

2012

“So be prepared, a strong nation, for the storm that most surely must come”¹: Creswell’s campaign for a naval defence of Australia

Sheila Joy Dwyer
University of Wollongong

Recommended Citation

Dwyer, Sheila Joy, “So be prepared, a strong nation, for the storm that most surely must come”¹: Creswell’s campaign for a naval defence of Australia, Doctor of Philosophy thesis, School of History and Politics, University of Wollongong, 2012.
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3776>

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

CERTIFICATION

I, Sheila Joy Dwyer declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of History and Politics, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

.....

DEDICATION

The submission of this thesis is the end of a long road for me. It started 13 years ago when my youngest child began high school. With encouragement from my family I decided to pursue the education I had always wanted but, for various reasons, I had been unable to complete.

I was accepted into the University of Wollongong's Gateway Programme which offered a learning skills programme for mature age students seeking entrance to university. I wish to thank most sincerely the University of Wollongong for offering this opportunity as a means of furthering higher education for those not able to gain entrance to university in the usual manner. It commenced a journey of historical enquiry, to search for the answer to that most basic of enquiries, 'Why'? The submission of my thesis is a significant milestone in this journey.

My sincere thanks to the lecturers and tutors at the University's School of History and Politics in the Faculty of Arts, for making study both enjoyable and nerve-wracking at the same time. In particular, I thank my Thesis Supervisors, Dr. Peter Sales and Dr. Stephen Brown. They have supported me with encouragement, patience and sound advice even though I may not have appreciated it at the time. I will now admit that they were probably right, most of the time.

My biggest thanks must go to my family for their unfailing support over these years, my children thought me a little crazy for my choice of study topic, (The Foundation of the Australian Navy), but then 'Mum was always a bit odd'. My husband Neil has my never-ending gratitude for his support and understanding my need to complete my education and for being my research assistant during this work.

Thanks also must go to the staff of the Reading Room's of the National Library, State Library of Victoria, State Library of South Australia and Archives New Zealand for making research material available as requested.

A final dedication must be made to Elizabeth Sevier, the granddaughter of Admiral Creswell for her friendship and interest in this work.

One final question – What's next?

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the campaign for a naval defence of Australia and the role of its most significant advocate. William Rooke Creswell is recognised as a dominant force in the foundation of the Australian Navy. This thesis is neither a naval history, nor a biography of Creswell. It is about the influence of people and events on the status and direction of Australia, expressed through achieving that defining symbol of a maritime state, a naval defence.

The campaign for a naval defence would be caught up in the aspirations for, and of, a commonwealth for Australia – in its destiny and identity. In creating a commonwealth out of six self-governing colonies, common defence was given as a reason for its being, entwined with a doctrine of self-preservation, but with a relaxed and comfortable attitude about subsidised British naval protection.

This thesis seeks to establish both the nature of Creswell's contribution to the foundation of the Australian navy and the reasons why the process of its formation was such a protracted and fraught process. Major factors working against this process were the expense of a navy and the infrastructure to support it, a small and isolated population, the intransigence of the British government and Admiralty, and the differences of opinion among Australian politicians over whether and how an Australian Navy should come into existence.

Creswell as a former Royal Navy officer understood and accepted the significance of Britain and of the Royal Navy in the defence of Australia. Yet he remained undaunted in his career-long self-imposed mission of a navy for Australia. His achievement was a naval defence with warships appropriate to Australian conditions and requirements and an infrastructure to support the fleet. It was Creswell who more than any other individual

“so be prepared, a strong nation, for the storm that most surely must come”¹: Creswell’s campaign for a Naval Defence of Australia.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

SHEILA JOY DWYER, Bachelor of Arts with Honours

School of History and Politics, Faculty of Arts.

2012

¹ Lawson, H. *Australia's Peril* in Cronin, L., (ed) *A Fantasy if Man: Henry Lawson Complete Works* 1901-1922, Lansdowne Press, Willoughby NSW, 1984. p.246

Sir William Rooke Creswell, KCMG, KBE



It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcomings; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.²

² Theodore Roosevelt, Speech to the Sorbonne (1910) in Fullilove, Michael. 'Men and Women of Australia' *Our Greatest Modern Speeches*, Vintage, Sydney, 2005 (Forward: G. Freudenberg). p 61

CONTENTS

List of Photographs	4
Abbreviations	5
Introduction	6
Chapter I	
1885-1900: “Have a fixed purpose of some kind for your country and yourselves” Imperial Duty/Imperial Mission.	18
Chapter II	
1901-1903: Nationhood and the Sea: Destiny and Identity. The Anglo/Japanese Alliance. Japan to protect Australia	50
Chapter III	
1904 – 1906: ‘All unprovided and unprepared, the outpost of the White!’ Britain withdraws its modern warships from the Pacific Ocean.	97
Chapter IV	
1907-1908: Australia’s search for security. A False Dawn but a Rising Sun.	144
Chapter V	
1909 – 1911: ‘A good, sturdy Naval Cub in the Pacific’ Australian navy ships ordered from Britain.	191
Chapter VI	
1912-1913: ‘A great bond of union’ At last, a navy for Australia – the arrival of the Australian Fleet..	228
Chapter VII	
Australia at War: ‘To sail to a foreign country, and fight for England’s name.’ RAN ships leave Australia to fight a war in European waters.	273
Conclusion	293
Bibliography	298

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

Sir William Rooke Creswell Australian War Memorial.	Page 2.
Lieutenant William Rooke Creswell, taken from Thompson P. (Ed.), <i>Close to the Wind</i>	23
Adelaide, circa 1890: Governor of South Australia with various members of the local armed forces including Lieutenant Commander William Rooke Creswell seated, right. Naval Historical Collection South Australian Archives.	33
Adelaide, SA. C. 1896. Captain William Rooke Creswell, (Centre) Naval Commandant of the South Australian Defence Forces with Staff Engineer William Clarkson on his right, and on his left Chief Gunner Edwin Argent and Sub-Lieutenant Patrick Weir, Naval Historical Collection, Australian War Memorial.	44
Captain Creswell as Commandant of the Queensland Naval Forces, 1900, from the Naval Historical Collection, Australian War Memorial.	54
Captain Creswell observing the Commonwealth Naval Forces manoeuvres, Easter 1905 aboard the torpedo boat <i>Countess of Hopetoun</i> Royal Australian Navy.	113
John Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher from <i>The New York Times</i> Current History of the European War (January–March 1915). Volume 2. p.928.	212
Australia's First Naval Board. Back row: Staff Paymaster Eldon Manisty, RN, Engineer Commander W Clarkson RAN. Front row: Rear Admiral WR Creswell RAN, Defence Minister Senator George F Pearce, Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow RN. National Library of Australia.	257

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Australian Archives
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANZ	Archives of New Zealand
CBE	Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
CDC	Colonial Defence Committee
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CMG	Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George
CNF	Commonwealth Naval Forces
CMF	Commonwealth Military Forces
CPD	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
CPP	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
DNI	Director of Naval Intelligence
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	Her Majesty's Colonial Ship
HMCVS	Her Majesty's Colonial Victorian Ship
HMS	Her/ His Majesty's Ship
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
KBE	Knight of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
KCMG	Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George.
NLA	National Library of Australia
OBE	Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RN	Royal Navy
SANF	South Australian Naval Forces
US/ USA	United States/ United States of America
VC	Victoria Cross

INTRODUCTION

To study the foundation of the Australian navy, one simply follows the trail that documents, historians, biographers and other writers have left us since the navy's inception. The prevailing accounts have remained so unchallenged that there is little reference made to how it all started or who campaigned for it. The writings of John La Nauze (*Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, 1979), George Macandie (*The Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy*, 1949), Neville Meaney (*A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923: Volume 1: The Search for Security in the Pacific 1901-1914*, 1976), Rev. Tom Frame (for example, *No Pleasure Cruise: The Story of the Royal Australian Navy*, 2004; *First In, Last Out: The Navy at Gallipoli*, 1990), and an unpublished doctoral thesis written thirty six years ago have become the basic references.³ Professional historians have attempted to redress this: particularly David Stevens and John Reeve through their facilitation of the King-Hall Naval History Conferences, their edited publications of Conference papers, and with their own writings and recently David Day with his biography of Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher.⁴

Current descriptions of the navy's foundation appear to accept the available material without adequately questioning it. A thorough review of the limited literature and documentation actually suggests a different interpretation from the prevailing account. This thesis will consider several questions: What was the context (political, imperial,

³ Webster, Stephen D., *Creswell, The Australian Navalist: A Career Biography of Vice Admiral Sir William Rooke Creswell, KCMG, KBE*, Unpublished Thesis, Monash University, 1976

⁴ Dr David Stevens is Director of Strategic Historical Studies, Sea Power Centre, Canberra
Dr John Reeve is Senior Lecturer, History Programme and Osborne Fellow in Naval History, UNSW at ADFA, Canberra
Dr David Day Historian and Author

social, and economic) for the navy's foundation? What part did naval theory, regional influences and public attitudes play in the formation of a navy? Why did a Gibraltar-born, ex-Royal Navy officer campaign strenuously for its creation?

This thesis seeks to challenge the conventual approach and consider more diverse available material (newspapers, parliamentary reports and debates, correspondence) in seeking answers to the above questions, specifically the significant role of Vice-Admiral William Rooke Creswell who unrelentingly campaigned for a naval defence of Australia for over three decades. His public career has not been subject to close enquiry by professional historians, nor his actions or rationale evaluated. There is no biography and little written about Creswell the naval officer and less about the man. My thesis is not intended to be a biography of Creswell. Such an undertaking would be virtually impossible given the paucity of his private papers which have survived. What my work provides is an analysis of the extent to which Creswell shaped early naval defence and his challenge of early defence policy. In so doing it reveals a shrewd political strategist and tactician: In 1886 his articles on seapower in the *Adelaide Register* were the prologue to his campaign in the press, in correspondence and in reports to parliament to convince the public that Australia should have a naval defence. He was a politically astute advocate for a self-reliant naval force within the British Empire, a naval force the British Admiralty would not contemplate and did its best to crush what would be a successful campaign.

When Theodore Roosevelt, the great champion of the United States Navy, addressed the Sorbonne in 1910 he could have been characterising Creswell, when he said, "The credit

belongs to the man who is actually in the arena.”⁵ This thesis seeks to balance the conventional approach of naval historians with insights into his character and his vision of a naval defence for Australia from the small amount of material available. The argument put forward in this thesis is that the role and the contribution in the establishment of a naval defence of Vice-Admiral Creswell have been under-estimated and misunderstood. “Captain Creswell recognised that to be able to truly develop as a nation, a strong Australia needed a strong Australian Navy. Australia's future was dependant on maritime trade and its security lay in the protection of its sea lines of communication. In many ways Australia's strategic circumstances have not changed in 100 years” Vice-Admiral Matt Tripovich said in 2008 in acclaiming Creswell’s achievement. Competency and self-reliance were at the core of the Creswell vision for Tripovich noted:

In an attempt to introduce what we now refer to as network centric warfare, he lobbied for all of the vessels to be fitted with wireless, to enable communications with shore and each other, and to allow dispersed vessels to act together for greater effect. ... To enhance his vision for an independent Australian Navy supported by a local industrial base, he proposed that the first of the class of larger vessels be built in the UK, but that the remainder should be built in Australia.

Creswell was relentless in his advocacy, ”taking every opportunity to remind the Government of the consequences of continuing to fund the expansion of the Army at the expense of naval forces.”⁶ He was the campaigner in the struggle to establish a naval defence and, as importantly, a realist and pragmatist who advanced this grand vision by taking important small and practical steps, often in the face of widespread scepticism,

⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, Speech to the Sorbonne (1910) in Fullilove, Michael. *‘Men and Women of Australia’ Our Greatest Modern Speeches*, Vintage, Sydney, 2005. p 61

⁶ Vice-Admiral Tripovich, AM, CSC, RAN Chief of Capability Development, Australian Defence Force, 107th Australian Navy Foundation Day Creswell Oration: *Navy Capability From Creswell to Tomorrow*, 1 March 2008

suspicion and criticism. Creswell believed that the Royal Navy was mighty, but ‘situated as we are at the extremity of the Empire’⁷, Australia could not be adequately protected and a strong local naval force could add to the Royal Navy being ‘mightier yet’.

Creswell’s advocacy occurred at a time when British imperialism was reaching its zenith. Britain’s attitude to the members of its empire and the response of Australia to this imperialism are emphasised in this thesis. Amongst the Britons who promoted the ideals of imperialism was Professor John Ruskin. On 8 February 1870, he delivered his inaugural lecture, entitled *Imperial Duty*, at Oxford University. Ruskin’s oratory inspired generations with his charismatic message, which would be shared by many beyond Britain’s shores. It was a powerful *imprimatur* of British society: its people, its economy and its institutions (including the Royal Navy). To Ruskin, ‘there is a destiny now possible to us — the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. ... an inheritance of honour, bequeathed to us’ extending to other lands the British race, society and religion, which Britain would govern and defend. These people were melded to Britain, for ‘though they live on a distant plot of ground, they are no more to consider themselves therefore disenfranchised from their native land, than the sailors of her fleets do, because they float on distant waves. So that literally, these colonies must be fastened fleets.’⁸

This sentiment still resonated throughout the Empire thirty years later. William Creswell, the Commandant of the Queensland Naval Forces, advancing the cause of a

⁷ CPP, Report: *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports* by WR Creswell p.156

⁸ John Ruskin, from *Lectures on Art*, in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Norton Topics Online: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/20century/topic_1/jnruskin.html

national naval defence in September 1901, declared the need ‘to develop locally those qualities of race and that sea profession which first gave us, and has since held for us, the land we live in.’⁹ Creswell as a former Royal Navy officer understood and accepted the significance of Britain and of the Royal Navy in the defence of the new Commonwealth but, in Creswell’s view, only in co-operation with a local sea defence force.

Creswell, shortly after reviving his naval career in South Australia, ‘began to give shape to some ideas on the subject of Australian defence.’ In 1886 he published his ideas in a series of articles in the *Adelaide Register* thinking they might raise local interest in naval matters. His task, he soon realised, was ‘Imperial in its dimensions.’¹⁰ Within a decade across the Pacific the writings of a United States naval theorist emerged which would influence the way the great seapowers would perceive their navies. Rear-Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan determined that there were three critical elements of seapower: firstly, first-class warships with supply bases; secondly, significant, secure sea commerce delivering wealth, supplies and manpower; and thirdly colonies provisioning the seapower with bases and resources. Investment capital, international trade, raw material supplying colonies, a shared heritage with people throughout the empire and the greatest seapower the world had seen were all features of the enduring British imperialism.

It is hard to disagree, ‘Mahan sought to change the way Americans thought about their security. He declared that Americans must see themselves as inhabitants of a

⁹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Report: *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports* by WR Creswell, p.156

¹⁰ Thompson, P. (ed), *Close to the Wind. The Early Memoirs (1866-1879) of Admiral Sir William Creswell, KCMG, KBE*. Heinemann, London, 1965. Pp. 195/200

maritime state in a world of opposing navies.¹¹ Creswell shared this sentiment and attempted to persuade Australians to envisage a navy as a symbol of the new nation's identity in the same way Mahan defined seapower being broadly social and national, not just military. Both nations were maritime and both Admirals asserted seapower as a national interest. In his first public lecture in 1894, Creswell defined "Sea-Power" not so much the naval strength as the commerce of the nation, the national industry and everything that tended to send her products beyond her borders.¹² While Mahan sought to change Americans' thinking about their own navy, Creswell started from a lower base: he endeavoured to convince Australians of the need to have a navy at all. What ensured Mahan's success in the United States was the support and political leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, who between 1897 and 1909 developed the navy into a major naval power. Success for Creswell was delayed by the lack of a 'local navy' policy arising mostly from adherence by Commonwealth governments to the Naval Agreement and imperial naval policy.

Hirst claimed, 'Historians have often expressed great satisfaction in the peaceful and seemingly inevitable process that brought together the six self-governing colonies.'¹³

Inevitable, but Neville Meaney has noted:

Geo-politics was the determining condition of Australian nationalism. Distance from the Mother Country and proximity to each other enabled the Australian colonies to acquire a sense of possessing a community of interests. Although this set them apart from the British Isles on the other side of the world, it also provided the basis of a common identity.¹⁴

¹¹ Baer, G., *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Introduction, 1993.

¹² *Adelaide Register* 10 April 1894

¹³ Hirst, J., *The Sentimental Nation. The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*. Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2000. pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ Meaney, N.K., *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923: Volume 1: The Search for Security in the Pacific 1901-1914*, Sydney University Press, University of Sydney, 1976, Pp.8-9

Less convincing, was Meaney's assertion:

From the end of the nineteenth century successive Australian governments ...were aware of their peculiar geo-political circumstances and within the formal framework of the British Empire they evolved consistent, cohesive and comprehensive defence and external policies to provide for the security of their own country.¹⁵

For much of the first decade of the twentieth century the thinking of the 'short-lived' Commonwealth governments about defence and external affairs extended no further than Britain would allow. Their only consistent, cohesive and comprehensive policy related to a White Australia. Creswell developed his ideas within this broader geo-political context and it was this which gave such prescience to his work.

Creswell's campaign came at a time when imperial policies (defence, foreign relations, economic and trade) sought to prevail over an emerging autonomous nation. Did the prevailing imperialism hinder his campaign for an Australian naval defence, the timing of its establishment and what form and development it would take? Why were early Commonwealth governments opposed to Creswell's schemes? A number of parliamentarians asserted a common national defence as the prime reason for federation, but did this include a national navy?

As early as the 1870's politicians and the press had promoted Australia's ambitions in the Pacific, according to a local interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine: this was more assertive and aggressive in attitude associated with territorial claims, unlike the original Monroe proclamation. They also perceived successively and even simultaneously at times, threats by France, Russia, Japan and Germany. The proposition that Australia, as

¹⁵ Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923*: Volume 1: Pp.1-2

an island continent, needed its own naval defence was a matter of increasing debate following Federation. Politicians (e.g. Sir John Quick, Richard Crouch, and Senator Chataway) would reference Creswell in their parliamentary advocacy for an Australian navy, while journalist Richard Jebb in his study of the Empire in 1902 noted Creswell's 1901 scheme as 'the basis of an immediate programme.'¹⁶ After 1906 Creswell's public comments, schemes and annual reports to parliament reveal an evolution in his strategic thinking to a 'blue water' navy and Australian political journals, such as *Lone Hand* and *The Call* supported the Creswell stance for an Australian built, crewed and commanded local navy. *The Age* told its readers in 1908 that Australia's geographic position demanded that it must have a navy:

Australia is an island continent. Our destiny lies on the sea. No friend or enemy can reach us save by the sea. ...We must arm, and inasmuch as the sea while we possess no war ships puts us at the mercy of any hostile Power possessing ships, it is our first duty to arm navally.¹⁷

In the first decade of the twentieth century Australia's Commonwealth Naval Force was not a well established organisation with the full suite of infrastructure, requiring government oversight of materiel purchase, new naval designs or the deployment of appropriate naval forces in support of foreign policy - as was to be found within Britain's government-Admiralty relationship. It was not an autonomous national navy; it was hardly a navy at all: Britain would not tolerate independent colonial or dominion navies, accepting only 'One Flag, One Fleet'. The nature of this context shaped the nature of the civil and naval relationship. Creswell found himself in an uneasy, even, at times, antagonistic relationship with the civil authority (parliament, government) and this extended to the Admiralty and the Committee of Imperial Defence. In Australia conflict arose through the differences in experience and outlook of the various players:

¹⁶ Jebb, R., *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1905, p.288

¹⁷ *The Age*, Melbourne, 17 March 1908.

Creswell, parliamentarians, journalists and the general public. These differences were partly ideological, partly traditional. Small tenuous steps were taken to formalise the civil - naval relationship by the Reid-McLean government in 1905, which followed through on the intentions of the short-lived 1904 Watson government. The Hughes-Onslow incident demonstrated in 1913 the civil authority-navy relationship remained awkward and underdeveloped. Though to Creswell the principles were clear:

With parliament and the Government rests the responsibility of deciding what amount shall be set apart for naval defences. As the officer charged with the care of those defences, my responsibility extends only to making the most of the means placed at my disposal. As professional adviser, it is, however, my duty to represent what is needed. ... it is my plain duty to make them.¹⁸

Creswell did not waver from this stance for the next twenty-five years. Shortly before he died, he told Herbert Brookes that his battle for a naval defence was purely on the naval side, not the political field. In this battle, as he advised graduating cadet-midshipmen from the Naval College in December 1917, two elements for their careers were important: the greatest confidence is shown in officers who, firstly, were absolutely straightforward in everything and who, secondly, never left a job or duty until it was completed.

While Creswell's reputation has not had widespread recognition, some historians and other writers (as early as Murdoch and La Nauze) accepted the politician Alfred Deakin as the pre-eminent advocate and a founder of the Australian Navy. The significance of his role is problematic at best, despite the defence of his granddaughter, Judith Harley:

¹⁸ Report of the Naval Commandant, 1 August 1895, *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, 99/1895 in Hyslop, R., *Australian Naval Administration 1900-1939*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1973, p.26

Deakin has been criticised in his handling of naval issues as being political and erratic and as lacking expertise. But he had to be political and flexible as a democratic leader and diplomatic negotiator. And while Deakin was not a naval person, he had a certain strategic insight ahead of his time – Japan became a threat to Australia and the American alliance was important in defeating it. Above all, Deakin had a vision for Australian naval power.¹⁹

My thesis argues that Deakin was not the catalyst for acquiring an Australian naval defence and his role should be re-examined in a more critical light. There are good reasons for thinking that an Australian navy came into being despite Deakin, and certainly not because of him. Deakin, as Prime Minister, lacked executive assertiveness and rarely delivered substance to his words in parliament, public addresses or writings in advocating an Australian navy. Deakin desired a local navy within an Imperial Fleet, as he desired for himself a major role within the councils of the Empire. He failed to achieve either. Deakin accepted that the instruments of British naval defence would protect the interests of Australia, but he did not transcend the orthodoxies of his day: in Deakin's view only with the consent, expertise and unity of control of the British Navy, whose fleet would remain the prime protector in Australian waters, would a local naval force be possible. Creswell, by contrast, challenged the established viewpoint. Reflecting on the mission he had set himself, Creswell wrote:

When I entered the lists to fight for the cause of Australian naval defence, I thought of the magnitude of the struggle in which I had engaged. In point of fact, the battle was destined to be waged for three and twenty years, no less. At the time the righting of what I conceived to be a glaring wrong seemed simple enough. A wholly unsound policy had only to be explained was my fond thought, and correction must straightaway follow.²⁰

What followed was a two-decade struggle for Creswell. Eventually, Australia gained a naval defence replete with warships, support infrastructure such as training schools,

¹⁹ Harley, J., *Alfred Deakin and the Australian Naval Story* in Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *The Navy and the Nation: The influence of the Navy on modern Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005, p.303

²⁰ Thompson, P. Pp.196-197.

engineering facilities and an intelligence service under the directive of an Australian naval board.

