

# Pursuing the Total Force: Strategic Guidance for the Australian Defence Force Reserves in Defence White Papers since 1976

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Recent events including the re-election of the Morrison government in July 2019 and speeches from the new Minister of Defence, Senator Linda Reynolds, and the Chief of the Defence Force, General Angus Campbell, have added to the discussion on a new Australian Defence White Paper (DWP)<sup>1</sup>. Proponents argue that a new DWP is required for reasons including a changing strategic situation, emerging interstate conflict short of war (called grey zone operations), great power tensions and the diminishing power of the United States. Furthermore, new technology including Artificial Intelligence, autonomous systems, hypersonic missiles and cyber weapons may change the character of the next war from those fought in the past. These factors support a rethink on Defence policy and the force structure and capability development priorities that flow from it.

A significant portion of the uniformed personnel serving in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) are part-time, traditionally referred to as 'Reserves'. These personnel serve the three Services—the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), Army and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)—in several different or 'less than full-time' arrangements, now known as Service Categories. Australia has a rich history of citizens participating in part-time military service, particularly the Army which was, prior to 1948, predominantly part-time, apart from the World War periods when large volunteer expeditionary forces were raised separately and served overseas. Part-time force elements remain in most Western defence forces due to cost effectiveness and the strategic flexibility they can provide. Since 1999 Australian Reserves have been utilised at an unprecedented level to support the ADF's operational deployments; about 18 per cent of ADF forces on operations have been Reservists.

Despite the recent prominent employment of Reservists at home and overseas, and their excellent performance, the number of Reservists declined to an all-time low in 2016 due to slackening recruitment and high turnover. These trends suggest that Defence is not according sufficient priority to the Reserves. There is also evidence that Defence is uncertain about the utility of the Reserves. For example, the most recent Army Research Development Plan poses the question: "Are the Reserves being used efficiently? Is the existence of Reserves contrary to the notion of military professionalism?"<sup>2</sup> Implicit in this two-part research question is a condescending attitude to the Reserves.

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1 From this point in the article 'Defence White Paper' will be abbreviated to 'DWP' and followed by the year of issue where relevant. So 'Defence White Paper 1976' will be abbreviated to 'DWP 1976'.

2 Australian Army, *Army Research and Development Plan: Arts and Humanities* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2016), pp. 14-17.

Strategic guidance should specify employment and set priorities for generic force preparation of the Reserves. This paper examines contemporary strategic guidance in DWP 2016 and analyses earlier DWPs to discern the nature and character of present and past guidance. The purpose is to discover if there are legacies and lessons from past and contemporary strategic guidance that impact on Australia getting the best from its Reserves.

The paper makes a number of telling observations. These include: strategic guidance related to the Reserves has shifted over time; paradoxically more has been demanded from the Reserves in every DWP as resources for the Reserves have dwindled; the Reserves content in DWPs peaked in DWP 1994 and has steadily diminished to its lowest level in the most recent DWP in 2016. What are the implications of shifting guidance? Is there an explanation for the peak of Reserves content in DWP 1994 and then a steady decline in guidance for the Reserves over the next twenty years? How might future strategic guidance for Reserves be recast to optimise the contribution Reserves can make to the defence of Australia and its national interests?

The paper will discuss strategic guidance provided for the ADF Reserves in the seven DWPs since 1976, with emphasis on the most recent, DWP 2016. It will conclude by making some observations about how the Reserves might be better represented in the next DWP.

### ***Intentions of DWPs***

Since 1976, Australian governments have developed and published seven DWPs to explain Australia's rationale and priorities for the defence of Australian sovereignty and national interests.<sup>3</sup> Typically, DWPs articulate each government's strategic assessments based on an analysis of international relations, and derive three priorities for Defence, namely, national sovereignty, regional security and supporting a rules-based global order. Prominence is given to the US-Australian alliance as well as aspirations for self-reliance. Each DWP is used to justify capability development and major military equipment acquisitions; usually acquisitions focus on principal weapons platforms such as naval vessels for RAN, armoured vehicles and artillery for Army and aircraft for RAAF. These platforms are a major determinant of the composition of Australia's military forces.<sup>4</sup>

DWPs are not the definitive source or basis of all military force structure decisions. As Defence Minister Linda Reynolds noted in 2015, Defence and the ADF conduct frequent institutional reviews that drive changes to force structures, resource allocation and priorities.<sup>5</sup> History also reveals that federal, state and territory politics play significant roles in the location of military bases, Army Reserve depots, shipbuilding, small arms and spare parts manufacture and other capability development projects.

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3 Australian Government, *The Strategy Framework* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2017), p. 5.

4 N. Brangwin, N. Church, S. Dyer and D. Watt, *Defending Australia: A History of Australia's Defence White Papers*, Parliamentary Library Research Paper (Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services, 2015), p. 5.

5 L. Reynolds, 'The Department of Defence: Fundamental Problems Require Transformational Solutions', Dissertation, Deakin University, Geelong, 2015, p. 20.

## **Frequency**

DWPs are intended to be timely and responsive. Accordingly, there is no set cycle for developing and publishing them. In 2009 the Rudd government did propose a five-year cycle, but this did not last beyond the following DWP.<sup>6</sup> One or more factors have triggered the timings of their development: a change of government, a significant change in the economic outlook, a significant shift in strategic circumstances and/or the need for a large-scale capability investment (such as a new submarine fleet or aircraft type). In the forty years between DWP 1976 and DWP 2016 the average time was 5.7 years but was greater in the earlier years and more frequent since 2009.

