



# AUSTRALIAN ARMY

Headquarters 3rd Brigade

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## THE MAJOR AND SERGEANT MAJOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. The purpose of this document is to define expectations for our Major and Sergeant Major leadership teams as sub-unit command teams, trainers, educators, enablers and staff.
2. In this changing world our responsibilities remain.
3. Uber, the world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world's most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory.<sup>1</sup> Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Skype and WeChat, the world's largest telecom operators, own no telecom infrastructure. Apple and Google, the world's largest software vendors, don't write apps. And Netflix, the world's largest movie house, own no cinemas.<sup>2</sup> Algorithms, drones, robots, smartphones and the cloud — a million brilliant ideas — are dramatically lowering costs across all industries and have been for a decade.<sup>3</sup>
4. Simultaneously, the Australian Defence Force remains engaged in the Indo-Pacific strategic arc extending from India through Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia, including the sea lines of communication on which the region depends.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed to Afghanistan, Arabian Gulf, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Sinai Peninsula, the Strait of Hormuz, Sudan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.
5. Responsibilities for these and other challenges weigh upon the shoulders of Australian Army leaders, especially our Major and Sergeant Major leadership teams.
6. Major and Sergeant Major leadership teams are the pivot point in the tactical land force. The Major sets the example. The Sergeant Major maintains and enforces the Major's example. The Major effectively leads, commands and controls the sub-unit. The Sergeant Major advises, guides and supports the Major and the sub-unit. Jointly they lead sub-units, usually within the wider construct of a unit led by a Lieutenant Colonel and a Regimental Sergeant Major.
7. These sub-units, whether combat teams, companies or squadrons, are building blocks for land force fighting power.<sup>5</sup> Mission success for the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force requires considered, competent and capable Major and Sergeant Major leadership teams.

## Expectations for Major and Sergeant Majors leadership teams

8. Major and Sergeant Major leadership teams must:
  - a. **Form a Team.** The Major teaches/trains the Sergeant Major. The Sergeant Major teaches/trains the Major. We all learn from each other, regardless of worn rank. The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team work hard to quickly establish a harmonious working relationship.

The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team succeeds and fails as team. This team confides with each other for personnel and sensitive issues. These conversations are in confidence. Mutual respect is trust given and received.

We apply the law. We live Army's values of courage, initiative, respect and teamwork. We challenge and improve policies. Our behaviour is legal, moral and ethical. We are experts in close combat, we protect ourselves and our team mates. We are leaders, physically tough, mentally prepared and committed to continuous learning and self-development. We demonstrate compassion. We always offer a few kind words and a helping hand.

- b. **Lead as professionals.** You are field rank officers and warrant officers. Your profession is the profession of war. You must know your profession. Similarly to medicine, engineering or the law, a military professional is distinguished by *expertise* in a particular area of human affairs, a sense of *responsibility* that lends an importance transcending monetary rewards to one's work...[and] a sense of *community* and commitment to members of one's group.<sup>6</sup>

Professionally apply the Defence Force Discipline Act. A Major, as a *Subordinate Summary Authority*, is responsible for applying the scales of punishments designated within the Defence Force Discipline Act. Your objective, consistent, honest and careful professional judgement is vital in applying the Defence Force Discipline Act.

Professionally communicate. The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team communicate effectively by the written and spoken word. Apply correct terminology and grammar for a clear understanding by smart 21st Century soldiers. Poor communication means that the Major and Sergeant Major leadership team's message is not heard, or worse – ignored and ineffective.

- c. **Plan two levels down – look one level up.** Plan, communicate, execute and review. Focus your section commanders and platoon / troop commanders on: their environment; education; training levels and standards; known operations; caring for all soldiers; planned exercises; international engagement; current and future capabilities; combat training centre and jungle training wing opportunities; timely and accurate reporting; non-platform support responsibilities and training opportunities.

Study your Commanding Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors. Emulate their strengths; learn from their imperfections.

You are always accountable for soldiers' welfare, including their families. The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team demonstrate compassion and empathy for your soldiers. In turn, soldiers are accountable for their own behaviour. Major and Sergeant Major leadership team lead and coach soldiers to understand their mutual obligation to Defence as people who receive, understand and implement orders.

The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team implements firm and fair decisions based on honest actions. Honesty includes delivering unfavourable or unpopular decisions to your soldiers. In challenging times, the Major and Sergeant Major leadership team must remain unified. Deliver your decisions with authority and competence. Don't leave difficult decisions solely to your Commanding Officer and Regimental Sergeant Major.

- d. **Innovate.** You are closest to Army's greatest asset: our people and their bias for action. Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who cut through argument, debate and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand.<sup>7</sup> Carefully nurture individual and team capabilities. Develop your people. Encourage their innovation.

Design challenging training. Experiment with ideas, doctrine, tactics and equipment. The theory behind our doctrine needs constant re-examination through the lens of changes in operational and training environments. If our theory and doctrine no longer meet the requirements of an evolutionary and sometimes revolutionary world, they should be discarded and replaced.<sup>8</sup>

We see value in practicing simple missions well. We ensure our brilliance at the basics.

