



Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies - Australia

Promoting national security awareness

ABN 83 657 442 244

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR PERIOD 2 OCTOBER 2023 TO 6 OCTOBER 2024 - FOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON 7 OCTOBER 2024

Background

In 2016, the Constituent Bodies (CBs) of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia (RUSIDSS-A) agreed to the incorporation of RUSIDSS-A as a company limited by guarantee.

RUSIDSS-A is an Australian public company which is registered with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) and regulated by the Australian Charities & Not For Profits Commission (ACNC).

Also in 2016, a new National Board was elected with new governance arrangements and with a vision of a federated organisation with seven CBs focussing on strong local programs with strong coherence between the CBs and RUSIDSS-A.

The National Board was independent of the CBs who owned the company. The 2016 National Constitution excluded any person holding a position as councillor or director on the council or board of a CB from being eligible to be elected as a director of RUSIDSS-A (Clause 39.4 of the Constitution).

On 9 March 2021, the then National Chairman advised the Board that he had received a paper from two CBs that was supportive of improving relationships between CBs and the National Board.

Accordingly at the 2021 AGM, the CBs agreed unanimously to amend the National Constitution by deleting clause 39(4), thus allowing office holders of CBs to stand for election as directors on the National Board.

National Board

At the 2023 AGM, the following persons were elected as Directors:

Paul Irving, who had retired at the AGM and nominated for re-appointment; and

Mike O'Brien, who had retired at the AGM and nominated for re-appointment.

Paul Irving was elected as President (National Chairman).

The following persons continued as Directors:

Kerry Gallagher - Director and Vice President

Bill Henman (ACT) - Director

Lance Scott (WA) - Director

Robert Atkinson (SA) - Director

Paul Ferguson (TAS) - Director

Herbert (Mickey) Michaelis, National Support Manager, kindly agreed to continue to undertake the duties of Company Secretary.

John Howells kindly volunteered to take the minutes of the Board meetings and to organise the videoconferences for the Board meetings.

Allan Dixon, Hon. Auditor, kindly agreed to continue as Hon Auditor.

The President requested David Leece to attend Board meetings as an observer in view of his extensive background with RUSIDSS-A.

During the reporting period, Paul Ferguson and Rob Atkinson resigned as Directors due to medical conditions. The Board thanks them for their contributions, especially Rob Atkinson, who has served as a Director for many years.

Unfortunately, Mickey Michaelis, a stalwart of RUSI-A, and long-term office Manager and Company Secretary passed away on 5 December 2023 after a long illness. The Board expressed their condolences to Mickey's family at his passing.

At the meeting of the National Board on 29 January 2024, David Toose was appointed National Treasurer and John Howells was appointed National Secretary.

David Toose, in consultation with the President and Allan Dixon, worked to implement a stable, functional and accurate National financial system. A decision was taken to discontinue the use of the MYOB accounting system and transfer the National finances to an application called "Moneyworks". This led to a saving of \$58 a month but more importantly, the Treasurer was able to balance the financial reports that had not been achievable under MYOB.

A considerable amount of work was undertaken by David Toose and Allan Dixon in withdrawing RUSIDSS-A from the ATO GST system; in updating all signatories to our bank accounts, with the ATO and with the ACNC; and in chasing up arrears in payment of copyright fees from RMIT.

During the reporting period, the Board met on eight occasions via videoconference, namely on 3 October 2023 (Special Director's Meeting), 13 November 2023, 29 January 2024, 11 March 2024, 22 April 2024, 3 June 2024, 15 July 2024 and 26 August 2024.

The National Constitution allows for the election of up to nine directors and requires that 1/3rd of remaining directors retire at each AGM. Kerry Gallagher, Bill Henman and Lance Scott agreed to retire at the 2024 AGM and they have nominated for re-appointment.

Finances

The then Treasurer's Report to the 2021 AGM advised that RUSIDSS-A was solvent but based on assumptions on income and expenditure, it was forecast that RUSIDSS-A would become insolvent by FY 2023/24.