## **Content**

In simple terms, the better the strategic guidance from government the better Defence understands what it is expected to be ready to do. Taken together, DWPs should show how capability development and force structure decisions, as well as expenditure estimates, connect to strategic objectives.<sup>7</sup> DWPs should also guide levels of force preparedness, training regimes and force generation cycles.<sup>8</sup>

In order to achieve their objectives, each DWP generally consists of four core sections, although these may consist of multiple chapters. The first is an assessment of the national strategic context with a focus on international relations; the second is an overview of Australian military strategy; the third section provides a framework of a future force structure; while the final section relates to funding.<sup>9</sup>

## **The Place of Reserves in DWPs**

This paper will focus on the Army Reserve. The Army Reserve make up the largest proportion of ADF Reserves. RAN and RAAF Reserves have a different model of service compared to the Army Reserve. Both are small and are less likely to be a significant expansion base for either Service. They consist predominately of ex-regular personal and specialists, as opposed to the Army Reserve for which the majority are career part-time members.

For several reasons, the Army Reserve features independently in every DWP. The first reason is cultural. There is a deep culture of part-time military service in Australia dating back to Federation as well as to earlier colonial times. Contemporary land force reserve units maintain traditional historical and close ties with urban and rural communities and can be conduits for recruitment to regular forces. The second reason is that the Reserves are a core mobilisation force for national defence. They are comprised of uniformed, trained military personnel available for call up for full-time military service.

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6 Brangwin et al., *Defending Australia*, p. 58.

7 Ibid.

8 RAND, *Comprehensive Analysis of Strategic Force Generation Challenges in the Australian Army* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2018), p. xi.

9 Andrew Davis, 'A New DWP Wouldn't Be Worth the White Paper It's Written On', *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 19 June 2019, <<https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/a-new-dwp-wouldnt-be-worth-the-white-paper-its-written-on/>>

They also contain pools of specialists, such as engineers, logisticians, surgeons, doctors and anaesthetists. Though there is an ongoing debate, Reserves are a cost-effective supplement and expansion base for Australia's military capabilities and capacities.<sup>10</sup> Typically, DWPs highlight territorial and infrastructure defence including home guard and disaster relief roles and mobilisation that includes supplementation of regular units and augmentation through provision of specialists.

In anticipation of a strategic or operational emergency or at the onset of a strategic surprise or disaster, the Reserves can accelerate the specific force preparation of existing and newly formed units, mainly land forces, and release regular land force elements for immediate employment while raising and mobilising follow-on forces for rotation to and from theatres of operation. Reserves can be deployed immediately to defend important infrastructure and/or population centres with well-led personnel trained in the disciplined use of weapons. For partial mobilisation to meet specific threats, Reserves can supplement regular forces to bring them up to strength and form a reinforcement echelon for replacing casualties in regular forces. In practice these contributions to Australia's military capabilities and capacity can overlap and are often made simultaneously, interchangeably or are implied. No DWP has ruled out the traditional immediate supplementation or anticipatory mobilisation roles for the Reserves.

## The Strategic Guidance for the Army Reserve Over Time

### **Overview**

The table in Figure 1 summarises the number of references to Reserves in each DWP,<sup>11</sup> the number of paragraphs dedicated to Reserves,<sup>12</sup> percentage change since the last DWP,<sup>13</sup> number of references to RAN/RAAF Reserves and key strategic guidance for Reserves.<sup>14</sup>

This table reveals a number of trends. The first is that while the length of DWPs have increased over time, the number of references to the Reserves peaked in 1994 and has decreased for every subsequent DWP. Specific mention of RAN and RAAF Reserves disappeared in 2013. The number of paragraphs focused on the Reserves has followed the same trends as single references to the Reserves.

Figure 2 summarises the elements of strategic guidance contained in DWPs categorised according to the traditional roles outlined above.

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10 M. Smith, 'Focusing the Army Reserve: Force Structuring as an Operational rather than Strategic Reserve', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no. 193 (2014), p. 44.

11 'Reserve' mentions count includes all the text including table of contents. Excludes 'reserve' in non-military staff context (e.g. petroleum reserves) and when a part of another word (e.g. preserves).

12 Includes paragraphs where the content is principally devoted to Reserves.

13 Sum of 'reserve' and 'part-time' mentions compared as a percentage to the previous DWP.

14 This is a judgment of the DWP statement that best encapsulates the strategic guidance for Reserves.

**Figure 1: Textual Analysis of DWPs 1976-2016**

	Total number of pages	Reserve mentions (military staff)	Part time mentions (military staff)	Paragraphs dedicated to Reserves	% Changes in mention since last DWP	% Changes in dedicated para since last DWP	Mentions specific to Navy/ Air Force Reserves	Primary Reserve Strategic Role Statement
DWP 1976	38	25	0	4	NA	NA	3	No discernible specific statement
DWP 1987	65	51	0	8	104%	100%	9	...major roles in northern defence, logistic support, surveillance, protection of key installations, and maintenance of expansion base skills in armour, artillery, air transport, and mine countermeasures. .... Reserves to play the fullest possible role in the defence of Australia by enabling them to be used in the sort of low level threat which could emerge with relatively little warning. pp. 92-93)
DWP 1994	93	229	13	47	375%	488%	39 (2 x para for Navy 5 x para for Air Force)	Reserves now have specific roles in defending Australia in short-warning conflict, both as individuals and as formed units. In peace, they perform a number of essential tasks on a permanent part-time basis. (p. 73)
DWP 2000	142	58	3	20	-75%	-57%	0	Henceforth their (Reserves) clear priority will be to provide fully-trained personnel to our ready frontline forces deployed on operations (p. 84)
DWP 2009	144	21	33	11	-11%	-45%	7 (1 x full para each)	(main aim) improve the Army's overall ability to sustain prolonged operational deployments and to provide additional capability when the regular Army is facing concurrency challenges. (p.75)
DWP 2013	148	30	2	8	-41%	-27%	0	Operational reserve (p. 40) Typically, Reserves provide lower-end and longer lead-time capabilities, and those that are related to the civilian skills of reservists. (p. 45)
DWP 2016	191	12	0	4	-63%	-50%	0	...deliver defence capability (p. 148)

