

Lessons of the Latham saga

The recent publication of *The Latham Diaries* has generated much debate on a range of issues. From the national security policy point of view valuable lessons for the future can be drawn from Mark Latham's leadership of the ALP and the subsequent publication of his diary covering that period.

But first some background. In the second half of 2003, the ADA approached a senior frontbencher in both the Liberal and Labor parties who had no direct portfolio responsibilities for national security matters. In each case the frontbencher was regarded in their party as a 'thinker' and an up-and-comer. They were invited to contribute a philosophical analysis on the broad range of security challenges facing Australia and each was asked to avoid political 'tub-thumping'. The first article, *The West and its Challenges*, by Tony Abbott (then the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations), was published in the Spring 2003 issue of *Defender*. The second, by the then Shadow Treasurer, Mark Latham, was published in the Summer 2003/04 issue and it would be fair to say the request to avoid tub-thumping was ignored. The article was written in Late November, *Defender* was published on the first Monday in December and Mr Latham was elected Leader of the Opposition the next morning.

The Latham article, *Reversing Our March of Folly*, was mainly about Australia's role in the conflict with transnational Islamist terrorism. Several more general statements about defence self-reliance and Australia not being a 'baby nation', 'little colony' or 'junior nation' aroused the interest of the media, who thought they had a scoop on their hands. Throughout that week the ADA explained the circumstance of the article on many occasions. We noted that when Mark Latham wrote the article he had no idea he would be Opposition Leader by the time it was published. The ADA suggested he be given the benefit of the doubt for the more controversial or poorly-argued aspects.

On Tuesday 23 March 2004 Mark Latham made his apparently arbitrary statement on Sydney talkback radio that Australia's contingent to Iraq would be withdrawn by Christmas should Labor win office in the impending election. Later that morning the ADA contacted a senior member of Mark Latham's staff to discuss the issue. The Association asked whether the Opposition Leader had been misquoted and was advised that he had not. We suggested that the comments unnecessarily raised the operational security risk to the Australian contingent in Iraq, especially as the insurgents did not have a nuanced understanding of

Australian domestic politics and might escalate their attacks against the contingent through a belief this might hasten its withdrawal. The ADA further advised that it would have to note this concern if asked by the media and that it hoped the Opposition Leader might qualify, clarify or withdraw his remarks at an early opportunity.

Despite several opportunities, no such qualification, clarification or withdrawal eventuated. When answering subsequent media enquiries the ADA described the withdrawal statement as 'probably not conducive to the operational security of the Australian contingent'. Addressing the matter as part of a wider issue, Association opinion columns published in several newspapers that week called on all parties to exercise restraint and avoid politicking that might result in increased threats to overseas defence force contingents.

Over the next few months this and subsequent examples of Mark Latham's apparent difficulties in grasping matters of national strategy were smoothed over by Kevin Rudd, Chris Evans and later Kim Beazley and Robert McClelland. Few who watched Kevin Rudd turn himself inside out on *Lateline* the week of the Iraq withdrawal statement, valiantly claiming that the Opposition Leader had not made the decision arbitrarily and had done so after consultation with the Shadow Cabinet, will forget the sight of the verbal acrobatics involved. Such matters were subsequently discussed in the July and October 2004 issues of the ADA's monthly bulletin, *Defence Brief*. The relative silence of Mark Latham on defence issues over this period, and the return of Kim Beazley as Opposition Spokesman on Defence, stemmed in part from growing Labor unease that the Opposition Leader's anti-American stances, and general weaknesses in defence and foreign policy matters, were likely to lose many votes.

With the recent publication of *The Latham Diaries* we now know just how bad the situation really was. Rather than his unguarded comments signalling no substantive departure from longstanding and mature Labor policy on defence matters, which was the spin at the time, the diaries confirm they were the product of Mark Latham's real, if inchoate, beliefs. This has naturally generated discussion on what might have occurred had Labor won the last federal election, especially as several other caucus members appear to have similar ill-informed or unformed views on the cost-benefit equations underlying the US alliance. Notwithstanding subsequent assurances from several Labor frontbenchers that Mr Latham would have been removed from office if he needlessly threatened Australia's alliance with the US, the whole episode produces some interesting questions and

lessons that transcend party politics and the current political hubbub.

