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**Army Commanders,**

## **CHANGES TO ARMY COMMAND AND CONTROL**

In the past two decades, Army has continued its rich history of contributing to ADF operations here on our own soil and overseas. This includes nearly 600 separate Army-led bodies of troops, and 21,000 soldiers who served in Afghanistan. In recent days, the withdrawal from Afghanistan has caused many of us pause and reflect; about those we worked with, our own roles and the implications for security and stability elsewhere in the world.

Thank you to those who deployed. Your presence, as always, meant security, reassurance and safety. This is what land forces do and why we have high readiness teams. The withdrawal, while tragic at a human level, is also an obvious marker of changes in Australia's Defence policy. This shift has been underway for some time but was made explicit in Government's 2020 direction. To support Government policy, the Army is continuing to focus on the region and contribute to defence effects in cooperation, competition and conflict.

I am writing to update you on what Army is doing to prepare for this challenge. You translate intent to action at the sub-unit, unit, training centre and formation level and it is important that you understand what is important to me. It has been a tough week in some parts of the Army and only you will know the right time and place to talk about these topics with your teams.

Our mission is clear – the Army prepares land power to enable the joint force. This relationship is interdependent. For example, the land forces on the ground in the Kabul evacuation were put there, protected and enabled by Air, Maritime, Space, and Cyber and Information power. Equally, land power enables other forms of military power. It enables the ADF to operate in the region by securing ports, airports and land that dominate maritime choke points. In cooperation and competition, this access is achieved through people to people engagement. In conflict, land forces enable the joint force to create access through ground, air and littoral manoeuvre. Land forces also remain essential to countering grey zone threats – working on the ground with partners and allies – denying access and influence by being there. In some situations, this demands discrete and specialist capabilities that are resident in Army's special purpose forces: Information and cyber domain specialists, the Regional Force Surveillance Group and Special Operations Forces. These capabilities have never been more relevant.

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Land power has had, and will continue to have, a critical role to play to enable the Joint Force. Government investment will deliver new equipment to increase Army's ability to generate it. This includes new long range missiles, self-propelled artillery, electronic warfare, attack and light utility helicopters, and the upgrade or replacement of every Unmanned Aerial System, combat vehicle, watercraft and weapon in the Army. The protection and lethality of these systems is how Army delivers land power and presence across the continuum, including when soft power is needed in hard places.

This year and in 2022, Army is delivering the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle, the Hawkei, and the NASAMS Air Defence System. At the soldier level, Army is issuing Soldier Combat Ensemble Tier Zero. This means everyone will have the same base level equipment. Much more new equipment will arrive after 2023. Between now and then, being *Future Ready* means evolving our thinking, command and control, structures, training and workforce. Army's conceptual approach to be *Future Ready* is described in Army's *Contribution to Defence Strategy Edition 2*. The *Army Force Structure Implementation Plan* synchronises our efforts and informs Defence and Government decisions that affect the Army. As we prepare for the future, we need to manage tempo. To enhance how we do this, Army Headquarters and the Commands have recently completed a review of our force generation system. The changes, we are implementing, are intended to protect time for you and your teams to achieve foundation preparedness and prioritise other tasks. We are also proactively organising our command and control to ensure our Army can deliver against the demands of continuous competition and conflict. This includes the following changes:

**Army Aviation Command.** Army is establishing an Aviation Command to deliver new helicopters and unmanned systems and to enhance the safety, effectiveness and sustainability of current aircraft. Responsibility for Army Aviation will transition from Forces Command to Army Aviation Command in 2021 and 2022. The first step in the transition was the transfer of air safety responsibilities on the 1st September 2021. The Army Aviation Command Headquarters is based in Canberra and will begin initial operations in late 2021.

**Domestic Support.** In response to lessons learnt from the 2019/2020 Bushfires, Operation COVID Assist and domestic security exercises, the 2nd Division has strengthened how it supports state based emergency services. The 2nd Division will become a command in its own right to better manage how this task is resourced and balanced with its enduring role to prepare land forces for conflict. To ensure our response forces are balanced across Australia, Army will grow part-time West Australian based light cavalry, engineer and littoral manoeuvre forces. This means more opportunities to serve in Western Australia and more options for the ADF. Army's first significant action to realise this is to re-raise the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment in late 2021.