There are many threads to the story of the birth of this naval defence: the setting of time and place, the actions and behaviour of people and powers played out in the arena, are integral to the origins of Australian naval defence. This thesis contends that Creswell played the fundamental role in the establishment of a naval defence. While his advocacy was as much about a call for identity as about security for a nation, at a political level duality of loyalty blurred the identity of nationhood. The Commonwealth Parliament, under the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act of 1900, had the power to make laws and to govern for external affairs and defence. Yet for forty years, until the Statute of Westminster, which was not ratified in Australia until 1942, it did not exercise the external affairs power, relying on British representation. As for defence, Britain considered Australia 'safe' on land to manage its own affairs and encouraged Commonwealth governments to commit most of the defence budget to the army. After all, Australia was 'girt by sea': an army was confined within a natural border, unlikely to stumble into Imperial affairs, but available to augment the armies of the Empire. As for the navy, that was a different matter. Localised navies in the dominions split responsibility in Britain's view and, in the first half of the twentieth century; it would accept no deviation from having one Royal Navy and sole command of the Empire's fleets. Imperial ideology stumped national practicality; Australians became increasingly aware that British naval protection was half a world away. An Australian navy could challenge the threat of an enemy at sea, staving off invasion until the Royal Navy arrived. For a maritime continent, the *sine qua non* that a navy built, crewed and commanded by Australians was the nation's first line of defence was not accepted by

Britain. ‘One Flag, One Fleet,’ ‘concentration of naval forces’ and ‘unity of control’ were aspects of Britain’s command of all the oceans: This was imperial ideology pervading British naval policy. This thesis demonstrates what a swirling sea Creswell set himself on when, at first, he only asked to share, what Joseph Chamberlain called for at the time, ‘some assistance and some support’ for ‘the weary titan’.²¹ (but for Britain this offer of help was not welcome).

²¹ Jebb, p.138

Chapter I

1885-1900 The Imperial Mission: “Have a fixed purpose of some kind for your country and yourselves”

Britain had a clear view of Empire and what it wanted from it: there was a clear sense of *Imperial Mission*. From the mid-nineteenth century, Britons, particularly those in high office or authority, generally subscribed to John Ruskin’s invocation:

This is what England must either do or perish: she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, ... and there teaching those of her colonists that their chief virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and their first aim is to advance the power of England by land and by sea ... If we get men, for little pay, to cast themselves against the cannon-mouths for England, we may find men who will plough and sow for her, and bring up their children to love her.²²

The spirit of his words guided peoples’ thinking and actions: Africa was explored; regiments and naval squadrons were deployed throughout the world to protect British interests, to suppress slavery and piracy, to forestall or contain foreign powers; and wherever they settled, these people were ‘Britons’ and Britain was ‘Home’.

Britain could do all this because, at the conclusion of twenty-five years of European conflict (1790-1815), it had ‘the ability to use the seas and oceans for military or commercial purposes and to preclude an enemy from the same.’²³ There would follow one hundred years of relative peace known as *Pax Britannica* (1815-1914) or the *Trafalgar Century* (1805-1905). These were not necessarily interchangeable terms: the span of the *Pax* – at least in Europe - was from the 1815 peace treaty between Britain

²² *Imperial Duty*, the inaugural lecture by John Ruskin, Oxford University, 1870, in Roberts, B., *Cecil Rhodes: Flawed Colossus*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 1988, p. 27

²³ Gray, C., *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War*, Free Press, New York, 1992, p.4

and France to the outbreak of the Great War, while the latter *Century* denoted Britain's world supremacy of the sea from Trafalgar to the rise of other naval powers, particularly Germany and Japan. This relative peace allowed the Royal Navy freedom of movement to explore, its hydrographic office to chart the world's oceans and Britain to trade. Captain Peter Hore has argued that:

it was the Royal Navy, not the US Navy, which policed the Monroe Doctrine in its early years, for Britain was undisputedly the one world power, and her navy was supreme... Without the victory of seapower, little of this would have been possible.²⁴

What made British seapower great and secured its Empire was not that it had warships on every ocean and all the seas of the world but that it had a small number of geo-strategic naval stations which based squadrons with the aspect of 'fleets in being'. Britain effectively controlled the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean, the English Channel and the North Sea and thus 'could virtually dictate the terms of Europe's access to the 'outer world'. Under conditions prevailing until near the end of the nineteenth century, control of these four narrow seas had political and military effects felt around the globe. in effect a global command of the seas.'²⁵ It was a clear illustration of sea power: the ability, through strength, capacity and mobility, of a nation to possess an effective naval defence which permitted its commerce to travel freely across the seas to markets and suppliers in peace and, in time of war, to prevent, repel or attack and destroy an enemy when required. Unlike the permanency that can be associated with conquered territory, a maritime nation's command of the sea is limited by the geographical area of control for the protection of sea routes and is as permanent as its maritime operational

²⁴ Hore, Captain P., *The Habit of Victory: The Story of the Royal Navy 1545 to 1945*, Sidgwick & Jackson, National Maritime Museum, London, 2005, p.242

²⁵ Sprout, H. and M., *Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American naval policy and the world scene, 1918-1922*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1969, p.16

infrastructure, naval capability and its government's policy will allow. Britain's command of the seas came in two phases: firstly, as a seapower, vigilant on the world's oceans, reinforcing Pax Britannica - an instrument for the preservation of peace and security. The second, with the onset of an Anglo-German naval rivalry from 1904, Britain's naval policy was predicated not only on keeping British sea communication secure, but with a seapower preparing for 'Armageddon', possessing a navy modern in training, armaments and construction, which would attack and destroy an enemy when required.

There was an emerging vulnerability to this mastery of the seas: acquisition of an extensive empire, rich in commerce, raw materials and agriculture, demanded the protection of sea trade and commerce and the defence of imperial territories. By the middle of the nineteenth century Britain, unchallenged at sea, became arguably at least somewhat complacent in the power of its navy. A Royal Commission on the Defence of the United Kingdom in 1860 brought forcefully to the attention of the British Government, and the Admiralty in particular, the urgent need to address the defence of its far-flung Empire. It had become burdensome for Britain to maintain a large and expensive empire on its own. A key finding was that the colonies could not rely solely on Britain for protection. British domestic pressure was increasing for a reduction in the costs of maintaining its colonies, many of which were now self-governing and well able to compete on the open economic market.

This was particularly the case for the Australian colonies with their emerging aspirations for national autonomy within the British Empire. The protection of these colonies was as much a matter of economic value and good governance for Britain as it

was a strategic piece in its foreign policy and defence ‘chess game’. For the first 70 years of British colonial rule Australian governors and governments reported to London through the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. In 1854 the Colonial Office and the War Office were separated. The Australian colonial governments’ concerned about the war between Britain and Russia in the Crimea - there were reports of Russian men-of-war in the Pacific - were already stirred to respond: the New South Wales government locally built a gunboat, the *Spitfire*, while the Victorians ordered from England an armed screw steamer, the *Victoria*, which arrived in May 1856.

On 25 March 1859 the Admiralty, anticipating the Royal Commission’s findings and recognising the need for dedicated naval protection for the Empire’s resource rich colonies, separated the Australian colonies from the East Indian Station and established Australia Station. It was the initial, though important, step in recognising a naval defence was required for this sea-bound continent. Thirty-five years later the United States naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan would declare an enduring maxim:

Some nations more than others, but all maritime nations more or less depend for their prosperity upon maritime commerce, and probably upon it more than any other single factor. Either under their own flag or under that of a neutral, either by foreign trade or coasting trade, the sea is the greatest of boons to such a state; and under every form its sea-borne trade is at the mercy of a foe decisively superior.²⁶

Though written at a time when maritime nations, particularly Britain, were re-assessing their positions as sea powers, Mahan’s July 1894 article in the *North American Review*, seemed to be a précis of the situation for the Australian colonies: foreign warships could

²⁶ Mahan, A.T., *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*, Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1897 (Reissued 1970), p.129

proceed unchallenged in Australian waters and, therefore, the Royal Navy needed a presence equal to any other power in the region.

‘After 1861,’ according to Lambert, ‘British strategy shifted away from the stationed forces, both land and sea, of the previous 60 years towards the mobile, centrally controlled units urged as an economy measure by Gladstone,’²⁷ who, when he became Prime Minister in late 1868, promptly adopted his long-held ‘Flying Squadron’ strategy. To give effect to this government policy of showing the might of the navy to its British possessions, Rear-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Phipps Hornby was given command of a flying squadron and was sent on a training cruise for new midshipmen around the world, which included a visit to Australia in late 1869. One of the midshipmen was William Creswell, who had joined the 35-gun, screw frigate, HMS *Phoebe*, following graduation from HMS *Britannia* at Dartmouth in 1867. Recalling his time as a midshipman, Creswell wrote, ‘*Showing the flag* was ... a very necessary duty. Primitive states like the Central American republics would be less likely to infringe international law to the detriment of our shipping or of British subjects if they were occasionally visited by a powerful protector.’²⁸

Away from well governed colonies in less stable areas of the world, Britain still needed to protect its citizens, provide access to its territory and preserve the security of its trade routes or commercial interests from the threat by pirates, slavers or rebels. To counter these threats, incursions or illicit trade, Britain deployed the Royal Navy not

²⁷ Lambert, A., *Australia, the Trent crisis of 1861 and the strategy of imperial defence*, in Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *Southern Trident: Strategy, history and the rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, p.116

²⁸ Thompson, P. Pp.55-56

for war, but to influence and preserve peace, protect sea commerce and permit free movement of goods and people across the seas. It did so in the form of small, shallow draft vessels, which could work close to shore and access coastal rivers systems, commanded by junior naval officers. ‘This was, perhaps, the last era in history when, unfettered by global communications, the junior officer could exercise his initiative to the full in the Hornblower tradition.’²⁹



Lieutenant William Rooke Creswell, taken from Thompson P. (Ed.), *Close to the Wind*

This was the type of naval operation, of which Midshipman Creswell wanted to be part, in which small steam driven vessels – gun boats, built in their hundreds - became the instrument of diplomacy (asserting British foreign policy) and policing (protecting trade or the rights and interests of Britons in foreign lands or British colonies). He was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant on 20 October 1871 and, after a time with the Channel

²⁹ Perrett, P., *Gunboat! Small Ships at War*, Cassell, London, 2000, p.13

Squadron, transferred to the China Station at Hong Kong in 1873. From here Creswell was sent to Penang, with the chance of command, to subdue piracy. David Howarth has said, ‘the young men who commanded the gunboats were often thousands of miles away from their senior officers, and British policy put a big responsibility on them.’³⁰ On 21 August 1873 Sub-Lieutenant Creswell, commanding a cutter, used rocket fire to silence a gun in a Chinese pirate fort at the mouth of the Larut River; the following month, 6 September, while onboard the schooner, HMS *Badger*, he fought off two large Chinese pirate galleys on the Larut River, and, though severely wounded in the engagement, remained at his post. For his gallantry, Creswell was promoted to Lieutenant, invalided home and went on to study at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

By 1875 ‘there was no active service going on anywhere’ the ambitious William Creswell recalled. ‘The lists were crowded, and promotion at its slowest.’³¹ The Royal Navy’s work in suppressing the slave trade in East Africa offered the young Creswell, hope of promotion, higher pay and action so he transferred to HMS *Undaunted*, the flagship of the East Indies Station, in late 1875. Creswell seemed to echo the sentiments of John Ruskin’s call to British youth: “all that I ask of you is to have a fixed purpose of some kind for your country and yourselves.”³² He was taught Swahili (which brought him extra pay as an interpreter) to add to his fluency in Spanish and then joined the unarmoured wooden screw vessel HMS *London* in Zanzibar in 1876. Hunting slave traders and stopping local rulers from interfering with ‘legitimate’ trade, provided opportunities for Creswell to use his initiative, be decisive and be able to articulate and

³⁰ Howarth, D., *Brief History of British Sea Power: How Britain Became Sovereign of the Seas*, Robinson, London, 2003, p.385

³¹ Thompson, P. p.143

³² Thomas, A., *Rhodes: The Race for Africa*, BBC Books, London, 1996, p.110

defend his decisions. Writing of such junior naval officers David Howarth noted that ‘Single-handed, they were expected to weigh up a local situation, judge who was right and who was wrong, and decide whether tact or a salvo of shells was a better solution.’³³ Perrett observed that ‘their actions demonstrated the qualities of high courage, leadership, self-sacrifice, independence, initiative, ingenuity and sometimes astonishing impudence’³⁴ - qualities which would be evident in Creswell during his thirty-three year advocacy for an Australian naval defence. In 1876 in Zanzibar, following a bout of malaria, Creswell was invalided home. Before he left Creswell was advised of his father’s death and this contributed to his decision at age 26 to resign his commission in the Royal Navy.

A visit to Australia in 1869 as a midshipman on board the frigate HMS *Phoebe* as part of Admiral Phipps-Hornby Flying Squadron revealed to Creswell ‘a land of infinite promise, as it seemed, for a man still young, with his way to make in the world...’ and, without any urging, arrived in Sydney on 4 February 1879 with his younger brother, Charles ‘... as a prospective settler in search of a fortune.’³⁵ He took up a selection in the Curlewis area of Queensland with two partners, Abbot and Chataway.³⁶ However, the man may leave the navy, but the navy does not leave the man. In the first half of 1885, Commander John Walcott, the Commandant of the South Australian Naval Forces wrote to Creswell, his ex-shipmate, asking him to join the colonial navy in South Australia as First Lieutenant. Creswell declined but following the deteriorating health of his brother, for which a milder climate was recommended, Creswell accepted a second invitation from Walcott. When Creswell took up the position with the South Australian

³³ Howarth, *A Brief History of British Sea Power*. p.385

³⁴ Perrett, p.16

³⁵ Thompson, P. p.193

³⁶ Thomas Drinkwater Chataway later became a senator for Queensland and a supporter of Creswell in the Commonwealth parliament.

Naval Forces on 12 October 1885, already on board *Protector* were two men with whom he would be associated in the early Royal Australian Navy: Chapman Clare and William Clarkson.

First Lieutenant Creswell already knew the vastness of this continent as a visiting midshipman in 1869 and as a Queensland stockman. ‘To while away the many solitary evenings which, as a bachelor aboard the *Protector* fell to my lot,’ Creswell wrote in his early memoirs, ‘I began to give shape to some ideas on the subject of Australian defence.’³⁷ The enormity of the coastline and the distance from Britain were significant considerations for formulating a maritime doctrine: a coastline of 19540 kilometres and 19200 kilometres from Western Europe, far from help (‘Home’ or neighbouring naval stations) or threat (an attack, Britons and colonists presumed, would come from a European power) for the Australian colonies. Geoffrey Blainey described the inadequacy of Britain’s reach to govern Australia in concert with the colonial administrations, as ‘a tyranny of distance.’ It was a dual tyranny: imperial policy, directives and expectations communicated through the Colonial Office to colonies, which, in turn, incorporated their realities of Australia and its environs with producing localised policy interpretations, reactions and fears. From the time of early white settlement, a particular reality of the colonies was their isolation as an outpost in the South, which in part, generated their fear of the threat of armed invasion from one European nation or another – firstly, France, then Russia and later Germany. Added to this was the invasion by migration from Asia: the influx of Chinese miners during the gold rushes in Victoria and Queensland had aroused concerns among the white population of an influx of ‘Asiatics’ from the north willing to work hard at jobs the

³⁷ Thompson, P. p.195

locals were not keen to take on and for very little pay. This concern eventually included the Japanese and Pacific Islanders.

British supremacy of the oceans made it highly unlikely that any enemy would harass coastal shipping, bombard ports or invade Australia. Based on this assumption two British engineering officers, Lieutenant Colonel William Jervois and Major Peter Scratchley, commissioned in 1876 by the British government at the request of colonial governments, examined the condition of colonial Australia's existing port and coastal defences. The sea, they characterized, was Australia's first line of defence and British warships at sea would intercept an invading enemy fleet or marauding enemy cruiser. The only thing the colonists had to fear was coastal raids in which the objective would be plunder, the extortion of money after the capture of merchant ships or bombardment of coastal cities. Yet all this would only be possible after the defeat of the Royal Navy. In 1879 Sir William Jervois recommended that the individual colonies acquire torpedo boats for coastal and river defence for the protection of their principal ports 'whilst the Imperial Navy undertakes the protection of the British mercantile marine generally, and of the highways of communication between the several parts of the Empire'.

Generally, the colonies did not respond positively to the Jervois-Scratchley report. An Inter-colonial Conference in Sydney in January 1881 considered financially contributing to additional naval forces locally, but it did not gain general support. To the contrary, the colonial premiers resolved that not only should the British retain responsibility for the naval defence of Australia, but the strength of the Royal Navy should be increased on the Australia Station. The Secretary of State for the Colonies

was not impressed with the premiers' resolution that the colonial naval defence 'should continue to be an exclusive charge upon the Imperial Treasury.'³⁸

When the colonists' invasion fears were heightened by German expansionary activities in the South Pacific, the Queensland Government decided to act, annexing in March 1883 the eastern half of New Guinea on behalf of the Empire. The annexation of the island of New Guinea had long been a priority for colonial governments for its possession would create a barrier between mainland Australia and Asia to the north. The demarcation between imperial policy and colonial aspirations were sharply drawn when the British Gladstone government repudiated the colonial government's action. Britain's refusal to sanction an active colonial policy was received with 'profound regret in Australia and New Zealand'. Victorian politician, James Service, in London at the time was quoted in the *Post* newspaper saying, '....from Queensland in the north to New Zealand in the south, from Western Australia in the west to Fiji in the extreme east, the cry is echoed 'the islands of Australasia shall belong to the people of Australia'³⁹.

Queensland's action and Service's comments were a clear declaration of Monroe Doctrine dimensions. These sentiments were re-affirmed at the Sydney Inter-Colonial Conference of Australian Colonial Premiers in November 1883. The Conference, which included New Zealand representation, demanded that Britain annex the unclaimed parts of New Guinea and nearby islands (Victoria, for instance, favoured the annexation of Fiji) as a buffer for the security and defence of the six colonies. Taking the concepts of the Monroe Doctrine and applying them to the South Pacific, the Conference declared that no foreign power be allowed to annex territory south of the equator and that any

³⁸ Macandie, G., *The Genesis of the Australian Navy*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1949. Pp.18/38

³⁹ Tate. M., *Political Science Quarterly*, 'The Australasian Monroe Doctrine', June 1961, Pp 264 - 284

further annexations be viewed as a threat to Australia and the Empire, in reality asserting an Australasian Monroe Doctrine.⁴⁰ As far as Victorian Premier, James Service, was concerned, 'the object they had in view was to keep the English people in these distant lands as far removed as possible from danger arising from European complications.... by keeping the colonies safe, through their remoteness' while 'the loyal people of Australia would be free to lend their assistance to the dear old motherland in any struggle in which she might be engaged.' The intention, in the view of the colonies, was to advance the Imperial cause, which in turn would strengthen their security.

The London *Pall Mall Gazette* of December 6th, 1883 reacted to the colonial premiers' declaration with 'it is hands off all round, with the exceptions of course, of the hands of Englishmen. To Frenchmen, Germans, Americans and all other foreigners the whole of the Pacific, south of the equator, is forbidden round.'⁴¹ The British government were dismissive. Publicly the resolutions of the Sydney conference were 'warmly welcomed' by the Colonial Office and would be 'carefully considered' by the government in London, which was ever mindful of public opinion both at home, and in the Pacific colonies. Privately the government was not so polite: in a letter to Prime Minister Gladstone, Lord Derby a former Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressed his contempt of the resolutions: '...this is mere raving: and one can scarcely suppose it to be seriously intended: though it is hard to fix the limits of colonial self-esteem...'⁴² The notion that even lowly colonials may have independent thoughts and ideas concerning their wellbeing and security seemed curious to the British premier.

⁴⁰ The idea of An Australasian Monroe Doctrine would occur a number of times in the early years of the Commonwealth. Also in Wellington, R., *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Australian Attitudes to the Spanish-American War*. Vol.56, Part 2, June 1970. Pp. 111-120.

⁴¹ Wellington, Pp. 111-120

⁴² Tate, Pp. 264-284

Queensland Premier Samuel Griffith suggested ‘that a Federal Australasian Council should be created to deal, inter-alia, with the maritime defences of Australasia, beyond the territorial limits.’ Griffith realised it was a responsibility the colonies should have, which he underlined later in a memorandum of June 1885:

‘it is manifest that the ships at present on station are insufficient both in number and quality to afford such offensive and defensive force as a community of over 3,000,000 persons, with wealth far beyond that possessed by a similar number in most other parts of the world, ought to have at its command.

This was more than righteous indignation. As the next thirty years would attest, colonial and then federal governments were not prepared to fund a local navy of such size and versatility that, in their view, should be provided by the Imperial government – not withstanding colonial ‘wealth far beyond that possessed’⁴³ by others. Emboldened by their 1883 deliberations, the colonies agreed to Premier Griffith’s proposal that a council be established to consider a federation or union of the Pacific colonies. Britain concurred passing the Federal Council of Australia Act in 1885. However, with council membership voluntary, self interest ensured that New South Wales, South Australia and New Zealand did not participate in the Council.

The colonies’ resolutions proved to be feeble when, unimpeded, Germany annexed the north-eastern part of New Guinea. Reluctantly Britain accepted the call for the annexation of New Guinea in October-November 1884. However, as a consequence of its procrastinations, the declared protectorate covered only approximately one third of the land area; the Germans having already colonized the other two thirds, much to the consternation of the Australian colonies. The *Australasian Monroe Doctrine*

⁴³ Macandie, Pp.38-39

resolutions agreed to at the conference in Sydney received further attention when it became known that Germany was interested in expanding its empire into the Pacific beyond New Guinea. Even then the British did not think that they 'could reasonably assent to what amounted to a Monroe Doctrine over the Western Pacific'.