This prediction was based in part on the significant cost of operating the National office, failure to find replacement sponsorship of the National website undertaken by Rolls Royce and failure of some CBs to pay the capitation fee.

In view of this dire prediction, the Board undertook measures aimed at considerably reducing the cost of operation of the National office including:

- closing the National Website and associated Wild Apricot content management system;
- developing a new but significantly cheaper National website;
- discontinuing the "Association Liability Insurance Policy" in FY 2022/23, thus saving an annual premium in excess of \$2000;
- critically reviewing all items of expenditure by the National office;
- improving returns on investments: and
- ensuring all CBs paid the capitation fee set at the AGM.

As a result of these actions, RUSIDSS-A has returned modest surpluses in the last three financial years and now has a healthy reserve.

Financial Report for Year Ended 30 June 2024

Attached at **Annex A** are the Hon. Auditor's Report, the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Statement as at 30 June 2024.

For FY 2023/24, the Company made an operating surplus of \$3,478. This was due in part to increased interest received from investments and payment of arrears in copyright royalty payments. **The Company is solvent.**

The Directors wish to express their appreciation for the work of the Hon. Auditor, Allan Dixon and Company Treasurer, David Toose, in preparation of the financial reports.

Proposed Budget FY 2024/25

The President in consultation with the Treasurer has prepared a minimalist budget for FY 2024/25 (**Annex B**) for consideration at the AGM.

Capitation Fee

At the AGM held on 18 October 2019, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

That Members of the Company be levied a service fee equivalent to a rate of \$15 per financial member of each Constituent Body to fund the national body. This resolution remained extant until the 2022 AGM.

At the 2022 AGM, based on a minimalist budget to operate the National Office, the Board agreed to set a capitation fee of **\$5.50** per financial member for FY 2022/23. All CBs paid this capitation fee.

At the 2023 AGM, the Board agreed to set a capitation fee of **\$5.00** per financial member for FY 2023/24. All CBs paid this capitation fee.

The proposed budget for FY 2024/25 (**Annex B**) indicates that around \$5,300 is required in capitation fees to help fund the expenses of running the National Office, with most of the expense relating to the typesetting costs of the National journal.

The number of financial members in each CB as at 2023 was as follows with the figures for 2022 shown in brackets. It is likely that with an ageing membership, the overall number of financial members in each CB may have reduced in the last 12 months.

ACT	129	(129*)
NSW	514	(496)
QLD	111	(71)
SA	73	(90)
TAS		
Hobart	43	(43)
Launceston	31	(55)
VIC	249	(262)
WA	27	(36)
TOTAL	1177	(1182)

In particular, RUSI NSW reports that after an audit of financial members, there are around 350 financial members.

In these circumstances and based on more accurate data to be provided by CB Presidents at the AGM, a capitation fee of between **\$5.00** to **\$6.00** per financial member in each CB may need to be set to raise the \$5,300 required to run the National Office.

Insurance

For several years before FY 2016/17, RUSI-A took out comprehensive insurance through Civic Insurance Brokers on behalf of itself and each CB.

The cost of the comprehensive insurance was shared based on RUSI-A paying \$1000, with the remaining (approximately \$2,500) being allocated to each CB based on their percentage of financial membership across the CBs.

On 22 August 2016, the RUSI-A Board considered the breakdown of insurance costs and determined that rather than paying a notional \$1,000 to cover its national activities, that it should pay 1/8th (being one of eight legal entities) with the remainder of the

insurance cost charged proportionally by the CBs based on membership numbers of financial members.

The contribution by the National Office to insurances was considered by the Board again in 2023 and this was continued for FY 2023/24.

The total cost of insurance for FY 2024/25 was **\$2470.11**. This has been paid by the National office.

With the passing of Mickey Michaelis, there is no regular part-time officer working in the National office. Allan Dixon, who attends the office on an irregular basis, is a member of ACT USI whilst the National President is a member of RUSI NSW. Both will be covered for insurance purposes by their respective CB.