**Figure 2: Summary analysis of strategic guidance for DWP 1976-2016**

	Mobilisation/ expansion base	Territorial Defence	Round out/ Supplement	Specialists	Link with the community	Complementary capability	Domestic Support
DWP 1976	ME (p. 30)	X	P (p. 33)	X	X	X	P (p. 33)
DWP 1987	SE (p. 27)	ME (p. 92-93)	SE (p.60)	X	X	SE (p. 38)	X
DWP 1994	SE (p.33)	ME (p.48)	SE (p.48)	SE (p.55)	SE (p. 136)	SE (p.74)	P (p. 81)
DWP 2000	SE (P. 65)	X	ME (p. 84)	SE (P. 65)	SE (p. 71)	SE (P. 65)	SE (p. 53)
DWP 2009	SE (p. 75)	X	ME (p. 75)	SE (p. 91)	SE (p. 75)	SE (p. 75)	SE (p. 91)
DWP 2013	SE (p.46)	X	ME (p. 40)	SE (p. 45)	X	SE (p. 46)	X
DWP 2016	X	X	ME (p. 148)	SE (p. 148)	X	X	X
Legend		ME- Main Effort	SE - Supporting Effort	P - Potential	R - Ruled out	X - No specific mention	

Strategic guidance in DWPs for the traditional roles for the Reserves is fragmented and imprecise. There is no primary or consistent guidance except for highlighting supporting efforts for the Reserves in mobilisation. This guidance disappeared in DWP 2016. The subordination of the Reserves as an immediate supplement to top up regular units is a strong trend after the turn of the century. However, DWP 2016 mentions this role as an afterthought late in the text.

More specifically, guidance changes over time. The Reserves were mentioned explicitly and primarily in DWP 1976 as an expansion base for mobilisation with potential for supplementation. From DWP 2000 until DWP 2016 supplementation of Regular forces becomes the main effort for the Reserves. A couple of categories for employment disappeared after DWP 2009, namely domestic support operations and maintaining traditional military-community links. More broadly, the Reserves appear to have been dismissed as a unique contributor to Australia's military capabilities and capacities and demoted to be a source of supplementation for Regular forces.

Alan Dupont, an expert in the analysis of DWPs, points out that they have failed to articulate strategic guidance more generally and that the Reserves should not assess that they are the only component of Australia's defence structure that receives fragmentary and imprecise guidance:

Given the number of defence white papers that have been published since the first appeared in 1976, finding a clear statement of Australia's defence strategy would seem a straightforward task ... Even the most determined and forensically inclined reader will struggle to find a simple, clear statement of Australia's defence strategy and objectives. They frequently must be inferred, or extracted piecemeal, from the voluminous pages of recent white papers.<sup>15</sup>

Mindful of Dupont's dismal assessment, discussion will now turn to discussing each DWP individually in order to identify trends in guidance for the Reserves in more detail.

### ***DWP 1976—Australian Defence***

The Fraser government tabled the first DWP in 1976. Previously, Defence had issued a document entitled, 'Australian Defence Review' in 1972 as a way of articulating strategic guidance. DWP 1976 came in the aftermath of the end of the Second Indochina War, a strategic humiliation for Australia's major ally, the United States, and the recognition of China in 1972. The Whitlam government had ended national service for Australia's participation in operations in Vietnam in 1972. Since taking office in controversial circumstances in 1975, the Fraser government had conducted a number of Defence reviews that informed DWP 1976. By this time controversial former diplomat and Defence bureaucrat Arthur Tange had spearheaded a restructure of the higher management of Defence that disempowered the Services in order to facilitate civilian control of capability development.<sup>16</sup>

For the Army Reserve the key review before DWP 1976 was the 'Committee of Inquiry into the Citizen Military Forces'. This report, known as the 'Millar Report', made a series of recommendations designed to be implemented over the following ten years.<sup>17</sup> Essentially, the strategic rationale proposed was one of a 'Total Force' with the renamed Army Reserve (ARES) performing the role of an expansion base that would be structured and employed in the same way as the Regular Army (ARA) but on longer

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Dupont, *Full Spectrum Defence: Re-thinking the Fundamentals of Australian Defence Strategy*, Analysis (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, March 2015), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army: A History* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 248-50.

<sup>17</sup> T. B. Millar, *Committee of Inquiry into the Citizen Military Forces: Report* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services, 1974), p. 2.

lead times for specific force preparation for operational employment. The Millar Report recommended the disestablishment of traditional but now obsolete complementary capabilities such as Forestry, Water Resource and Railway operations. Other significant recommendations included the amalgamation of some ARES units and amendment of the Call Out legislation to allow call out of Reserves without a new Act of parliament.<sup>18</sup>

Amalgamations, more streamlined call-out arrangements and an emphasis on self-reliance did not prompt specific guidance for the Reserves. The strategic threat concerns were the reduction of US and British forces in Australia's near region, an increase in Russian military activity and potential instability in the Pacific Islands. There was a focus on \$12 billion for major acquisitions for the three Services, theoretically in response to these strategic trends, namely, new RAN frigates, new Army battle tanks and new RAAF PC3 long range surveillance aircraft.