A key question is how Mr Latham, then commonly regarded as an innovative thinker in many areas, could have persisted with such intellectually threadbare beliefs about national strategy in general and our alliance with the US in particular. On the evidence published in his diaries and his subsequent comments, Mr Latham's grasp of the relevant aspects of international relations and Australian economics, history, geography and national strategic capacity are, to say the least, poor.

Certainly he appears not to have understood that for generations the US alliance has allowed Australia to divert significant national expenditure away from defence to spending on social policy issues. Moreover, in the diaries New Zealand is described as the 'safest country on earth' and this is attributed solely to its foreign policy being much more independent of American ties. Even if this gross oversimplification is accepted as valid (which it is not), the contribution of other geo-strategic factors such as history, geography, and continuing Australian and US subsidisation of regional stability and New Zealand's defence, are simply ignored or not understood. Finally, the diaries attribute public support for the US alliance as being supposedly and solely based on popular fears of Indonesia, rather than commonsense appreciations of a range of factors dealing with Australia's place in the world in strategic, historical, moral and economic terms. Quite frankly, these Latham statements are undergraduate-level assumptions and prejudices (at best) seeking to masquerade as mature or balanced argument.

Domestic politics and its pursuit are not the be-all and end-all of national life. Australia's way of life interacts constantly with wider, and increasingly more fluid, international strategic circumstances. The key lesson of the Latham experiment is surely that no political party should again offer a candidate for national leadership so intellectually unprepared for the international dimensions of governing Australia. Candidates for prime-minister also need to be given the opportunity to broaden and deepen their experience in intermediate constitutional offices of importance (particularly if their previous life experience outside politics is minimal). This is obviously a problem for parties enduring long periods of opposition, but can be surmounted with a sufficient range of relevant shadow portfolios (not just what they want to do) and programs of post-graduate level education and serious foreign travel. As discussed in the April 2005 issue of *Defence Brief*, in the context of succession planning in the Liberal Party,

the practice until the early 1970s was that any serious contender for the prime ministership needed to have held at least two of the three major portfolios of state: treasury, defence and foreign affairs. The long-term national interest would be well served by a return to this convention rather than portfolios being allotted more as a result of personality, parliamentary jockeying and party or factional patronage. ♦



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Relieving disasters

Recent controversy in the United States after devastating hurricanes highlights the problems that can be caused when politicians at all levels of government neglect their contingency planning and preparations for natural disasters, and then try to shift the blame for their mistakes to the other levels. There are several reasons why so much when wrong in the US, not least being the difficulty of protecting a major city located below sea level, surrounded by bodies of water in a hurricane-prone climate. Difficulties with community spirit in poorer urban areas also hampered pre-emptive and post-incident emergency measures at the local level.

Emergency planning is based on the simple principle that disasters are best tackled from the bottom up, with local emergency teams being used first, followed by regional, state and national supplementation as each level runs out of resources to handle the matter. In Australia the various, largely volunteer and community-spirited, state emergency and rural fires services, together with the police forces, cover the local, regional and State responsibilities. Emergency Management Australia (EMA) co-ordinates the federal responsibility, much of which is usually provided by the defence force.