Accordingly, it is proposed that for FY 2024/25, the National office is NOT charged 1/8th of the insurance premium but that the total cost of the insurance premium be charged proportionally to CBs based on their current number of financial members.

National Journal

During the year, *United Service* continued its transition as a truly National journal. Unfortunately, most articles and book reviews published were provided by RUSI NSW. The challenge remains for all CBs to produce articles for inclusion in *United Service*.

Statistics maintained by RUSI NSW show the extensive “reach” of the National journal within Australia and around the world.

Special Interest Group on Strategy

There is such a vast amount of material being produced daily within Australia and internationally on the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, plus other hotspots such as the Red Sea, New Caledonia etc., it is difficult for members to read and assimilate this material.

Whilst initially an initiative of RUSI NSW, the RUSI Special Interest Group on Strategy now has members from most CBs where subject matter experts analyse the daily reports and comment on the various developments across the world.

More recently, the Special interest Group on Strategy has recorded its analysis as edited by David Leece in a clear and precise way via regular podcasts which are also posted on the National website. The podcasts, which are now being recorded by John Howells in UHD4K for enhanced big screen viewing, are attracting much interest internationally as well as within Australia.

National Website

During the reporting period, CBs added details of local events and other materials to the new National website that was launched on 1 July 2022, thus providing more and relevant information to members and non-members on the work undertaken by CBs.

John Howells as the National website manager has continued to improve and expand the website which now provides access to each edition of *United Service*, videos of

lecture presentations, newsletters, defence updates, monographs and the Special interest Group on Strategy podcasts.

“A Federated Organisation with seven CBs focussing on strong local programs with strong coherence between the CBs and RUSIDSS-A”

This was the vision developed in 2016 by the National Board.

The current Board spent considerable time discussing the future role and structure of the National body and the CBs via a paper developed by Vice President Kerry Gallagher titled: **“Fit For Purpose into the 2020s and Beyond”**.

At a meeting of the Board on 21 August 2023 and at a Special Directors Meeting on 3 October 2023, the Board agreed in principle that:

RUSI-A should:

- have an office in Canberra to be the central point of contact for Defence, Government and large-scale sponsors;
- facilitate publication/dissemination of research and presentations via a national journal, newsletters, video amalgamation, etc.;
- administer a national membership database across all CBs to facilitate membership amongst serving ADF members, and those who transition out of the ADF;
- organise insurances and other support where economy of scale can yield a result better than individual CBs; and
- carry out essential administration as a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee and registered with ASIC.

CBs should:

- conduct events and social functions for members in the CB;
- conduct research, prepare papers, and disseminate to members via newsletters, Facebook, YouTube channel etc.;
- seek and exploit local sponsorship;
- provide library and other research facilities;
- recruit and administer memberships as agreed with National office; and
- be the regional focus of the RUSI with the freedom to engage in activities best suited to the local region and their contribution to the national environment.

The above separation of responsibilities would be subject to:

- RUSI NSW agreeing to administrating a national data base of RUSI members and renewing the annual membership fee on behalf of all CBs; and
- that any commercial arrangements with RUSI NSW be clearly set out for the information of CBs.

RUSI NSW is in negotiations with a sponsor (Unitech, Wollongong) to develop a new management system for RUSI NSW that will allow for a National membership system. It is expected that the new system will be operating at what might be a reasonable fee to

administer the National database. Ideally, the new system would be operational from the beginning of FY 2025/26.

To further the consideration on the future roles of the National body and the CBs, the President requested that David Leece prepare a Discussion Paper on both the National Constitution and a trading name for RUSIDSS-A (**Annex C**) that will be discussed at the 2024 AGM.