DWP 1976 mentioned Reserves twenty-four times and devoted four paragraphs to discussion of roles for Reserves. The Millar Review in 1974 gave the ARES context for DWP 1976. However, it contained little specific strategic guidance. One theme was the desirability of a greater peacetime role for Reserves in the context of one Total Force. The emphasis moved from employment of Reserves for war or in a defence emergency, to employment during "international situations" or for "short-term assistance to the civil authorities during a natural disaster".<sup>19</sup>

Without a connection to strategic guidance, DWP 1976 forecast an increase of 5,000 ARES personnel from a current strength of about 20,500 over the next five years and longer-term relocations and rebuilds of ARES depots after wide consultations.<sup>20</sup> Within one year the disconnect between promised DWP 1976 funding and acquisition targets was apparent.<sup>21</sup>

### ***DWP 1987—The Defence of Australia***

The Dibb Review released in 1986 strongly influenced DWP 1987.<sup>22</sup> Paul Dibb, a senior Defence official, was critical of many parts of the ADF's force structure, including the Reserves for which he could not identify the official strategic rationale for a 30,000-strong Army Reserve. It also did not reference an Army review of the ARES that identified a decline in capacity and capability since 1974 as a result of ageing facilities, understaffed units and recruiting deficiencies.<sup>23</sup>

DWP 1987 reaffirmed the focus on self-reliance and eschewed forward defence, favouring the notion of a defence in depth of an area of strategic interest 'radiating' in circles around Australia. The strategic plan was for the RAN and RAAF to engage forces intent on invading Australia in the 'air-sea gap' forward of the Australian homeland. The Army's

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18 Ibid., p. 130.

19 Department of Defence, *Australian Defence* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1976); (DWP 1976), p. 33.

20 Ibid., pp. 38-46.

21 Peter Jennings, *The Politics and Practicalities of Designing Australia's Force Structure*, in Desmond Ball and Sheryn Lee (eds), *Geography, Power, Strategy and Defence Policy*, (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016), Chapter 9, <[press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p346293/pdf/ch09.pdf](http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p346293/pdf/ch09.pdf)> [Accessed 25 July 2019].

22 Paul Dibb, *Review of Defence Capabilities* (Canberra: Australian Government, 1986), p. vi.

23 J. M. Sanderson, *Report on the Structure and Tasks of the Army Reserve* (Canberra: Australian Army, 1986).

role was to deploy to defend key infrastructure and defeat enemy raiders in the north and north-western areas of the Australian mainland. Without explicitly mentioning Reserves, DWP 1987 called for a better balance of forces and the development of Australian defence industry.<sup>24</sup>

DWP 1987 mentions Reserves fifty-one times and devotes eight paragraphs to discussion of roles, a 100 per cent increase on DWP 1976. Guidance was vague and possibly patronising. The ARES would be “required to contribute to operations which might arise in the shorter term as part of the total Army, at a level commensurate with achievable degrees of training and readiness”.<sup>25</sup> The ARES was assigned the principal role of ‘vital asset protection’ within the context of ‘Territorial Defence’ thus freeing up ARA combat units for mobile offensive operations.<sup>26</sup> The separate ARES role of Territorial Defence was a departure from the Total Force concept articulated in the Millar Report and reemphasised in DWP 1976.<sup>27</sup> Instead of being employed in a similar way to the ARA, the bulk of the ARES would conduct specific but limited tasks separate from the ARA.

In some ways DWP 1987 created unrealistic expectations and made a number of imprecise generalisations. Repeating DWP 1976, there was mention of the ARES as an expansion base that included an unrealistic possibility of the ARES being issued battle tanks.<sup>28</sup> Another unrealistic expectation was advice that ARES units would ‘integrate’ with 1st Division and the Logistic Support Force.<sup>29</sup> A commitment to legislation for a restricted call out of Reservists for full-time service was not attended to until 1988, fourteen years after the Millar Report and commitments in DWP 1976.<sup>30</sup> Aspirations for 6th and 7th Brigades to provide individuals and groups to ‘round out’ ‘higher priority elements’ of the ARA was fanciful. In contradiction, DWP 1987 offered that other ARES formations than the theoretical “higher priority elements would be staffed and equipped at a level suitable for training but not operations”. They would be ‘rounded out’ by another element of the ARES if mobilised.<sup>31</sup> Once again, without connection to strategic guidance, DWP 1987 stated there would be an increase of ARES strength to 26,000.<sup>32</sup>

In a rather disingenuous way DWP 1987 declared that its prescriptions, “will make our Reserves a much more effective element in a self-reliant Australian defence force”. The end of the Cold War made DWP 1987 obsolete, but its prescriptions echoed through the 1990s as Australian governments once again renewed strategic traditions and despatched land forces overseas to support a rules-based global order. Australia committed relatively significant forces to peace support operations in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia and Rwanda. DWP 1987 also contributed to increasing risk. The organisational muscle groups for force projection were neglected. An ADF response to a coup on Fiji in

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24 Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, 1987 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1987); (DWP 1987), pp. 8-9.

25 Ibid, p. 58.

26 Ibid, p. ix.

27 M. Mumford, ‘History of the Reviews into the Army Reserve’, supporting Annex to the 2nd Division Transformation Project Directive (Canberra: Australian Army, 2017), p. A-6.

28 Department of Defence, DWP 1987, p. 60.

29 Ibid, p. 60.

30 Ibid, p. 59.

31 Ibid, p. 54.

32 Ibid, p. 60.



1987 and subsequent force projections to Somalia and closer to home in the near region highlighted systemic problems.<sup>33</sup>

The Wrigley Review of 1990 titled *The Defence Force and the Community* and Force Structure Review of 1991 both promoted the cost effectiveness and potential of the Reserves, on condition that there would be enough strategic warning time to increase their readiness for operations.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Wrigley proposed nearly doubling the Reserves and a much greater role for RAN and RAAF Reserves and noted the likely resistance from regular officers for this scheme for reasons including “professional military prejudice”.<sup>35</sup>

### **DWP 1994—Defending Australia**

Mentions of the Reserves increased significantly in DWP 1994 with 229 instances, a 350 per cent increase compared to DWP 1987 and forty-seven paragraphs devoted to the Reserves, an increase of 488 per cent. Indeed, Chapter 7 was dedicated to Reserves. The term ‘part-time’ in the context of military forces appeared thirteen times for the first time in a DWP.