Germany's reply to Australia's plans for the islands in the Pacific was blunt and succinct. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, found the 'grasping policy of the English colonists as offensive and irritating as the original 'insolent Monroe dogma'.⁴⁴ He rejected Australia's claims to New Guinea and any other unclaimed islands in the region. Herbert Bismarck, the Chancellor's son, warned his father that the German annexation of New Guinea was a mistake and 'that you will in time have a great trouble there. Australia is expanding in strength and population. In a generation or two ... She will feel strong enough to wage war, like the Old European Powers, and will clear out all foreigners from the neighbourhood'. Australia's desire to extend its empire into the Pacific was a response to its geographic location, Roger Thompson observed. Australians regarded themselves as being 'on an imperial frontier next door to no-man's-land that might be taken over by another imperial power'.⁴⁵ By claiming nearby territory, in the name of the British Crown, Australia was in fact enacting a Monroe style doctrine as a way to set up a buffer against any encroachment by possible hostile powers.

It was inconceivable to successive British governments that the Australian colonies would be threatened by foreign aggression. Confirmation of this had come twelve

⁴⁴ Tate, Pp.264-284

⁴⁵ Thompson, R.C., *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific. The Expansionist Era 1820-1920*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1980. Pp. 104-6

months earlier from an R N officer on the Australia Station, who advised the Admiralty on 23 October 1883 in his report, *Naval Geography and Protection of British Ports and Commerce*, that ‘the position of our Australasian colonies, lying at the utmost distance possible from the territories of the great states of Europe and America, is in itself an almost impregnable safeguard against invasion.’ Captain Cyprian Bridge, R.N. the report’s author, reminded the Admiralty that:

possibly the Imperial authorities are agreed that our Australian possessions run no risk of invasion. Such is not the conviction of the colonists themselves; and with them, be it remembered, the power of ultimately deciding on a defensive policy rests, and with them alone.⁴⁶

In this, Bridge was being either hopeful or naïve: colonial governments, in concert, would not accept and British governments for the next thirty years would resist a local, autonomous defence policy.

Bridge contemplated in his report the potential threat of European powers in Asia- as had the colonists – and the closeness of such a threat. If the Netherlands were conquered by a significant European naval power, Bridge contended, then Surabaya, the chief naval base of the Dutch East Indies, 1200 miles from Darwin, would be a threat in assembling and despatching an invasion force. Likewise potential threats could come from Manila, 1800 miles away and Saigon, the capital of the French colony of Cochinchina, 2000 miles from Darwin. Bridge, however, did not draw from his own analysis that Darwin, as Thring and Hughes-Onslow would in 1912, could be a potential British naval base. He was bemused that the raising of corps of cavalry was favoured by the

⁴⁶ Lambert, N., *Australia’s Naval Inheritance: Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station 1880-1909*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No. 6, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 1998, Pp.41-43.

public in New South Wales to somehow counter an invasion from the sea rather than the protection offered by a warship for sea trade and the security of the coast. Bridge reported that:

Probably nothing will awaken the popular mind in the colonies to the true character of the risk which they must expect to incur in war but a plain statement of the vital necessity to them of a proper system of naval defence ... If our colonies in the southern hemisphere be provided with a suitable naval defence invasion of them may be erased from the list of possibilities.⁴⁷



Adelaide, circa 1890: Governor of South Australia with various members of the local armed forces including Lieutenant Commander William Rooke Creswell [seated, right] (Naval Historical Collection, South Australian Archives)

To William Creswell, First Lieutenant aboard the HMCS *Protector*, the sole vessel of the South Australian Naval Forces, placing one's fate entirely in the hands of land forces was incomprehensible for a maritime nation:

The landing of an enemy force on Australian soil was, to the general run of people, the danger most to be feared. They would not, apparently, realize that

⁴⁷ Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance*., p.43

invasion by an enemy expeditionary force was impossible so long as the British Navy had command of the seas.⁴⁸

Creswell acknowledged years later that he failed to comprehend at the time why the development of a local navy had so little support in Australia and Britain, compared with encouragement for an army:

With a navy supreme and unchallenged on all seven seas, the mother country neither asked for nor desired naval aid from overseas. But with what was the smallest army in the world, having regard to the immensity of its commitments, she could not but place the highest value on the existence of a reserve of trained troops in the outlying parts of her vast domain.⁴⁹

Britain would get Australians soldiers ‘to cast themselves against the cannon-mouths for England’⁵⁰ several times before Creswell’s naval career ended.

Creswell considered himself ‘a zealous naval lieutenant, thoroughly convinced of the necessity of cherishing to the utmost the naval services of his country – the country of his adoption’⁵¹. To this end he spent his ‘many solitary evenings’ aboard the *Protector* contemplating a naval defence for Australia, committing his ideas to print in a series of articles in the *Adelaide Register* in 1886. His often repeated themes, first expressed at this time, were the vulnerability of Australia to naval attack and the protection of seaborne commerce as part of a developing naval defence. Not surprisingly, in his first public lecture, entitled ‘Sea-Power’, at a meeting of the Australian Natives Association in Adelaide in 1894, Creswell defined ‘“Sea-Power” not so much the naval strength as the commerce of the nation, the national industry and everything that tended to send her products beyond her borders.’⁵² This would be at risk if British seapower faltered.

⁴⁸ Thompson, P. p.195

⁴⁹ Thompson, P. p.199

⁵⁰ *Imperial Duty*, John Ruskin p. 27

⁵¹ Thompson, P. p.199

⁵² *Adelaide Register* 10 April 1894

Creswell further argued that Britain's vulnerability was Australia's vulnerability: Britain, through distance or defeat, would not be able to defend Australia soon enough or in enough naval strength to resist or repel an invading or raiding force. Nor were local based British naval forces reliable: they may be recalled 'Home' or sent elsewhere at any time.

Cyprian Bridge provided the earliest indication that this would be the case. If the Australian colonies did not draw up a scheme of naval defence, Bridge concluded in his 1883 report:

A sudden outbreak of war would find our fellow-countrymen in the colonies not only quite unprepared to defend interests that are vital, but as far as can be seen, altogether unaware of the true dangers to which the prosperity of Australia and New Zealand is exposed. The officers serving on the station would in case of actual war be far too busy with their own work to do much to help them in arranging for the security of their enormous trade.

Bridge's critique of the strategic consideration for the protection of trade and ports may have had the desired affect upon the Admiralty. In late 1884, First Naval Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Astley Cooper Key, wrote to the Australian colonial governments encouraging them to consider a better organisation of local naval defence. His proposal would require the colonial governments to fund 'the provision and maintenance of the naval force considered to be requisite for the protection of its port or ports' and the remuneration (wages, allowances and prospective pensions) of the officers and men, while the British would superintend the construction and maintenance of vessels equal to those found in the Royal Navy. If this proposal met with the approval of both Imperial and colonial governments, Cooper Key believed would make the colonies feel secure and 'unite the Colonies to the motherland by bonds of friendship and mutual

reliance.⁵³ The newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, Rear-Admiral George Tryon brought the Cooper Key proposal to Australia in January 1885.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was already considering the prospect of Australian colonies contributing to their naval defence and the scenario where some of the ships on the Australia Station may be drawn away because in a European conflict. 'England might want her last ship, her last sailor, and her last shilling to defend her own coast. Then we shall wake up ...'⁵⁴ to a foreign flag on a swift cruiser in Port Jackson. Creswell recalled that in the late 1880's he was one 'who had the cause of a self-reliant colonial naval service at heart,' he knew the horrendous opposition of which the Admiralty was capable. It was 'an obstinate resistance of unhallowed tradition; an obduracy, inflexible and implacable, against which ordinary mortals beat their knuckles in vain.'⁵⁵ The evidence of Britain's commitment to Australian naval defence prior to 1900 was 'unimpressive, small wooden vessels.'⁵⁶ The flagship of the Commanders-in-Chief, Australia Station during the 1880's, HMS *Nelson*, was inadequate. It had succeeded HMS *Wolverine*, a twenty-two gun screw sloop built in 1859, which had been the flagship for the squadron since 1876. When Admiral Tryon took command in January 1885, Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald referred to the Imperial Squadron as 'a small squadron of slow and antiquated wooden small craft, in addition to the *Nelson*, a heavily armed though slow and partially protected iron cruiser.'⁵⁷ The *Nelson* had only recently been commissioned before coming to Australia. It had four 18-ton, eight 12 ton muzzle loading guns and six 20 pounder breech loading guns with a

⁵³ Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance*: Pp. 51/62

⁵⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 February 1885.

⁵⁵ Thompson, P.199

⁵⁶ Trainor, L., *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994, p.28

⁵⁷ Macandie, p.45

range of 4,800 yards, carried a complement of 593 and travelled at 14 knots. Except for the *Nelson* all the ships were lightly armed. All the ships in the squadron used sails as well as steam power. As Creswell would say of his warship, *Protector*, one-sixth the size of *Nelson* 'we could except in heavy weather, out-steam and always (by some two or three thousand yards) out-range (the *Nelson*).'⁵⁸

Tryon proposed that the colonies contribute to the Australia Station by funding the construction of protected cruisers, which would continue as a cost to the colonies in peace-time but in war such costs would be met entirely by the Admiralty. 'It seems to me,' Tryon said in March 1885, 'that if our local defences are in a satisfactory condition, a heavy squadron would have no mission in these waters.' The proposed auxiliary squadron provided, crewed and maintained by the Royal Navy would consist of six cruiser catchers (designed, constructed and armed with the approval of the colonial governments) and eight sea-going torpedo boats of 750 tons for coastal surveillance. While placed under the command of the Commander-in-chief, Australia Station, 'at no time will these vessels be removed without the waters of Australasia without the sanction of the Governments of the Colonies.'⁵⁹ The Admiralty agreed to Tryon formally proceeding to negotiate this local maritime defence proposal with the colonies. The ubiquitous reticence over financing by some colonial governments stalled negotiations and Tryon was unable to conclude an agreement before his Australia Station appointment ended in February 1887.

Britain recognised the need to protect the maritime trade in Australasian waters. The colonies, Sir Henry Holland, addressing the Colonial Conference in London in April

⁵⁸ *Adelaide Register*, June 1920, Walcott Papers, Mitchell Library, A3319, in Trainor, p.28

⁵⁹ Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance*, Pp. 65/68

1887 said that the basis of defence of the Australasian colonies was distance and the capability of an opponent's navy. With the assumed enemy being European the Imperial fleet could blockade an enemy's port or intercept and destroy an expeditionary force before it reached Australasian waters. Fighting capability had developed from sail to a steam-powered navy providing not only for more rapid movement. Taken together with an assured coal supply and 'the development of the telegraph cable systems of the world has further facilitated rapid unexpected measures of aggression.'⁶⁰ These strategic virtues seemed to imply for South Australian Colonial Premier, Sir John Downer, a Conference participant, that 'while it was reasonable for the colonies to maintain their own defences, the presence of the navy was for "defending the commerce of the colonies, and the commerce of the colonies and the commerce of England was very much the same thing."⁶¹ The sole cost of maintaining a naval defence should not be borne by the Australian colonies it was argued. To Downer it should be considered in a broader strategic context: 'it becomes a question of Empire, and the object to be protected is the trade and safety of the Empire', then Britain should bear a reasonable proportion of the cost. The colonial governments were essentially agreeing to the Cooper Key-Tryon proposals.

In the end, the colonial representatives, including Chief Secretary of Victoria, Alfred Deakin, agreed to financially contribute £126,000 per annum for this protection. According to the 1887 naval agreement there would be an auxiliary squadron of five fast cruisers and two torpedo boats to protect maritime trade, certain ports and coaling stations. It was an agreement that Britain would soon regret for, critically, while the

⁶⁰ Macandie, p.41

⁶¹ Bannon, J., *Supreme Federalist: the political life of Sir John Downer*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, S. A., 2009, p.80

auxiliary squadron would be provided, equipped, crewed and maintained by joint funding, with the vessels having the same status as any other Royal Navy ship, and be under 'the sole control and orders' of the Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, the British government had agreed that the vessels could move beyond the limits of the Australia Station 'only with the consent of the Colonial Governments.'⁶² Added to this, the individual local naval forces were solely under the command and control of each colony. Around this time there was a shift in the sentiment of British governments: the benign attitude to local naval forces exhibited by Bridge, Tryon and this agreement was giving way to a strategic policy that to command the seas there needed to be a concentration of the Imperial naval forces to destroy an enemy's fleet in order to gain and exercise control of the seas.

Until the last decade of the nineteenth century, Britain had unquestioned primacy in the world's oceans but *Pax Britannica* had left it indolent. 'The *Pax* was primarily a peace of the sea ...'⁶³ and, while no power challenged Britain, national transformations heralded change. The unification of Germany in 1871, the industrialisation and westernisation of Japan, the national economic impact of the Trans-Siberian railway on Russia, the emergence of the United States with its trans-continental rail and telegraphy communications and diversified industrial infrastructure, the decay and fracturing of China, eventually, even the dominion status of Canada (1867) and New Zealand (1907) and the federation of Australia (1901) signalled the approach of new political, economic and defence strategies, policies and alliances, new economic markets and the migration of peoples across regions, continents and the world. By the late 1880's British naval supremacy seemed challenged by other European naval powers, especially France and

⁶² Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance* p.74

⁶³ Morris, J., *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*, Faber & Faber, London, 1968, p.421

Russia with implications for British foreign policy, protection of its seaborne commerce and sources of trade and resources, and the security, generally, of sea communication. The views of the 'blue water' school of navalists started to take hold in British government and Admiralty circles. By the Naval Defence Act of 1889, Britain adopted a two power standard, that is, the British fleet should be equal to the combination of the next two strongest European naval powers, while the Admiralty adopted a doctrine of centralisation and concentration of its naval forces. There was no place for fragmented colonial navies; the imperial ideology would be: 'Sons, be welded each and all/ into one imperial whole, / .../ One life, one flag, one fleet, one throne!'⁶⁴

Writing in 1894, Commander Charles Robinson, R.N, more sharply defined the British navalist view:

All that our Empire is it became by the exercise of Sea Power ... It can be maintained only by possession of the power by which it was made. Sweep away the merchant marine and the Navy which safeguards it and our possessions will drop like fruit from a blasted tree. They will fall into the lap of the maritime power by which we are undone. Without a sufficient fleet to keep open our communications, none of our colonies or dependencies could secure themselves from foreign domination.

To Australia and New Zealand, Robinson made it abundantly clear: the battle that would save them would not be fought in southern waters, for there was no strong maritime power in that hemisphere:

The naval battles of the future, in which the outermost limits of the Empire will be defended, will, we assume, be fought on the great strategic routes from Europe, or even in the English Channel. Let it never be forgotten that as soon as

⁶⁴ From 'The Opening of the Indian and Colonial Exhibition by the Queen' by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1886, Henderson, P., *Tennyson: Poet and Prophet*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978. Pp. 183- 184

the members of the Empire are cut off from communication with its heart, they will fall a prey to the power that intervenes.⁶⁵

For the next twenty years this would be the Admiralty's imperial naval strategy with the warning codicil of concentration of forces. Robinson's comments also implied that local colonial navies were worthless.

Defence was a prime motive for the Australian colonies to federate. At the first national Australasian Constitutional Convention held in Sydney in March-April 1891, New South Wales' Premier Sir Henry Parkes, president of the convention and an early Father of Federation, proclaimed it 'essential to preserve the security and integrity of these colonies.'⁶⁶ Parkes 'played the race card' to receptive delegates when he argued that the colonies needed to federate as 'forms of aggression will appear in these seas which are entirely new to the world' with the threat coming from China and other Asian nations. Parkes was concerned that it was not bombardment of cities, nor an attack on seaborne commerce or the ransoming of property and lives that was to be feared, but invasion of 'some thinly-peopled portion of the country' by an enemy which would take a considerable cost in lives and money to eject. Meaney has noted, 'the *Father of Federation* was also in the same sense, *Father of the Yellow Peril* tradition in Australian foreign policy.'⁶⁷ Parkes had unanimous support for his resolution 'that the Military and Naval defence of Australasia shall be entrusted to Federal Forces, under one command.' That is, there would be a separate and equal naval commander and military commander 'amenable to the National Government of Australasia.'⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Robinson, R.N., Commander C., *The British Fleet*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1896. Pp. 55-56.

⁶⁶ *S M H*, 25 October 1889, Sir Henry Parkes speech at Tenterfield, 24 October 1889

⁶⁷ Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923: Volume 1*, Pp.31-32

⁶⁸ Macandie, p42

Parkes' view on defence was shared by Sir Samuel Griffith, the Queensland delegate and the Tasmanian delegate Andrew Inglis Clark, who favoured a republic and 'believed each nation had its character and mission and that Australia could not fully develop its potential while it was in anyway subordinate'.⁶⁹ Griffith re-worked a constitution, originally drafted by Clark, which was the basis for consideration by the 'fathers' of Federation over the next nine years. It should have enabled any future Commonwealth to assert its sovereign responsibility to establish defence forces to protect and defend Australia. 'Griffith wanted to constitute an independent Australian nation that would remain in the empire, but without being subordinate to Britain; the only link to Britain would be the Crown. Britain would be an equal and an ally, and all the people of the empire would share a common citizenship.'⁷⁰ Griffith wrote into the constitution that executive power was vested in the Crown, exercised by the monarch's representative, the Governor-General, who was Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Britain had wanted a 'safe' Australian federation and:

... the Colonial Office in 1897, in attempting to modify secretly the draft Australian Constitution, proposed a wording that would place Australian forces under the Queen, not the Governor-General. The significance of this was that Australian forces might, when serving in war, be controlled by British ministers, not Australian.⁷¹

The proposal was dropped as the War Office was concerned 'about the legal framework of command when colonial troops served with British forces.' The Defence Forces was enshrined under the constitution⁷²: to protect every State against invasion and domestic

⁶⁹ Hirst, J., p. 11

⁷⁰ Hirst, J., p. 29

⁷¹ Trainor, p.148

⁷² See Chapter I, Part V – Powers of the Parliament (Section 51), Chapter II – Executive Government, (Section 68) and Chapter V – The States (Section 114) in *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1974

violence (that is, internal unrest), for the peace, order and good government and for executing and maintaining the laws of the Commonwealth under the constitutional Commander-in-Chief, the Governor-General. Revenue, however, took precedence over defence as a national responsibility following Federation. The most significant transfer of responsibilities from the new states was the custom services, the main source of revenue for the Commonwealth to fund its core functions (parliament, Commonwealth Departments, pay politicians and public servants) while Commonwealth activities which required outlays such as defence would have to wait.

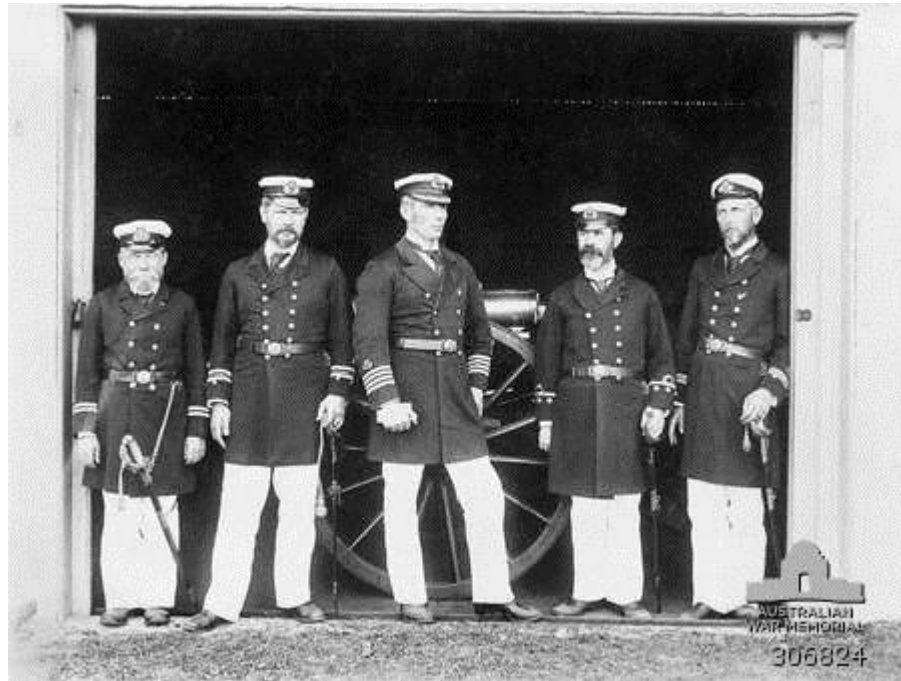
Whatever the aspirations for military and naval defence within the draft constitution, the Colonies Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, reminded premiers at the opening of the Colonial Conference, that British military and naval forces were not for the benefit of the United Kingdom alone. 'They are still more maintained as a necessity of Empire, for the maintenance and protection of Imperial trade and of Imperial interests all over the world' Chamberlain said. What the Admiralty wanted, according to its First Lord, G.J. Goschen, was 'a free hand ... to be able to conduct the defence of Australia on the same principles as those which we should follow in the defence of our English, Scots, and Irish ports ... No organised expedition could be sent either from Japan, or from the United States, or from France without the full knowledge of the Admiralty.' He asserted that, 'I cannot conceive any case, unless we lost actually our sea power, when we should think it our duty not to defend so valuable a portion of our Empire as Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania, for the safety of which we hold ourselves responsible, in the same way as we hold ourselves responsible for the safety of the British Islands.'⁷³ To know that Tasmania, separately, had the same guarantee as New Zealand was one thing,

⁷³ Macandie, Pp.54/56.

but Goschen was not one for having the Royal Navy ‘hugging the shore’. It needed to aggressively seek out the enemy, while the colonies looked after shore defences.

The Commandant of the South Australian Naval Forces had already been contemplating Australasia’s participation in its own naval defence. On 27 January 1897 Captain Creswell placed his naval scheme before the government of South Australia and in June 1897 South Australia’s Premier, Charles Kingston, submitted the scheme to the Colonial Conference in June 1897. Creswell proposed ‘that instead of a money contribution, the Australasian colonies should furnish an equivalent in trained seamen for the Royal Naval Reserve for service in Australasian waters and contiguous seas.’ Under Creswell’s scheme it was anticipated that 5000 men would be raised for a reserve force: ‘Sea defence is of vital importance to island peoples; there can be no sea defence without seamen.’ However with Australia’s small population (3.8 million people in 1901) it was this basic element which would limit Australian naval development for the next twenty years, even when vessels were acquired. Creswell advised Kingston prior to the Conference of a further limitation in developing the scarce available seamen: ‘If our shipping and our sea trade is manned by foreigners who have no interest in defending us we shall have neither seamen nor sea defence.’⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Macandie, Pp. 58-59



Adelaide, SA. C. 1896. Lieutenant Marshall Smith, Staff Engineer William Clarkson, Captain William Rooke Creswell, Naval Commandant of the South Australian Defence Forces; Chief Gunner Edwin Argent and Sub-Lieutenant Patrick Weir, Naval Historical Collection, Australian War Memorial, (306824)

Creswell knew that the British taxpayer would not be happy with his proposal to cease the subsidy while retaining the Royal Navy on the Australia Station. Audaciously, he claimed that Britons would be soothed in the knowledge that trained Australian seamen would supplement the squadrons of the Pacific, China and the East Indies stations. Australia needed to foster and develop a naval defence, Creswell contended, because, given its geographic situation and given changes in the Asia region, naval strength would influence the country's future. Creswell knew from his Royal Navy experience that a strong navy was the instrument in foreign policy and security for a maritime state. Significantly Creswell concluded his proposal with an early assessment of the danger of a potential malevolent naval power in the North Pacific:

The rise of Japan as a naval power and her well known aspirations, the establishment of Russia at Port Arthur, may have in the future an effect which will be undesirable to Australasia; the New Hebrides question ... may be one much more threatening to our well-being, and one which an Australasia unable

to take upon herself an honourable share in the burden of resisting would be unable to evade.

