

Sir Richard Williams Foundation Seminar

The Imperative for Cost Effectiveness in Multidomain Operations

Thursday, 22 May 2025, National Gallery of Australia

Aim

The 2025 seminar series will identify and discuss strategic themes which impact the Whole of Australian Government, Defence and industry, as well as international partners in a multi-domain context. Given the increasingly complex set of threats and operational risks, it is also set within the context of the emerging issues aligned with the development of NDS26 and beyond.

The seminar series will address the need to balance near-term decisions in air and space capability to ensure Defence and industry investment also provides the sustainable foundations for future force structure planning and growth.

In recognition of the increasing pressures on Defence spending, the aim of the May 2025 seminar is to examine the imperative for cost effectiveness in multi-domain operations.

Background

The May seminar considers the need for a balanced view across NDS planning epochs to ensure the Future Integrated Force is fit for purpose, not least in its ability to survive to operate in an increasingly complex and contested national security environment.

Epoch 1, end of 2025 – the Enhanced Force-in-Being will focus on immediate enhancements that can be made to the current force.

Epoch 2, 2026 to 2030 – the Objective Integrated Force will see the accelerated acquisition of critical capabilities.

Epoch 3, 2031 and beyond – the Future Integrated Force will see the delivery of an ADF that is fit for purpose across all domains and enablers.

The intent is to inform and contribute to the ongoing development of the NDS based on an objective, evidence-based consideration of the assumptions that address the realities of a future war. As described in the recently released United States Air Force Unclassified Force Design Review, there is a need to consider the operational capacity, range, and density of increasingly capable network-enabled long-range fires—such as ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Furthermore, the USAF Review highlights “conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East highlight the growing effectiveness of smaller, less-costly systems that in sufficient quantities create quality of their own”.

Strategic Themes 2025

The Sir Richard Williams Foundation strategic themes for 2025 cover mass, depth, agility, industry involvement, and redundancy.

The intent of the themes is to provide an objective consideration of those measures which balance combat effectiveness with an increasing demand for efficiency in a fiscally constrained national security environment. While all themes are relevant across the NDS planning epochs,

prioritisation of near-term effort is in Epoch 1 and 2 and generating and exploiting depth in air power:

Building Combat Mass and Depth Across Domains: How can new technology be applied to the extant force structure to enhance a focussed force and achieve critical mass and depth. The ability to mass power, plus sustain and replace it includes consideration of force protection and generation requirements for sustained operations across multiple rotations in a high threat environment where success is by no means assured. This could involve reliance on international partnerships. The focus of this theme relates to Epochs 1 and 2.

Generating Tempo Across Domains: How can the ADF respond at speed and scale across a vast geographical area in strategically relevant timeframes and remain survivable. The main focus is Epoch 2 and 3.

Enhancing Industry capability and the National Support Base: How can industry be more involved in planning to mitigate key replenishment, sustainment and preparedness risks not least in relation to cost, and the broader demand for increased capacity and workforce integration. Growing the industrial base to keep pace with the need for increased combat mass across domains will involve more detailed consideration of risk tolerance, and attritable equipment and weapon systems. The focus is Epoch 1 and 2.

Survive to Operate: How does the ADF build redundancy to sustain integrated operations across multiple domains and critical nodes in the face of an increasingly complex and lethal threat. Beyond the ADF there is the broader need for an objective assessment of industry competencies, workforce preparedness, and national will. Moreover, a central question emerges around whether the nation is ready for the realities of a future war? This is predominantly an Epoch 1 and 2 effort.

Seminar Agenda

The May seminar will focus on enhancements to the focussed force, and the gaps and risks emerging from the Integrated Investment Program. The seminar will seek to support the transition to a Future Integrated Force that is fit for purpose across all domains and enablers that considers the rapidly accelerating threat and the need to prioritise investment in capability, which is operationally relevant, survivable, lethal, sustainable, and delivered with the lowest political risk.

The proposed industry focus is: How can industry be more involved in planning to mitigate key sustainment and preparedness risks in the integrated force, and introduce new technology to add mass and depth plus the ability to sustain and replace it?

Cutting across each of the strategic themes are policy, process, technology, infrastructure, and workforce considerations including, but not limited to:

- Operational Risk Management: Balancing Lethality and Survivability
 - Workforce: Management, Automation, and Development
 - Training System Effectiveness & Mission Rehearsal
 - Future Technologies and Collaborative Combat Systems
 - Accelerating Capability: Minimum Viable Capability and Minimal Viable Product
 - Preparedness, Basing, Logistics & Supply Chains
 - Assuring Value for Money in Force Development
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Program

Updated 20 May 2025

Time	Topic	Speakers
0800-0830	Registration and breakfast	
0830-0835	Welcoming Remarks	ACM Mark Binskin AC (Retd) Chair, Sir Richard Williams Foundation
0835-0840	Introduction and MC	WGCDR Sally Knox Sir Richard Williams Foundation
0840-0915	Keynote – USAF Transformation Challenges	Gen. (ret) T. Michael Moseley, KBE 18th Chief of Staff, United States Air Force
0915-0945	Strategic Risks and Opportunities in Australian Multidomain Operations	AIRMSHL Rob Chipman AO, CSC Vice Chief of Defence Force
0945-1030	Adversary Threat and Allied Airpower Capability Trends in a Multidomain Context	Prof Justin Bronk Senior Research Fellow/Editor, RUSI Defence Systems
1030-1100	Break – Morning Tea	
1100-1130	Future Cost Effectiveness Considerations for the Integrated Force	Dr Marcus Hellyer Head of Research, Strategic Analysis Australia
1130-1215	Cost Per Effect Panel Discussion: Facilitator: AIRMSHL (Retd) Darren Goldie AM CSC	AVM Glen Braz AM, CSC, DSM Air Commander Australia Prof Justin Bronk Senior Research Fellow/Editor, RUSI Defence Systems
1215-1300	Industry Perspectives: Industry Panel Facilitator: Kath Ziesing	Kendell Kuczma, Lockheed Martin Nick Leake, Optus Bradley Thompson, Phantom Works Australia AVM (Ret) Robert Denney AM, Northrop Grumman Jim Gardner, Raytheon Australia
1300-1400	Lunch	
1400-1425	Operational Opportunity Costs	Chris McInnes, Executive Director, Air Power Institute
1425-1455	Deceive. Disrupt. Defeat: Integrating non-kinetic effects for (cost-effective) battlefield advantage”	GPCAPT Marija Jovanovich AM, CSM Chief of Staff, Vice Chief of the Defence Force
1455-1535	Chief of Air Force in Conversation with AIRMSHL (Retd) Geoff Brown AO	AIRMSHL Stephen Chappell DSC, CSC, OAM Chief of Air Force AIRMSHL (Retd) Geoff Brown AO Deputy Chair, Sir Richard Williams Foundation
1535-1545	Formal Close	ACM Mark Binskin AC (Retd) Chair, Sir Richard Williams Foundation