A focus on cost effectiveness and utility is one possible cause of this new emphasis. The Hawke government’s priorities were economic in face of the initially slow recovery from the recession of 1990–92.<sup>36</sup> There was post-Cold War optimism for US President Bush’s ‘New World Order’ and a relatively benign strategic outlook for Australia’s near region. The Defence Minister, Robert Ray, delivered a reduced Australian Defence budget in the context of pursuing a ‘peace dividend’ after the end of the Cold War and dominance of the United States in a unipolar world order.<sup>37</sup> The role of the Reserves received particular attention to soften criticism of a reduction in the size of the full-time forces, especially in the Army. The issue of balance (regular/reserve) within the ‘Total Force’ was mentioned no less than seven times.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the additional content focused on the Reserves, DWP 1994 contained little in the way of new or specific strategic guidance from DWP 1987. New content focused on a new part-time force called the Ready Reserve. This scheme was based on recruiting individuals for a year of full-time training followed by a period of part-time service with annual training obligations. The Ready Reserve Scheme rounded out the 6th Brigade in Brisbane along with smaller Ready Reserve elements for the RAN and RAAF. Robert Ray touted the Ready Reserve as a force that would bolster the ADF to meet the challenge of “short warning conflict”.<sup>39</sup> This term was introduced to describe the contingencies that might arise inside strategic warning times and therefore require the “forces in

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33 Bob Breen, *Struggling for Self-Reliance—Four Case Studies of Australian Regional Force Projection in the late 1980s and the 1990s* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), p. 40.

34 Alan K. Wrigley, *The Defence Force and the Community: A Partnership in Australia’s Defence* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990), pp. 500–2.

35 Ibid, p. 364.

36 David Gruen and Glenn Stevens, ‘Australian Macroeconomic Performance and Policies in the 1990s’, In David Gruen and Sona Shrestha (eds), *The Australian Economy in the 1990s*, Reserve Bank of Australia Bulletin, Oct 2000. P. 32.

37 John Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 95.

38 Department of Defence, *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1994) (DWP 1994), pp. 48–49.

39 Ibid., p. 49.

being” to deploy for employment initially to allow time for specific force preparation of rotation forces.<sup>40</sup>

The ‘big idea’ in DWP 1994 that would have ramifications for the following decades was that “the distinction between Regular and Reserve personnel must be greatly reduced” and therefore Reserves would have a “similar level of individual training [as Regular forces] with the difference being the level of experience and availability”.<sup>41</sup> This new concept of standardising individual training for the full-time (ARA) and part-time (ARES) components of the Army effectively left ARES personnel at basic training levels because all of their annual training allocations would be consumed by entry level and initial employment training. In order to facilitate an increase in training time, DWP 1994 outlined an initiative to engage with the civilian employers of Reservists to encourage giving Reservists more time off to train and protecting their employment in order to encourage taking time off for training.<sup>42</sup> In effect, the ARES was destined to become a pool of trained personnel that could contribute effectively to operational activities.<sup>43</sup> Notably, DWP 1994 included for the first time an explicit intention for the federal government to facilitate the employment of the Services in disaster relief activities, domestically and internationally.<sup>44</sup>

Significant force structure changes affecting the Army Reserve occurred without warning after DWP 1994. Newly appointed Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, introduced the Army in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (A21) and Restructure of the Army (RTA) programs. Sanderson envisaged integration of ARA and ARES units, reallocation of equipment and introduction of Common Induction Training. The Ready Reserve Scheme was also discontinued despite its promise.<sup>45</sup>

In 1999 the ADF faced a moment of strategic truth when called upon to project a substantial land force into the near region and lead an international force into East Timor. The Army was stretched to its limits to sustain this commitment.<sup>46</sup> The A21 and RTA initiatives foundered on the rocks of necessity as ARA companies were stripped from ARES battalions with scores of trained reservists, many taking demotions in rank, to reinforce 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR), for a tour of duty in East Timor in 2000.<sup>47</sup> The rapid reinforcement and deployment of 6 RAR in four months at least proved that standardising basic and initial employment training for ARA and ARES infantrymen paid off when additional manpower was needed urgently for overseas operations. Notably, scores of Reservists rallied and made themselves available at short notice for service in East Timor. Specialist ARES personnel, such as logisticians, doctors, surgeons, engineers as well as communications and sanitary technicians were crucial to the success of the intervention.<sup>48</sup>

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40 Ibid., pp. 24-25.

41 Ibid., p. 78.

42 Ibid., p. 81.

43 Ibid., p. 33.

44 Brangwin et al., *Defending Australia*, p. 27.

45 Grey, *The Australian Army: A History*, p. 257.

46 Bob Breen, *Mission Accomplished, East Timor: The Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Forces East Timor (INTERFET)* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2001), pp. 1-10.

47 Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard*, p. 170.

48 A. Davies, and H. Smith, *Stepping Up: Part-time Forces and ADF capability*, Strategic Insights, (Canberra Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2008), p. 2.

## ***DWP 2000—Our Future Defence Force***

DWP 2000 came in the aftermath of the intervention into East Timor. There were many lessons from this unexpected high-risk force projection. The Reserves had played an important role. More Reservists had been employed on full-time duty in the two years prior to DWP 2000, mostly in East Timor, than in the previous fifty-four years combined.<sup>49</sup> Many Reservists volunteered and took time off from civilian employment to round out deploying ARA units. The regular 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment could not have deployed on time and fully trained without Reservist reinforcements who became the riflemen and machine gunners in the frontline of operations.<sup>50</sup> Reservists also played an important role domestically with many volunteering for full-time service to do the jobs of deployed ARA personnel.