Disasters can be caused natural phenomena, man-made accident or by terrorist or military attack. We can, of course, bask in our better-organised community-based response resources and the success with which Australia has prepared

current comment

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for and coped with recent natural disasters and chemical spills, although the extensive bushfires which seriously damaged parts of Canberra in 2003 were not a high point in this latter regard. On the other hand, we can seriously study recent American experiences for the lessons they teach when large-scale disasters overwhelm emergency responses at the local, regional and state levels, and the federal level is slow to recognise this and respond because it depends on the state level realising this first. This would particularly be the case with major terrorist attacks where mass casualties could easily overwhelm all available medical resources and, in cases of chemical, biological and radiological attack, our incident-response capabilities are limited and greatly dependent on (federally controlled) defence force elements. ♦

Much ado about nothing really

When the Commonwealth first proposed the most recent round of updates to counter-terrorism legislation much of the ensuing public debate was swamped by precipitate, overly-pessimistic and even outlandish claims from our myriad civil liberties lobbies. Further artificial controversies were generated when various multiculturalism zealots and the more extreme fringes of the Muslim community made unfounded claims that the proposals somehow discriminated against all Australia's Muslims.

As the ADA remarked ruefully at the time in several newspaper opinion articles and media discussion programs: 'it often seems that the quickest way to get trampled in public debate at present is to stand between a professed civil libertarian and the opportunity a microphone presents for knee-jerk criticism. Although a close second would be to stand between any rostrum and a politician seeking to scare up some votes, either way, by appealing to sectional prejudices or suspicions'.

ADA public comment has consistently noted that most commentators appeared unaware or simply ignored the historical background to such issues, not least their constitutional basis. Several significant High Court decisions in both World Wars established the principle that the defence and internal security heads of power in the constitution wax and wane depending on the threat. This is why we had relatively draconian national security regulations controlling many areas of national life during World War II, but why the Communist Party Dissolution Act was struck down by the High Court in 1951 because the threat at that time did not justify the severity of the measure.

As an example, during both World Wars, national security regulations authorised the internment of those reasonably suspected of harbouring enemy sympathies. Internment incorporated appropriate judicial oversight and other safeguards, and mainly involved foreign citizens from countries with which Australia was at war. It also included small numbers of Australian citizens with political sympathies or other beliefs in favour of Australia's enemies — where these were serious enough to threaten national security if such citizens were allowed to remain at large in the community. A common belief is that communists

largely comprised the latter category but this was not the case, even during the September 1939 to June 1941 period when the USSR co-operated with Nazi Germany in the dismemberment of Poland and the Baltic republics. The largest group of those interned (some 33 persons) were members of the 'All For Australia Movement', a group of ultra-nationalists, who were so opposed to the British Empire that they evinced strong support for Japan instead. The overall key point is that measures such as internment are constitutionally legal and otherwise justified during time of conflict, but not otherwise.

Australian history offers many examples where the end of the world was forecast if certain security or criminal justice measures were or were not adopted. More to the point in this case, much of the debate about striking a balance between free speech and security has occurred before, during previous threats from the 1920s onwards, with only the labels of the extremists being different. Over the years Australia has faced down internal threats of varying degrees from anarchists, wobblers, nazis, various kinds of communist and a range of separatist-supporting émigré groups. On each occasion, Aussie tolerance and commonsense has won out, especially over the long run. As a national community we will successfully face down Islamist terrorism and we will do so much quicker if we remain cool-headed and realistically tolerant.

Unfortunately many of those purporting to speak on civil liberties grounds have needlessly stoked the fires of suspicion and even paranoia. The debate (if it can even be graced as a debate at times) has also spurned a plethora of new 'civil liberties' or 'human rights' lobbies, many of them largely unknown outside the specific media interview concerned. The level of uninformed comment has also been magnified by radio and television panel discussion and talkback programs being put to air with insufficient critical judgement being applied. At a time when community opinion must be nourished by informed and balanced views, and calm discussion, we have too often seen the quoting or broadcasting of politically-biased viewpoints and extreme, unsubstantiated and unsubstantiable claims. Furthermore, the latter types of claim have frequently emanated from various civil liberties and ethnic community splinter groups of doubtful representative legitimacy, intellectual provenance or general accountability. Many of the views broadcast could not be described otherwise than as the vapourings of the politically obsessed or the ranting of cranks.