Appreciation

The Board wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the following persons who have assisted materially in the effective operation of the Board during the reporting period:

Allan Dixon, Hon. Auditor;

Mickey Michaelis, National Support Manager and Company Secretary;

David Toose, Treasurer

John Howells, Secretary, Website Manager and IT Expert;

David Leece, advisor to the Board and Chair of the Special Interest Group on Strategy

Paul Irving

National Chairman on behalf of the Directors

30 September 2024

Attachments:

Annex A - Financial Report for FY 2023/24

Annex B - Proposed Budget for FY 2024/25

Annex C – A Discussion Paper on the National Constitution and Trading Name

Annex A

18 Sherlock St,
Kaleen, ACT 2617
26 August 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY STUDIES - AUSTRALIA

I have audited the accompanying financial report of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies - Australia, which comprises the Balance Sheet (statement of assets and liabilities) as at 30 June 2024, and the Statement of Financial Performance (statement of income and expenditure) for the year ended 30 June 2024, and other appropriate accounting records.

The Company has prepared and presented the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards. This includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

At the time of previous audits there were small differences between the details in the statements and the data in the MYOB accounting system, in spite of advice from a number of MYOB advisers. These differences have now been resolved since moving from the MYOB system to another accounting system.

It is noted that, following discussions with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), the ATO has cancelled the Company's GST registration, with effect from midnight on 30 June 2023. The ATO has also cancelled the Company's PAYG withholding registration. These cancellations have removed the requirement to submit quarterly business activity statements.

In my opinion, the financial report of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia:

- a. provides a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its performance for the year ended 30 June 2024; and
- b. complies with Australian Accounting Standards.



Allan Dixon FCPA
Honorary Auditor

Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies - Australia

Balance Sheet - 30 June 2024

	Note	30-Jun-24	30-Jun-23
		\$	\$
Current Assets			
Operating Accounts		16,420	17,082
Visa Debit Card		299	282
Term Deposit		23,702	20,000
Term Deposit - Yolla	1	26,298	25,000
ATO - Tax Refund Receivable	2	117	117
Accounts Receivable		0	877
		66,836	63,358
Non-current Assets			
Defence Bank Shares		10	10
		10	10
Represented by			
Equity		63,368	63,368
Plus current year operating surplus		3,478	
Total Equity		66,846	63,368

Notes

1. Term deposit – YOLLA

The \$25,000 term deposit is a donation from the Australian Defence College Association and, under the terms of the agreement and subject to negotiations with the Commander ADC, is assigned to the support of the Yolla/Joske award. The term deposit was increased back to \$26,298 on renegotiation of maturity on 3 August 2023.

2. ATO - Tax Receivable

At the end of the 2023/24 financial year the Institute was successful in de-registering for GST, with effect from midnight on 30 June 2023. This outstanding amount was paid on 11 July 2024 (2024/25 financial year).

Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies - Australia

**Statement of Financial Performance for
the year ended 30 June 2024**

	Note	2023/24 \$
Income		
Copyright royalty payments		1,322
Interest		1,673
Capitation fee		5,885
Total income		8,880
Expenses		
Computer software		705
Internet expenses		971
Bank charges		32
Insurance	1	296
Sundry expenses		218
Journal typesetting		3,180
Total Expenses		5,402
Surplus		3,478

Note

1. **Insurance**

Insurance expenses	2023/24
Total paid	2,370
Recharged to State Branches	2,074
Net cost	296

Annex B

RUSI-A PROPOSED BUDGET FY 2024/25

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE	\$	\$
IT OPERATING EXPENSES	1220	
SOFTWARE	800	
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES		
Bank charges	40	
National Journal (typesetting - \$900 x4)	3,600	
Office expenses - supplies, telephones, postage	340	
TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE		6,000
ESTIMATED INCOME		
Capitation fee		5,300
Copyright		200
Interest		2,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED INCOME		7,500
ESTIMATED SURPLUS		1,500

* Typesetting of *United Service* costs around \$780 per journal depending on the number of pages in each issue. To allow for larger journals, estimated full year cost of the typesetting would be around \$3,600 (\$900 per journal).

Constitution of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia A Discussion Paper

References:

- A. Constitution of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia as at 19 November 2021.
- B. Constitution of the Order of Australia Association dated 29 September 2020.