Innovation thrives on austerity demanding change. No military organisation is perfectly equipped. Throughout history, military organisations short of people, training and equipment have performed magnificently. In other cases, well equipped military forces have failed. The Australian Army frequently has personnel, resource, training, trade, mobility, equipment and digitisation deficiencies. Therefore, carefully designed austere training, frugally resourced and professionally executed, is required to maintain our focus on core warfighting skills.

Encourage people to innovate. Recognise and reward achievements and qualifications. Promote people in order to grow sub-unit and unit capabilities Take ownership of your soldier's career development.

- e. **Employ six principles of mission command:**<sup>9</sup>

- (1) Build cohesive teams through mutual trust – Trust is gained or lost through everyday actions more than grand or occasional gestures. Trust is based on personal qualities, such as professional competence, personal example, and integrity. Trust comes from successful shared experiences and training.
- (2) Create shared understanding – Command teams collaboratively understand the operational environment, define problems, and visualise approaches to solving them. Shared understanding and purpose form the basis for unity of effort, unified action and trust. Red teams help command teams understand alternative perspectives.
- (3) Provide clear commander's intent – The commander's intent is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired end state. Commander's intent helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned.
- (4) Exercise disciplined initiative – Move toward the friction. Develop a bias for action. Disciplined initiative is action in the absence of orders, when existing orders no longer fit the situation, or when unforeseen opportunities or threats arise. Commanders rely on subordinates to act. A subordinate's disciplined initiative may be the starting point for seizing the tactical advantage.
- (5) Use mission orders – An order should not trespass upon the responsibility of a subordinate. An order should contain everything that the subordinate must

know to carry out their mission, but nothing more. Above all, an order must be adapted to the circumstances under which it will be received and executed.<sup>10</sup>

- (6) **Accept prudent risk** – Prudently estimating and intentionally accepting risk is not gambling. Commanders carefully determine risks, analyse and minimise as many hazards as possible, and then take prudent risks to exploit opportunities. In contrast, gambling is staking the success of an entire action on a single event without considering the hazard to the force should the event not unfold as envisioned.
- f. **Live with humility.** A leader is not tempted by the trappings of authority. In fact, leaders actively refuse all opportunities to enhance themselves to the detriment of others. For example, after each game members for the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team, teammates stand up, grab a broom and begin to 'sweep the sheds'. This is an example of 'personal discipline and humility' ... All Blacks 'tidying up after themselves so that no one else has to'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, leaders live President Harry S. Truman's philosophy that 'it is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit'.<sup>12</sup> A humble leader's 'complete lack of pretension can be their most indirect, yet endearing trait'.<sup>13</sup>
- g. **Test and enhance doctrine.** Major General Fuller noted in 1936 that 'it is only through free criticism of each other's ideas that truth can be thrashed out. Until you learn to teach yourselves you will never be taught by others'.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, to test and enhance Army's doctrine we are to annually read and conduct professional education activities, on at least one of five pieces of Army doctrine:
- (1) Land Warfare Doctrine 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Power*, 2014  
<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/armyweb/sites/Doctrine-Online/comweb.asp?page=243637>
  - (2) Land Warfare Doctrine 5-1-4, *The Military Appreciation Process*.
  - (3) Land Warfare Doctrine 3-0-3, *Land Tactics*.  
<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/armyweb/sites/Doctrine-Online/ComWeb.asp?Page=242482>
  - (4) Land Warfare Doctrine 3-1-0 Intelligence Surveillance, *Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance*.  
<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/armyweb/sites/Doctrine-Online/ComWeb.asp?Page=242483>
  - (5) Headquarters Forces Command, *Command & Control*, Concept of Operations, 2014.
  - (6) In addition, read and conduct annual professional military education activities on one Corps Specific Pamphlet according to an officer's / warrant officer's specialisation (e.g. Land Warfare Doctrine 3-3-7, *Employment of Infantry*, 2008). Encourage the sharing of doctrinal lessons via social media applications, including UTube.
- h. **Maintain mental fitness.** George Orwell feared those who would ban books. Aldous Huxley feared that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be none who wanted to read one.<sup>15</sup> It is a given that you will deliberately allocate time and resources to maintain physical fitness. Make the same deliberate decisions allocating



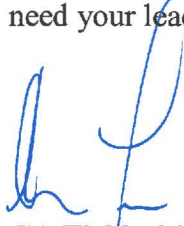
resources to maintain your mental fitness. Read each day. Read with purpose. Acknowledging the diversity of military writing available, you should try to focus your reading to become expert, strategically, operationally and tactically, in at least one battle or campaign.

- i. The following three biographies are unique military publications known for their honesty, humanity and humility. All three authors admit their fears and fallibilities. Make it your mission to read at least one before you complete your current appointment:
  - (1) *The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant*, Ulysses S. Grant.
  - (2) *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-1945*, Field-Marshal Viscount William Slim.
  - (3) *One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander*, Admiral Sandy Woodward.
  