Finally, as the ADA predicted, the Commonwealth's proposals for increased security measures always had to be negotiated with state and territory governments of the opposite political hue. This can be a good thing in potentially controversial matters, especially where the controversy is more apparent than real or where it involves constitutional or other fundamental principles of government. The Commonwealth government's professed aversion to sunset clauses stemmed from a realisation that those included in earlier measures were far too short. The 10-year period now agreed is a far more realistic period. The only alternative would be to follow the historical precedent of 'until hostilities

cease'. This would obviously be difficult in a conflict with terrorist enemies, where a formal and universal surrender is unlikely, and a unilateral government declaration that hostilities are over might even spur terrorist remnants to further atrocities

The real argument about these new counter-terrorist measures has never really been about whether such measures are justified. Irrespective of whether a government is conservative or Labor, the responsibilities of government tend to concentrate the minds of those doing the governing. In a situation of obviously increased threat from international Islamist terrorism, and in one where there are clearly domestic extremists sympathetic to Islamist ideology, the real argument has always been about the nature and extent of the safeguards required.

The simple fact that the nine politically disparate governments involved swiftly agreed to the reforms is testament to both the need for them and the quality of the safeguards incorporated. Despite the hyperbole of the critics, the new measures are not a threat to freedom of speech or legitimate peaceful dissent. This will not, of course, lessen the prophecies of doom from the 'civil liberties' jeremiahs.

Nor will it dampen ridiculous claims of discrimination from the extremist fringes of the Muslim community and those with an inadequate understanding of mainstream, moderate, Islam. Obviously these extremists have a sectional interest in incorrectly portraying the measures as somehow being attacks on Islam or as somehow directed at all Muslims. To paraphrase Mandy Rice-Davies in another context: 'they would say that, wouldn't they?' The extremists are hardly likely to acknowledge that the measures legitimately target the terrorism that springs (at least in part) from the minority and bigoted variations of Islam that the extremists espouse. If persisted with, such false claims will become a hate crime. If claims of this nature intentionally or irresponsibly lead to violence they are clearly seditious and should be vigorously prosecuted as such.

This said, legitimate sensitivities within Australia's Muslim community must not be inflamed by uninformed accusations from those who see an anti-civil liberties conspiracy behind every gum tree or, on the other extreme, by those who fail to recognise that the Islamist extremists do not represent, are not representative of, and are not supported by, the vast bulk of Australia's Muslims. ♦

More old lessons learnt


In regard to national security legislation and practice we are learning few new lessons but re-learning many old ones. The measures being introduced generally reflect longstanding recommendations from several inquiries, and other more recent advice from legal, law enforcement and security intelligence sources. Most of them close potential loopholes or structural weaknesses in existing laws or practices, some of which stretch back long before the current terrorist threat.

Most of the measures are essentially procedural in effect and do not significantly affect traditional civil liberties. These include enlarged provision for random bag searches and extension of CCTV systems to better protect those


using mass transport or attending large public events. Other procedural measures include extended periods of validity for search warrants, broadened federal police authority to stop and search where they have reasonable grounds to believe a terrorist crime might be involved, and tightened laws against the financing of terrorist groups.

In one final procedural area, covering extensions to the nature and type of terrorist groups that can be proscribed, the major change is to allow proscription without such groups being banned by the UN first. Relying on the UN's unwieldy, inefficient and potentially politically corrupt processes is no longer feasible. This was a point of contention between the Coalition and Labor in the past, but is unlikely to be so now given it has become common practice in the UK and several major western countries.

Only in the use of control orders and preventative detention do the measures break new ground in recent practice — but not really in established principle. The control orders are intended to work like apprehended violence orders. They are really an extension of the old criminal offence of consorting, in that they might limit the travel or association of those reasonably judged to pose an unacceptable terrorist risk. Preventative detention for up to 14-day periods is quite mild in comparison to the internment used in previous conflicts. Such detention is intended to prevent the destruction of evidence, forestall further attacks (once one has occurred) and generally cool down volatile situations. Given the numerous



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safeguards involved, detention would be most unlikely to be used with much frequency, or to apply to other than a very small number of persons in most unusual circumstances.