Summary

I have been asked by the Board Chair to provide advice to the RUSI-A Board and to the members of the company (the seven constituent bodies – CBs) as to whether the company's structure should be changed from that of a loose federation of self-governing CBs ('corporate persons' in governance terms) based on state/territory jurisdictions to that of a unified, national body with individual 'natural persons' as its members and state/territory branches replacing the CBs.

I conclude that, if the members wish to make this change, then the present constitution should be repealed and be replaced with one modelled on Reference B. I recommend this course.¹

Should the members agree to adopt the unified national model, before a new constitution could be drafted, the members would need to advise the Board as to what additional changes were needed to enhance the cost-effective operation of the company and ensure that the constitution is fit-for-purpose. Such changes could include:

- *changing the Board structure to include a representative of each CB on the Board;*
- *separating the role of National President from that of Board Chair; and*
- *adopting a shorter trading name.*

Aim

To provide advice to the RUSI-A Board and members on changing the constitution to meet the contemporary needs of the company and its members (CBs).

Background

The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia (RUSI-A; the company) is a not-for profit public company limited by guarantee and is a charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). It is the national peak body for the Australian state/territory-based (Royal) United Service(s) Institutes which constitute its self-governing constituent bodies (CBs) most of which are incorporated separately under state/territory legislation. This is an obsolescent structure by contemporary corporate governance standards and inhibits liaison with government and other stakeholders at the national level.

The current RUSI-A constitution as at 19 November 2021 (Reference A), when initially drafted in 2015 and 2016, was a compromise between two schools of thought:

- those who wished the national body to continue be a loose federation of self-governing constituent bodies ('corporate persons') based on state/territory jurisdictions (**Model 1**); and
- those who wished it to become a strong, unified, national body with individual 'natural persons' as its members – they would be organised internally by regional sub-divisions *e.g.* state/territory branches (**Model 2**).²

At the time of the initial drafting of the constitution in 2016, Model 1 was favoured primarily by the CBs and Model 2 by the proposed directors of the new national board. The draftsman (Lieutenant Colonel Neil James, the proposed deputy chair of the new national board) was instructed to take the model constitution for not-for-profit charities and adapt it to Model 1. If the members now decide to move to Model 2, then Reference A would need substantial revision.

¹ While I am a former company director and a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (FAICD), I retired twelve years ago and am no longer up to date on corporation law. That said, I represented New South Wales during the drafting of the original constitution so have an historic understanding of the issues on foot.

² The designators "Model 1" and "Model 2" are used for simplicity in this paper. They were not used during the original deliberations in 2015 and 2016.

There also are some specific provisions in the current constitution that have proved difficult for the RUSI-A Board to administer, such as those relating to the election of a Board chair and a desire by some to adopt a shorter trading name. There is also a desire among some CBs to be directly represented on the Board. These may need constitutional change to resolve.

I will now address each issue in turn.

The Corporate Structure (Model 1 or Model 2)

The CBs, heretofore, have favoured Model 1 [the ‘dispersed’ or ‘jurisdictional autonomy’ model], primarily because they wished to maintain complete control of their programmes and assets. In some CBs, there also has been concern, possibly unfounded, about the perception of being ‘taken over by Canberra’ and a preference for maintaining their own discrete identities.

If instead, Model 2 [the ‘unitary’ or ‘centralised’ model] were adopted, the CBs would become accountable to the charity regulators through the National Body (the company) and the National Body would become solely accountable to the regulatory bodies for each CB (branch), unless an individual CB also were to retain its jurisdictional incorporation – economies-of-scale considerations probably would not justify doing so and it may complicate the constitutional drafting.

A key difference between Model 1 and Model 2 is membership. Under Model 1, RUSI-A consists of only seven corporate persons, the extant CBs, although there is provision for additional CBs to be admitted (say if the USI of the Northern Territory were to be resurrected). Under Model 2, all members would be individual natural persons and the CBs would become regional branches (or some other term for regional divisions) of the National Body. They would run their own regional programmes as they have always done but would be governed by the National Board *vide* the National Constitution *i.e.*, they would cease to be self-governing.