- j. **Think broadly.** In war and peace, many people have little prior experience with the Australian Defence Force. Frequently you are the first Australian Defence Force representative people have met. Proudly represent and serve your regiment, battalion, unit or headquarters. Simultaneously, remain open to engaging beyond your standard military structures. Federal, state, joint, wider regular and reserve Army, coalition, multi-national, non-government organisation and multi-sector partners bring opportunities via their knowledge, skills and capabilities. In turn, these organisations will judge the Australian Defence Force's knowledge, skills and capabilities largely on your attitude and behaviour. Set conditions early through positive engagement.
  
- k. **Maintain personal resilience.** Believe in what you do and why you do it. Know that your leadership creates an environmental culture for others to adopt and follow. The following are ten-ideas to assist maintaining your personal resilience:
  - (1) Know yourself. Know your hot-button issues. In other words, know issues that cause you to feel and act upon strong emotions.
  - (2) Don't rely on others for your self-worth or self-esteem. Maintain realistic expectations of yourself and others. Seek help when needed.
  - (3) Don't take sides.
  - (4) Do not have emotional outbursts. Raise your voice only when life is in danger.
  - (5) When recovering from setbacks – bounce forward. Aim for post traumatic growth.
  - (6) Manage your stresses in private.
  - (7) Know what will undo your people. Focus on ensuring that does not happen. Allow people bad days.
  - (8) Know your limits and know when you need to exceed them. Live by Colonel Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop's conviction that it's 'only when you are put at full stretch that you can realise your full potential'.<sup>16</sup>

(9) Approach people and situations flexibly.

(10) Think long term. Focus outwards.

9. The Major and Sergeant Major leadership team is an influential body within the Australian Army. These are our expectations of these teams. Enjoy your privilege of commanding, educating, training and enabling our Australian soldiers and other people who need your leadership.



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**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Tom Goodwin, *The Battle Is For The Customer Interface*, Crunch Network, 03 March 2015 <<http://techcrunch.com/2015/03/03/in-the-age-of-disintermediation-the-battle-is-all-for-the-customer-interface/>> [accessed 02 November 2015]

<sup>2</sup> Blake Morgan, *5 Predictions Shaping the Future of Customer Experience for 2016*, Forbes Magazine, 30 Nov 2015 <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2015/11/30/5-predictions-shaping-the-future-of-customer-experience-for-2016/>> [accessed 05 January 2016]

<sup>3</sup> Alan Kohler, *RBA: Before you cut rates, take a look around you*, The Australian, 02 November 2015 <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/rba-before-you-cut-rates-take-a-look-around-you/story-fnp851cq-1227590413814>> [accessed 03 November 2015]

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Canberra, 2013, p. 7

<sup>5</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1, The Fundamentals of Land Power*, 2014, p. 48. 'Fighting power is the way in which Army generates its capacity through the integration of the physical, moral and intellectual components at both the individual and organisational level. The intellectual component provides the knowledge of war, warfare and cognitive capability – the 'what to think'. The moral component reinforces culture, values and legitimacy – the will to fight. The physical component provides Army's capabilities and functional effects – the means to fight. When all three components interact, Army's capacity to operate in the future environment will be strengthened'.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1959, pp. 8-11

<sup>7</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, Random House, Ballantine Books, 1996, p. 383 quoting Michael Korda who is the author of *Ulysses S. Grant*, *Ike*, *Hero*, and *Charmed Lives*. Educated at Le Rosey in Switzerland and at Magdalen College, Oxford, he served in the Royal Air Force. He took part in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and on its fiftieth anniversary was awarded the Order of Merit of the People's Republic of Hungary.

<sup>8</sup> Col Alex Vohr, USMC(Ret), *Words Have Meaning, Understanding what we say and write*, United States Marine Corps Gazette, November 2015, p.88

<sup>9</sup> Headquarters Department of the United States Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0, Mission Command*, Change No. 2, Washington, DC, 28 March 2014, Chapter 2

<sup>10</sup> United States Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Tentative Field Service Regulations – Operations*, Oct 1939, p. 62

<sup>11</sup> The Guardian, *How culture delivers competitive advantage and other lessons we can learn from the All Blacks*, 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/marketing-agencies-association-partner-zone/business-lessons-culture-all-blacks>> [accessed 30 November 2015]

<sup>12</sup> University of Missouri-Kansas City, *Harry S Truman Centre for Governmental Affairs*, Kansas City, Missouri, 2014, <<http://cas.umkc.edu/trumancenter/>> [accessed 03 March 2015]

<sup>13</sup> LTCOL Jim Hammett, Commanding Officer, 8th/9th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, March 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Major General J. F. C. Fuller, from his first lecture at Camberley Staff College, 1923, quoted in *Memoirs of an Unconventional Soldier* (1936)

<sup>15</sup> Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Penguin Books, 1985, p. vii

<sup>16</sup> Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Medical Research Foundation, *Sir Edward Dunlop, Biography*, Heidelberg West, Victoria, 2015 <<http://www.siredwarddunlop.org.au/index.php/historical/biography-part-two>> [accessed 05 December 2015]