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## In Memoriam – Professor Jeffrey Grey

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### Professor Peter Dennis and Dr Roger Lee

Jeffrey Grey, who died in his sleep from a heart attack on 26 July 2016, was an amazing man. Son of a general, he had a lifelong interest in the Australian Army and absolutely no interest in formally joining it. He used to remark that he was ‘of’ the Army, frequently ‘with’ the Army but never ‘in’ the Army. Fortunately for Army, he did not have to be in it to make a major contribution to its development and evolution. One of Jeffrey’s major frustrations was that he felt Army did training very well and education extremely badly. Given his character, Jeffrey enthusiastically set about trying to change this. Through more than just his teaching contribution – he was an academic first at RMC, and then at ADFA – Jeffrey tried to change the culture of Army to appreciate the value of professional military education as an ongoing, essential contributor to a modern, professional force. He did this by unashamedly lobbying senior officers, writing articles critical of the failings (as he saw them) of Army’s educational regime and by engaging at as many levels as possible within Army to press his arguments. One of his key arguments was that, by comparison with the US Army and US Marine Corps, the Australian Army did not exploit its long history, both of peace and war, to help prepare its current members for the job they had to face.

The main beneficiary of his tireless enthusiasm and energy was the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU). Jeffrey had established an early connection with the then Colonel Peter Leahy who, as Director Army Research and Analysis, asked Jeffrey and Professor Peter Dennis (also at ADFA and Jeffrey’s mentor and close friend) to assist with the planning and

delivery of an international conference examining amphibious warfare. This became the relationship that defined Jeffrey's connection to the Army. The History Unit came into being in 1998 and promptly took responsibility for the history conference idea – beginning (until recently) an annual event that has arguably contributed more understanding about the Australian Army, its origins, culture, combat experience, flexibility and likely future shape and construction than any other single initiative. Jeffrey (and Peter Dennis) worked with the History Unit on every one of these conferences: Jeffrey's unsurpassed knowledge of who, anywhere in the academic world, was working on what, enabled the conference organisers to identify and sign up as speakers the most current, most credible and (a key consideration) most persuasive speakers on any challenging military topic. It has been remarked that, of all his attributes, the end of our access to Jeffrey's contact list will probably be the biggest loss to Army!

The relationship between Jeffrey and the History Unit did not end with the once a year conference contact. Although ADFA, not AAHU, paid his salary, the average onlooker could rightly have been confused about that. Jeffrey spent much of his time on military history projects being pursued by the Unit. He sat on the Military Historical Advisory Committee, chaired by DCA. Until his acidic comments became too unrestrained, he was a long-time member of the Army History Research Grants scheme: his opinions on the (poor) applications of some of his fellow academics for research assistance were as entertaining as they were unreportable. Jeffrey worked closely with the Unit and its flourishing publishing scheme to encourage the publication of the theses from the best and brightest young PhD students at ADFA and elsewhere, thus ensuring their widespread availability. There was, however, much more to the relationship than just these formal connections. Jeffrey was always happy to help when the Unit was stumped by a request for some obscure information or when a senior officer wanted a speech written on some area in which Jeffrey was the recognised expert. He was always happy to comment on articles or similar product destined for public consumption. He even attended the Unit Christmas party on a regular basis where his fierce demeanour (an amusing façade) routinely intimidated the Unit's younger staff – until they wised up to his game!

It would be a mistake to paint Jeffrey's relationship with the Army solely through the AAHU connection. He had many other links – he even had a paid part time position with the Land Warfare Centre at one stage (perhaps

the closest he ever went to being ‘in’ the Army). He edited the Australian Army Journal on a few occasions and sat on its Board for many years. While he rarely mentioned it, it was known he was consulted on a wide range of subjects by senior members in Army Headquarters. Through his many years’ teaching, he was a friend and confidant of many soldiers, including many who made it to command positions. He was in demand as a speaker at unit and formation gatherings and as part of the ongoing, informal education of junior officers.

However, it was through his writing that Jeffrey had the greatest impact. The author of over thirty works, including his highly regarded and commercially successful book, *A Military History of Australia*, he was directly involved in – and in one instance was the instigator of - two of the more ambitious military history projects in Australian publishing history. In 2001, as part of the national centenary of federation commemorations, a major publishing project resulted in a six volume series, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*. Jeffrey wrote volume one in the series – *The Australian Army* – and was closely involved in the production of the series itself. More recently, recognising that the Defence Organisation, including Army, was not well prepared to respond to likely popular demands for some recognition of the centenary of the Great War, Jeffrey approached the then Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, with a proposition. With Army’s support, Jeffrey undertook to organise and produce a centenary history of the Great War as Army’s acknowledgement of the centenary. CA accepted and in late 2014 the first of the five volume set appeared. Jeffrey’s own contribution, on the war with the Ottoman Empire, appeared in 2016. He selected the authors, undertook the series editing and generally supervised all the volumes through to completion personally. This series epitomised everything about Jeffrey and his relationship with the Army. The support he received from Army was sufficient but not generous. Jeffrey did much to make the series both authoritative and qualitative, but this was done at great personal cost in time and emotion. He did it simply because he believed the Army was a national institution with an admirable history, great public credibility and a reputation for professionalism second to none.

It was his greatest desire to help Army maintain this record and the Army History Unit became a major beneficiary of this commitment. It seems impossible the void caused by his death can ever be filled.