



How to reframe the culture around Joint Force and become a strategic junior leader

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In today's strategic environment, the framework that is a traditional military is not fit for purpose and this is evident as Minister for Defence Peter Dutton wants the ADF to embrace asymmetric warfare offensively rather than defensively. If you're reading this as a member of Defence and thought about your present or future role in your respective service then this is the blog for you. We will inspire you to think strategically about the Joint Force so that the next time MINDEF makes a speech, you will be on the right track to becoming a strategic junior leader worthy of taking down the cultural barriers around Joint Force one barrier at a time, or maybe multiple?

If all you have is a hammer, everything seems like a nail! (Tanya Anderson)

The 2016 Defence White Paper identified the need for a joint force that is more consistently linked to its strategy rather than a federation of separate parts. This is good on paper but how has this intent been implemented? The general consensus is that junior leaders have not felt a shift towards a joint mentality.

Posted to the Joint environment as a junior leader offers the perspective that tri-service and multi-domain collaboration is occurring on some level but there is still a reluctance for

information and capability integration between the components. As the ADF stands up new capabilities, which beg consideration to kinetic and non-kinetic effects across multiple domains, reluctance to the Joint approach to warfare has no place in the modern ADF.

Joint integration should begin from initial training as there is no reason a member's first interaction with a sister service is on exercise or deployment. ADFA does this well with integration from day one of training. If we are to train the way we fight, it's time for ADF/Joint training to become the initial step into military life for all members. Tri-service positions should be included in most units and not reserved for Officers and SNCO's. No single person can be expected to have all the knowledge on Joint capability but every person should have the ability to reach into a sister service should the need arise.

How about Professional Joint Military Education? (Mikahla Hall)

With Defence emphasising the importance of Joint Force and encouraging members to leave the Service rivalry behind to equip a joint mindset, you would think there would be more concentration in enforcing this in educational opportunities such as Professional Military Education (PME), however presently the course only focuses on business skilling, leadership and air power.

Don't get me wrong, PME offers a great level of tactical and operational understanding and it's a great move for the Air Force's military education. However, it does not provide junior leaders with the strategic awareness on Joint Force that a dynamic ADF expects, therefore we are unable to provide options and see the strategic end state to National and Military strategic objectives.

To counter this, implementing a Joint Force tri-service module into PME will enable the junior leaders of all services to obtain a strategic mindset and provide a great opportunity for networking. This would also increase retention rate as members aren't just thinking 'like this, do that', they're being provided the opportunity to enable, to influence and to make decisions.

'Boots on the Ground' Strategic Policy Implementation (Fiona Ellis)

The Air Force Strategy (AFSTRAT) and Theatre Campaign Plans are critical documents that outline the RAAF's strategies both internally as an institution and externally as a contingent

of the joint force. These documents are essential to the function of the RAAF but are primarily outlined by senior leaders for senior leaders.

Junior leaders are not actively made part of the strategic conversation and therefore by their very nature, these strategic documents are written in a vague manner that provides minimal direction that is actionable by junior leaders. For example, the AFSTRAT illustrates the overall intent on intended changes to RAAF culture but leaves the actual steps required to achieve the “line of effort” up to personal interpretation. This format is an excellent tool for enabling discussions, however it alienates junior leaders as they have limited influence in order to actually make the required changes.

According to the 2019 Defence Census, 60% of the Air Force is made up of officer and enlisted junior leaders. Presently junior leaders are not being encouraged to take part in strategic discussions. Senior leadership needs to encourage junior leaders to join the conversation by exposing them to this information in a cohesive and actionable format by including them in the strategic planning.

Educating our people (Aaron New)

Our contribution to military power as junior leaders is our ability to influence the teams we are a part of through innovation, encouraging members to explore joint dynamics and opportunities, and using our own experiences to influence change.

Military power is our people therefore mentoring, coaching and leading by example develops the future generation, this is a massive part of making sure that military power is the best we can make it. Through shared experiences in a joint environment, our people can begin to understand the challenges faced by their peers both up and down the chain, and begin to form an understanding of the proficiencies of our sister services.

Giving time to prioritise the understanding of Air Power and joint force integration at the lower levels will allow our SGTs and CPLs to advocate in this space. We in the RAAF are very good at pushing our technical skills as well as our social skills through mandatory training and the like, but don't push our people into understanding the concepts of national power, and how we deliver on our core capabilities. A future workforce needs to at first understand

a whole of government approach to national power, in order for it to feel comfortable enough to influence the direction we are headed.

Although reshaping capability, training and education seems like a long battle, it's an offensive one (MINDEF approved) worthy of conducting to reframe the culture around Joint Force, and influencing our next generation to become the dynamic ADF Australia needs.

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