While Creswell accepted the training of Australian seamen as ‘following our national instinct and traditions ...from the sentimental and patriotic aspect there could be no plan more certain to bind us to the Mother land than one by which our own seamen will take their place in the fleet that “holds the command of the sea as a trust for the civilised world”’.⁷⁵ The Admiralty would not sanction the scheme. ‘The Admiralty, perhaps not anxious to encourage the growth of local navies, had not succeeded in training one Australian sailor for the Royal Navy by 1900.’⁷⁶

As the six separate Australian colonies were finalising their federation into a single nation through colonial referenda, a conference of colonial naval officers met in Melbourne on 5 August 1899 to deliberate on a naval defence for Australia. Present were Captain Robert Muirhead Collins, retired, the Victorian Secretary for Defence, who chaired the committee; Captain Francis Hixson, commanding the NSW Naval Forces; Commander Walton Drake, Acting Naval Commandant of Queensland; Commander Frederick Tickell in command of the Victorian Naval Forces and Creswell, Naval Commandant, South Australia. The naval officers were critical of Australia’s naval capability: it was the same as it was ten years ago and indeed might remain the same for 20 or 50 years if provision for a naval defence of Australia was not contemplated by the new Commonwealth. They were disillusioned by obligations not met under the 1887 agreement by which the vessels of the British Auxiliary Squadron would provide the means to drill and train Australian seamen. The neglect went deep: ‘This expectation has never been realised, the vessels in reserve having always been laid

⁷⁵ Macandie, Pp. 59-60

⁷⁶ Trainor, p.102

up in Sydney, and no attempt has been made to utilise them for the benefit of a local Naval Force.’ As the naval officers noted, ‘in the event of a European combination of such strength as to occupy the attention of the British Fleets, the continuance of a policy which in no way advances Australian ability for sea defence might have disastrous consequences.’⁷⁷

The colonial naval officers declared what the Admiralty would already have known: that:

France, Russia, and Japan have established naval bases and possess powerful fleets in the north of the Pacific. Nearly every other European power has effected a lodgement in the seas to our north.⁷⁸

Obvious to the naval officers was the fact that the Pacific would be ‘the arena of national contending forces.’ Broeze had noted that ‘the Pacific, historically, has been a centre of maritime power and influence with ‘the shifting balances of geopolitics and strategic calculations’⁷⁹ and the exercise of ‘Australia’s Monroe Doctrine, the belief in the manifest role for Australia in the south-west Pacific, and the conquest of a modest Pacific empire constitute one example of such geopolitical ideology.’ The key assertion of the naval officers was that ‘Australia having no military frontier requires for her defence a sea or naval force.’ In consequence ‘every consideration both of defence and our position of influence, which will be that of the ‘New Power in the Pacific’, demands from those responsible for the organisation of Federal Defence the recognition of the primary importance of Naval defence for Australia.’⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *the Report of the Conference of Naval Officers*, in Macandie, Pp. 72-73

⁷⁸ Broeze, F. *Island Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*. Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, 1998. Pp.4-5.

⁷⁹ Broeze, Pp.4-5.

⁸⁰ Macandie, Pp. 73-74

The Times of London, in several caustic articles (notably on 28 September and 6 October 1899), was unimpressed: the proposal was ‘deplorably mischievous ... inadequate, inconsequent and altogether inadmissible ...’ The Commander-in-chief, Australia Station, if consulted would have told the conference of naval officers that there is, and can be, no such thing as a “naval defence for Australia”, *The Times* thundered. ‘The only true and adequate naval defence for Australia, as for every other possession of the Crown, is a British Fleet supreme on the seas and by virtue of its supremacy keeping open the maritime communications of the Empire’ The editorial vitriol rolled onto the final insult for those who, the newspaper assumed, made up colonial naval personnel: ‘Naval warfare on the high seas is not, and never can be in these days, an affair of amateurs, volunteers, and half-trained longshore seamen.’⁸¹

The articles did not go unchallenged. Creswell informed *The Times*’ readers that “there is something special in the naval defence of Australasia, for special and distinct provision has been made to meet it with the establishment of the Auxiliary Australian Squadron.” For *The Times* to report that the Naval Force would consist of ‘amateurs, half trained volunteers and longshoremen’ was, to Creswell, disparaging, condescending and untrue. “Neither in numbers, physique, intelligence, nor sea aptitude is the available material one whit below that of the mother country.”⁸²

By the end of the nineteenth century, Creswell’s call for a local naval defence remained unanswered in an empire assured of its greatness by the supremacy of one navy. Navalists subscribed to the view Arthur Marder observed that:

⁸¹ *The Times*, London, October 6, 1899, Editorial, Pp.9 -14

⁸² *The Times*, London, April 19, 1900. p. 14

British sea power had been used as the servant of mankind by destroying the slave trade and piracy by keeping order on every shore and protecting equally traders of every nation. This was no idle boast. The British navy had made and kept the whole sea 'as safe as the Serpentine.'

From Malaya to Zanzibar to China, Creswell had served an Empire in which, Marder noted, 'the essential instrument in an imperialistic policy was the navy ... it was the instrument for securing colonies and trade.'⁸³ The British Empire made manifest the challenge John Evelyn set 300 years before:

A spirit of commerce, and strength at sea to protect it, are the most certain marks of the greatness of empire ... whoever commands the ocean, commands the trade of the world, and whoever commands the trade of the world, commands the riches of the world, and whoever is master of that, commands the world itself⁸⁴

Britain commanded all the oceans and thus Australia could expect, Creswell concluded, only 'raids by commerce-raiding cruisers, cruisers of a gun power capable of menacing unprotected sea ports.' To Creswell the solution to accommodating an Australian naval service was long-range cruisers with a heavy armament 'as no raiding cruiser, unless inclined to suicide, would risk encountering.'⁸⁵ For men like Robert Muirhead Collins and Creswell, it seemed as clear as day that with no land frontier, border security rested with a naval force. In September 1900 Collins stated that for this key Federal responsibility the first step was to have a clear and definite defence policy. To support this line of reasoning, Collins referred to a letter in the London *Spectator* of 26 May 1900 which provided the salient features to justify a naval defence with a little prophecy:

⁸³ Marder, Arthur J., *The Anatomy of British Sea Power. A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre Dreadnought Era 1880-1905*, Octagon Books, New York, 1976, p.11

⁸⁴ John Evelyn, *Navigation and Commerce, their Origin and Progress*, London, 1674 in Adkins, R. and L., *The War for All the Oceans*, Abacus (Little, Brown), London, 2007, p.334; also Roger, N.A.M., *The Command of the Oceans*, Penguin, London, 2004, p. viii

⁸⁵ Thompson, P. p.198

To hold intercourse with mankind, to share in their fortunes, to enrich themselves by commerce, above all to be great in the world's affairs, the Australians must take to the sea. By the sea they will sell everything, through the sea they will buy everything; and that fact, which they cannot alter, will in the end – which may not be as distant as we now imagine – force upon them ships, fleets to protect the ships, and, if we may look yet a few decades further ahead, political ambitions. A great commerce implies fleets to protect it, fleets require maritime stations, and both commerce and ambition point out to the Australians the same path.

In the pre-dawn of the Commonwealth, Collins emphasised that 'it is important to Australia from her geographical position and her maritime future, to develop her own local resources. This cannot be done if her naval defence is restricted to the payment of subsidies.'⁸⁶ Soon-to-be Prime Minister Edmund Barton remarked in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 31 December 1900 that taking over the various defence departments was not a matter of urgency. The newspaper re-assured its readers on 1 January, the day the Commonwealth of Australia was established, 'we are guarded in our isolation by the iron wall of a navy which is admittedly incomparable.' A day later, on 2 January 1901, at the Federation Banquet held in the Sydney Town Hall, New South Wales' Premier, Sir William Lyne, reflected on Australia's place in the world:

The material prosperity of the new nation will not affect the people of Australia alone; it will contribute to the strength and greatness of the British Empire, and therefore improve the prospects of permanent peace amongst the nations of the world. A strong and united British Empire is the best guarantee of such peace⁸⁷.

Britain's naval supremacy had delivered both a *Pax Britannica* and a *Trafalgar Century*; it had secured the Empire. In creating a commonwealth, common defence was regarded as the reason for Australia's being, but with a relaxed and comfortable attitude about British naval protection.

⁸⁶ Macandie, Pp. 75-76

⁸⁷ *SMH*, 1 & 2 January, 1901.

Australians would retain for several generations images and perceptions of national identity, according to Broeze, which revolved largely around inward looking and often racist concepts of ‘continental Australia in which the sea was seen as a fence shutting out unwanted intrusions from the surrounding region.’⁸⁸ To Creswell, successive Australian governments had misinterpreted the sea for a hundred years. It was a facilitator of communication (migration, trade, communications – mail, legal documents, and newspapers). It was not a barrier – it was an easy means of access. Australia – as for any sea nation – could only be defended from attack from the sea by warships. Warships to defend the coast and warships which could engage an enemy far from the coast.

“In the century that is opening,” President Theodore Roosevelt said in 1903, “the commerce and the command of the Pacific will be factors of incalculable moment in the world’s history.”⁸⁹ Australia required a naval defence which would secure its sea frontier. It could not do it alone. The early task for navalists, particularly Creswell, was to shift public perception about the sea surrounding Australia so that there could be a realistic and practical response. In his campaign Creswell would shape the formation of a naval defence. As the new century opened Creswell was more vigorously asserting Australia’s unique position in the Empire, though acknowledging ‘One Flag, One Fleet’, while Britain’s attitude to a maritime Australia was entirely negative.

⁸⁸ Broeze, p.1

⁸⁹ Morris, E., *Theodore Rex*, Harper Collins, London, 2002, p.228

Chapter II

1901-1903 Nationhood and the Sea: Destiny and Identity

In the opening years of the Commonwealth, there were three key matters which would frame its naval destiny, identity and status within the Empire: Firstly the national response, from government and parliament, to the constitutional provisions for autonomous defence forces and foreign affairs; Secondly, Creswell's call that Australia's future was as a maritime state; and Thirdly, the renewal of the Naval Agreement with Britain. In addition for almost a decade from 1901, fickle support for minority governments and the prevailing belief amongst many politicians that Britain would protect Australia at all costs contributed to the national deliberation over a local naval defence.

In foreign policy, early Commonwealth governments were less complacent, legally enforcing a 'White Australia' policy and encouraging relations with the United States.

Under Section 51 of the Constitution, the Commonwealth parliament had the power to make laws with regard to defence and external affairs. Miller argued that:

The first Australian government led by Edmund Barton without doubt could have decided its own foreign policies administered through its own created diplomatic service. It did not want to do so. It did not believe it had the need, the right, the power, or the capacity. This was not a case of liberty reinforcing the bonds of empire, but rather habits of empire softening the resolve of liberty.⁹⁰

In regard to defence and external relations, as a member of the Empire the meaning of 'One Flag, One Fleet' was understood: there was one voice only in foreign policy and one instrument in imperial security and protection, that of Britain's.

⁹⁰ Millar, T., *Australia in Peace and War*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1978, p.70

The Boxer Rebellion (1900) – as with the Boer War (1899-1902) and the Sudan War (1885) – provided the Australian colonies with an opportunity to support Britain's foreign policy and imperial security actions, 'reinforcing the bonds of empire', to fight under one flag and command. 'The Commonwealth was born in imperial khaki,'⁹¹ according to Trainor – and also navy blue. To quell the Boxer Rebellion, the Australian colonies responded with some 500 sailors of the New South Wales and Victorian Naval Brigade, as well as the South Australian warship *Protector*, crewed by volunteers. This act of loyalty to Britain did not even pass muster: Captain Chapman Clare, the recently appointed Commandant of the South Australian Naval Forces and *Protector*'s commander, did not meet the British specification that the ship be under the command of a Royal Navy officer. The only acceptable officer was the recently appointed Commandant of the Queensland Naval Forces, William Creswell. Once *Protector* had completed its Royal Navy service in China, it returned, firstly to Sydney on the 24 November 1900 remaining to participate in ceremonies inaugurating the Commonwealth of Australia and then proceeded to Adelaide.

For Creswell there was a understandable pride in HMCS *Protector*'s achievements - particularly as it was one third the size of the British warship, HMS *Wallaroo*, sent from the Australia Station to China to assist in the suppression of the Rebellion. *Wallaroo* had greater armaments and in the journey from Sydney to Hong Kong, HMS *Wallaroo* took only a day less than the smaller *Protector*. It meant little to Rear-Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont, KCMG, RN, the Commander-in-Chief of the Australia Station, who

⁹¹ Trainor, p.4

disparagingly informed the Admiralty that ‘it only showed that she could be navigated to China and back at economical speed by her officers and crew.’⁹²



Captain Creswell as Commandant of the Queensland Naval Forces, 1900, from the Naval Historical Collection, Australian War Memorial (POO.444.162)

‘It is a curious thing about Australian nationalism that Australians have so often identified the birth of their nation as an outcome of participation in imperial wars ...’ Meaney noted in *The Search for Security in the Pacific*, his study of Australian defence and foreign policy., ‘It sprang out of the achievement of Australian arms in a British cause and under British leadership, out of the pride that the soldiers, as British Australians, felt in the part they played in the war effort.’⁹³ Whether it was the turn of the century actions of the Boxer Rebellion or the Boer War or the Great War of 1914-18: ‘The desire for recognition and a secure identity is a prime force in the movements to create nations,’ Hirst has argued. ‘Australian historians who doubt the force of national feeling in federation have looked to economics to reveal the selfish motive

⁹² Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance*, p.87

⁹³ Meaney, N.K., *A History of Australian Defence*, Volume 1, Pp.4-5

behind it. They overlook the motive that is quintessentially selfish and integral to nationalism and status: the desire for identity and status.’⁹⁴ Yet the birth of a new nation for the new century did not co-create in the Australian people or parliament immediate aspirations for a separate status and identity. That is, the inception of this new state did not change its people from consciously accepting that they were ‘Australian Britons’ or acknowledging their kinship with the people of Britain as ‘Britons of the Empire’, regardless of their place of birth. At Federation the destiny that seemed inevitable - to be one nation - had been reached, and, as if collectively catching their breath, Australians settled into national unity and local and individual freedom. The Australian flag flew for the first time from the Exhibition Building in Melbourne on 3 September 1901. The English flag was ‘ours’ while the Australian flag was not officially recognised until gazetted in 1903, following approval from King-Emperor, Edward VII. It was more than symbolic that the flag displayed the Southern Cross and Commonwealth Star beneath a Union Jack? In Australia, for the remainder of the century, it would fly in tandem with the Union Jack long after the duality of citizenship had become a memory.

On Friday 1 March 1901 the new Commonwealth proclaimed its constitutional responsibility for defence and, in particular, transferred the ships and personnel of the former colonial navies to the Commonwealth Naval Forces. These naval assets consisted of the monitor, *Cerberus* (built 1870), the cruiser, *Protector* (built 1884), the torpedo boats *Childers* (1884), *Lonsdale* (1883), *Nepean* (1883), *Mosquito* (1884) and *Countess of Hopetoun* (1891), the gunboats *Gayundah* (1884) and *Paluma* (1884) and some auxiliaries with 240 permanent and 1348 voluntary naval brigade personnel. In

⁹⁴ Hirst, p. 26

reality nothing changed. The vessels remained in their home ports under the command of their State commandants.

Writing to the Governor of South Australia, Lord Hallam Tennyson⁹⁵, from the Navy Office of the Queensland Defence Force, Creswell wished, 'but it is a dream, we could design our own ships.' Creswell confided to Tennyson the necessity to send the naval engineer and former shipmate, William Clarkson, to England to oversee their design, planning and building 'but there is no such luck. Destroyers would be most useful but the Admiralty will insist upon telling us everything and assume we were all born or imported from Mars the day before.' Most tellingly, he lamented the state of the Royal Navy:

They can't even build their own ships; their programme is years and a dozen battleships behind. We could go straight to assisting and get what we wanted. The Federal Govt. must insist on Naval establishments on principles that will make the Navy I see take root and from this country a small plant – a creeper now, and oak someday

Creswell's vision was not confined to acquiring ships: people, skills and the capability of local naval engineering were also needed. He wanted Australian Government Scholarships to fund twenty places per year with the British Navy as Australian Naval Cadets. They would serve for five to ten years with a possible early return to Australia as commissioned lieutenants: 'We want officers oh! so badly and unless something is done, shall always want them.' Creswell felt he was now not alone in his quest. 'It is a lifting thought to know that you take such an interest in our Naval matters.' Creswell confided to Tennyson. 'I have stayed Robinson Crusoe at it for so long.'⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The son of the English poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson

⁹⁶ Creswell to Tennyson, 22/1/1901 *Tennyson Papers* NLA 479/5/38

Creswell's stance was not unrealistic nor an isolated view. Alfred Thayer Mahan in July 1902 wrote:

What Australasia needs is not her petty fraction of the Imperial navy, a squadron assigned to her in perpetual presence, but an organisation of naval force which constitutes a firm grasp of the universal naval situation. Thus danger is kept remote; but if it should approach, there is insured within reaching distance an adequate force to repel it betimes.⁹⁷

When Creswell was asked to comment on Mahan's article, he said, 'What we want is to be personally and actively represented in the great organisation which is to control ... the universal naval situation.' The difficulty was that when Creswell proposed his scheme Britain, 'even among the experts' seemed to think that what Creswell wanted was an increase of ships 'for purely local purposes to take the place of forts. This fallacy has been shared to a large extent in Australia, where crude notions regarding naval defence are prevalent. ... It is absurd to think that the experience of 200 or 300 years of successful naval warfare would be disregarded'⁹⁸ and yet that was the accusation, Creswell felt, was being levelled at him. For the next eight years, Creswell put before Parliament schemes to give substance to that which was provided under the Constitution: 'The Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth ... [for] the naval and military defence of the Commonwealth ...'⁹⁹ Creswell's vision for local naval defence was Mahanian and he believed in his ability to realise it.

Tennyson forwarded Creswell's January letter to Lord Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, for consideration. The response came on 2 March, stating the unwavering

⁹⁷ Hattendorf, J., (Ed.) *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1991 p. 317

⁹⁸ *SMH*, 4 July 1902, p.5

⁹⁹ Part V, Section 51 (vi), *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act*, Government Printer, Canberra, 1974

position which British governments maintained for at least the next decade. Ominously, it also brought Creswell and his views to the attention of the Admiralty and there was a message for him: abandon your arguments for a local navy. 'The plain fact is that Australia and its trade is protected by the British Fleet in the China Seas, where the decisive action so far as the Eastern Seas is concerned will be fought' Selborne wrote. 'If that fleet is beaten, no number of *Protectors* will save their trade any more than the American frigates in 1812 saved the United States from invasion and its commerce from destruction.' Britain mandated one navy, under one flag, with the Admiralty in control and, from the First Lord's position 'Australia should aim at adding to the real strength of the Imperial Fleet in China waters.' Further, Australia 'should either provide herself or give us the means to provide ships capable of keeping the sea, and of meeting the powerful cruisers of France and Russia, whether in China or Australian waters. Selborne encouraged Tennyson to challenge Creswell directly by using the argument contained in this correspondence but doubted Creswell could validly respond. To Tennyson, Selborne provided this injunction for the Britons in the South:

You cannot too strongly impress upon all your countrymen in Australia that the real defence of Australia and Australian trade, in a naval war, will have to take place a long way from the coast of Australia; just as the security of England from invasion would probably have to be decided, not in the Channel, but in the Mediterranean, so the security of Australia is much more likely to depend on a battle in the China Seas than anywhere on the Australian coast. It would be a fatal mistake, the gravity of which I cannot exaggerate, to think it a wise policy to defend Australia by ships that could not keep the sea or steam a good speed.¹⁰⁰

It the imperial logic underpinning the standard Admiralty response in Creswell's successive proposals for a local naval defence. It was inconceivable to Selborne that

¹⁰⁰ Selborne to Tennyson, 2/3/1901 *Tennyson Papers* NLA 479/2/83

‘your countrymen’ – by heritage and ethnicity, if not birth – should have it any other way’.¹⁰¹

Creswell’s lobbying for an Australian naval defence became more intense and outspoken. By February 15, 1901 Creswell boldly asked Tennyson to suggest to the new Defence Minister, Sir John Forrest, that ‘he should have a Naval advisor and that worthy person should be myself’ [for] ‘We want to lay the foundations of that which will be a great addition to the Empire’s sea strength and a real defence for Australia.’ To drive this point home, especially to those who favoured land forces over a navy, Creswell informed Tennyson:

The old idea that the fate of Australia might be decided in the Channel can be amended by nearly four and a half million Britishers out here. Anybody or rather power, who can first polish off the British fleet and then spoil for an Australian War (a la Boer) is not within one’s power of imagination. How specially apropos is all the above to my request to be appointed naval advisor to Sir J.F. while taking over Naval Defences must be evident, but I will be really grateful if (your considerations permitting) you will recommend me.¹⁰²

However, it would be of limited value to be in a position to affect change if Australians did not embrace the Creswell vision. To Creswell, Australians may be relaxed and comfortable with ‘the idea that we are safe because there are no very strong naval bases owned by foreign Powers in our neighbourhood. That is true, but it is a fool’s paradise, and it must at once be dispelled.’ He argued that an enemy did not require a local base to raid Australia’s sea commerce. A couple of cruisers could be coaled from a steamer at sea or a protective cove along the vast island continent. It would be Selborne’s ‘grave mistake’ not to contemplate that the vulnerability of Australia was also the vulnerability

¹⁰¹ Selborne to Tennyson, 2/3/1901 *Tennyson Papers* NLA 479/2/83

¹⁰² Creswell to Tennyson, 15/2/1901 *Tennyson Papers* NLA 479/5/37

of Britain: an enemy raider in the Pacific could deprive Britain of raw materials and agricultural products.

