logic that flows from clear strategic intent to every facet of our organisation. This transparent connectivity will not only provide justification and reason throughout the organisation but it will enable and facilitate decision superiority as an organisational attribute. This is a truly networked force – the type of force envisaged in FASOC.

## Becoming a Strategic Air Force

36. Having chosen to become a strategic organisation, what exactly is required for Air force to realise our intent? There are a number of systemic and individual changes that will be required as we transform ourselves into the type of force we seek to become, and in its most simple formulation a sustained and focussed program of change is necessary. Fundamental in this process are the cognitive changes necessary within the organisation, both from a top down perspective and horizontally across our organisation at each level. The capacity to function strategically exists primarily within the cognitive domain of the members that comprise an organisation. Consequently, for an organisation to function effectively as a strategic force, the appropriate understanding, knowledge and intent must infuse the entire workforce population. For us,

this represents more than just the dissemination of information across the organisation. It entails a significant cultural change that must be adopted throughout our workforce, both in and out of uniform, so as to align thinking and behaviour within the force consistent with the new orthodoxy of strategic design. In order to coherently move toward becoming a strategic organisation, we will need to inculcate a culture and ethos that values not only the core elements of strategic intent, professional mastery, decision making and decision superiority, but that values education as an intrinsic good in itself, as well as an indispensable and worthwhile means for developing the attributes necessary within the force to achieve the abovementioned core elements.



### Strategic culture – strategic people

37. Cultural alignment is a slow and deliberate business that requires consistency, persistence, reinforcement and appropriate reward mechanisms in order to effect genuine and enduring change. Producing this sort of change entails more than just formal education and training within an institutional context, it requires a whole of organisation approach in which appropriate behaviours and attitudes are valued, promoted and rewarded. The formal educational component of this approach would most appropriately be implemented through a training and education program that spans the entirety of educational experience from initial entry training courses through to senior leadership awareness experiences. It is a well accepted maxim that one trains for certainty and

educates for uncertainty, and for the complex, uncertain and ambiguous environment that Air Force faces - and will face in the future - this expression has particular relevance. Education, therefore, is a key plank in the program to developing an air force of influence. Consequently, Air Force must genuinely value education as the foundation from which to deal effectively with uncertainty.

38. The other less formal but essential component in the broader acculturation process is the presentation of a consistent institution wide statement of intent or vision. This pervasive message will serve not only to provide clear and unambiguous direction to the organisation but, align the disparate parts of the force to the core and essential business of our organisation. The first step in disseminating a statement of strategic intent, however, is developing the intent then committing to its achievement. CAF has already communicated this intent for Air Force to become one of the best smaller strategic air forces in the world, and we in the senior leadership team are committed to its achievement. This commitment will subsequently be conveyed to the whole of our organisation through the consistent articulation and pursuit of this strategic intent. This organisational approach complements the formal education and training and will reinforce the cognitive changes necessary to establish behaviour evidenced cultural modification. Upon this basis we can then bring about the physical changes necessary to become a strategic force.

### Organisational design

39. Although essentially the product of realignment within the cognitive domain – that is, of intent – becoming a strategic force entails certain material structural and organisational changes also. These are the physical changes our organisation needs to undertake to put into effect the new culture and new way of thinking. These material changes are manifest in two primary areas, those of organisational design and force structure. As noted earlier, a key attribute of strategic forces is the idea of decision superiority; this itself is predicated

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on an organisational design that enables optimal decision making. This organisational design is of course different from organisation to organisation, but in general terms it embodies design that provides effective and efficient flow of information, appropriate vertical and horizontal linkages and communication paths, the delegation of appropriate authority and resources to decision-makers, and processes and procedures to report and communicate within the organisation. Organisations designed to decide are organisations designed to function as strategic entities. This design therefore is a necessary but not sufficient characteristic of our strategic air force. Coupled with the appropriate strategic intent as described above; however, it will form the basis of our strategic force of influence. Air Force therefore, must thoroughly review its organisational design to ensure it is structured to most effectively deliver its chosen ends.

### **Force structure**

40. The final component of a strategic air force is a force structure that would enable the organisation to produce strategic effects that shape its environment consistent with its intent as part of the larger joint enterprise. For Air Force this force structure may not be too different to that which currently exists and delivers such good tactical effect. Ultimately however, as a strategic force, we will need to evaluate our current force structure not only against our immediate operational requirements as directed by CDF and government, but against our longer term strategic obligations to shape the regional security environment consistent with government long-term guidance. Achieving the latter requirement may dictate that the force structure be reshaped or refocused.