In two more general areas, sedition and citizenship, the measures reflect more philosophical changes and address fundamental questions of national unity in times of increased threat. These reforms are clearly intended to partially reverse the swing of the cultural policy pendulum from the more divisive effects of multiculturalism back towards the need for greater national cohesion.

In particular, the sedition laws are to be updated to better deter or prosecute those who betray their fellow Australians by inciting violence within the community in order to change our way of life through undemocratic means. The measures also cover those who betray their citizenship and community responsibilities by supporting Australia's enemies — particularly by undertaking actions designed to undermine the operational effectiveness, security or morale of the defence force in its prosecution of military operations in our common defence.

It was weaknesses in this area, for example, that precluded prosecution in the late 1960s and early 1970s of those who *actively* supported the forces fighting Australian troops in South Vietnam. The new measures are clearly targeted against the incitement or active support of violence. Legitimate and peaceful dissent would, of course, continue to be unaffected although this may be disputed by those with perhaps broader definitions of legitimate and peaceful. Active sedition, such as recruiting people to fight, collecting funds in order to aid and abet Australia's enemies or willfully sabotaging our defence capabilities, will be a clear offence (and, if their intent was to overthrow the legitimate government by illegal means, more clearly treasonable).

With regard to citizenship the qualification period of permanent residence will increase from two to three years, security checks of prospective citizens are to be restored, and cancellations of citizenship can now be based on criminal offences committed between when citizenship approvals are given and when they are taken up. Most Australians would no doubt be surprised that the security checking of citizenship applicants was ever stopped, but stopped it was in one of our periodic bouts of political correctness cancelling out commonsense. Similarly, increasing the probationary


period to qualify as an Aussie has also been progressively lessened over recent decades (it used to be 5-15 years) and will now be restored to at least the three years it was reduced to by the Whitlam Government. In comparable countries of settlement by mass immigration it is generally even longer (in New Zealand, 3-5 years and in the USA, 5 years). In most Asian countries it is 10-25 years. It could well be argued that we are still needlessly cheapening our citizenship by giving it away before applicants have sufficiently proved their change of allegiance to our democratic, pluralist and secular constitutional system and its supporting way of life.

The reforms to our counter-terrorism, sedition and citizenship laws are justified and reasonable, and do not constitute an over-reaction by the Commonwealth and State governments. ♦

Helping Japan face its past

Even in the 60th anniversary year of the end of World War II the recent anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki again brought forth much barrow-pushing on modern nuclear issues, rather than an appropriate commemoration based on the facts and, just as importantly, considered reflections of their meaning for contemporary strategic stability in East Asia. The Asia-Pacific region still suffers from Japan's failure to properly face its past. Even ruthless dictatorships such as China and North Korea are able to divert attention from calls for democratisation by regular beating of the Japanese atrocity drum.

Japan's real acceptance in modern Asia will not advance until the Japanese — as the Germans have — teach their young people the truth. Japan must honestly confront its appalling World War II record and the atrocity of continuing to deny it. Poor or biased international and Japanese media coverage of the nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki does not help either side move forward in such a debate. Japanese casualty figures, then and since, have too often been greatly exaggerated. Japan's prior aggression is ignored or hidden behind bogus claims of liberating fellow Asians from colonialism. Widespread Japanese atrocities are omitted, denied or downplayed. On 06 August this year, 11 hours of coverage on the main Japanese television channel was



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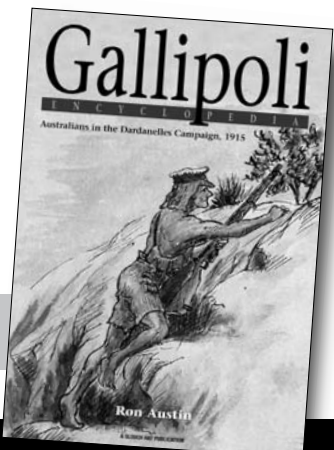
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still insufficient to mention Japan's campaigns of overseas aggression.