Creswell promoted his call for a local naval defence and indirectly his own credentials in a long article in the *Brisbane Courier* of Saturday 2 March 1901. The timing would appear deliberate: Australia was in the midst of its first Federal election and the prime minister-designate, Edmund Barton, was in Brisbane electioneering. Entitled 'Federated Australia and A Navy', Creswell wrote of Australia's existing naval status, as well as that of foreign powers in the region. If its commerce was threatened, Australia's position far from Imperial fleet support (and its powerless state if help was not forthcoming or there was a weakened British naval response) meant, in Creswell's opinion, that the solution lay with a local naval capability. To Creswell it defied logic that the British Isles, so close to presumed continental enemies, correctly basing its defence on seapower, would contend that Australia, an island continent 'should have no navy, should have received no encouragement to train her sons for service afloat ...' It must end, Creswell argued, for 'discouragement and aloofness have been the constant attitude of the Imperial authorities towards naval development in every Australian colony.'¹⁰³ Creswell's argument was not based on having a navy for naval defence sake. Deny commerce – export of food and raw materials – from Australia and not only Australia suffered economically, but so would the intended recipient – Britain. Albany in Western Australia and Thursday Island off north Queensland needed to be secured as key naval defence positions, according to Creswell, as seaborne commerce used coastal routes that passed through these locations for trans-oceanic trade. The significance of Thursday Island was not to be forgotten, when eleven years later, it would feature in the

¹⁰³ *Brisbane Courier* Saturday, 2 March 1901, and Macandie, p.87/91.

strategic arrangements of a 1913 report on the naval defence of Australia. For the present, Creswell wrote that ‘the naval defence of Australia means the protection of our floating trade and the supply of our due quota of aid to the Empire’s sea strength.’¹⁰⁴ This was preaching a separate naval entity, but one that acknowledged the unity of control within one Imperial fleet. By May 1901, Creswell was urging Defence Minister Forrest, that in considering proposals from the Admiralty, the Barton government ‘should have at their disposal the latest and most complete information on all points of Australian naval concern to guide them.’¹⁰⁵

Creswell was keen to use any opportunity to promote a national naval force in light of the dominance of the land forces in the national thinking. The Duke and Duchess of York were touring Australia following the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament and Creswell sought to take advantage of Tennyson’s contact with the nautically-inclined future King George V to assist the cause: ‘I can’t help asking you to befriend Australian Naval prospects before the Royal visitors have left us for good. Not a thing of any kind has been done for the Navy. Everything has gone to the Army.’ The Commandant of the Queensland Naval Forces was entitled to be concerned: The supremacy of land forces was publicly recognised when, on 1 March 1901, Sir John Forrest appointed a committee of State Military Commandants to review the colonial defence acts with the view to drafting a defence bill for the new Commonwealth. Sir George French, the New South Wales Commandant was appointed president of the committee and Major William Throsby Bridges its secretary. For years Creswell and Bridges would challenge each other over the local defence of Australia; for the moment, Creswell was aggrieved at the lack of recognition for deeds of recent memory:

¹⁰⁴ *Brisbane Courier* in Macandie, p. 87/93

¹⁰⁵ Creswell to Forrest, 27 May 1901, in Hyslop, p.156

Not a thing has been said or done for Aus Naval help in China. True we did nothing really to claim anything for but it is the first time the younger sons of the Sea power race have shown any sign of heredity. It might be marked there was after all as much in taking the little *Protector* up with a good crew to China as in looking after railway trucks in South Africa and the NSW and Victorian Navals did good honest work.¹⁰⁶

The Defence Bill introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament proposed that the naval forces be controlled and administered by a Naval Officer Commanding while the 28,000 military personnel be under a General Officer Commanding. On 26 December 1901 the position of General Officer Commanding was given to Boer War veteran Major-General Sir Edward Hutton, former Commandant of the New South Wales Forces and prior to this the Canadian Militia. However, Defence Minister Forrest, speaking in the Second Reading debate on 9 July 1901 did not envisage the immediate appointment of the naval commander. “But where is our fleet” interjected George Reid, the leader of the Free Trade group in parliament. “I have said” Forrest replied, “that we may not appoint the officer yet. This Bill is not for today – it is for all time.”¹⁰⁷ Creswell was incredulous; he had little time for Forrest: “I don’t think I ever heard such a dull, small-brained man being a minister.” To Creswell, Forrest was “a dead weight in the Ministerial boat but that unintelligent person is treading us in the mud, kept amused and inflated by the attentions at his elbow of Gordon, French and co”¹⁰⁸ These were distinguished military men to challenge! In a letter to Tennyson from Flat Top Island off the coast of Mackay Queensland where he was midway through training Naval Reservists, Creswell wrote that in his view the proposed Defence Bill was for “a land

¹⁰⁶ Creswell to Tennyson, 25/6/1901 NLA MS1963/41

¹⁰⁷ CPD 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 2, 20 June 1901 – 18 July 1901, p. 2163

¹⁰⁸ Creswell to Tennyson, 25/6/1901 NLA MS1963/41

without one inch of military frontier” drawn up by military men. “It could only suit Switzerland and I said so.”¹⁰⁹ Creswell’s part in a civil-naval relationship in the new Commonwealth was getting off to an inauspicious, though aggressive start.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Edmund Barton sought the views of the principal British naval officer in Australia, Rear-Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont. Beaumont had not only an operational role, but also one promoting ‘One Flag, One Fleet’ whilst maintaining a surveillance of British naval sentiment. Beaumont, previously Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty, responded on 16 July, dismissing any idea of a local navy: “It is beyond the powers of the Commonwealth at the outset to create such a force”. He re-assured Barton of the solidarity of the Royal Navy, exemplified by the vessels on station. Indeed, Beaumont considered that the Commonwealth “should take no part in the creation or maintenance of Naval Reserves or State Naval Reserves”. It would be “more costly and less efficient to have a Naval Defence Force”.¹¹⁰ The Rear-Admiral argued that there were limitations in creating a local defence force with Australia’s weak financial position and small population. In essence Beaumont was telling Barton that it was appropriate and logical to exhibit loyalty to the Empire by paying tribute to the overlord in the guise of the subsidy under the Naval Agreement for the Royal Navy Squadron based in Sydney.

This was not the view of some members of the first Commonwealth parliament. George Fuller, the Free Trade Member for the Illawarra reminded the House that:

¹⁰⁹ Creswell to Tennyson, 25/6/1901 NLA MS1963/41

¹¹⁰ Macandie, Pp.78/79.

the necessity of the defence of Australia ...having been the prime agent in bringing about federation I am one who believes the time has come when we should establish ... the nucleus of an Australian navy, when all the men of that navy should be Australian-born citizens.

The Protectionist Member of Parliament, R.A. Crouch, joined this call in the House on 24 July 1901. In his view, ‘it is not from the European nations that I think we Australians have to expect any great difficulties, but from those great nations of the East, China and Japan, which we are unfortunately teaching European methods of utilising their military resources.’¹¹¹ This was the earliest Commonwealth parliamentary reference not only linking defence with the threat from the North, but also the dubiousness of giving Asia, particularly Japan, a technical capability equal to that of the European powers. It was a connection that others would take time to grasp. For the present the focus was on keeping the ‘Yellow Peril’ from the gate. Crouch would not have been reassured by the Defence Minister who, a month later in Parliament, would declare, “there is no limit to the number of foreign ships of war to be admitted to Australian waters.”¹¹²

Generally, the parliamentary party leaders were dismissive of a local navy. Reid was reticent, hoping “to see – not so much for the emergencies of today, but as a part of the evolution of an Australian system of defence – our Australians exercising upon ships of war” The Free Trade leader offered the suggestion that ‘there is no necessity, perhaps, to begin the founding of a navy now, but there is no reason in the world these ships of war, which are lying idle in our ports, should not be made the training ground

¹¹¹ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 3, 19 July 1901-28 August 1901 Pp. 2966/2959

¹¹² CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 4, 25 September 1901, p. 5127

for the future naval defence of Australia.’ Labor Leader Chris Watson did not doubt that “a navy would be a material advantage in connection with the Defence of Australia”. His concern was the cost of building and maintaining a fleet (estimated at £1.3 to £1.5 million for a battleship): “We cannot have anything like an Australian navy without incurring an expenditure that we dare not face, and it is, therefore of no use to discuss a question of this kind at the present stage.” Watson also drew attention to the idle ships of the British Squadron based in Sydney. While he believed Australia should contribute to their maintenance, “the vessels that are here under the auxiliary squadron agreement are fast becoming obsolete, and that even the guns with which they are armed are not of sufficiently new design to be effective on active service.”¹¹³

The Defence Minister’s focus, however, was on the value for money of the ex-colonial, now Commonwealth Forces. In writing to Tennyson from the Defence Department in Melbourne on the 26 August, 1901 Forrest said, “The difficulty of the way of Military and Naval Defence seems to be expense. One can hardly believe that we are spending seven hundred thousand pounds a year already or can have so little to show for it.” Prime Minister Barton was more direct when he told parliament on 9 August:

It is quite out of the question for the Commonwealth to engage the building of a sufficient navy to protect her shores ... It would probably cost £4,000,000 for the construction and the equipment alone for the defence of these shores at all times and in all emergencies’ with another £1,000,000 in repairs and maintenance.¹¹⁴

William Morris Hughes, Labor Member for West Sydney, shared the sentiment of pro-navy parliamentarians. Entering the Defence Bill debate on 31 July, Hughes advised the House that the present value of the Auxiliary Squadron was £702,564 and “it was

¹¹³ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 3, p. 3196

¹¹⁴ Forrest to Tennyson, 25 August 1901. NLA 479/5/41

notorious that, with the exception of the flagship HMS *Royal Arthur*, the vessels of the squadron are obsolete.” Hughes argued that in the last ten years of the Naval Agreement the Commonwealth had contributed £1,260,000 and ‘had a business rather than a sentimental one, we should now have been in a position to own these vessels and ... man them.’ Worst than dependence on obsolete ships was the realisation that if the British homeland was under threat, the squadron would be withdrawn. Hughes wanted the ‘tribute’ paid to Britain scrapped. Hughes was aware of Creswell’s arguments and he added his own powerful argument, occupying over six pages of the parliamentary record containing the key features of Creswell’s advocacy, in castigating a Bill that did not acknowledge the Commonwealth as an island continent or a maritime nation: ‘one would imagine that one was living in the mountain recesses of Switzerland.’ Australia needed a navy to keep enemy warships from the coast and, if invaded, a trained national militia to respond. Divorced of imperial ideology or good intentions, Hughes was quite clear: ‘This is a Defence Bill which upon being analysed and laid bare does nothing to provide for that which is the very essence and corner stone of a Defence Bill, namely our defence in our time of need.’¹¹⁵ Hughes and pro-local navy parliamentarians recognised the connection Creswell had made already between nationhood and the sea; the sea had always defined Australia represented by ‘a tyranny of distance’, invasion fears, colonial attempts to annex Pacific islands, immigration, external trade of wheat and sheep products and inter-colonial coastal commerce and transport.

In all of the Second Reading debate, there was one voice missing: the Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General, Alfred Deakin. At this first opportunity to place, at least, his vision – if not the provision for an Australian navy – on the parliamentary

¹¹⁵ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 3, Pp. 3293/3295/3599

record, Deakin was silent. The only entry in the parliamentary record was on 30 August 1901, when Deakin, in a procedural motion, postponed discussion on the Defence Bill. The Protectionist government and its silent Attorney-General sought to defend Australia with legislation to deny entry of a specific threat.

On 12 September 1901 Deakin, brought before the House of Representatives what he considered Australia's most significant Bill: "We here find ourselves touching the profoundest instinct of individual or nation – the instinct of self-preservation – for it is nothing less than the national manhood, the national character, and the national future that are at stake." More significant than the Defence Bill was a piece of legislation, widely favoured by Australians at the time, which would enshrine the one, universal attribute which offered both status and identity for the nation: the Immigration Restriction Bill. 'Cost what it may' Deakin intoned:

We are compelled at the very earliest hour of our national existence at the very first opportunity where united action becomes possible to make it positively clear that, however limited we may be, for a time by self-imposed restrictions upon settlement - however much we may sacrifice in the way of immediate monetary gain - ... in the interests of the future generations who are to enter into and possess the country of which we at present only hold the borders.¹¹⁶

If only such a sense of purpose had been applied to the true defence of Australia: its own navy! In reviewing the record of the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* with regard to this bill, one can see that race purity, unity and identity overrode national defence. The Labor Party supported the Protectionist government because the bill 'legalised' the 'White Australia' racism and responded to the Labor Party's platform of immigration restriction and protection of white workers. Labor would look inward, concentrating on domestic issues, until the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902) and the

¹¹⁶ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 4, p.4804

Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), before realising that to protect the nation and culture Labor needed to agitate for an Australian navy. For now, Labor, through Deakin, was focussed on keeping out the one widely accepted – at the time - threat to Australia: Asian and coloured migration. For Deakin this was the Monroe Doctrine for Australia:

We may have in the future some developments, which may call for the application of the Monroe Doctrine in the Pacific. But far more important than that, and a far more significant declaration at the present time, is this for a White Australia. It is the Monroe Doctrine of the Commonwealth of Australia. It is no mere electioneering manifesto but part of the first principles upon which the Commonwealth is to be administered and guided.¹¹⁷

The ‘White Australia’ policy was the bi-partisan bastion of national identity, security and protection. Divergence with Labor occurred where the Barton and Deakin governments regarded the Imperial Fleet as Australia’s principal protector. For Barton cost dictated whether, initially, Australia could afford vessels and then, later, for Deakin it became a tension between what could be afforded, how to manage the Imperial relationship and how to appease Labor and its defence platform whilst relying on Labor support to stay in power.

Labor leader Watson appreciated the call for a Monroe Doctrine but, in his opinion, Australia lacked the capacity to assert such authority. ‘We here in Australia are not such a power as America then was’ Watson said in parliament. ‘We are a mere handful of people with an immense territory within the confines of the continent to administer and develop.’¹¹⁸ The argument that possession of British New Guinea would prevent foreign powers encroaching on Australia, Watson contended, fell apart in the face of the Germans and Dutch in New Guinea and the French in the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. ‘I ask the Government whether they themselves have considered what

¹¹⁷ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 4, p.4804

¹¹⁸ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 6, Pp.7423-4

provision will be required for the necessary defences of these outlying positions.’¹¹⁹ If US President Theodore Roosevelt had been asked whether he would have some sympathy with the ‘White Australia’ policy, he would caution diplomacy and for Australia to have the armed capacity to back up its words. Roosevelt speaking in September 1901 noted an old proverb, ‘speak softly and carry a big stick – you will go far.’¹²⁰ As a nation, Roosevelt said, ‘it is both foolish and undignified to indulge in undue self-glorification, and, above all, in loosed tongue denunciation of other peoples.’ Generally Australians, particularly parliamentarians and sections of the press, did not speak in moderation about Asians and Pacific Islanders. Worse still, Australians were unarmed when they spoke loudly and deliberately of white supremacy. However, Roosevelt made a corollary, acknowledging, ‘we have got to remember that our first duty is to our own people’¹²¹ and Deakin certainly agreed with this.

Captain Creswell recognised the point as well. From the Naval Staff Office in Brisbane on 28 September 1901, he unfurled his battle flag in the arena of Australian defence, issuing a report that could easily be described as his seapower manifesto for Australia, his own maritime doctrine. “Our future must be that of a maritime state. It is a truism that the defence of the frontier of a state should be in the hands of its frontiersmen. In Australia our seamen are our frontiersmen.”¹²² *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports* Report of 1901 was a clear, visionary but practical proposal for a naval defence for Australia. Creswell wrote that:

¹¹⁹ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 6, Pp.7423-4

¹²⁰ Roosevelt was to say this was an old West African proverb, but the source remains unknown

¹²¹ Roosevelt, T. *A Strenuous Life*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1990 Pp.329-330.

¹²² Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Report: *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports* by WR Creswell, Pp.151-157. Prime Minister Barton was repeatedly asked in parliament to table the Report, particularly by Sir Langdon Bonython, a South Australian parliamentarian and friend of Creswell; Barton finally, and possibly reluctantly, did so on February 1902. Hence, it is often referred to as Creswell’s 1902 Report

Australia should take an active and personal share in her own defence, and especially in that which is her main protection, is so directly in accord with the first principles of defence and our soundest policy as a portion of the Empire, that only reasons of an insuperable kind, such as national incapacity, could compel any other course.

Colonies Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, the prime imperial federationist, would express a similar sentiment in 1902: to relieve the 'weary Titan' the dominions needed to take a share in their own defence.

Creswell recognised that for the new Commonwealth to establish a navy the cost would be prohibitive. 'Money cannot conjure a navy into existence' Creswell wrote in his Report. Moreover, it would not be in an infant navy's interest or possible. What was needed was a scheme 'within our means, and of gradual development on sound lines, to advance by progressive steps' complemented by progressive reductions in the subsidy paid to the British Government under the Naval Agreement. It was so logical to Creswell: 'The life of the Empire depends on the fleet; any strengthening of the fleet adds to the security of the Empire.' As a first step, Creswell suggested one modern ship specifically designed to suit local conditions: 'The federal ship of war to carry a full complement of officers and instructors but only a sufficient permanent crew for navigating, caretaking of armament, etc.'¹²³ This cruiser would have the latest armaments - with discipline, routine and training to Royal Navy specifications - and would be completed by 1903 by Creswell's estimation. This would be followed by a second to be completed in 1905, a third to be completed in 1907 and a fourth cruiser to complete the requirement in 1909 with a total capital cost of £1,200,000. Under

¹²³ CPP., Report by WR Creswell, 1902. p.151-2

Creswell's plan, the Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station would inspect ships and men at any time and during war, the federal ship and all trained Australian seamen would be placed under his orders and at his disposal. With a 'nucleus crew' on board, the warship would embark naval personnel in visiting ports of each state for regular at-sea training. Thus 'the ships of the Australian Naval Force will be manned by reduced crews, and raised to war strength from our Naval Reserve.'¹²⁴ This idea was not new – not in 1901, nor 1903 when Jacky Fisher proposed it to the First Lord of the Admiralty as part of his re-organisation of the Home Fleet. Creswell in his Report referred to the current arrangement with the Home fleets whereby the Channel Fleet was fully manned while the First Reserve Fleet had reduced crewing. These Creswell proposals for crewing and command would sound curiously familiar six years later in December 1907 when Alfred Deakin made his defence policy statement.

Creswell's proposals were not revolutionary or unilateral. 'From the beginning' Frances McGuire argued:

Creswell insisted that Australia must adopt an evolutionary course in naval affairs; that she must free herself from the subservience attached to the mere money payment for services received from the Royal Navy; that she must work towards increasing independence, but independence acquired gradually and earned by correct training and hard experience. The opening passages of the 1902 Report reveal a man far in advance of his contemporaries both in assessment of our naval requirements and in appreciation of national and social changes which they implied.¹²⁵

Creswell encapsulated his argument in a quotation from the *Edinburgh Review*: 'For a maritime state unfurnished with a navy, the sea, so far from being a safe frontier, is rather a highway for her enemies; with a navy, it surpasses all other frontiers in

¹²⁴ CPP., Report by WR Creswell, 1902. Pp.153.

¹²⁵ McGuire, F.M., *The Royal Australian Navy: Its Origin, Development and Organisation*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1948, p.55

strength.’¹²⁶ It was a simple Mahanian principle: ‘the first and most obvious light in which the sea presents itself from the political and social point of view is that of a great highway.’¹²⁷ It would be at the core of Creswell’s advocacy and it would take most of the decade for Australia’s leaders to grasp, politically, economically and strategically, the significance of a naval defence. In political terms, a navy would increase Australia’s standing for membership in the councils of the Empire. In strategic naval terms ‘if ... seapower is about the ability to use the sea and to deny such use to an enemy, then plainly seapower must generate strategic leverage towards the outcome of a conflict.’¹²⁸ It was an instrument of warfare: ‘if navies’ Mahan noted ‘exist for the protection of commerce, it inevitably follows that in war they must aim at depriving their enemy of that great resource.’¹²⁹ Economically, an Australian owned, crewed and built navy would, in time, contribute to the commercial diversification of an established and new industrial base and infrastructure (from local utilisation of raw materials – food agricultural products, wool, iron ore, coal – to secondary industries such as food processing, clothing and footwear, dockyards, steelmaking and fabrication) for there were ships to be built, repaired and fuelled and sailors to be clothed and fed.

Creswell concluded his report with his famous statement: ‘The spectacle of some 5,000,000 Anglo-Australians, with an army splendidly equipped, unable to prevent the burning of a cargo of wool in sight of Sydney Heads, is only the ordinary consequences of a policy of naval impotence.’¹³⁰ Over the next decade Creswell argued that British supremacy over the world’s oceans was no longer total. Moreover, the sea was not a

¹²⁶ CPP., Report by WR Creswell, 1902. p.151

¹²⁷ Westcott, A. (Ed.), *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, Dover Publications, Mineola, NY. 1999, p.16

¹²⁸ Gray, P.5

¹²⁹ Mahan, *The Interest of America in Sea Power*, p.128

¹³⁰ CPP., Report WR Creswell, 1902. p.156

natural barrier to a nation with a naval capacity to attack and, should the distance from danger be traversed by this enemy, a well equipped Australian army would meet the enemy, if it knew at all from where the enemy may attack, from behind harbour forts and the tactical limitations of land. In 1906 Admiral Sir Jacky Fisher declared more dramatically the consequences for his own country the vulnerability of a trade dependent British Isles: 'If the navy is not supreme, no army, however large, is of the slightest use. It's not invasion we have to fear if our navy is beaten. It's starvation!'¹³¹

Creswell's scheme and public activity in advocating for a local naval defence prompted a report to the Admiralty on 14 November 1901 by the Commander-in-Chief Australia Station. Rear-Admiral Beaumont advised that the State Commanders of the local naval forces opposed a financial contribution for the maintenance of the Royal Navy Squadron, instead 'urging their claim to be organised into a united and efficiently trained force second only to the Royal Navy, in the belief they are, so to speak, fighting for their lives.'¹³² The position of Beaumont and the Admiralty was assured with Barton's Defence Minister Forrest, who recalled 13 years later, that 'in the early days of Federation, I was not an advocate for a local navy, but favoured an Imperial Navy.'¹³³ With the Barton government considering naval defence as no more than naval brigades at ports with training at sea as required, Australia's first Defence Bill lapsed, due to the priority of other legislation. To Barton, a naval force for Australia "can only be acquired and maintained by arrangement with the Imperial Government, and I believe that if this

¹³¹ Marder, AJ, *Fear God Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Volume II *Years of Power 1904-1914*, Jonathon Cape, London, 1956

¹³² Rear Admiral Beaumont to Lord Selborne, 14/11/1901, in Lambert, *Australia's Naval Inheritance*, p.80

¹³³ CPD, Vol. LXXV, 11 November 1914, p.476

course was adopted it would also follow that the greatest amount of good would be maintained at the smallest cost.”¹³⁴

Publicity of *The Best Method* Report in newspapers and in speeches by pro-navy parliamentarians (for example, Sir John Quick and WM Hughes) positioned Creswell as the leading navalist in the arena. Melbourne’s *The Age* said that Creswell had ‘a wise policy ... a practical scheme’¹³⁵, while the *Sydney Morning Herald* asserted that it was ‘worked out on practical lines by a practical man.’¹³⁶ The *Adelaide Register* noted that ‘Captain Creswell has proposed a practical scheme for gradually establishing a Naval force worthy of federation.’¹³⁷ Melbourne’s *The Age* of 1 May 1902 agreed: ‘the right policy for the Commonwealth, therefore, is to promote the establishment of an Australian navy, manned by Australian seamen’¹³⁸ developed gradually, moderately in line with financial capability. However, the seed of Creswell’s advocacy would remain on stony ground for the foreseeable future, though he was buoyed by some British supporters: Admiral Penrose Kennedy ‘was in frequent correspondence with Captain Creswell during the controversy about the starting of the Australian Navy. We pulled together.’¹³⁹ The Right Honourable Sir John C.R. Colomb, KCMG, a former Royal Marine and British parliamentarian, wrote to Creswell on 15 June 1902 that his advocacy deserved success: “Your long and persistent efforts to lead Australasia – the statesmen out there – to see with clearer eyes where and in what direction salvation in war will lie have had all my sympathy.”¹⁴⁰ To the British public, Colomb had made his position clear a year earlier: ‘The hope of British survival in the Pacific is not in

¹³⁴ Macandie, p. 78

¹³⁵ *The Age*, Melbourne, 20 December 1901.