41. Such change will need to be delivered through a carefully planned and directed strategic approach. The cost, in terms of budget, personnel change, training, infrastructure and time may be so great that action to reshape the force for the future will need to begin long before the target date. At the same time, reshaping will need to be conducted in ways that ensures extant commitments are met. These ends can only be

achieved by an organisation that understands its current and future requirements and is able to decide a strategy path to the future that meets both. The historic paradigm of replacing old capabilities with newer versions of the same has been abandoned for a strategic approach that clearly links Defence strategy with capability and acquisition processes. Air Force needs therefore, to continue to review its organisation to ensure its present and projected force structure and capability developments effectively accord with its strategic intent as part of the larger joint security enterprise.

42. Air Force is already structured to create good tactical effects and is already broadly aligned with strategic intent as part of the larger joint enterprise. The implications for future capability development are clear. The future force must align with our strategic intent described in FASOC and be prepared to operate in the context of a National Effects Based Approach to Australian security. Our strategic Air Force must be an influential partner in capability development that is joint, future driven and consistent with strategic intent.

## **Measures of Effectiveness**

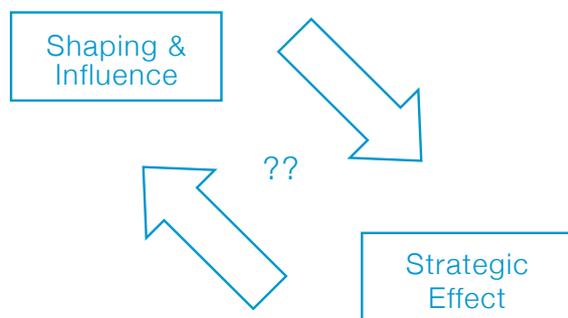
### **How do we know we are on the right track?**

43. An air force structured, designed and led in a fashion consistent with that outlined above would exhibit the attributes of a strategic organisation – an air force of disproportionate influence. Making these changes however, will be complex and critical. Because these changes, which are primarily cognitive, will often be subtle, determining and using appropriate measures for the change and ultimately the performance and effectiveness of the strategic Air Force will be vital to establish and maintain confidence in the new organisation.

44. The basis for these measures is relatively simple. Strategic organisations/forces are

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evaluated by their ability to produce deliberate and reliable strategic effects consistent with their strategic intent. For Air Force this would mean three things. First, we must be able to influence and shape the strategic security environment (inclusive of political, policy and operational dimensions), both external to Australia and internally, as directed by government and CDF. Second, we must continue to produce the range of excellent air power effects we produce now. Third, we must demonstrate alignment with the other Services towards the creation of a seamless ADF. The framework for the third criterion will be the Joint Warfighting Functions.



45. While conceptually measuring this effect is relatively simple, in practice determining what strategic effect an organisation or force produces can be more subjective and problematic. The strategic objective of government policy, in understanding and shaping Australia's security environment, is that it might avoid or deter any potential conflict within the region and contribute to it remaining a stable, prosperous and peaceful one in which Australia and her neighbours could pursue their interests. In the broadest sense therefore, if Australia's security is maintained, and no significant conflicts arise in the nation's immediate area of interest that might involve Australia, then this would be a positive measure of effect. The difficulty arises of course in determining what elements of national power are responsible for such an outcome, and within a whole of government approach such determination might prove very difficult indeed. It would, for example, be very

difficult to precisely determine if it was military influence that had persuaded a regional state to behave in a particular manner or if it had been the cumulative effect of years of Foreign Affairs engagement with that government or indeed the result of far more subtle influence by good-will NGOs. To try to disaggregate such complexly interrelated dynamics with any degree of certainty is probably futile and serves only to highlight that national power and influence is a complex and intricately connected web of many strands. However, developing and articulating clear, achievable and measurable strategic objectives are a first step in being able to measure performance and effect, thus a strategic air force would ensure it developed these and promoted them widely within its organisation. The positive measure of effect for Air Force therefore, would be that at it was able to contribute to the whole of government approach to shaping the environment and that, at its level and within its sphere of influence, it had the capacity to demonstrably influence other regional air forces.