To spell this out clearly, every individual member of a USI in Australia would become an individual member of RUSI-A. New individual members would join RUSI-A centrally and be allocated to the regional branch (CB) in which they resided if there were one. Where there was no regional branch, the member would belong only to the National Body. Each member would pay the same membership subscription annually to the National Body and regional branches (currently CBs) could levy an additional fee should they so choose. Where a CB levied a fee, this would be collected by RUSI-A with the membership subscription and credited to the relevant CB’s account.

The primary reasons for moving to Model 2 would be:

- Non-existent (*e.g.* Northern Territory) or weak CBs constitute a major weakness of our current system (Model 1) – *e.g.* the Launceston Branch of RUSI-Tasmania currently is exploring transferring its membership *in toto* to RUSI-NSW.
- Members who moved interstate would not need to change their membership to a new CB *e.g.* serving ADF members regularly find themselves in this position.
- Under Model 2, common services, such as a professional journal and a regular newsletter, could be provided to all members throughout Australia, whether or not they belonged to a CB.
- Under Model 2, the administration and compliance burdens on CBs would be lessened and administrative replication among CBs and the National Body would be considerably reduced – *i.e.* greater efficiency would result.
- Model 2 would greatly facilitate representations to government on defence/national security policy and on government support for RUSI-A programmes – state-based CBs no longer are able to deal directly with the Commonwealth placing some in a precarious position.
- If a CB in any jurisdiction were to ‘fall over’, as USI-NT did a few years ago, under Model 2, their members would already have an RUSI home. Under Model 1, they are lost to the Institute.

CBs Directly Represented on the Board

Reference A was updated in November 2021 to enable CB councillors to serve on the Board. Those who do so, however, do so as directors of the company, not as representatives of their parent CB(s). There is no provision in Reference A, for the Board to include a representative of each CB (cl. 38 and 39 refer). The Constitution’s drafters in 2016 wanted an “expert” Board with a maximum of nine members rather than a larger, more traditional “representative” Board, a model that they considered was “old fashioned” and might give the CBs too much power.

I note, though, that Reference B, which was drafted in 2020, provides at cl. 41.1 for 13 directors, five “expert” or “executive” directors and eight “representative” directors – one representative director

nominated by each of the state/territory branches. If we were to adopt such a model, it might remove much of the angst that can develop between the members (CBs) and the National Board from time to time. I recommend that the members give the model at Reference B, Cl. 41.1 serious consideration.

Electing a Board Chair

In 2020, following the failure of the members at the AGM to elect a Board Chair, some CB presidents requested that Reference A be amended to allow the Board to elect its chair rather than continue to have the members of the company elect the chair at the AGM. If this is still an issue, amending the constitution to enable this could be controversial as some members may wish to retain this prerogative especially in relation to the position of National President – the Board Chair currently automatically becomes National President once elected (cl. 40.1 refers).

If constitutional change is seen as desirable, then I would suggest that the Board be empowered to elect its chair, but that the Board Chair not necessarily become the National President as currently is provided at clause 40.1. The power to elect the National President should continue to be reserved for the members (CBs) – it was a key issue for the CBs when the constitution was drawn up. This would necessitate splitting clause 40.1 into 40.1 (a) with respect to the National President [who need not be a director, but, as a distinguished person of national standing, would serve as national spokesperson and make representations to government on behalf of RUSI-A]; and 40.1 (b) with respect to the Board Chair. I consider that this change would be desirable in any event – see the example at Reference B, cl. 40.

A Shorter Name

Constitutional change is not needed to adopt a shorter name. The Board already has that power. Clause 59.1 empowers the directors to “pass a resolution to make by-laws to give effect to this constitution”. Pursuant to this clause and to cl. 1 (the name of the company), the directors could resolve to adopt a trading name. I would suggest as a trading name a shorter version of the current name *e.g.* either “Royal United Services Institute Australia” or “Defence and Security Studies Australia”.