¹³⁶ *SMH*, December 20, 1901.

¹³⁷ *Register*, Adelaide, 13 March 1902.

¹³⁸ *The Age*, Melbourne, 1 May 1902,

¹³⁹ Penrose Kennedy, C.C., *From Sail to Steam Naval Recollections 1878-1905*, p.259

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Hyslop, p. 183.

mounted infantry or bushman scouts ... it lies in means of local production and maintenance of battle power in that ocean.' Local and European powers were developing their interests in the Pacific and:

our island resources in the north-east corner of one hemisphere cannot indefinitely compete on equal terms for maritime control of the other. The mere fact of having to drag across the globe almost every single thing necessary for the repair and equipment of British ships is a heavy handicap in war with a nation or nations having the necessary sustaining power, so to speak, on the spot.¹⁴¹

The solution the British government had to counter any threat in the Pacific in 1902 would prevent naval development in Australia.

The 'old' Imperial Powers were reducing their fleets in the Pacific. Britain's reduction of its fleet in the Far East and Spain's resounding defeat by the United States Asiatic Squadron in the Philippines brought the first stirrings of new imperial powers, the United States and Japan. Australia and New Zealand regarded the rise of Japan as potentially more a threat to them than any European or western hemisphere incursions into the Pacific. Both countries were dismayed at Britain's signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance on 11 February 1902 considering that they would be virtually defenceless on the edge of Asia. Britain, as usual, did not consult Australia on foreign policy decisions; the Anglo Japanese Alliance was presented as a *fait complete* after it was signed. While New Zealand remained convinced that the remaining ships of the Royal Navy would still be strong enough to protect them, should the need arise, the *Wellington Post* (New Zealand) editorialised that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance 'had

¹⁴¹ Extract from *Monthly Review*, June 1901, Appendix B, CPP., Report WR Creswell, 1902.

been received in New Zealand with not a little suspicion and uneasiness.’ The paper suggested that if Britain had no ‘White Colonies’ in the Pacific the alliance might be admirable, but the Mother Country could not expect it to be so regarded by ‘free colonists who see their country exposed to the risk of being turned from white to yellow by her (Britain’s) entanglement with an Oriental power.’¹⁴² Sydney’s *Bulletin* was equally direct: ‘The Australian people had no voice, directly or indirectly, in the making of the Japanese treaty, and they are not morally bound by a treaty in which they had no voice.’¹⁴³

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance meant that Britain did not need to deplete its Mediterranean or Home fleets to maintain superiority in the Far East. By the Alliance, ‘both parties pledged themselves to remain neutral if the other found itself at war with one power, but to come in with their ally should a second Power join the enemy. ... For Britain there was the assurance that the Russian and Japanese fleets, the two most powerful in the area, would not be combined against her.’¹⁴⁴ The treaty recognised Japan’s special interest in Korea and it ‘further provided that if other powers attacked one of the signatories the other would come to its aid.’¹⁴⁵ Importantly if only one power were to attack one of the signatories there would be no action from the other, but if two were to attack then both Britain and Japan would retaliate. For Japan, the alliance was immediately beneficial, effectively giving it Great Power status from 1902. For Britain too, the treaty had considerable benefits. Sir Julian Corbett noted that, the alliance

¹⁴² Reckner, J., *Teddy Roosevelt’s Great White Fleet*, United States Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988, P. 26

¹⁴³ *Bulletin*, 22 February 1902, in Greenwood, and Grimshaw, (Eds.), *Documents on Australian International Affairs*, p.125

¹⁴⁴ Padfield, P., *The Great Naval Race*, Birlinn, 1974, Edinburgh, p.102

¹⁴⁵ LaFeber, W., *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1998, p.76 .

would ‘give Britain respite from having to defend everything everywhere’.¹⁴⁶ There were some misgivings about the treaty within the British Cabinet: Prime Minister Arthur Balfour wrote ‘the momentous step has been taken and, if the Japanese accept our proposals, we may find ourselves fighting for our existence in every part of the globe against Russia and France.’¹⁴⁷ Balfour was concerned that in the event of an emergency, Britain’s responsibilities would be global but Japan’s would be regional and that the treaty was, consequently, not equal between the two.

This treaty brought with it greater opportunity for the Imperial Japanese Navy to continue to modernise: it was able to purchase British built ships and take advantage of British naval expertise. However, the rise of Japanese naval power undermined England’s strategic dominance, and hence political dominance in the Far East (Australia’s near north). Through one of the ironies of history it was the British who contributed to this situation. ‘British shipyards in the 1880’s and 1890’s built one warship after another’ for the Imperial Japanese Navy and Royal Navy officers were loaned to educate the Japanese ‘in naval science and administration’¹⁴⁸, while Japanese officers served on British warships. Japan learnt from such experiences that Europe alone could design modern battleships, for which there was no equivalent in the Far East. If Britain ruled the waves, then Imperial Japan wanted to learn from the best. It could be argued that if the British had not built these ships someone else would have; yet this was more than a commercial arrangement. Britain wanted to counter the rise of Russian imperialism in the Far East and the threat to British interests in India and the

¹⁴⁶ Nish, I., *Historical Significance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance* Studies in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923), <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/is/I5443.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ Nish, I., *The First Anglo-Japanese Alliance Treaty*. Anglo-Japanese Alliance <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/is/IS432.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Sprout., p. 19

Persian Gulf. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance recognised Japanese interests in North Asia and Britain anticipated that this would divert Russia sufficiently to concentrate on its interests in Asia.

A Colonial Conference was to be held in London during July and August 1902 to coincide with the coronation of Edward VII. On the agenda was the re-negotiation of the naval agreement between Britain and certain of its now self-governing colonies, for which Defence Minister Forrest prepared a paper on naval defence. For Forrest there was a key principle for the naval defence of Australia and the Empire: 'If the British nation is at war, so are we; if it gains victories or suffers disasters so do we'. In his view Australians should 'fully realise that we belong to a nation which for centuries has been mistress of the sea'¹⁴⁹ and he endorsed a 'one fleet for the Empire' for Australia. Rear-Admiral Beaumont of the Australia Station had done his job for his superiors in Britain: Forrest was considering the possibility of disbanding the local State naval forces. Beaumont informed the First Lord of the Admiralty 'of one thing I am glad – he is sure now that Captain Creswell's scheme will not do for them.'¹⁵⁰ Forrest asked the General Officer Commanding the Commonwealth Military Forces, Major-General Edward Hutton, to critique his paper. Hutton was not going to alter the Minister's stance on naval defence: if there were limited funds in the treasury for defence it may as well be committed totally to the army.

Deakin's biographer, John La Nauze, has argued that at this time Deakin 'had no responsibility for questions of defence except as a member of cabinet.'¹⁵¹ Such an

¹⁴⁹ Greenwood, and Grimshaw, *Documents on Australian International Affairs* p.65/115.

¹⁵⁰ Lewis Beaumont to Lord Selborne, 10/03/1902, in Lambert, *Australia's Naval Inheritance*, p.95

¹⁵¹ La Nauze. J., *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979, p.515

evaluation could be applied more generally to Deakin's ministerial career! As prime minister one would expect a greater executive assertion, but as deputy prime minister and attorney-general, La Nauze seems to conveniently side-step either Deakin's influence in cabinet or Deakin's desire to push the local navy issue. Interestingly, La Nauze preceded this 'concession' by noting that on his return as leader of the Victorian delegation to the 1887 Colonial Conference, Deakin had recommended the freshly negotiated Naval Agreement be adopted by Parliament, recalling years later 'that he looked forward to the day when Australia could provide her own naval defence; but brave words could not build a fleet. The first necessity was federation.' The necessity of federation having been achieved, Deakin seemed to be devoid of 'brave words' when it came to naval defence. The cabinet, La Nauze wrote, urged Barton to press for a scheme similar to that proposed by Kingston in 1897 'a proposal which came from ... Captain Creswell'¹⁵² that is, in the new Naval Agreement let Australian seamen be substituted for subsidy.

The Prime Minister's perspective on the navy was not well defined when he left for the conference. 'He did not on naval questions, any more than on military, follow any clear principle – whether imperial or national, strategic or political'¹⁵³ for, as Bolton pointed out, Barton 'was not unsympathetic to the concept of a separate Australian navy, but he was all too well aware of the financial constraints of such a policy.'¹⁵⁴ Barton was not short of advice and the Governor-General of the Commonwealth, the Earl of Hopetoun, gave his before Barton's departure. His remarks were indicative of someone extremely well briefed for one supposedly representing the Crown not British politics:

¹⁵² La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, p.116.

¹⁵³ Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy*, p.80

¹⁵⁴ Bolton, G., *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job.*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2000, p.274

There were so many viewpoints to consider ... For instance, the naval expert, with his knowledge of the subject and his careful study of history, may advocate a certain course which in itself may be, probably is, the only really sound course to follow, whereas we here in Australia may allow our local sentiment to stand between us and what is really essential to our safety.

This initial rebuke was slight; but in a clear reference to Creswell, Hopetoun was slapping down any thought of 'local sentiment' for a navy. Condescendingly, paternalistically, Hopetoun apprised Barton of the Australian character and capability, chiding Creswell's frontiersmen:

Your people do not take readily to the sea ... you have no great fishing population such as we find in the British Colonies of North America. My own belief is that it will take an immense amount of work, much expense, and some disappointment before you can turn out in this country a highly skilled and highly disciplined production like the British bluejackets.

The governor-general's letter made it very clear that the local naval advocate in his *The Best Method* Report was too slick, too smooth, in the claim, which would be repeated over the next decade, that Australia could afford its own maritime defence: 'Those who talk as glibly about a fleet of second-class cruisers for the Commonwealth hardly appreciate or wilfully ignore the huge cost of such an undertaking.'¹⁵⁵ Constitutionally the representative of the Crown in Australia, Hopetoun confirmed that he was, in effect, an agent of the British government. The work of the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor-General was done in this exercise. Barton would align with imperial naval strategy: a concentration of naval forces based on 'One Flag, One Fleet'.

Certain capital city newspapers thought Barton was denying the inevitable in his attitude to a local navy. The *Adelaide Register* thought he displayed a 'feeble attitude'

¹⁵⁵ Hopetoun to Barton, 29 April 1902, *Barton Papers*, NLA 51/1/954a, Pp. 1-2/5.

which ‘... was neutralised by the gratuitous vapourings of Sir John Forrest.’ Its editorial, favouring Creswell’s position, predicted that, ‘in the end, however, no influence can prevent the ultimate creation of an Australian Navy, or an Australian branch of the Imperial Navy... ... and the authorities in the old world should allow for it as an imperative requirement for the new nation in the Southern Seas.’¹⁵⁶ The *Brisbane Courier* of 7 July 1902 called into question the preparedness of Australian representatives for the discussions, who did not appear well briefed. There appeared to be a failure to take ‘advantage of Captain Creswell’s experience and knowledge.’ The *Brisbane Courier* utilising Creswell’s sentiments, felt the Colonial Conference afforded the opportunity, ‘of dealing with the reorganisation of the whole system of naval defence to meet the new conditions which have made the Pacific the probable scene of the naval battles of the near future.’¹⁵⁷ This sentiment appeared to lie behind the question in the Senate on 8 July of Senator David Charleston of South Australia, a former marine engineer and trade unionist:

Is it the intent of the Government to take measures to constitute an Australian Navy and to train seamen for defence purposes, and for strengthening the mercantile marine of the Commonwealth in place of the existing policy of paying a subsidy in connexion with the Auxiliary Naval Squadron?¹⁵⁸

The government response was negative, advising that the matters raised would be the subject of discussion at the Colonial Conference.

The 1902 Colonial Conference was presided over by Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. From the outset his objective was to strengthen the bonds between Britain

¹⁵⁶ *Register* Adelaide, 9 July 1902, Greenwood, and Grimshaw, (Eds.), *Documents on Australian International Affairs*, Pp.77/ 127

¹⁵⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 7 July 1902 in Greenwood, and Grimshaw, (Eds.), p. 126

¹⁵⁸ CPD, 1st Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 11, 19 June to 26 August 1902, p.14184

and ‘the great nations across the seas.’ There were three principal approaches to achieving this: through political relations, through commercial union and through imperial defence. Since the previous conference in 1897, Australia had federated, a federated South Africa was close and, in Chamberlain’s opinion, the political federation of the Empire was possible but he thought this was for the colonies to decide. The Dominion of Canada promptly asserted its independence: Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier already declaring ‘If you want our aid call us to your councils.’¹⁵⁹ Chamberlain acknowledged this declaration’s authorship though, either mischievously or naively, claimed it for imperial federalism:

Gentlemen, we do want your aid. We do want your assistance in the administration of the Empire, which is yours as well as ours. The weary Titan staggers under too vast orb of his fate If you are prepared at any time to take any share, any proportionate share, in the burdens of the Empire; we are prepared to meet you with any proposal for giving to you a corresponding voice in the policy of the Empire¹⁶⁰

Chamberlain’s idea was that questions of imperial interest would be brought before a ‘Council of the Empire.’ It was no less paternalistic when ‘floated’ in 1897 – except now ‘the children’ were being asked to participate in keeping ‘house’ – and if there were any bright ideas, the ‘adults’ (Britain) would be only too pleased to discuss and consider them. Theodore Roosevelt had noted twelve months earlier the reality of empires. ‘All the great colonising powers, England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland and Russia managed their colonies primarily in the interest of the home country,’

¹⁵⁹ Laurier had first made this comment in the Canadian parliament in 1900 when involvement in the Boer War was being debated. If Canada was to respond to all calls to be in all Britain’s wars ‘it would be necessary to make new constitutional terms; they would have to say to Britain, “If you want us to help you, call us to your councils.”’ Laurier told parliament. Skelton, O., *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier*, Volume II, Oxford University Press, London, 1922, p.105

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Jebb, R., *Colonial Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1905, p.138

Roosevelt said on 2 August 1901. ‘... in no case were the colonists treated as citizens of equal rights in a common country.’¹⁶¹

When discussion came to naval defence, Chamberlain turned the conference over to First Lord of the Admiralty Selborne. Sharing the burden of Empire did not mean localizing the Empire’s maritime defence: there had been, there was and there would be ‘One Flag, One Fleet’. Selborne made it very clear that ‘the sea is all one, and the British Navy therefore must be all one.’ Singularly tasked, the enemy would be sought out and destroyed; if this was done, Selborne said, ‘the whole Empire will be simultaneously defended in its territory, its trade and its interests’. He advised that colonial leaders were not to think in terms of a local maritime defence with ‘its allotment of ships for the purpose of the separate protection of an individual spot, the only possible result would be an enemy who had discarded this heresy and combined his fleets will attack in detail and destroy those separated British squadrons which, united could have defied defeat.’¹⁶²

The Admiralty presented a memorandum on imperial defence to the conference emphasising the immense importance of fleet concentration. In this concentration of naval forces ‘the primary object of the British Navy is not to defend anything, but to attack fleets of the enemy, and, by defeating them, to afford protection to the British Dominions, shipping and commerce. This is the ultimate aim.’¹⁶³ The Admiralty paper offered an interesting assertion about a situation where the Royal Navy failed – this was

¹⁶¹ Roosevelt, *A Strenuous Life*, p.284

¹⁶² *Colonial Conference 1902*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1903, Vol. II,

¹⁶³ Keith, A.B. (Ed.), *Selected Speeches and Documents on British Colonial Policy. 1763 – 1917*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p.233

a scenario for which Creswell would offer the creation of a local navy as a solution. To the Admiralty:

it is immaterial where the great battle is fought, but wherever it may take place the result will be felt throughout the world, because the victor will afterwards be in a position to spread his force with a view to capturing or destroying any detached forces of the enemy, and generally to gather the fruits of victory, in the shape of such outlying positions as the New Hebrides, Fiji, Singapore, Samoa, Cuba, Jamaica, Martinique, the Philippines, Malta or Aden, which may be in possession of the enemy, his shipping and commerce, or even to prosecute such overseas campaigns as those in the Peninsula or South Africa.¹⁶⁴

To Creswell 'our condition in such a contingency would be one of absolute helplessness'¹⁶⁵ and thus a local maritime defence with the progressive provision of modern warships suited to local conditions was now needed. In the Admiralty's view:

the immense importance of the principle of concentration and the facility with which ships and squadrons can be moved from one part of the world to another – it is more easy to move a fleet from Spithead to the Cape or Halifax than it is to move a large army, with its equipment, from Cape Town to Pretoria- points to the necessity of a single navy under one control, by which alone concentrated action between the several ports can be assured.

No mention was made as to the ability to perform the voyage from Spithead to Sydney! In conclusion the memorandum proclaimed this maxim: 'The strength and composition of the British Navy, or of any squadron, depends, therefore, upon the strength and composition of the hostile forces, which it is liable to meet.'¹⁶⁶

When it came to defence, Chamberlain was keen for the colonies - particularly the 'rich and powerful' – to consider an imperial federation, when it came to defence: 'I think it is inconsistent with their position – inconsistent with their dignity as nations – that they

¹⁶⁴ Keith, p.231

¹⁶⁵ CPP Report by WR Creswell, 1902. p.157

¹⁶⁶ Keith, p.234

should leave the mother country to bear the whole, or almost the whole, of the expense.’¹⁶⁷ Selborne had already ‘telegraphed’ his intentions at the conference in a letter to Lord Tennyson on 2 July 1902. ‘I shall endeavour to extract as much money from them as I can, which after all will bear a very small proportion of what they ought to pay.’ However, money was not at the core of his theme at the conference. Firstly he wanted it emphatically understood that in time of war there was one fleet and one command:

We should no longer be tied by that heretical stipulation about not moving the ships in time of war from Australian waters without the leave of the Government. There is no difficulty about giving them assurances in time of peace, but anything more strategically unjustifiable than not to leave the Admiralty free to send the ships in time of war to meet the enemy’s ships wherever they are to be found I cannot imagine.

Secondly, Selborne genuinely wanted Australians to be involved in the maritime activity of the Empire – but as part of one navy, a view Tennyson shared. Selborne wrote:

I want to attract Australians to the sea, to make them more of a maritime population; and therefore not only am I anxious to see a genuine branch of the Royal Naval Reserve established in Australia, but I want to see one or more ships of the Squadron permanently manned by Australians, and by Australians only, paid at local rates of pay.¹⁶⁸

Writing in *The Times*, Rear-Admiral Lord Charles Beresford declared that ‘a separate navy for Australia would be a mistake. One of the main features in the strength of the Navy and the Empire is a united Fleet ... For the proper defence of the Empire the Navy must be a whole, and under one single direction.’¹⁶⁹ Barton had been sufficiently

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Marsh, P., *Joseph Chamberlain Entrepreneur in Politics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994, p.532

¹⁶⁸ Selborne to Tennyson, 3 July 1902, *Tennyson Papers* NLA 479/5/53

¹⁶⁹ *The Times*, Saturday, 18 July 1902, issue 36823, p. 9; Col. B

‘softened up’ in Australia to renew in London the Naval Defence Agreement of 1887, along with New Zealand, by making payment to the British government to maintain an enlarged British squadron in Australia. Years later in retirement Sir Wilfred Laurier reflecting on the two Australian prime ministers (Barton and Deakin) he had known at colonial conferences found that ‘Barton was the ablest but lethargic.’¹⁷⁰

Barton returned to Australia on 16 October 1902¹⁷¹ and on the following evening addressed a public meeting at the Sydney Town Hall ‘to give an account of the overseas mission and to begin the process of selling the naval agreement to the Australian public. He recommended it as “a reasonable Imperialism”, avoiding “reckless engagements” in overseas quarrels, but combining unity of naval defence with a respect for Australian autonomy.’¹⁷² Barton told the Sydney audience, ‘We cannot leave ourselves without a share of the protection of the navy; and if we want that protection, can we leave ourselves meanly relying on others to give it to us and not bear a share of the cost ourselves? (Cheers.) We have duties to perform and restrictions to bind us.’¹⁷³

Barton was adhering to the Selborne position at the conference. Addressing a public meeting in Melbourne Town Hall on 28 November Barton stated that he had found the Conference ‘had been one of great pith and moment’. Barton told his audience that ‘The Commonwealth ... could not establish its own navy owing to its constitutional and financial obligations, and consequently the only course to follow was to continue the

¹⁷⁰ Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier*, p.342

¹⁷¹ Alfred Deakin was acting Prime Minister, as well as attorney-general, minister for external affairs, Government Leader of the House and acting party leader, while Barton was overseas for five months. He suffered his first breakdown from nervous exhaustion in September 1902. “Deakin thought he was only ‘exhausted in nerve power’ but he had in truth suffered a breakdown which was not, as he chose to believe, a momentary phenomenon.” Gaby, A., *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.146; further details Gaby, pp.145-146

¹⁷² Bolton, p.278

¹⁷³ *S MH*, 18 October 1902

present subsidy system or to pay nothing which would be poltroonery.’¹⁷⁴ Owing to its constitutional obligation, under Section 51, Australia could establish its own navy. The sad truth was that every time any Australian ministers attended an Imperial, Colonial or Defence Conference in the first decade of this new century they were beguiled by the pith and moment’ of the British government, the Admiralty and influential British imperialists.