**Command and Control of Special Forces.** Strengthening Army presence in Western Australian is complemented by changes to the command and control of the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) that I directed earlier this week. These changes ensure the SASR's unique operating model is accountable and future proof. It does not mean SASR will be more independent or self-contained. With more expected of it, enhanced command and control

ensures SASR is more capable, accountable and connected. These changes will take effect from January 2022.

**Health.** In 2022, Army will take the first steps to reorganise its health capabilities. Creating four multi-function health battalions and a health brigade will strengthen training and governance and increase deployable capability. The creation of this brigade reflects lessons learnt from employment of health capabilities on operations and prepares for new deployable health equipment that will be delivered in the next two years.

**Long Range Fires and Amphibious and Littoral Operations.** Army's planning is now focused on actions to receive long range missile systems and an enhanced amphibious and littoral operations capability. These will be game changers. They strengthen the joint force and provide Government options in the Shape, Deter, Respond elements of our strategy. I anticipate making further announcements about these plans in early 2022.

**Innovation.** Commercial investment and consumer demand is accelerating the development of artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and autonomous systems, biotechnology, and new forms of energy. We are working with industry and Defence Science and Technology Group to understand the implications of these technologies for equipment, tactics and training. Army also experiments with un-crewed vehicles, quadruped robots, counter unmanned systems weapons, and advanced leader-follower technology. This experimentation is helping Defence to understand the limitations and strengths of these systems in cluttered, ambiguous and degraded environments.

We want your engagement and input. Army is rolling out eight Makerspace labs in Brigade locations to provide practical experimentation and prototyping in artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, coding and advanced manufacturing. This rollout has been informed by lessons learnt over the past few years from the Innovation and eXperimentation Group (IXG). IXG is a Special Operations Command unit-level initiative to address capability gaps and advance the adoption of emerging technology, organisational processes and human performance factors.

Junior leader input is also the central idea of the Junior Leader Fellowship. Through this initiative, 120 junior NCOs across Army contribute their ideas to Army initiatives. In the coming months, the 100 member Army Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Fellowship will also hold its first online forum. Engagement and participation by leaders at every level is what we need to be ready for *Accelerated Warfare*.

**Training and Workforce.** Equipment is important but not as important as people and ideas. Many of you are working hard in challenging conditions to recruit, on board, upskill and retain our people. This is made more difficult by an extremely competitive national labour market and border restrictions. The competitiveness of the labour market will endure. To build Army's capability through our people, we must change the way we recruit and train and this is my highest priority. From September of this year, recruiting fitness standards will better align with workforce segments allowing more Australians the opportunity to join the Army.

In October of this year, Forces Command will support the 13th Brigade to trial new, tailored part-time recruit and specialist officer entry courses. Many of these soldiers and officers have been recruited through an accelerated program, leveraging Army's strategic partnership with BHP. The work in Western Australian builds on ongoing transformation of how we attract, develop and retain our people. Army is also simplifying our training systems, enhancing the skills and qualifications of our workforce, and learning how to deliver more effective online or blended learning. We are listening and adjusting to your concerns regarding tempo, locational stability and support for families; this is being built into the design of the Army Objective Force as a priority.

Together, these changes ensure Army is ready for future challenges. They complement our most vital resource - you and your support network. Who you are, how you work with others and apply yourself remains our greatest strength.

I know you are working hard and I am proud of all that you are achieving at this challenging time. I acknowledge COVID-19 restrictions are making it difficult for families to support each other and increase the burdens on your teams. Recent events in Afghanistan and the tragic death of two soldiers from the 7th Brigade in a vehicle accident have caused distress and deep sadness in parts of our force. My thoughts are with those affected, their families and colleagues. Look out for each other and ask for help when you need it.

Good soldiering.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Burr', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Richard M Burr, AO, DSC, MVO**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Army

3 September 2021