DWP 2000 ended the Defence of Australia doctrine in favour of a small, high readiness ADF configured for force projection. While Reserves content was down, the clarity of guidance for the future of the Reserves was up:

The strategic role for the Reserves has changed from mobilisation to meet remote threats to that of supporting and sustaining the types of contemporary military operations in which the ADF may be engaged.<sup>51</sup>

The key to our sustainment capability in future will come from our Reserve forces. In line with the new emphasis on a small, high-readiness army ready for deployment, the role of our Reserve forces will undergo a major transition ... Henceforth their clear priority will be to provide fully trained personnel to our ready frontline forces deployed on operations.<sup>52</sup>

DWP 2000 went on to highlight the role of the Reserves in disaster relief both nationally and internationally.<sup>53</sup> The significant initiative in this DWP was a more sophisticated approach to skilling the Reserves and having Reservists at different levels of readiness on stand-by for operations. Standardised training for the ARA and ARES, aligned to the new National Training Framework, facilitated recognition of civilian and military skills.<sup>54</sup> Selected individuals and units would be held at higher levels of readiness and have higher training obligations.<sup>55</sup> These would be the High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and the Reserve Response Forces (RFF) that were introduced in subsequent years.

There was a restated commitment (from DWP 1994) to legislate measures to protect the jobs of Reservists and provide support for employers.<sup>56</sup> The Howard government passed legislation to formalise these arrangements in 2001. Less successful was a proposal for an online database of Reservist's military competencies, accessible by employers but

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49 Department of Defence, *Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000); (DWP 2000), p. 69.

50 Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard*, p. 170.

51 Department of Defence, DWP 2000, p. xiii.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

56 *Ibid.*

never implemented.<sup>57</sup> Returning from absence in previous DWPs was mention of the value that Reserves provided through provision of a link with local communities.<sup>58</sup>

DWP 2000 represented an important milestone for the Reserves. Participation in operations in East Timor during the nation's time of need for trained military personnel renewed interest in including the Reserves more meaningfully in Australian defence. There was now clear guidance on transitioning the ARES to be a fully trained and operational reserve for the ARA.

Over the next nine years until the next DWP the Army Reserve stepped up to reinforce units deployed overseas. For the first time ARES rifle companies served as garrison forces in East Timor and Solomon Islands. Reservists served with their ARA compatriots in Iraq and Afghanistan. Reservists also took part in Border Protection operations, domestic event security operations and disaster response, such as to support ARA units cleaning up after Cyclone Larry in north Queensland in 2006.

### ***DWP 2009—Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030***

The Rudd government's Defence Minister, Joel Fitzgibbon, released DWP 2009 in May 2009. The mentions of the role of the Reserves were only slightly down on DWP 2000 with numerous references calling for a greater contribution from Reserves.<sup>59</sup> The RAN and RAAF each had a paragraph devoted to their reserves.<sup>60</sup> This would be the last mention of either in a DWP.

Echoing DWP 2000, the "main aim" for the Army Reserve was, "to improve ... overall ability to sustain prolonged operational deployments and to provide additional capability when the Regular Army is facing concurrency challenges".<sup>61</sup> Necessity had been the change agent. Reservists and ARES sub-units had enabled the ARA to sustain overseas deployments and achieve reasonable rotation schedules. Reserves proved essential through this period to maintain the tempo of operations while allowing rest and reconstitution for ARA units.

In several ways DWP 2009 marked a peak in guidance to the Reserves for backing up deployed regular units. There were numerous mentions of the value of part-time forces, but it would be last time that a DWP used the nomenclature 'part-time'. It would be the last time that High Readiness Reserve (HRR) and Reserve Response Force (RRF), as well as proposals for different part-time service models such as 'Focused contributions' and 'Sponsored Reserves' would be mentioned.<sup>62</sup> The notion of the ARES backing up the ARA with trained personnel was dampened by an observation that the ARES contribution would be constrained by, "the complexity of the tasks performed by the ADF and the sophisticated and intensive mission preparation required".<sup>63</sup>

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57 Ibid., p. 72.

58 Ibid., p. 7.

59 Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009); (DWP 2009), pp. 68, 74, 75, 90-92, and 117.

60 Ibid., p. 91.

61 Ibid., p. 75.

62 Ibid., p. 91.

63 Ibid., p. 90.

As an afterthought, DWP 2009 directed the Army to review its mix of full and part-time elements to achieve a number of goals including increasing the utility of Reserves and improving community links. It affirmed that the ARES should retain its divisional structure with six brigade-sized formations across the nation to recruit and train part-time personnel.<sup>64</sup>

### ***DWP 2013—Defending Australia and its National Interests***

DWP 2013 was largely a continuation of DWP 2009 with reduced guidance for the Reserves. Australia's strategic objectives and capability priorities were largely consistent.<sup>65</sup> The mentions of the Reserve were down on DWP 2009 by about 40 per cent and there were less paragraphs devoted to discussing the roles of the Reserves, down 27 per cent.

Echoing DWP 2000, DWP 2013 acknowledged explicitly that ADF Reserves had transitioned from a 'strategic reserve' (i.e. mobilisation/expansion base for defence of Australia's territorial sovereignty), to an 'operational reserve' (i.e. round out and supplementation for deploying and deployed forces).<sup>66</sup> It stated that the "Reserve component is an integral part of ADF capability".<sup>67</sup>

DWP 2013 contained a succinct and informative paragraph that listed the type of capabilities that Reserves provided: complementary and supplementary sub-units, specialist personnel and a surge of trained and partially trained personnel. The context was an accurate and realistic description of reserve capabilities: "Typically, Reserves provide lower-end and longer lead-time capabilities, and those that are related to the civilian skills of reservists".<sup>68</sup>

The Army's Plan Beersheba changed expectations of the place Reserves would take in the Order of Battle. Principally, DWP 2013 prescribed that Reserve Brigades would 'pair' with Regular Multi-Role Combat Brigades (MCB) and generate a Battlegroup and range of other small elements to supplement each MCB in each three-year Force Generation Cycle (i.e. reset, readying and ready).<sup>69</sup> This expectation represented a significant challenge because for more than a decade the ARES had focused on training individuals and groups up to company size for Stabilisation Operations in the near region. Now they had to train three headquarters and three Battlegroups capable of operating within the framework of each regular MCB during the annual major conventional war-fighting exercise of Hamel/Talisman Sabre.

