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Chief of Army**

*Australian Army Reserve transformation - A total force*

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**As delivered**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.

I want to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we are gathered, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

I would like to thank Major General (Retd) Mike O'Brien, president of the Royal United Services Institute (Victoria), for the opportunity to speak to you today. The Victorian branch of the RUSI is a fitting place to speak about the transformation of our force of part-time soldiers. It is a matter of record that John Monash was active in the early days of this branch when he was a young lieutenant. That early interest in military affairs, fostered by the RUSI, seems to have stood him in good stead...A few short years later Monash was commanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division on the Western front – an Australian Army formation which also had a long association with the state of Victoria.

The history of the Australian Army is one of citizen soldiers serving alongside each other, in full time and part time service. Over the 116 year history of the Australian Army, the components of our Army have had various names: Militia, 'permanent' forces, the First

and Second Australian Imperial Forces, Citizen Military Forces and 'Regular' Army to name just a few. For more than half our history, part time soldiers made up the bulk of our force; serving, sacrificing and contributing to the development of our proud record.

This pathway of service has given us some of our greatest wartime leaders, at all levels: from Monash and Chauvel, to Albert Jacka and Charlie Green. It has also given us some of the humblest but most remarkable soldiers. Men such as Private John Carroll of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, 1<sup>st</sup> AIF. John was a labourer and railway worker when he enlisted in Western Australia in 1916. The son of Irish immigrants, John was an athlete and a prominent member of the Kurrawang Aussie Rules Club. A taciturn man, he was sometimes referred to as 'Referendum Carroll' because he rarely said anything other than 'yes' or 'no'.

In the AIF, Carroll's mates called him 'The Wild Irishman'. For his actions in the battle of Messines Ridge, fought 100 years ago last month, he was awarded the Victoria Cross. During the battle he rushed an enemy trench and bayoneted four men, then rescued a comrade in difficulties. Later in the same advance, he attacked a machine gun crew, killing three men and capturing the gun. Then, in spite of heavy shelling and machine gun fire, he dug out two of his mates who had been buried by a shell explosion. Private Carroll missed the first three dates for his investiture at Buckingham Palace. Rumour has it that he found certain other establishments in London more convivial. He finally received his VC on the fourth attempt, after he had to be sent for...John was quickly returned to his battalion in Belgium after discovering that, as a VC holder, he could 'turn out the guard' at the Palace.

Whether a feted leader like Monash or an 'everyman' like John Carroll, our citizen soldiers have made extraordinary contributions. They are inextricably a part of our Australian Army story. Part time soldiers have taken part in all of our campaigns; from the high veldt of South Africa to the dust of Iraq and Afghanistan. Theirs has been a consistent contribution to, and an enrichment of, the ANZAC heritage *they* created.

Today, the Australian Army is a highly trained and professional force of 45,000 soldiers. We are an integrated 'total' force of some 30,000 full time and 15,000 part time citizens. Our Army is focussed on delivering capability outcomes, rather than dogmatic adherence to a particular process to develop and deliver that capability. By embracing different pathways to capability, the Army gains from a broadening of our skills base, attracting a range of generalist and specialist experience to our modern force. The commitment of all our people is the same: to serve our nation in peace and war, as duty requires. The only difference being their employment flexibility, in training but not on operations, associated with full time or part time service.

This means service in our contemporary Army is characterised by people who, across their career and as their circumstances and needs change, move between various service categories. The service of my brothers and I is indicative. The three of us have variously served in a range of categories: from full time service in conventional and special force units, to active, inactive and standby service. And for two of us, back to full time service: at least for now! Of course, the very great majority of our reserve personnel do the opposite, joining in a part time capacity, with some then offering periods of full time service.

Change is underway to ensure that our Army, including the Reserve as an indivisible component of our Army, continues to deliver the capability required of us by Government. With regard to the reserve component, the Reserve is driving this process: it is their ideas, suggestions and planning we are moving out on. Let me be very clear – this is not a case of a Regular Officer telling the Reserve what’s good for it. Rather, senior reserve leaders have said they want and need change:

- *Change* that acknowledges the significant strategic challenges of our times;
- *Change* that better supports the training and development of our people, especially young adult Australians;
- *Change* that aligns Army service and contemporary civil employment demands; and
- *Change* that appreciates the opportunity and complexity of modern land force materiel.

A key change concerns the way in which we think about the wider utility of the Reserve. For some decades we have been moving away from the strategic rationale of the Reserve *purely* as a mobilisation base. Moving away from thinking of it as a *separate part* of the Army, or even a *separate Army*, whose purpose was only to generate capability *in extremis*. In the ‘total force’ model the Reserve contributes to capability in all of our endeavours to defend Australia and secure its national interests.

The contribution of the Reserve is particularly notable in our efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere. Between 2004 and 2014, 2,400 Reserve soldiers deployed on operations, with Reserve officers routinely holding significant appointments. 2016 is illustrative:

- Brigadier Kathryn Campbell was the Deputy Commander of Joint Task Force 633 on Operation ACCORDION;
- Brigadier Michael Annett commanded Task Group Afghanistan on Operation HIGH ROAD; and
- Brigadier Michael Bond commanded the Australian Service contingent on Operation ASLAN with the United Nations in South Sudan.

