

So you're posted to CASG - Part II

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Welcome back on the rollercoaster! For those of you that missed Part I, have a squiz on it here. Kicking on from where Part I abruptly ended, I argued that the Capabilities Acquisition and Sustainment Group (CASG) has an image problem and most of us do not want any part of it if given the choice. This, I pointed out, is an issue given the importance of CASG's role in delivering capability. You see, the problem with an image problem is that it dissuades people from knocking on your door for a job, as no one wants to work or be associated with an organisation that can't seem to deliver beer and skittles effectively nor efficiently. Sound about right?

Before we crack into Part II, Warning: the following may be contentious for some. As the CASG Air Domain Warrant officer (WOFF), I have no issues picking at some workforce scabs and admitting my aim to pinch from squadron's (SQN's) their best and brightest people into the Air Domain fold.

People: Our Greatest (CASG) Capability

Now, I have to admit that I am selfish in my aim to fill CASG with the best of the best. Defence employs a workforce of amazingly talented soldiers, sailors and aviators in SQN-land, and I want all of them in CASG—the sooner the better. Why? Because the depth of knowledge and experience they hold in operating, maintaining and 'logistifying' air and space capabilities is critical to the sustainment of those very same capabilities and the acquisition of their whiz-bang replacements. Having experienced workers with their fingers on the pulse who can tell you why the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) widget that is perfect for United States Navy (USN) carrier operations is totally unusable in Tindal are the key to 'getting air power capability.'

Being able to translate the hard-learned lessons of operating, maintaining and 'logistifying' air and space capabilities directly into AIR1234, WHEVEVR-SPO¹ is vital in delivering beer and skittles that are truly fit for purpose, not 'fit-ish'. The very same reason SQN's fight each other over high-flying personnel is the same reason I want them in CASG—they bring the goods on game day and elevate team performance. They're wired to spot the inconsequential parts of the acquisition contract that cause us trouble later on in the sustainment phase. They can express their frustration to the contracted logistics provider about how inconvenient it is to have red skittles that are located in Choiceland, a convenient squillion miles away and not nearby.. They know stuff about stuff, and that that stuff is somewhat important in protecting our stuff and breaking thine enemies' stuff. Quite simply, without the ability to tap directly into the best and brightest of SQN-land, CASG are at risk of being stuffed when it comes to delivering the all-important beer and skittles on time and on target.

For CASG to do its job, it needs the best people on the job: experienced, focused, committed people. Currently, CASG is filled to the gunwales with experienced, focused and determined Australian Defence Force (ADF), Australian Public Service (APS) and contractor workforce, and this has always been the case. The problem is that we don't have our

¹ AIR1234, WHEVEVR-SPO is an example of a project description. Projects are categorised into Air, Land, Sea and Joint followed by an alphanumeric characters, which identifies the project and phase. WHEVEVR-SPO refers to the assigned Systems Program Office that is responsible for the efficient and effective acquisition and in-service support.

squadrons top-tier aviators harassing the Directorate of Personnel (DP-AF) for their AIR1234, WHEVER-SPO position, chomping at the bit for the chance to get their hands dirty delivering ADF capabilities. I mean, who exactly, wants to be posted to CASG? Typically, CASG relies on getting lucky with the posting cycle, with System Program Offices (SPOs) and Projects keenly awaiting a rush of experienced, focused and committed newbies through the door every year. This, as you may have guessed or experienced, is not always the case (either at CASG or the SQN's). Sometimes it's the brand-new promotees who don't have the time in rank required for the role who waltz through the door. Sometimes it's the crusty old *insert rank here* who is only interested in telling warries. And yes, sometimes it's the bumbling 'techo' that falls for it every time they get tasked to grab some striped paint or a left-handed Philips screwdriver head from the tool store.

Now, before you press send on that very angry email, this is not to say that each and every newbie who inhabits a CASG cubicle can't and won't value-add in delivering critical beer and skittle capabilities. Just as in the SQN's, people grow and mature in their roles and this is no different in CASG. What is not the same though is the compounding factor of CASG's image problem, in that it's infinitely harder to turn someone's frown upside down when they fundamentally don't want to be in your organisation in the first place.

High performing teams require high performing players, and I want those high performers harassing DP-AF for their spot in the A-Grade team that is AIR1234, WHEVER-SPO. Sound fair? CASG is up against it given their apparent image problem, so what's the solution to attract our high-flyers into our SPO's and Projects? It's all in the marketing my friend, and which Part III will delve into.

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