The Reserve 'Reinforcing Battlegroup' has been successfully raised each year since 2014. Tasked predominantly with Rear Area Security Operations, it adds important mass to the MCB, but significant effort is required to train, equip and integrate each Reinforcing Battlegroup which is made up of personnel from many different ARES units.

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64 Ibid., p. 75.

65 Brangwin et al., *Defending Australia*, p. 68

66 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2013); (DWP 2013), p. 40.

67 Ibid., p. 45.

68 Ibid., p. 45.

69 RAND, *Comprehensive Analysis of Strategic Force Generation*, p. xii.

Communication equipment, protected mobility vehicles, some weapon systems and items such as body armour need to be shifted around 2nd Division, at significant cost, to train and equip the Battlegroup just in time for exercises. The process has improved relationships and interoperability with the MCB but there is still discussion about the cost of generating a unit-level Headquarters, the handover point to the MCB and whether the Battlegroup can be considered a 'manoeuvre group' capable of offensive missions. The ultimate test will be whether the complete Battlegroup ever gets deployed on operations.

## **DWP 2016**

A change in government and pressing capability acquisition decisions prompted DWP 2016 three years after DWP 2013.<sup>70</sup> Despite it being an even longer document than its predecessor the Reserves hardly featured. There were only twelve references, down 60 per cent from DWP 2013, and four paragraphs, down 50 per cent from DWP 2013. Absent were mentions of ARES Battlegroups and joining the ARA in Force Generation Cycles. Guidance focused on the Total Workforce Model implementation (Plan Suakin) and a Reserve Assistance Program that provided counselling support for Reservists.<sup>71</sup>

There was a statement affirming the government's commitment to "maintaining the role of the Reserves" but no summary of the strategic rationale for Reserves. The closest statement resembling strategic guidance was, "The ADF is increasingly drawing on the skills and expertise of Reservists to deliver defence capability."<sup>72</sup>

DWP 2016 provided much less detail on ADF force structure than previous DWPs. This had the effect of lessening mentions of the roles of the Reserves. This was a significant break with the past. Less guidance increased the likelihood of the Services making autonomous decisions about force structure. However, commentators such as Ergas and Thomson considered the absence of force structure guidance as a potential 'moral hazard' for the Service Chiefs.<sup>73</sup> They recommend that government take more interest in specific force structure. There was a risk of ARA officers favouring full-time forces in force structure discussion rather than 'growing' part-time forces, a bias noted by Wrigley in his review in 1990.<sup>74</sup>

There are three other possibilities for the scant mentions of Reserves in DWP 2016. The first is that the organisation was satisfied with what the Reserve were delivering. After all, the DWP acknowledged that around 18 per cent of all ADF personnel deployed on operations (1999-2016) were Reserves.<sup>75</sup> Another possibility is that this reduction in specific mentions of the Reserves was as the logical consequence of higher integration of Regular and Reserve elements. A third, more likely but negative possibility could be that the Reserves were seen as largely irrelevant in the DWP discussion. In this period,

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70 Brangwin et al., *Defending Australia*, p. 74

71 Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016); (DWP 2016), pp. 148-49.

72 Ibid.

73 H. Ergas and M. Thomson, 'More Guns without Less Butter: Improving Australian Defence Efficiency', *ANU Agenda*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2011).

74 Wrigley, *The Defence Force and the Community*, p. 521.

75 Department of Defence, DWP 2016, p. 148.

the ARES was declining in numbers and at its lowest strength ever at around 13,500.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the basis of the absence of direction regarding Reserves, there was nothing in DWP 2016 that would compel Defence to change its approach to Reserves.

## Changes in DWP Guidance to the Reserves

An analysis of strategic guidance to the Reserves across seven DWPs from 1976 until 2016 reveals an evolution of roles and a trend in expectations ranging from those based on reality to those founded on aspirational platitudes. Apart from the three-year period between DWP 2009 and DWP 2013 there were significant evolutionary changes that reflected evolutions of Australia's strategic posture. There was a shift from the traditional strategic rationale of the Reserves in the early 1970s, then called the Citizen Military Forces, as a mobilisation base to the Reserves training for territorial defence of Australia's sovereignty (DWP 1987/1994) to an operational reserve of basically trained military personnel (DWP 2000 onwards).

Guidance in DWPs for the structure of the ARES reflected the evolution from mobilisation base to a part-trained personnel pool with one major contradiction. Initially, ARES brigades and units were mentioned as a 'percentage' of the 'Total Force'. The assumption appeared to be that the ARES 2nd Infantry Division in Sydney and 3rd Training Group in Melbourne were there to mobilise with the ARA 1st Division on a longer lead time after war was declared or the threat of invasion became probable. In DWP 1987 there was a notion that Australia would receive sufficient strategic warning time for this mobilisation timetable to be effective.<sup>77</sup> DWPs fell silent about 2nd Division and its brigades after DWP 2000, but 2nd Division and its brigades continued regardless. Indeed, the structure of the major parts of the Army Reserve is largely consistent with that described in DWP 1976. There have been changes such as consolidation of units, changes in command status and the disestablishment of Headquarters 3rd Division to become 3rd Training Group, but the organisation is more similar than dissimilar to the one of forty years ago. Despite the advances in land forces technology, changes in Army force structure, lessons from contemporary operations and the emergence of new capabilities, the ARES remains Infantry-centric with most resources devoted to generating a light Battlegroup each year. These are historical echoes from the halcyon years of the militia in the twentieth century but they have questionable operational relevance in the twenty-first century.