Of these two options, older members may favour the former which is our historical name originating in our colonial past. Its difficulty for younger members, as I understand it, is that no one knows what “Royal United Services Institute” means – the meaning has been lost in antiquity.³

In contrast, “**Defence and Security Studies Australia**” is a name designed for the 21st century that clearly describes the space in which we now operate.

A compromise might be “**RUSI Defence and Security Studies Australia**” or just “**RUSI Defence Studies Australia**”.

Other bodies that have adopted trading names, designed for the 21st century, without changing their official names, include:

- The Institution of Engineers, Australia, which now trades as “Engineers Australia”;
- The Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology, which now trades as “AgInstitute Australia”;
- The Australian Society for Soil Science, which now trades as “Soil Science Australia”; and
- The Australian Rugby Football Union, which now trades as “Rugby Australia”;

among many others.

The Way Forward

Getting a new or revised constitution approved through the various regulatory hurdles is no easy matter, so constitutional change should not be embarked on lightly.

The first step should be to hold a general meeting of the seven members (the CBs) with the Board to decide whether they still wish to stick with Model 1 or would now be willing to move to Model 2. Once this fundamental decision has been made, the major matters of detail enunciated herein – changing the Board structure to include a representative of each CB on the Board; separating the role of National

³ My best guess is that it may have referred in the early- to mid-19th century to a hoped for “union” of the Royal Navy and the British Army (which never came to fruition, except in more recent times in Canada), or a union between the Armed Services and the wider community (which the Duke of Wellington championed), or both, via the conduct of common higher education for the officers of both Services and the interested community – the education to be provided by a “United Service Institution” (“institution” in those days being a term commonly used for educational bodies, particularly in the trades and the community). The community role was emphasised in London from inception of the U.S.I. in the 1830s but not in Australia until 1974 when RUSIA was founded.

President from that of Board Chair; and adopting a shorter trading name – should also be resolved, if not done so by the earlier decision.

A new or revised constitution then can be drafted *vide* the Members' decision. This should be done by a Constitutional Working Party chaired by a Board appointee and consisting of one representative of each CB. Other minor issues as may be identified subsequently can be fixed during this drafting process. Once drafted to the Board's satisfaction, it may then be put to the members for approval via a special resolution at a general meeting – it would require 75 per cent of members voting in favour to pass [5 of 7 CBs].

Conclusion

RUSI-A is at a crossroads. It does not have the leadership standing to be taken seriously by national government (at either the political or departmental level), or by defence industry, academia, think tanks, or other external contributors to the defence and national security debate. We need to either lift our game substantially or consider winding up our affairs.

At the CB level, while I appreciate that RUSI-NSW is not too badly off, some other CBs face difficulties with long-term accommodation, attracting quality speakers, declining membership, finance, leadership, succession, and longer-term sustainability issues, among others.

We all desperately need a strong national body that will give us an effective and respected voice in the national defence and security debate, that will represent us competently to government, and that will support CBs that are struggling.

Given the overall low strength of the USIs throughout Australia and our very limited financial resources, we need to minimise administrative burdens and share outputs and services wherever feasible *e.g.* a single national website, a quarterly national journal, a monthly national defence and security newsletter, and the like.

The need for a strong national voice coupled with the need to reduce administrative overheads and share services like websites, journals and newsletters would be greatly facilitated by adopting a unified national structure (Model 2) along the lines of Reference B.

I suspect that, unless we make changes like this and regain our national standing reasonably soon, we will slowly become a defunct organisation. It would be a tragedy if, after some 136 years of service to Australia, the organisation was to die for a lack of vision and effective leadership, exacerbated by parochialism. Getting the RUSI-A constitution right will be a key building block to future success.

David Leece

D. R. Leece, AM, PSM, RFD, ED
Brigadier (Ret'd)
22 September 2024

Attachments

1. Reference A: Constitution of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia as at 19 November 2021.
2. Reference B: Constitution of the Order of Australia Association dated 29 September 2020.