

## Snap Shots

This much larger than usual omnibus issue of *Defender* (to help catch up for delays in publication) addresses topics across the spectrum of strategic policy, capability development and operations. Dr Paul Monk's essay addresses the intellectual big picture of how we should conceptually frame our most basic thinking about strategic policy-making. While a longer article than those the journal normally runs, the truly fundamental importance of his topic and the logic of his approach makes this a very interesting and enlightening read. Dr Monk also joins the editorial board of *Defender* from the next issue. After his many thought-provoking articles and book reviews in recent years we feel confident our diverse readership will welcome him aboard.

Another Canadian contributor, Dr James Boutillier, analyses why we are in the midst of the most dynamic maritime era in living memory and how strategic concerns about the security of sea-lanes-of-communication (SLOCs) are only one aspect of this globalised dynamism. The review essay by Andrew Shearer discusses many of the same points.

Ric Smith discusses the seeming paradox that 'east of Mumbai the guns are silent' but no-one is reducing defence spending. In terms of inter-State conflict Asia has been peaceful for a generation, and certainly the most peaceful it has been in a century, yet most countries continue to see a need to increase their defence capabilities. He also examines the changing roles of armed forces across the region and, from the practical rather than the conceptual angle, touches on several of the same themes and issues also described by Paul Monk.

In *the Sharp End*, recently retired Major General Jim Molan contributes a punchy refutation of commonly expressed myths and legends about Afghanistan, its history and the current international assistance effort there. If his words could be reported and understood on all the blog sites purporting to discuss such matters public debate would be much better informed.

With nearly double the number of book reviews, and five of them review essays, this issue covers a far wider range of recent publishing than we are usually able to do, and includes historical, military professional, defence capability, foreign and strategic policy, and international ethics issues.

In closing, we advise that the next issue of *Defender* will be the last for our longtime editor, Dr Malcolm Kennedy. After some 25 years of editing the journal from its birth, and after recovering from a serious illness, Malcolm is understandably retiring from the day-to-day fray to concentrate on his family and his health. The next issue of *Defender* will feature his farewell essay looking back on an often tumultuous quarter century of debate about Australian defence and strategic policy. ♦

## Nightmares long remembered

By far the two worst modern failures by Australian governments to meet their defence responsibilities were the Hawke Government's 1991 Force Structure Review (FSR) and the Howard Government's 1997 Defence Efficiency Review (DER). Many of today's depleted capabilities, inefficiencies and systemic problems resulted from their narrow terms of reference (in pursuit of pre-conceived outcomes), ideological motivations and the ill-conceived and largely bogus 'reform' programs that followed each 'review'.

As the editorial in this issue of *Defender* notes, as well as continuing the rebuilding of the ADF after decades of comparative neglect (by both Labor and Coalition governments) throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the Rudd Government has to overcome some quite deep-seated community and corporate memories about the failures of the Labor governments concerned. The ill-thought through and politically opportunist FSR, for example, slashed the size of the ADF by some 30 per cent and foolishly abolished several of the capabilities we subsequently most needed in East Timor in 1999 and afterwards. The FSR has cast an especially long and baleful shadow. Even today, nearly two decades later, its effects still limit ADF capabilities and the consequent choices available to government about our national strategic options and our ability to mount and sustain operational commitments.

The Rudd Government therefore needs to emulate Caesar's wife in being above suspicion about both its commitment to its defence responsibilities generally and its commitment to its 2007 election promises in particular. As preparations for the 2009/10 budget ramp up, it is important that the Government not try to repeat the blatant pea and thimble tricks it has apparently stooped to perpetrate in its first budget after winning office. ♦

## Staring down yet another slippery slope

In March 2008, long before the global financial crisis rendered budget surpluses untenable, the fight was apparently on in earnest within the new Rudd Government to rein in expenditure across the board. The defence budget is the fifth largest federal outlay. As the only wholly federal function among the major categories of national investment, however, the Defence allocation is disproportionately visible politically – and commonly regarded both politically and bureaucratically as a great consumer of money and a rather unproductive one economically at that. It was firmly in the sights of the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) as it