The pattern continues this year. Lieutenant Colonel Tony Hoyer is currently the Commanding Officer of the Australian Contingent at the Afghan National Officer Academy in Qargha, while Colonel John Brennan will deploy very soon to Operation ASLAN as the Commander of the Australian Contingent.

Whether providing reinforcements to deploying battle groups, embeds to coalition headquarters, niche specialist capabilities or entire contingents, the operational experience of today's Reserve is extensive. This will continue to develop. In February this year, I issued a directive, the '*Total Force Approach for Operational Deployments*'. The directive mandates a review of all current and future operational deployment documents. Through this mechanism, *some* positions on *all* operations will be made available to Army Reserve soldiers who undertake contingent force preparation; thereby embedding a 'total force' approach to our operational deployments.

Our Reserve now generates significant collective capability every year. This is most evident in the 'reinforcing battle group' of around 850 soldiers provided to the 'ready' Army brigade during our major exercise period. Battle Group Cannan, made up of soldiers from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Brigades, deployed this month to Shoalwater Bay. While

there, the Battle Group supported the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade on Exercise Talisman Sabre 2017. I had the opportunity to visit the exercise a few weeks ago and was very impressed by what I saw. Battle Group Cannan, just like Battle Group Jacka before it in 2016, demonstrates the commitment, current capability, and the extraordinary potential of our Reserve soldiers.

Battle Group Cannan was 810 strong, with an additional 50 personnel from 11 and 13 Brigades embedded as specialists throughout 3 Brigade and Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> Division. They were well equipped and supported by 3 Brigade, indistinguishable from any other soldiers on the exercise. When I asked how they got EF88s rifles and the latest Battalion Headquarters C3 kit, the Commanding Officer explained that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade had provided them. The Brigade Commander followed on to note that he needed the capability, so he wanted it to be the best our collective resources could make it. Now *that's* an integrated force in word, spirit and deed!

Through this battle group training the Reserve is developing considerable expertise in the essential and enduring tasks of rear area security and stabilisation. This is lifting their skills and reducing the training time required to prepare them for operations, whether that is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, security and stabilisation or conventional warfare. The importance of this contribution cannot be overstated. In any sustained operational deployment of an Australian Army brigade group, Reserve participation in successive rotations is likely to rise from an initial 10% of the first deployment, to 30%, and then 60% of the third rotation.

There are many paths to service in the Australian Army and many levels of readiness across units, full and part time, subject to respective roles and responsibilities. But there is only one path to deployment: our 'operational generation' process. This provides assurance, on my behalf, of the preparedness of all forces. This process is designed to certify, or not, individuals and units as ready to deploy. Full or part time in origin, all our people on operations are prepared and ready for those operations; one team, working for Australia.

Of course, the contribution of the Reserve is far broader than just operational deployments. For example, in 2016, while the Army had 100 Reservist deployed on operations, we had 600 on Continuous Full-time service and 500 on short periods of *Defence Act Section 26* service. Reserves also figure prominently in the Australian Army's many domestic roles. From disaster relief to special events, such as the G20 or the Commonwealth Games. We could not achieve what the Government asks of us without the 'total force'.

Whatever the roles and tasks assigned to the Reserve, it is a simple truism that to have a viable and effective Reserve component we must have enough suitable people.

Demography *is* destiny in this regard:

- We know that if we have 30 people parading we can generate efficient, effective and progressive training that builds capability while also meeting our necessary governance, safety and management responsibilities;
- We know that if we have 90 effective soldiers on the books, we can reliably anticipate 30 soldiers will attend training in any given period; and

- We know that we need a pool of 1,000 people aged between 17 and 29 years old in order to attract and recruit 1 soldier.

Extending this logic, we need around 90,000 to 100,000, young adult Australians, living within a reasonable distance of a Reserve hub, in order to offer a progressive training experience.

These numbers are all well-established and affirmed by similar experience among our allies. Yet our current disposition does not always support this reality. Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on earth. Yet many of our current hubs are located in rural and hinterland areas where, *disaggregated*, demography does not and cannot support the capability development we need. This is also true in some urban areas, where Reserve locations reflect Australia's demography in 1917 rather than that of 2017. Accordingly, we are studying the data from the 2016 Census to help determine where we need to be opening new depots.

Any Australian can join the Reserve and I want them all to consider doing so. We keenly want the hard working quiet stoicism of young rural Australians as much as the inner city worker and everyone in between. So, in order to facilitate a better way of connecting to you, wherever your home and associated depot, we are increasingly adopting, for city and country alike, a modular or block training approach to building capability. In doing so, we seek to *aggregate* people for training so that the *experience* of Reserve service is worthy of the *commitment* of young Australians. Remember, they are a very discerning generation who readily vote with their feet.