The marked allied reluctance to use the atomic bomb to end World War II is too easily ignored or forgotten. Absurd claims are even made that the Japanese were singled out for nuclear punishment only because they were Asians. Anyone with access to objective accounts (which unfortunately excludes most Japanese school history texts) can easily learn how development of the atomic bomb was only finished in mid 1945 — after Germany and her European allies had surrendered.

The factual ignorance and silly claims perpetuate the corrosive and backwards-looking myth of innocent or unique Japanese victimhood. They divert due attention from Japan's marked record of international aggression beginning with her attack on China in 1931. Most Koreans would date this back to 1911. From 1931-45 millions of Asians were killed as a result of deliberate Japanese policy or neglect. This was often by means or in pursuit of ends, such as the 1937 Rape of Nanking and the construction of the Burma Railway, well outside accepted norms of international humanitarian law both then and now.

The prime motivation for using the atomic bomb as a last resort was the desire to prevent the massive loss of allied and Japanese life that an otherwise unavoidable invasion of mainland Japan would have entailed. There were no other sustainable alternatives to considerable slaughter stretching into late 1946 at least. The Allies' Potsdam Declaration therefore warned Japan to surrender by 30 July 1945 or face 'destructive power immeasurably greater than before'. Leaflets spelling out the declaration were dropped over 11 principal Japanese cities in late July. Japan officially rejected the ultimatum on 29 July — one week before the strike on Hiroshima.

A convincing demonstration using an uninhabited target was not feasible. Even after Hiroshima and Nagasaki many Japanese militarists wanted to fight on. Only the ostensible intervention of Emperor Hirohito brought capitulation — and eventually peace and relative democracy to Japan. Centres of world cultural significance, such as Kyoto, were deliberately not targeted for nuclear attack. Far from being indiscriminate, the allies took a clear moral and strategic decision that targets must include both important military and industrial installations, thus exemplifying the collective security and coercive principles underlying the Potsdam Declaration (and the later UN Charter).

About 45,000 were killed at Hiroshima and around 25-40,000 at Nagasaki. Every year, Japanese sources and unquestioning journalists quote ever-more inflated figures. The relatively small number of casualties was even cited by those Japanese who advocated fighting on after the two nuclear strikes. Far from Hiroshima and Nagasaki being unique in their suffering, the relatively small number of casualties from two isolated nuclear strikes pales into relative insignificance against the frequent large-scale conventional bombing raids on, for example, London, Hamburg and Tokyo. Furthermore, post-strike deaths from radiation have

been relatively minimal — as they have been among the allied Prisoners of War imprisoned near the epicentre of both blasts.

Most modern comment also ignores Japan's contemporaneous quest for nuclear weapons. Hastening their development was even urged in the Diet in February 1944. Finally, but quite importantly, being forced to surrender so quickly prevented the carrying out of the high-level order to murder all surviving allied Prisoners of War in Japanese hands.

Asia as a whole can only move on if the Japanese seize the opportunity to understand why such exemplary punishment was delivered to them in August 1945, and why Winston Churchill described those atomic bombs as a 'miracle of deliverance for a war-weary world'. ♦

Fighting women not gender war

Women have been employed in the ADF in a wide range of combat roles for well over a decade. In the Navy they are employed on all ships, submarines and minor war vessels. The only employment category in the Navy limited to males is clearance diving. In the Air Force females are employed in all roles except for the ground (infantry) defence of airbases and some technical jobs requiring the regular use of chemicals known to be hazardous during pregnancy. In the Army females are employed everywhere except in infantry



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battalions, armoured regiments (both tank and cavalry), artillery regiments and combat engineer units.