The term of 'Total Force' that was prominent in early DWPs disappeared and was replaced with the notion of an integrated force in DWP 2009. The context was that the Army was comprised of an integrated workforce of full-time and part-time personnel. However, the term 'integrated' was also used frequently in other contexts, such as joint operations or logistics. This created some ambiguity about the use of the term to describe the ADF's new future as a joint force that integrated the three Services in common operational effort and a new way of thinking about the relationship between the Reserves and their full-time compatriots.

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76 Porter, S. 2018, *Commander 2nd Division Brief to Royal United Services Institute Queensland*, 17 October 2018.

77 Department of Defence, DWP 1987, p. 29.



The value of the Reserves as a military force ‘of the people’, with close community ties, especially in rural areas where traditional militia depots and historical unit names were retained, disappeared after DWP 2009. The context of mentioning the Reserves’ links with the community echoed the legends and cultural myths of the First World War and Second World War that sturdy men left work on the land, many of them already members of the Reserves, then called militia, to enlist in their thousands for overseas service.

The readiness of the Reserves has been a theme in most DWPs. Initially, there was a traditional but unspecified notion of readiness embodied in the more general term ‘mobilisation’. Over time, readiness levels became more specific as categories of Reserves with specified training competences were introduced. The Ready Reserve and High Readiness Reserves were the peak of this readiness regime. Common Induction Training set a shared training regime between ARES and ARA recruits and for initial employment. A Reserve Response Force had the intention of giving the ARA an immediate injection of trained personnel for operational service. Categories such as Sponsored Reserves and Focused Reserves were mentioned in one DWP and never effectively implemented, as was an aspiration for a central database of ARES members civilian skills that could be utilised on operational service.

There were innovations and enhancements for the Reserves in various DWPs. There were amendments to legislation to allow callout of Reserves in situations less than war or for a declared defence emergency. Conditions of Reserve service were enhanced through employment protection and employer support legislation. Despite the absence of a central database, the Total Work-Force model, expressed in slightly different ways, endured through the past four DWP and appears to be the most enduring concept for expressing the relationship between Reserves and full-time personnel.

## Consistent Themes, Aspirations and Realities

An overview of all DWPs reveals a number of consistent themes and enduring realities about the Reserves. There have always been mention of the cost effectiveness of maintaining the Reserves and calls for more to be gained from employing the Reserves in the ADF. Another consistent theme is the value of applying civilian skills in the ADF, especially specialists such as surgeons, doctors and other niche specialist medical staff. In this context there has been an ambition for some specialist capabilities to reside largely or completely in the Reserves. There has always been a notion that trained and specialist Reserve personnel could ‘round out’ or supplement Regular forces having to mobilise quickly for operations. One consistent aspiration has been for more ARA personnel with skills and experience transitioning to the Reserves to enhance the competence of Reserves and continue to be of service to the nation. Akin to this idea of retaining and maintaining a skilled workforce for military service has been the concept of the ADF and corporations sharing workforces. Finally, the Reserves have largely been comprised of Army personnel. RAN and RAAF Reserves have been proportionally much smaller than the Army Reserve, possibly a combination of continuing traditions and the more specialised nature of training and employment in operational service at sea and in the air. However, considering the contemporary challenges of crewing vessels and maintaining airpower, the RAN and RAAF could potentially benefit from greater and different uses of Reserves than their current service paradigms.



## Conclusion

DWPs guide ADF force structure and capability investment priorities for Australia's defence. It would then be reasonable to presume that they would clarify the strategic rationale for part-time forces which represent both a significant proportion of the ADF and a significant ongoing cost. However, an analysis shows that the guidance for the Reserves has been generally fragmented and shifts from DWP to DWP in terms of quality and quantity. The content devoted to the Reserves peaked in DWP 1994 and has been declining in every DWP since. In the most recent DWP released in 2016 there are only twelve mentions of the Reserves and four paragraphs that discuss the roles of the Reserves.

The elements of strategic rationale for the Reserves is broadly one of cost effectiveness. Reserves cost less than full-time forces through reduced fixed costs and leverage of skill sets maintained in civil employment. What the Reserves are used for, as articulated in DWPs, can be categorised into the elements of a mobilisation base; territorial defence; supplementary capability, specialists; link to the civil community, complementary capability and domestic support operations. In practice these may not be exclusive and represent what Reserves have been used for rather than as a result of design.

The guidance for Reserves has shifted over time from an expansion base to territorial defence and then to an operational reserve. The shift to an operational reserve has been successful if one considers the statistic that about 18 per cent of the ADF personnel deployed on domestic and overseas operation have been Reservists. However, there have been other consequences. The Reserves are now more capable, but smaller. Recruiting and retention challenges persist. The ARES remains Infantry centric with substantial resources invested in generating a Battlegroup for exercises each year. Transfer rates to the Reserves of discharging Regular personnel remain stubbornly low.

The cold calculation for the ADF of meeting demanding strategic tasks and limited budgets mean that Reserves have a place in the Total Force structure. However, the role, disposition and tasks for the Reserves may be suboptimal resulting in force and resource misalignments. This presents an opportunity for Defence to think differently about how Reserves are organised and managed. Having said this, reforming the Reserves has proved markedly more difficult than reviewing them. The next DWP is an opportunity to recast the value proposition of the Reserves and direct Defence to think beyond the traditional paradigms to engage more of the potential of the national human resource base in a way that contributes to national security.

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