This is about creating the opportunity for any Australian who volunteers and passes the entrance requirements to serve. Soldiers who live in urban areas often have more flexible training attendance options, due to simple proximity. These range from weeknight / weekday options, through to weekends and modular blocks of training. For rural, regional and remote soldiers, many of whom may be hundreds of kilometres away from their unit's hub, such options are neither feasible nor desirable. An example of modular training may see up to 3 x 9 day blocks (weekend, workweek, weekend) and 5 x weekend blocks within a training year. This means that city, rural, regional and remote soldiers - we want them all - can now all access a participation model that works for them.

The Army has also renewed our focus on *recruiting* for our Reserve. And it is working. Two years ago we were barely recruiting 900 reserve soldiers a year. We are now recruiting 1,400 a year and this number is rising. We have also addressed retention and wastage rates in the training pipeline. In doing this the Army is changing patterns of training and service to meet the flexibility required of the modern Australian workforce. While training standards remain the same, the Army realises that there are many paths to achieving them. An example is the trial of new 35 day and 28 day, part-residential, Army Reserve Recruit Training Courses.

Another focus for recruiting and development concerns getting more tradespeople into the Reserve. This target group includes the traditional 'trades' - our need for diesel mechanics, plumbers, electricians, cooks and carpenters is not going away anytime soon. But it now also includes newer and emerging civilian trades, such as cyber experts, software developers and computer programmers, social media and communications

experts, electronic systems technicians, UAS operators and technicians, to name only a few. Like doctors and lawyers, the skills we require from these people in uniform are the ones they have mastered in their civilian employment.

We are looking at ways we can attract and retain the right people from these professions, so that the employment offer is attractive, predictable and mutually beneficial. One initiative we are looking at is developing a simple course to induct them into the military so that their skills can be accessed quickly.

An important and related initiative, happening right now, is the re-rolling of the Sydney-based 8<sup>th</sup> Brigade to support the development and delivery of individual training to the Reserve. 8 Brigade's task is to deliver trained individuals (soldiers and officers) through innovative and practical combinations of modularised, residential and distributed regional training, as well as individual e-learning pathways.

As well as changes in recruiting, training and participation models, change is underway with respect to equipment. Modern land platforms, such as the armoured vehicles being acquired for the Army in Project Land 400, are highly capable. They are also highly complex and costly. Due to the complexity of these vehicles they will not be crewed by Reserve personnel. This is a factor of the number of training days per year necessary to establish and maintain crew proficiency. The high cost of this capability also makes it unlikely that our nation can afford more than a number sufficient to equip our full time brigades.

Of course, the Reserve will *utilise* Land 400 Armoured vehicles, as Cavalry Scouts for the Armoured Cavalry Regiments and as reinforcements for the infantry battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Brigades. And our Reserve infantry soldiers will continue to be trained and employed in dismounted roles, such as stability operations and operations in close or complex terrain environments.

Our citizen soldiers have come a very long way from the assessment made by Major General Stanley Savige when he joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in 1942. He wrote in a letter:

*When I got back I was really sick at heart when I saw the unreal outlook and effort which I could only term as 'Gathering mushrooms and chasing rabbits'*

He went on:

*Bullshit, malingering, social ambition and bugger all in the way of getting on with the job were in full cry...<sup>1</sup>*

Whether fair or foul, this divided view marred too much of our Army's history. Today's citizen soldiers are highly-trained and motivated part-time professionals. They are ready and relevant. The Reserve's role to support the generation of directed operational capability by the total force of 45,000 is 'locked in' to the design of the contemporary and future Army.

As I have outlined, this has involved change for all parts of the Army. It is a change for good. Change initiated, requested and driven by the leadership of the Reserve. The tenets of these changes are flexibility, modularity, world class training and a relentless focus on generating land forces for the defence of Australia and its national interests. I am proud of the fact that our current reservists have embraced these changes. And like

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<sup>1</sup> Palazzo, Albert, 2002. *Defenders of Australia: The 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division, 1916-1991*. Army History Unit, Department of Defence, Canberra ACT, p.103.

the example offered by John Carroll, they are quietly, competently and modestly getting on with the job at hand.

After his adventures in the UK Private Carroll VC went back to his unit and was promoted to Lance Corporal in September 1917. Severely wounded during the second battle of Passchendaele in 1917, he returned home to Western Australia in August 1918 and resumed work as a Railway Guard on the Kurrawang Line. He married Mary Brown in April 1923, and they moved to Yarloop a few years later. He lived a quiet life working as a labourer and railway employee, attending the centenary of Victoria Cross celebrations in London in 1956. John Carroll VC was 80 years old when he passed away in the Perth Repatriation General Hospital in October 1971.

Our contemporary reservists follow in John Carroll's footsteps. They are hardworking Australian men and women, offering service to the nation beyond that which they already give as citizens in their daily lives – and frequently achieving extraordinary things in both careers. The Reserve transformation underway in our Army demonstrates our commitment to them and respect for their service and the capability they deliver.

There are many paths to service in today's Australian Army, but we are one Army. A 'total force', united under the rising sun.

Thank you.