46. Despite the difficulty in objectively measuring the effectiveness of strategic influence there are a range of criteria that we could reasonably expect a successful strategic organisation to satisfy, and these may well serve as approximate measures of effectiveness. A successful strategic air force would, for example, be able to effectively, coherently and persuasively communicate its strategic intent and its plans for achieving that intent to the government, other agencies and services and the general population through a range of suitable media. In communicating this intent a strategic air force would in effect be 'telling' a convincing story of who it is, what it is, and what it is able to accomplish in the service of the national interest. An accurate and convincing story must be an elegant but simple and clear enunciation of Air Force's values, vision and mission expounded as much through actions as words, consistent across the force and persistently presented so that it was well understood, excepted and embraced by all interested parties.

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47. There are many other criteria that a strategic air force would meet and, although not exhaustive, the following are some of the more important. An air force of influence would have its operating model emulated not only by other air forces but by other services and agencies as well. The inherent value and effectiveness of such an organisation would leave others no option but to want to copy its success. Ultimately, other organisations would even defend the position of a successful strategic air force and, when appropriate, argue their case for them. For example, as a successful air force of influence, Air Force would find Army and Navy, more often than not, arguing their case for capital acquisitions, procurement policy and doctrine in the joint arena with the clear understanding that what was good for Air Force was good for all the services and for Australia. A strategic air force would act positively to progress and enhance the development of a seamless joint and whole of government environment. A strategic air force would not only be very successful in attracting and retaining the services of highly competent people, but it would consistently and systematically produce first class leaders, thinkers and statesmen who were highly valued and sought after by government and external industry to fulfil significant positions of influence. A successful strategic air force, for example, would over time, count among the ranks of its past members a disproportionately high number of state governors, politicians, Governors General, CEOs of major industries, and all positions of upper echelon and command in Defence and government.

## Conclusion

48. Our Air Force is a dynamic organisation. It embodies an organisational structure, is sustained by people, possesses a culture, and exists to serve a purpose and function along prescribed lines. Air Force has a future, a past and a present. Of these, our history has shaped and fashioned our present. It has set the pattern of organisational behaviour and culture that colours all that the force does

today, how we perceive ourselves and how we are perceived by others. Unchecked, Air Force's past would determine its future also. Belief in the inevitability of this future relinquishes the steering of the force to a form of passive organisational Darwinism in which an evolutionary process that favours fitness to the present, determines the future. Fortunately, however, this is not the only model of future development. Air Force is also a thinking and proactive collective of intelligent and motivated individuals who are capable of actively shaping their future and that of the institution in a fashion and direction they so choose.

49. Faced with the choice of seizing control of its future or leaving this to others, Air Force has chosen to become a strategic force of influence disproportionately greater than its size. Not content to allow our past to necessarily dictate our future, we have decided to shape ourselves and our organisation so that it in turn might shape its present and its future to better deliver air power capability to our government. This choice is not one taken lightly or without careful and deliberate consideration, and it is one that comes with certain costs and some, albeit minimal, risk. It is a decision that, once taken, brings with it a range of consequent actions that we must collectively and individually commit to in order to achieve our objectives. Becoming a strategic force of influence will require change within three key areas: our organisational design; our force structure; and most importantly our culture through training and education. All of these changes are achievable for a force with determination, drive and vision. Air Force possesses all of these attributes and can achieve strategic status with dedicated and sustained effort probably within a decade. The changes required are not enormous and the vast majority of what we currently do will remain unchanged. What is fundamentally required, however, is the leadership and articulated intent toward this objective that only the Air Force senior leadership team can provide. This is the task we are committed to.

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## **Our challenge for the future**

50. Now, as ever, the future of the Air Force resides in the hands of those who guide its present. The challenge for us, the Air Force leadership today therefore, is to decide about deciding. This is a challenge only we can face, and it is a choice that should not be deferred. Air Force has a justifiably proud history. It has clearly enunciated doctrine for the present and a well articulated vision for the future in FASOC. Realising that future through a deliberate, sustainable and designed program is the responsibility for all of Air Force and it is our good fortune and responsibility to lead that endeavour.

*Our vision is:*

*To be a balanced  
expeditionary networked Air  
Force capable of achieving  
the Government's objectives  
through the swift  
and decisive application of  
air and space power in joint  
operations or as part of a  
larger coalition force*