The principle involved is that females are not employed in units where the prime purpose of the unit, most of the time, is direct combat in an up-close-and-personal sense. Women are employed in roles where force is applied from a distance, and in roles where you might have to get up-close-and-personal as a secondary task occasionally (such as driving a logistics vehicle resupplying the Army's combat manoeuvre elements).

The battlefield is an unforgiving environment where the laws of physics and bio-mechanics apply without necessarily respecting academic gender equity theory. Operational capability is the prime determinant of employment policy. For a range of operational, moral, and occupational health and safety reasons, it would not be fair to female soldiers to expect them to directly fight enemy male soldiers in a physical sense as a permanent core part of their job. Some would win but most would lose, even if only eventually.

It also needs to be remembered that about half of the US casualties in Iraq are occurring in other than combat manoeuvre (infantry, armour, artillery or combat engineers) units. No-one on the modern battlefield is shielded from some exposure to combat. All may have to fight as at least a secondary task in their employment.

Recent changes to the employment of females do not mean they will be employed in those types of combat role where direct, personal, physical combat with the enemy is the core business of the job. The minor reforms involved are, however, a commonsense change to the application of existing principles. For example, if female soldiers serving with a signals squadron can be temporarily attached to the headquarters of an infantry battalion, sharing the same conditions and dangers, it seems an anomaly that females cannot also serve with that battalion headquarters. The changes will allow female soldiers to serve in the headquarters of combat manoeuvre units and with their logistic support subunits. Only male soldiers will continue to be employed in the infantry rifle companies, tank squadrons, cavalry squadrons, artillery batteries and combat engineer squadrons that form the teeth parts of those combat manoeuvre units.

There will always be some who see this as an issue of supposed gender equity only. They therefore fear that women are somehow being unlawfully or unethically discriminated against because they are prevented from employment in direct combat roles. On the other side of the fence are those who see the employment of women in any form of combat as somehow inherently destructive of the moral fabric of society, especially ideal motherhood and the sanctity of the family. In the middle are those who approach this issue from a strictly utilitarian basis — what is best for Australia's defence based on empirical analysis of the issues?

After all, we invest large sums in our national defence and the operational requirements of the defence force should primarily influence any decision on force composition and employment. Too many advocates in the first and second

categories above seem to forget or ignore what we have a defence force for, and why it is quite a different organisation to virtually all others in our society. Defence forces exist solely to deter or win wars by efficiently applied violence. A large part of this role involves a readiness and capacity to engage in actual battle. Even the most modern battlespace involves abnormal and often prolonged conditions of physical effort, psychological trauma, destruction, death, injury and general mayhem. Even police forces and fire services do not face the scale, tempo, complexity and repercussions of bloodshed involved.

Some modern battle involves killing by the operation of complex technology or the indirect or longer range application of force. This is gender-neutral operationally and enables females to join the fray as fighter pilots or aboard submarines for example. Much battle, however, still depends on direct, physical, to the death, close confrontations, often on an individual-to-individual basis. This is rarely gender-equal.

Contrary to recurring myth, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) employs female personnel in a far wider range of roles than most of the world's armed forces (including Israel). We have female sailors on our warships, female

'the battlefield is an unforgiving environment where the laws of physics and biomechanics apply without necessarily respecting academic gender equity theory'.

fighter and helicopter pilots, and female diggers in nearly every part of our ground forces. Our employment policies in this regard do not differ much, if at all, from comparable countries

such as the USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand and indeed most 'Western' countries. Where they do differ, this tends to be because we employ females more broadly or more flexibly. Those countries alleged to have broader employment of females are invariably 'Western' countries - and ones with little or no modern experience of combat. In many cases, such as Germany which conscripts only men, the examples cited are simply wrong.