Alfred Deakin, Attorney-General and the most senior minister in Barton’s cabinet, though unhappy with the Naval Agreement, dismissed the advocacy of the local naval professionals. Writing on 26 May 1903, disguised as the Special Correspondent for the *London Morning Post*,¹⁷⁵ the article appeared on 5 August, Deakin felt that the whole question of defence was unsatisfactory, “for the local experts we have do not command the ear of the public and exhibit little confidence in each other. The issues of high naval strategy or the modern requirements for effective action on a great scale are naturally beyond ‘the Man in the street’”¹⁷⁶ ‘*The local experts we have ... exhibit little confidence in each other*’: a baffling statement when one recalls that the 1899 conference of colonial navy commandants had presented a united position on the development of a local navy. Deakin appeared to ignore or dismiss Creswell’s 1901 report, which had been tabled in parliament in early 1902 and inferred that Creswell did not have much ‘traction’ with the public on naval defence. Would he not have read the reaction of the press at the time or did he choose to ignore the positive publicity?

¹⁷⁴ *The Times*, Saturday, Nov 29, 1902; p. 8; Issue 36938; Col. A

¹⁷⁵ ‘The Morning Post was London’s oldest daily paper, with a reputation for lively and combative political commentary from a broadly Tory perspective.’ Thompson, A., *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, 1880-1932*, Longman, London, 2000, p.65. Fabian Ware and Howell Gwynne, who were long-serving editors kept the secret of Deakin being the ‘Australian Special Correspondent’. Richard Jebb, a journalist with *The Post*, corresponded with Creswell.

¹⁷⁶ La Nauze, J.(Ed.) *Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post 1900 – 1910* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1968 p.117

Melbourne's *The Age* regarded Creswell's report as 'a wise policy' while the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the same day in a leader said Creswell's report was 'a scheme that certainly should not be pigeonholed and forgotten.' If Deakin was in any doubt about naval defence or ignorant of what the Barton government could do, then the leader in the *Adelaide Register*'s 13 March 1902 edition had made it plain and unambiguous 12 months previously. 'For the Commonwealth to request an outside body to perform any act of defence, which the people are able to do for themselves, is to enfeeble the national character and lower Australian prestige.' The *Register* was caustic:

To continue the paralysing cash subsidy, to hire ships and men to do work which we can perform more efficiently and economically by our own ships and men, to neglect the rich qualities of the first line of defence represented in our capital seamen – for the Federal Ministry to do these things would be for it to follow a stupid and unbusinesslike policy unacceptable to the people of Australia.¹⁷⁷

As to Deakin's dismissive assertions that the issues of high naval strategy or the modern requirements may be beyond the 'Man in the street', Creswell, fully aware of the potential of the advances in technology had, through his 1901 Report, newspaper articles and his own naval activities been attempting to inform the public of these advances. From February to April 1903, at Creswell's instigation, the Queensland Naval Forces conducted experiments with wireless telegraphy during the annual naval exercise of the QNF ships with Creswell captaining the *Gayundah* in company with the *Paluma*. Radio equipment was installed in a shed in the churchyard of St Mary's Kangaroo Point Brisbane with a 130 feet high mast alongside. Onboard the *Gayundah* in Moreton Bay was a 110 feet long bamboo foretopmast carrying the aerials. This put into practice what he had seen and heard during a lecture and demonstration on the new Marconi wireless telegraph at the Brisbane Technical College in 1902. The Creswell exercise produced

¹⁷⁷ *Adelaide Register*, 13 March, 1902 in Macandie, p.85

the first message between an Australia naval vessel at sea and a land station on 9 April 1903.

All this went unacknowledged by Deakin. More interest was taken in the visit to Australia in May and June 1903 of a squadron of the Imperial Japanese Navy, *The Argus* reporting that one of the warships, the *Hasidate*, was equipped with wireless telegraphy.¹⁷⁸ The squadron of 600 officers and men visited Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney to cement Japan's alliance relationship with British dominions in the Pacific. The squadron was met by huge crowds at each city visited and at Melbourne, where the *Hasidate* was opened for inspection, Prime Minister Barton and Defence Minister Forrest came aboard for a tour. The *Argus* would report that *Hasidate*'s gun could hurl an 800 pound projectile ten miles. Three months' later Barton in a letter to the General Officer Commanding the Military Forces, Major-General Sir Edward Hutton, he accepted that Japan, as Britain's ally, counter-balanced Russian imperialism in the Pacific on Britain's behalf, noting "in the present position of affairs Japan as a power is of even more interest to all who revolt from the idea of submitting to Russian arrogance."¹⁷⁹

In the debate on the new Naval Agreement in Parliament on 7 July 1903 Prime Minister Barton invoked patriotism and a loyalty to the Empire. Barton would not be looking to local naval expertise in considering a naval defence of Australia. It was an indirect rebuff to Creswell, who acted as a reference for a number of politicians opposed to the Agreement, Barton told the House 'I do not suppose that there is an expert here who

¹⁷⁸ Walker, D., *Australia and Japan in Peace and War* in O'Brien, P and Vaughan, B (Eds.) *Amongst Friends: Australia and New Zealand Voices from America*, University of Otago Press, 2005, Dunedin (NZ) Pp. 95-96

¹⁷⁹ Barton to Hutton, 30 September 1903, Hutton Papers, British Library, Cited in *Journal of the Australian Historical Society*, April 1987, Volume 72, Part 4, p.274

would pretend to offer an opinion of equal value to that of the Admiralty experts. We might possibly find some equal authority in the world, but it would have to be an expert opinion of a foreign power.’¹⁸⁰ It is to be wondered if Barton presumed that Britain or a foreign power would provide advice in Australia’s interests. British naval strategic concerns were not for an Australian navy. As *The Times* of London reported:

The Australian share in the Navy was most moderate, and was much cheaper than an Australian navy. He appreciated the spirit animating those who advocated an Australian navy, but the Government was unable to adopt such a proposal, as it was opposed to the principle of unity of control and was also prohibitive in cost. Unity of control was essential to the protection of trade routes and to the prevention of the transportation of hostile military forces in the event of an attack on outlying portions of the Empire. The agreement afforded scope for the training of Australian sailors, who would be useful in the case of the creation of an Australian navy. It was a necessary Act for the consolidation of the Empire, and consequently for Australia’s own protection.¹⁸¹

Barton’s call seemed peculiar for a ‘Father of Federation’ when he claimed “we must look at the great question of naval defence from the point of view of citizens of the Empire.” Indeed Australians, he said, fulfilling Ruskin’s challenge, “whatever their age may be ... are Englishmen, or Britons, of the Empire.”¹⁸² This was an Australian imperialist speaking: Maintain the British fleet in Australian ports as part of one Imperial naval defence policy. In Barton’s view, Australia could not afford to establish and maintain a navy.

In an ironic twist, Barton claimed that Creswell supported the Naval Agreement, being ‘one of the first, when he met me in Brisbane on my return from England, to

¹⁸⁰ CPD, Vol. XIV, 7 July 1903, p. 1799

¹⁸¹ *The Times*, Jul 10, 1903 p. 3.

¹⁸² CPD, Vol. XIV, 7 July 1903., Pp. 1797/ 1801.

congratulate me upon it.¹⁸³ When challenged in parliament about this, Barton was dismissive: Creswell had the right to challenge the veracity of what Barton said in parliament, but Barton did not think those in public service should participate in determination of government policy. Creswell swiftly telegraphed Barton advising that he must have been misunderstood: he did not endorse the Naval Agreement.¹⁸⁴ It was a curious incident: Did Barton need the endorsement of the leading naval professional? Or was he indicating that Creswell was accepting the government's policy? Why make any reference to Creswell at all, when Barton knew Creswell's public statements called for a local naval defence? Civil-naval relations had yet to be established, but the likelihood of a workable liaison between Creswell and Commonwealth governments did not bode well.

To some Federal politicians there was no dignity and no self-respect in being dependent on Britain for protection. Federation to them, implied name, identity, rights and equality as a nation amongst nations. The Member for Corio, RA Crouch claimed in the House of Representatives:

The Prime Minister said 'an Englishman in Australia has equal power with an Englishman in England, unfortunately he has not. The Australian is limited to local self-government; the Englishman controls the whole Empire; his voice and his hand are felt to the ends of the earth.

Crouch went on to explain why he would not vote for the Naval Subsidy Bill:

I am not an elector of the British Empire; I have nothing to say in its control, and shall have nothing to say in the control of the naval subsidy if this Parliament votes it. It is because of those considerations that I am against this proposal... it is only Australia that we have to legislate for. It is not the Empire. We have to do our duty for Australia.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ CPD, Vol. XIV, 14 July 1903, p.2042.

¹⁸⁴ CPD, Vol. XIV, 21 July 1903, p.2303.

¹⁸⁵ CPD, Vol. XIV, 7 July 1903, p.1803.

From the parliamentary record, Deputy Prime Minister Deakin was a notable absentee in the entire debate.

The Governor of Victoria, Sir George Clark had already anticipated that the Naval Agreement would be unacceptable amongst some parliamentarians. Clark, who once was and would again be Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, noted on the 25th April, 1903 that:

the whole spirit of the Agreement is absolutely opposed to the plan of local defence upon which Australia has hitherto spent much money with no valid return in the shape of efficient protection. The Admiralty has practically said to Australia: give up your local craft which are of no use, and join us in helping to maintain and to man sea-going and sea-keeping ships.¹⁸⁶

The argument was convincing: most of the vessels which had transferred to the Commonwealth from the colonial navies at Federation were obsolete or only suitable for harbour or coastal work. Cunneen noted that “to many, a straight out subsidy to the Royal Navy smacked of vassalage and guaranteed no local protection. For a time the passage of the new naval agreement through the Commonwealth remained in doubt.”¹⁸⁷

William Higgs, Labor Senator for Queensland, wanted to know why the Commonwealth paid £200,000 for Australia to be ‘simply a naval base for the British Fleet.’ For Higgs ‘our share of the responsibilities of defending the Empire is best met, in my judgement, by our defending ourselves and our own shores.’¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Memo on Naval Agreement, 25/4/1903, *Tennyson Papers* NLA MS1963/142)

¹⁸⁷ Cunneen, C., *Kings' Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Isaacs*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1983, p.45

¹⁸⁸ *CPD*, Vol. XIV, 3 July 1903, p.1723

He captured the essence of those who advocated a national navy when he told the Senate:

We do not want a navy, in the sense of wanting a fleet for aggression, a navy to patrol the seas, or to go to the North Pacific, or to the Indian Ocean, or the China Seas, but we want a Navy to defend our own shores and our own ports. We require our coastal and our harbour defences, and we want a navy manned by Australians and under Australian control.

He then placed on the parliamentary record the resolution carried at the Australian Labor Political Conference in Sydney in December 1902:

That this conference opposes the proposal for an increased subsidy to the Imperial Government for the maintenance of an Imperial squadron, and considers that any money available for Naval defence should be used in the formation of a navy that would be owned and controlled by the Commonwealth.¹⁸⁹

Whatever the stance of politicians regarding a local naval defence, the habits of empire would soften the resolve of sovereignty. Henry Bourne Higgins declared in the House that should Britain be attacked, he expected that Australia would ‘spend every man and every shilling’¹⁹⁰ to defend the Mother Country.

On 8 July 1903 the Labor caucus endorsed the party’s opposition to the naval subsidy¹⁹¹ and on 14 July Labor Party Leader Watson, told the House that “unfortunately it appears we have in power a government which is distinctly opposed to the idea of an Australian Navy.”¹⁹² Labor member Billy Hughes argued on 21 July that a local naval force was the first line of national defence to protect Australian shipping, while the Naval Agreement was like paying money for nothing. ‘It is the absolute and positive

¹⁸⁹ CPD, Vol. XIV, 3 July 1903, p.1723

¹⁹⁰ CPD, Vol. XIV, 9 July 1903, p.1999

¹⁹¹ Weller, P., *Caucus Minutes: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, Vol. I 1901-1917, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1975, p. 102

¹⁹² CPD, Vol. XIV, 14 July 1903, p. 2044

duty of each integral self governing part (of the Empire) to provide for its own defence ...'he told the House. 'It is the business of Australians to defend Australia, whether it costs much money or little.'¹⁹³ In this he was supported by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which offered that 'freedom and not fetters must be the guarantee of safety ... An Australian Navy is thus a natural demand of the situation, and it will still be an integral part of the Imperial navy.'¹⁹⁴ To George Reid, Leader of the Free Trade party, the idea of an Australian navy was 'utterly ridiculous in itself and that any attempt to carry it out would be fraught with failure.'¹⁹⁵ Watson, on behalf of the Labor Party moved unsuccessfully in the House on 22 July that the bill be postponed for six months but it passed and was given assent on 28 July 1903.

British journalist Richard Jebb noted that the Bill was barely ratified and that many who voted for it believed in the creation of an Australian navy. 'In voting, nevertheless, for the alternative of a meagre subsidy, they followed the perverse guidance of their respective leaders.' Jebb sensed that a naval defence policy for Australia could be adopted as many in parliament, particularly within the Labor Party, felt 'it is unworthy of the new Australian nation to depend upon the mother country to a greater extent than is imposed by financial exigencies'.¹⁹⁶ In his view this new policy would result in two distinct naval forces: a local squadron for coastal defence and an ocean-going squadron within the Imperial Navy for offensive action against organised attack. Australians would crew and train in the local squadron, which in time would replace the British squadron. To Jebb this was a practical solution and the prescription suggested by the Committee of Naval Officers in 1899 and the Creswell Report of 1901. Ultimately, in

¹⁹³ CPD, Vol. XIV, 21 July 1903, Pp 2313-21

¹⁹⁴ S MH, 24 July 1903

¹⁹⁵ CPD, Vol. XIV, 22 July 1903, p.2455

¹⁹⁶ Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1905 p.164

Jebb's view, 'it is the policy of alliance, opposing the policy of supremacy.'¹⁹⁷

The first Defence Act which was passed in October 1903 (and proclaimed on 1 March 1904) was largely an administrative measure. It provided for a Board of Advice for the defence minister, with membership nominated by the Governor-General. It also provided for an army of citizen soldiers for whom there would be no compulsory overseas military service in war time. The Act resulted in Creswell being appointed Naval Officer Commanding in February 1904.

By late 1903, the Naval Agreement seemed to postpone any consideration of a local navy until later in the decade. Australia's continued dependence on Britain epitomised its subordinate status as a self-governing colony. Britain had defined for itself the enormous responsibility of defending the Empire and guaranteeing permanent peace around the world. It was a responsibility which exposed its vulnerability to mastery of the seas. The rise of Germany as a significant seapower and its aggressive foreign policy would cause Britain to re-organise its navy, strengthen its fleets in Europe and deplete its overseas stations of capital ships. Over the next eight years Britain's naval strategy and foreign policy arrangements, and events in Europe and North Asia, would make Australians feel increasingly apprehensive, isolated, unprovided and unprepared. Britain's hold on the Pacific would grow weaker, in Australian eyes, with the ascendancy of a dubious ally. For the 'weary Titan' 'between 1895 and 1905 clear-cut naval supremacy slipped from Britain's grasp, and with it went the nation's unique role as the independent, detached arbiter of world affairs.'¹⁹⁸ Creswell noted that until 1909,

¹⁹⁷ Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1905 Pp. 66-67

¹⁹⁸ Friedberg, A., *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988, p.152

Britain ‘neither desired nor would tolerate a family of infant navies overseas and resolutely set its face against providing a nursery for brats.’ A local, autonomous navy could not be endured within imperial defence and foreign policy. Creswell recognized that for Britain ‘Colonial control would have spelt dual control, and dual control of the sea forces of the Empire was not to be thought of, for it seemed bound to lead straight to disaster. Fortunately this lion in our path was removed long before the outbreak of World War I, and the conflict between divided and undivided control reconciled.’¹⁹⁹ Creswell had an abiding sense of duty to Australia along with a vision of a naval defence, which would give not only protection but status and identity to the nation. Little did he know that this vision would be his life’s work.

¹⁹⁹ Thompson, P. p.200

Chapter III

1904-1906 Naval Defence Denied: ‘All unprovided and unprepared, the Outpost of the White!’

Over the next decade the personalities and the forces which produced the change from imperial naval protection to independent national naval defence would take centre stage. These forces were imperial as well as national and Creswell was required to engage both. British government policy expressed through a Colonial Conference, the Admiralty, the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) and the Commander-in-chief, Australia Station would all feature prominently. Locally, on the naval forces side, Creswell would continue to dominate; while on the political side, Deakin would be the significant personality, influencing the pace of naval development, though, at times, he would share the national arena with other political leaders and the emerging political force, the Labor Party.

Ultimately, the solution for a naval defence would be a political one and the circumstances in which this took place needs to be understood. Deakin assumed the prime ministership in September 1903 with the departure of Barton to the High Court. Deakin soon realised that he would need to cultivate the Labor Party and, in negotiating to stay in office, acknowledge the Labor platform including, a proposal with which he had some sympathy. When Labor, the Free Traders and the Protectionists were returned in equal numbers at general election after general election from 1903 to 1908, unstable governments resulted, though Deakin and Labor shared the honours on who should govern. This ‘alliance between Protectionists and the Labor Party enabled foundation legislation for the Commonwealth and lasted with one short interval until November

1908.²⁰⁰ Generally, governments lasted while parliament did not sit (thus avoiding exposure to no-confidence votes, as occurred with Deakin from December 1903 to April 1904 and later the Fisher government from December 1908 to May 1909). The brief months of parliamentary sittings were used by the opposition, particularly the influential and accomplished political alliance maker and breaker, Deakin, to extend and withdraw support.

Deakin was a skilled orator who won the confidence of his fellow parliamentarians – at least prior to 1909 – through ‘his curious power of attracting affection, his response, perceptive and personal, to other men as individuals, so that they saw him,’ according to his great admirer, La Nauze, as ‘a well-wisher and a friend to whom one might turn in need.’²⁰¹ Deakin appeared to emulate what Margaret MacMillan perceived in a Deakin contemporary President Woodrow Wilson, who ‘wanted power and he wanted to do great works. What brought the two sides together was his ability, self-deception perhaps, to frame his decisions so that they became not merely, but morally right.’²⁰² With his London *Morning Post* pieces, Deakin, disguised as the ‘Special Correspondent’, attempted to enhance his public image as a reasonable man: in one of his articles, which appeared on 29 December 1905, he referred to his ‘excessively affable and invariably conciliatory demeanour.’²⁰³ He was a man also of a particular, peculiar religious belief, identifying himself as an instrument of destiny. Words to a great extent allowed him to rationalise things, to feel sure about what he was doing – and he did write prodigiously. The *Morning Post* provided a forum where he would not

²⁰⁰ Hirst, p 285

²⁰¹ La Nauze, J.A., *Alfred Deakin*, p. 639 quoting Walter Murdoch, *Alfred Deakin – A Sketch* (1923)

²⁰² MacMillan, M. *Peacemakers*, John Murray, London, 2003, p. 14

²⁰³ La Nauze, J.(Ed.) *Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post 1900 – 1910* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1968, p. 158

be contradicted:²⁰⁴ disguised, he could lay out the rationale for his policies and actions without being compromised by Labor, by Free Traders or heckled by both. Nor would he be expected to deliver. Faith and a sense of destiny gave Deakin a serenity in public life that he publicised as ‘affability’ in the *Morning Post* and most parliamentarians tended to acknowledge that. He has been credited with the establishment of the great civil infrastructures of the Commonwealth to assert national protection, rights and responsibilities. His parliamentary record on national defence in these initial years of the Commonwealth was slight, when strong pro-navy leadership was needed.

Speaking during the elections of November 1903, Labor Leader Chris Watson said that the Party opposed the Naval Agreement as there was no guarantee that the subsidy paid to Britain would be spent on the naval defence of Australia. ‘The time had arisen when a purely Australian navy should be established for Australian defence, and if returned to the House he and his party would assist in the enactment of such a measure.’ Watson was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in terms evocative of Creswell’s own advocacy of an Australian navy when he proclaimed that:

We must undertake some responsibility for the defence of the Empire in general. No greater disaster could occur in this country than a sudden attack while their fleet was absent, say in China waters, and steps should therefore be taken to ensure the Australian Navy being permanently and solely available for the protection of Australian shores and commerce.²⁰⁵

Deakin, writing as the Special Australian Correspondent duly acknowledged in the London *Morning Post* on 22 December 1903 that Watson ‘declares for an Australian Navy and for a liberal expenditure on arms and ammunition as affording the best means

²⁰⁴ Deakin’s articles for the *Morning Post* were in the third person.

²⁰⁵ *SMH*, 13 November 1903

of local defence.’²⁰⁶ Deakin noted that over the previous three years many of Labor’s parliamentary successes were due to Watson’s ‘tact and judgment’. By his ‘absolute independence’ Watson promised neither Deakin nor Reid allegiance, adhering to his party’s platform and skilfully exploited Labor’s strategic position to extract support for Labor achieving its policies, including a navy. At the second general election in December 1903 the Protectionist lost seats to Labor, possibly reflecting as Deakin implied, the clarity and independence of the Labor Party’s platform. The Protectionists led by Deakin became more Victorian in representation, more liberal in policy stance and more nationalist (as opposed to imperialist) in outlook.

Deakin first referred to the unstable situation in Parliament in February 1904, when he spoke at an Australian Natives’ Association dinner, likening parliament to a game of cricket with the size of the membership of the parliamentary political parties resembling, as Deakin phrased it, ‘three elevens’ (three cricket teams). Their innings (in government) would be short with one team depending on another in order to be in office or be ‘bowled out’. Support in return for concessions was the tactical approach adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party from its first caucus meeting in May 1901.²⁰⁷ By March 1904, Deakin had to acknowledge in the *Morning Post*, that the ‘the real source of the Labor triumphs lies deeper still [than its continuous activity] in the fact that its platform is the Labor creed.’ Indeed, ‘Labor triumphs because it knows its own mind, knows what it wants, and will make sacrifices to get it.’²⁰⁸

In April 1904, Deakin resigned, dissatisfied with Opposition amendments to his conciliation and arbitration bill, and asked the Governor-General to call for the Labor

²⁰⁶ La Nauze, J.(Ed.) *Federated Australia*, p. 128

²⁰⁷ Weller, P. (Ed.), p.102

²⁰⁸ La Nauze, J.(Ed.) *Federated Australia*, Pp.136/138.

