

# National Power: The Importance of Aligned Expectations

**Laila Engle, Kizzy Grice, Sitra Khan & Anthony Lotfi**

RAAF

**How well do Commanders know Aviator's understanding of National Power? Is there a knowledge gap? Does it matter?**

To provide some understanding of these questions, various senior officers were surveyed to gauge their understanding of national power amongst their junior workforce with regards to doctrine, government papers and the Air Force Strategy.

Executive leaders from the following Units kindly participated in the survey: Air Force Training Group Headquarters, Air Force Band, 452 Squadron Air Traffic Control, Air Mission Training School, and Air Force Test Ranges Squadron. The data collated was structured on a measurable scale, as shown below:

- 1 - No Understanding
- 2 - Limited understanding
- 3 - Could follow a conversation with colleagues
- 4 - Could contribute meaningfully to a conversation
- 5 - Could deliver a brief to the unit

The survey offered a structured methodology to engage with senior leadership and develop a deeper understanding of their expectations. We were fortunate throughout this process to have the opportunity to engage with a range of executives who lead across an array of specialisations, all of whom deliver Air and Space Power effects that feed into national power.

**Is there a knowledge gap and does it matter?**

Over the past decade, Air Force has directed significant resources to redesigning the Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) curriculum with the aim of stimulating cultural change to promote diverse innovative ideas and support opportunities for decentralised leadership. Air Power, in a general sense, is introduced in Initial Military Training, and taught throughout Professional Military Education modules. However, the ability for the junior workforce to assimilate this knowledge relies on how advanced their overall technical mastery is. The primary role of the junior workforce is to have an in-depth understanding of their trade and specialisation first and foremost. Once this has been achieved, other skills and knowledge can be developed

through exposure and professional development. However, this is not always achieved in a timely manner.

The data collected highlights the different expectations from our commanders on where our understanding should lie, which also differ to our individual expectations based on what we would like to achieve. Some executives believe their workforce has a very limited understanding of national power, while others have a perception that their junior workforce has a broader and deeper understanding of their national power contributions and could potentially deliver a brief to their unit providing they had support and preparation.

Most responses agreed with a requirement to foster a base level of expected knowledge that includes an awareness of strategic documents and doctrine. Beyond that, the time we invest and topics we focus on vary, depending on our commander's intent. The differences initiate a much more interesting and nuanced discussion around relevant, timely and specific training investment to support a fifth generation workforce.

### **What's the so what?**

From this, there are a few things we need to work on:

- 1 - The ability to articulate our individual and collective strategic value to a non-specialist audience is a valuable skill at every level.
- 2 - Understanding of strategic context supports creative thinking and problem solving that are essential to a future focussed, effective, professional workforce.
- 3 - A clear understanding of our role and contribution to national power can have a positive effect on sense of purpose, resilience and retention.
- 4 - The expectations of JPME, our commanders, and our guiding doctrine/strategies need to be aligned.
- 5 - Without clarity, we pave the way for professional confusion.

This is inherent to the impact the contemporary workforce has upon national power in various ways. It is important to address it using longer term plans that delve into the factors of this issue rather than what is on the surface. We can achieve this by gathering knowledge from the core or more central sources of information, being middle management, as they are at the level where policies and guidelines are written. If they are able to interpret information from the chain of command, senior leadership and government, they are also able to align our expectations and direct how we can turn our outputs into results. The requirement of mustering and unit-specific modules will enhance how we, as the junior workforce, draw links from our technical mastery to our professional, and social skills within the ADF. This can fill the gap that exists between the various levels of command.

The articulation and delivery Australian national power has recently seen itself in ever-changing diplomatic environments. This strategic environment requires the ADF to be readily deployable, and equipped with a workforce that feels empowered with the skills and masteries required in our given fields. Hence, there is a need for the Air Force to instil a hunger for knowledge, so we can move into a future force that provides meaningful contributions to Australia's national power. It is with a sense of job satisfaction, self-improvement and greater sense of purpose that we are likely to gain a stronger workforce, and sustain it.