The ADF employs females in many roles where they may, on occasion, be forced by circumstances to engage in some close combat. But this is only where such fighting is a secondary role, is of a temporary duration or is for the protection of themselves or others. The rationale for this is essentially based on operational needs for levels of physical strength, physical power and load-carrying stamina not met by most women (and many men). Extensive peacetime Canadian and British testing with both all-female and mixed-gender infantry subunits has shown there are also teamwork maintenance and durability reasons, but the prime reason is the physicality.

The situation is strongly analogous to premier-grade sporting teams in physical contact sports. After all, even the most ardent feminist ideologue does not bat an eyelid in protest that first-grade Australian rules, rugby union and rugby league teams have no female players or that our top boxers are all men. Similarly, no one appears to seriously question that mixed-gender teams in sports such as netball have limitations on the number of men allowed in each team. Furthermore, where contact sports are played by women, such as rugby and boxing, some of the physical contact rules

are modified for safety reasons. Similarly, although at first glance non-contact competitive sports such as target pistol shooting should be open to both genders on an equal basis, Olympic competition in this sport is now segregated again to offer female contestants the opportunity to compete at this level.

The battlefield, however, is an environment largely without such rules where direct or close combat is concerned. Even the most fervent or well-intended ideals for gender equality cannot change the physical realities and long history involved.

It is also an unfortunate fact of history and Australia's strategic situation that many of our past and potential adversaries have not sprung from societies and cultures imbued with our beliefs in the rule of law, civilised behaviour and modern ideas of gender equality. The types of people we tend to fight are not those who make allowances for our sensitivity to gender equality issues. In many cases they would simply not understand them or would regard them with contempt. As an example, during the 1991 war to liberate Kuwait, most of the US female personnel captured in Iraq were sexually assaulted or raped.

There are sound moral, operational and equity reasons why Australia employs females broadly in our defence force. For the same balance of reasons such employment, by necessity, is not total. ♦

association update

Annual General Meeting

At the AGM held at the Naval and Military Club in Melbourne on 28 August 2005 David Forbes and Tom Magee were re-elected, and Michael Lovell was elected, to the ADA Board of Directors. The meeting also noted the death of longstanding ADA Fellow, John McKenna (see below), and passed a vote of thanks to Ian Bostock on his retirement from the Board. ♦

Vale John McKenna

One of the Australia Defence Association's moving spirits and an original guarantor, John Walter McKenna, died on 09 August 2005, aged 76. Although John was too young for service in World War II and too old for post-war National Service, he always maintained a deep concern for Australia's defence. He understood very clearly that political support for adequate defence was, in Australia, a fragile plant that needed the fertilising of ideas and the sustained weeding out of populist distractions.

For a person with his extensive family and business commitments, John had immense energy and was active in a wide range of organisations, especially in the field of human rights. In his mind, this was linked with defence through a conviction that societies committed to peace and justice for all did not just happen but resulted from an endless struggle against powerful forces of oppression. In an age dominated by utilitarianism rather than principle, John was a man of faith who believed in the famous words attributed to Edmund Burke that 'for the triumph of evil it is necessary only that good people do nothing.'

The ADA was represented at John's funeral by former executive director, Michael O'Connor, and a large contingent of Association members from the Melbourne Chapter. The Association thanks John's family for his service and offers its condolences to John's second wife, Margaret, his seven children (including retired Brigadier Tim McKenna) and his 21 grandchildren. ♦

Melbourne Chapter Lunch

The Melbourne-Geelong Chapter of the ADA is holding a luncheon meeting on Thursday 24 November 2005 at the Naval & Military Club, 27 Little Collins Street in the City, from 12 noon (with lunch served at 12:30). The meeting will be addressed by Robert McClelland, MP, the Labor Party Shadow Spokesman on Defence.

Members and supporters are encouraged to bring guests. All those attending need to book and pay in advance, by cheque or credit card, by advising the Club on 9250-6123. The cost of the luncheon is \$30 per head. Inquiries concerning the function should be directed to melbourne@ada.asn.au or the ADA national office on (02) 6231-4444. ♦

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