Opposition Leader, Watson, to form a government. Deakin was not pleased at being rebuffed by Labor and the Free Traders, a snub to which he alluded in the *Morning Post*.²⁰⁹ He wanted Labor installed so it would appreciate the realities of government; his *Morning Post* article was sensationalist: promoting a Labor ministry as ominous and alarming and complaining about the electors 'dereliction of duty' at the last general election in not voting for non-Labor candidates.

The Governor-General commissioned Watson on 23 April 1904 to form the first Federal Labor ministry and, consequently, the world's first national, social democratic government. Labor wanted to implement its naval policy and Prime Minister Watson was confident in the local naval officers to deliver: 'three very competent officers, namely Captain Creswell, Captain Tickell and Captain Colquhoun ... it was thought, would have some knowledge of local conditions,' The new Defence Minister, Senator Anderson Dawson, added that 'Captain Creswell is our naval expert, and if we have a naval expert, we must, to a large extent, follow his advice.'²¹⁰ No time was wasted in initiating contact with the Admiralty to purchase three torpedo boat destroyers.²¹¹ Regrettably Defence Minister Dawson's time in the portfolio was dominated by arguments with Sir Edward Hutton, the General Officer Commanding the Military Forces. Relations worsened to the extent that Dawson proposed abolishing Hutton's position replacing him with a Military Board and an Inspector General for training and discipline. Dawson also proposed a Naval Board with a Director of Naval Forces, and a Council of Defence chaired by the Prime Minister with the Minister of Defence,

²⁰⁹ La Nauze, J.(Ed.) *Federated Australia*,, Pp.139-142

²¹⁰ CPD, Vol. 20 (12 July 1904) Pp.3128b/3151b.

²¹¹ McMullin, R., *So Monstrous a Travesty: Chris Watson and the World's First National Labour Government*. Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2004, p.93

Treasurer and the military and naval chiefs as members. Unfortunately political events outran Labor's legislative agenda.

Despite the best of intentions and initial support from Deakin's Protectionists, the minority Labor government was powerless and did not remain long in office. In a House where it had only twenty-four members Labor faced twice this number in the combined opposition of Protectionists and Free Traders. On 12 August 1904, when Labor introduced its own conciliation and arbitration Bill giving preference to unionists, successful Opposition amendments effectively acted as a vote of no confidence. A Free Trade-Protectionist government under George Reid took office. Though Deakin had conspired with Reid for Labor's downfall, he declined a cabinet post.

It was during 1904 that Deakin became Victorian president of the Imperial Federation League. The League dreaded 'the formation of an Australian navy, with the implications of that for possible unauthorised conflict with foreign powers and the encouragement of independence and the break-up of the empire.'²¹² The self described 'imperial federationist', a nomenclature Deakin would still claim in 1912, entered a League which was vague in its objectives and had already folded in Britain in 1893. The League's sentiment for 'unity of control' within one Imperial navy would continue for another fifty years. For Deakin, the bonds of 'Home' were strong and, as Dr James Curran has said, 'Alfred Deakin, in his 1905 Imperial Federation address, articulated the kindred nature of the relationship between Australians and Britons and the mystic ties of Empire: "The same ties of blood, sympathy, and tradition which make us one Commonwealth here make the British of to-day one people everywhere."' Whilst Deakin

²¹² Trainor, Pp.31-32

used the word 'nation' seven times in this address, only once did it refer to Australia. He mostly implied a British 'nation' – which included Australians.²¹³ For the supporters of an Australian navy, the British answer was always going to be negative until the Admiralty changed its opinion – or had it changed for them.

It would be another four years of frustration for the Australian navalists until a reforming First Sea Lord found he could meet Britain's interests by meeting Australia's. John Arbuthnot Fisher dominated the naval history of the first decade of the twentieth century influencing the attitudes and developments of British and other naval powers (especially Germany) and forestalled the development of an Australian navy to a time more of his choosing. Fisher's appointment on 21 October 1904 as the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty heralded his second fundamental reform to the British Navy. Fisher advised the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, that this reform, which he did not want altered, was devoid of sentiment, and while pleasing the British taxpayer would not please those who chose to resist change in the navy. On 6 December Selborne informed the cabinet that the modern navy had been changed, not only by materiel, but also by strategic position around the world because of the growth of foreign navies (from the United States in the west to Japan in the East, as well as Russia, Italy, France, Austria-Hungary and Germany). In response, there was a need for world-wide re-organisation of the British Navy. Instead of the scattering amongst numerous stations, Fisher's reforms called for the concentration of fleets with older ships scrapped, some overseas naval stations closed and in place specific fleets for five strategic keys of the world: Singapore, the Cape of Good Hope, Alexandria, the Straits

²¹³ Curran, J., *A crisis of national meaning: Prime ministers and the dilemma of Australian nationalism*, John Curtin Ministerial Library Visiting Scholar Public Lecture, 19 April 2004, Curtin University of Technology, Perth. Cited at <http://john.curtin.edu.au/events/speeches/curran.html>.

of Gibraltar and the Straits of Dover. Fisher proposed to achieve this by initially reducing the Mediterranean Fleet from twelve to eight battleships, while correspondingly increasing the Home Fleet from eight to twelve. In the second stage of Fisher's plan the Home Fleet became the Channel Fleet (with new warships from shipbuilding yards), the Channel Fleet became the Atlantic Fleet, while the Reserve Fleet would consist of ships whose nucleus crews would be two-fifths the regular complement – specialists and officers, who would be onboard these vessels in three home ports – and come from the scrapped obsolete vessels. This was a scheme that would take time to deploy and though there was a clear message for Germany – increasing the pace of a naval arms race – for the world too, there was a message: the *Trafalgar Century* was coming to a close. The first of the British maritime legions were being called home.

The dynamics of Britain's changing strategic naval intentions and Fisher's reforms could not be adequately addressed by the Commonwealth's Naval Officer Commanding from his office in Brisbane. Creswell could not provide immediate expert opinion, counsel and advice to the Commonwealth Government and the Defence Department in Melbourne or have 'face-to-face' interaction with land forces chiefs: being in Brisbane provided a certain 'tyranny of distance'. Yet even the local internal transfer of Creswell from Brisbane to the seat of federal government in Melbourne underscored the impotency of defence arrangements in Australia. The Prime Minister, George Reid, on behalf of the Minister of Defence, wrote to the Governor-General on 15 September 1904, requesting that the Governor-General 'inform the Commander-in-Chief on the Australian Station that it has been necessary to arrange for the transfer of Captain

Creswell from Queensland to Victoria as Naval Commandant.²¹⁴ Creswell re-located from Brisbane to Melbourne, effective from 20 September and George Macandie, his clerk in the Queensland Naval Forces Office, transferred with him. It was to be an association that lasted until Creswell's retirement, while Macandie would serve on until May 1946 as Secretary of the Naval Board (1914 to 1946) and as Secretary of the Navy Department (1919 to 1921). Hyslop referred to Macandie as 'an enabler'²¹⁵, while Macandie, after fifty years of service 'witnessing and sharing in the development of the Royal Australian Navy', acknowledged 'the outstanding part played'²¹⁶ by Creswell.

It did not take long for the Naval Officer Commanding to signal his presence in the (temporary) national capital. In the Senate on Wednesday 19 October 1904, Labor Senator Higgs asked the Free Trade-Protectionist Attorney General, Senator Sir Josiah Symon a series of questions criticising Creswell: 'Was Captain Creswell correctly reported in the Melbourne *Argus* of the 6th October,' commenting on Russian Warships off Thursday Island? 'What authority has Captain Creswell for suggesting that it is Russia's general policy to interfere with British trade?' 'Will the Minister of Defence draw his attention to the order concerning neutrality?'²¹⁷ (The British Government requested that the Australian Government should be neutral with regard to the Russo-Japanese war.) Symon could not believe Senator Higgs was serious and would not answer his questions. Higgs pressed on: "Does not the Attorney General consider that the action of the Commandant of the Naval Forces of the Commonwealth, in expressing the opinion that the presence of Russian vessels may be part of the general Russian

²¹⁴ Reid to Governor General, 15 September 1904, Governor General's Office – Correspondence, National Archives of Australia, A6662/354,

²¹⁵ Hyslop, R., Macandie, George Lionel (1877-1968) in Gilbert, G. (Ed.), *Australian Naval Personalities: Lives from the Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No. 17, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2006, p.129

²¹⁶ Macandie, p.8

²¹⁷ CPD, Vol. XXII, 19 October 1904, p. 5704

policy of interference with British trade, is a contravention of the neutrality which it has been laid down should be adopted by Australia in the present trouble between Russia and Japan.” The Attorney-General did “not think that an expression of opinion of the kind referred to is any violation of neutrality.”²¹⁸ After all Lieutenant-Commander William Jarvie Colquhoun of the CNF was given leave to be *The Times* Special Naval Correspondent in Tokyo to report on the Russo Japanese War.

In December 1904 the Reid-McLean Government passed a Defence Act, reflecting most of Labor’s proposals of earlier that year, implementing a system of Administrative Boards for the defence forces. These were three-member Boards and, in the case of the Navy, comprised the Minister of Defence as President, the Director of Naval Forces and Mr JA Thompson as the Finance Member. For the future Rear-Admiral Henry James Feakes, CBE, RAN, who entered the Commonwealth Naval Force as a sub-lieutenant in 1906, ‘The personal gifts required in the new Australian naval director demanded, in addition to those usual in naval officers, a winning way in handling and converting not only an ill-informed public, but also difficult and often prejudiced political masters. *Creswell was the obvious choice.*’²¹⁹

To co-ordinate the Army and Navy Boards there was a Council of Defence, a move intended to ensure civilian control over the defence forces and civilian responsibility for defence policy. The professional service officers would now have a consultative role only. The membership of the Council of Defence consisted of the president, James Whiteside McCay, Minister for Defence and Sir George Turner, Federal Treasurer, as

²¹⁸ CPD, Vol. XXII, 19 October 1904, p. 5705

²¹⁹ Feakes, , H. J., *White Ensign, Southern Cross: A Story of the King’s Ships of Australia’s Navy*. A Ure Smith Publication, Sydney, 1951, p. 102

the civilian members and Major-General Finn, Inspector General of the Commonwealth Military Forces, Captain W.R. Creswell, Director of Naval Forces, and Colonel W.T. Bridges, Chief of Intelligence, as the defence services appointees. Samuel Pethebridge, the Chief Clerk of the Defence Department, served as secretary (as he also did for the Army Board).

The Council met for the first time on 12 May 1905 with McCay, a militia lieutenant-colonel from Victoria, circulating a minute giving priority to land defence over maritime defence, 'in view of the fact that the Imperial Navy, under even the most unfavourable circumstances, is likely to give us more protection than we can provide for ourselves on the water for many years to come, ... Naval developments should await the completion of land protection. In McCay's opinion there was no justification in creating a fleet for maritime defence: Australia, though an integral part of the Empire, was remote from naval powers of the world, had a small widely scattered population and what revenue it had was limited for land defence purposes. In this his military confreres on the Defence Council agreed.

Creswell drew on British Imperial policy, the writings of Sir George Clarke and Captain Alfred Mahan (July 1902 National Review article), as well as McCay's own submission in laying before the Council of Defence meeting of 12 May a memorandum that 'the most certain deterrent to any [invading] Land operation is the existence of a defending Sea Force adequate to its work.'²²⁰ Creswell was not advocating an independent navy here. He accepted 'Australia as an integral portion of the sea power of the Empire. Sea

²²⁰ Macandie, Pp. 118/121.

war differs from land war. ... The sea is *one* campaigning field, and every portion of the forces on one side must operate to carry out one scheme and be under one control.’²²¹

In his biography of William Bridges, Chris Coulthard-Clark reported that at the May meeting ‘Bridges had remained silent except for occasional snipes at Creswell’s remarks’ and posing four questions to Creswell:

(1) how much was to be transferred from the military vote to finance his scheme; (2) was an Australian Navy to supplement the Royal navy, or did it have some other purpose; (3) who was to command, the British Naval Commander-in-Chief or the Australian government; and (4) what was to be the principle of its deployment in war, dispersion or concentration to defend certain points?’²²²

Creswell was not to disappoint Bridges in his written response on 1 July: ‘The money expended on the Field Force’, he replied audaciously, ‘should be on a Naval Force and, assuming this to be £500,000, I would transfer that sum to the Naval vote.’²²³ To Bridges second question, Creswell was equally direct: the Australian Naval Force existed for the defence of Australia and, referring to Japan’s relationship within the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Creswell said just as Japan would supplement the Royal Navy in war, so would Australia. However, in time of war the Australian Navy, with the approval of the Australian government, would be under the command of the British Commander-in-Chief. In Australian waters, the Australian Naval Force would be tasked according to the strength and movement of the enemy with regard to the Australian warships’ capability and access to coal supplies. Coulthard-Clark called Creswell’s 1 July response to Bridges ‘Creswell’s confused statements’.²²⁴ Bridges and his

²²¹ Macandie, p. 121

²²² Coulthard-Clark, C., *A Heritage of Spirit: A biography of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges, K.C.B., C.M.G.*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979, p.50

²²³ Macandie, p.128

²²⁴ Coulthard-Clark, *A Heritage of Spirit*. p.50

biographer appeared ignorant or unappreciative of the clarity of Creswell's responses reiterating the key messages from his 1901 Report, published articles and his public comments promoting an Australian naval defence.

The contempt had not abated two years later, when Creswell challenged in his annual report to parliament the split responsibility with the army of customs inspection of visiting vessels. To consolidate local naval responsibilities, Creswell argued that the Commonwealth Naval Forces assume complete management and control of the examination service. Bridges was livid accusing Creswell of being 'opposed to the public interest', subversive of discipline' and inaccurate and misleading in the Report.²²⁵ In June 1908, then Defence Minister Ewing found in favour of Creswell and, following a delay by the United States' Fleet visit, the CNF took up responsibility for the Examination Service in mid-September 1908.

Bridges was as fierce a champion of Australian land forces as Creswell was in his advocacy for a naval defence. Bridges utterly opposed the creation of a navy until the land defence of Australia was complete. In retrospect, Bridges' opposition was ironic: nine years later the Royal Australian Navy would initiate the operational and logistical management of the sea transport of Australia army contingents to the Great War. Creswell's rebuttal of his opponent's contentious questions focussed on a *defensive* force: a sea force that was an integral portion of the Royal Navy. It could be argued that for Bridges, the defence of the nation started at the Australian shoreline, for Creswell at the enemy's (shoreline).

²²⁵ In Coulthard-Clarke: details the 'equally vitriolic' exchanges between the two service officers Pp. 66-68

Treasurer Sir George Turner, a member of the Defence Council, was not convinced of the McCay-Bridge position. In summary he wanted to know what type and number of naval capability should be provided and what would it cost. On 7 June 1905 Creswell responded on what would be the size and cost of a Creswell-proposed Australian navy. It would be a 32 vessel force consisting of 3 cruiser-destroyers, 16 torpedo destroyers, five 1st Class torpedo boats and eight 2nd Class torpedo boats with a nucleus complement of 624 crew in peace time and a complement 1720 in war. It was more than the acquisition of vessels that Creswell was seeking; what he was proposing was a naval defence of Australia replete with self-sufficiency in the construction and repair of warships. Vessels would be built in Australia with the advantages of 'enhanced self-dependence, saving in navigation expenses of voyage from England, economy of local expenditure by employment of local labour.'²²⁶ It came to nothing.

To the Commander-in-Chief of the Australia Station, Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Fanshawe, local navy schemes were without merit: there was enough of a financial burden in providing the protection of the British Navy. He claimed in *The Argus* that:

... if Australians and New Zealanders could thoroughly appreciate the principles of a sound naval policy they would realise that their existence as free and independent nations depended upon the navy alone, and would not be content to go on allowing their kinsfolk in the old country to bear almost the entire cost of their protection.²²⁷

Fanshawe was unrelenting in his opposition, asserting in June that the British navy would have to lose 'the mastery of the Pacific' for Australia to be invaded. It was

²²⁶ Macandie, Pp. 127-128/124

²²⁷ *The Argus*, Wednesday 1 March 1905, State Library of Victoria: *The Argus*, 158, 02 Jan 1905 – 31 March 1905

beyond Australia's capacity to defend itself, Fanshawe emphasized: 'the cost of maintaining such a flotilla in Australian ports would be prohibitive'. It was asserted by Fanshawe and successive Commanders-in-Chief and local imperialists opposed to an Australian navy, which proclaimed that "Australia and New Zealand's sole defence for many years rests upon the capacity of the Royal Navy to maintain command of the Eastern seas." Creswell tried to bring some sense to Fanshawe's scenario: if a large enemy force had been despatched across thousands of miles to invade Australia, then not only Imperial seapower in the Pacific would have already been annihilated, it would have presumably meant 'the defeat and collapse of sea supremacy and the Empire.'²²⁸ Creswell conjectured that the defeat of such a seapower as Britain could possibly mean a weakened enemy approaching Australian shores, where – if his scheme was implemented – a 32 vessel Australia navy waited to engage it.

Britain's course of action, devised by First Sea Lord Fisher, was to deplete its overseas fleets. Vessels of fighting value were withdrawn from overseas stations to Home and Mediterranean stations from 1905 onwards with Japan supplementing some of the protection for Britain's Far East and Pacific colonies to balance the presence of the sizeable German East Asia Squadron. Melbourne's *Argus*²²⁹ reported that on 2 June, a few days after the battle of Tsushima, the battleships HMS *Ocean* and HMS *Centurion* on the China station were ordered 'home' by the Admiralty without waiting for the arrival of their replacements, HMS *Goliath* and HMS *Canopus*. Britain was confident Russia would no longer be a threat in the East and confident, particularly as a result of its recent action, that Japan would be a capable ally to check localised German naval threats. British naval capability was also downgraded on the Australia Station: HMS

²²⁸ Macandie, Pp.131/133.

²²⁹ *The Argus*, Monday 5 June 1905

Euryalus, a modern armoured cruiser was replaced by the older, almost obsolete P Class HMS *Powerful* recently brought out of reserve to be the flagship on the Australia Station. *Powerful* was inefficient and ‘outdated as a fighting unit.’²³⁰ British re-deployment provided a clear message for Australia: it was being ‘abandoned’ and over the next three years Deakin and Andrew Fisher would seek answers, while Creswell continued to advocate local measures for naval defence. Britain would eventually come to realise (or concede) in 1909 that dominion participation in a ‘One Fleet’ would be beneficial for war with an aggressor; but even then, for Britain, it was about adding to the strength to her own ‘legions’ rather than protecting the Pacific.

Creswell was the one constant authority on naval matters throughout the ever changing Australian political landscape. His schemes for acquiring a naval defence, reports and sundry written advice to governments reveal a well developed understanding of strategy, as well as knowledge and a comprehension of regional strengths and weaknesses, the capacities of foreign fleets and the latest thinking of naval theorists. The rotation of governments and, consequently, defence ministers, resulted in the constant necessity of maintaining a profile for naval affairs in public and candid, often repeated, advice to his political masters. Thus, it would not be unreasonable for the Director of Commonwealth Naval Forces to be asked by newspapers for his views of the naval battle that had been fought between Russia and Japan in the Straits of Tsushima during 27-28 May 1905. The Australian press had been reporting the Russo-Japanese war, which broke out in 1904: land engagements in China and the progress of the Russian Baltic Fleet of eleven battleships, eight cruisers and nine destroyers steaming over 18,000 miles to East Asia to link up with Russia’s Third Pacific

²³⁰ Feakes, p.110

Squadron to engage the enemy, only to be sunk/destroyed/defeated. It was a great opportunity for Creswell to promote his naval doctrine and preview the value of his scheme outlined to Treasurer Turner on 7 June and to Defence Minister Playford in October.



Captain Creswell observing the Commonwealth Naval Forces manoeuvres, Easter 1905 aboard the torpedo boat *Countess of Hopetoun* (Royal Australian Navy)

At the time of the Battle of Tsushima, Creswell was observing naval exercises aboard the *Protector*. By 31 May he was able to provide his views to Melbourne's *The Argus* and *The Age* newspapers, 'based on the rough outline ... in the cabled reports',²³¹ though 'he was restricted in his comments, however, by the limitations of his official position.' To *The Age* Creswell declared that the battle was unparalleled since the Battle of the Nile with the Russians displaying '... the poorest tactical ability and limited manoeuvring power ...'²³² The great advantage from the beginning, Creswell told *The Argus*, was that while the Russians 'crawled out from home, encountering every sort of obstacle ... no coaling facilities and with distracting international troubles', the

²³¹ *The Argus*, Thursday, 1 June 1905, p.5

²³² *The Age*, Thursday, 1 June 1905, p.5

Japanese were getting their ships and guns fit for battle. 'Their closeness to their base allowed them to bring into play all their torpedo craft.'²³³ Creswell marvelled how Admiral Heihachiro Togo, the Japanese commander, 'played a splendid waiting game'.

The triumph of torpedo boats and destroyers in this sea battle provided good support for Creswell in arguing for his particular naval scheme. More than that, it was the 'wonderful object lesson', Creswell declared, of 'the well-established law that sea power is the determining factor in contests between nations – particularly so with an island country.' To a political as well as a public audience, Creswell could not be clearer: a local naval defence was required. Creswell had little sympathy for the Russian fleet 'manned, not by seamen, but by the annual crop of conscripts ... [for] the battle has been settled by the question as to who is in the ships...' Creswell never doubted that Japan would defeat Russia: 'We shall hear no more of Russian scares in Australia for many years.' There were 'some lessons for Australia ... to be drawn from the war',²³⁴ however these were matters of policy.

If these were separate newspaper interviews, his remarks to both were similar – except for one reference. *The Argus* report concluded with Creswell reportedly saying:

The fact of the matter is that the Russian Government is seething with corruption, and the very first place where this would be felt is on a warship ... the fight has gone to the trained and efficient man under honest administration and intelligent handling.²³⁵

Russian national honour was offended by these remarks of Creswell according to the Russian Consul-General, N. Oustinoff, who wrote to the Governor-General, Lord

²³³ *The Argus*, Thursday, 1 June 1905

²³⁴ *The Age*, Thursday, 1 June 1905

²³⁵ *The Argus*, Thursday, 1 June 1905

Northcote on 8 June ‘compelled to protest strongly to Your Excellency against the unqualified liberty of language which the Commander of the Naval Forces has allowed himself to use with respect to the Imperial Russian Government.’²³⁶ What followed was instructive for those who thought Australia a sovereign nation and for Creswell to practice circumspection. Lord Northcote forwarded the Consul-General’s protest to the Prime Minister, George Reid. On 30 June, Reid replied to the Governor-General inviting Lord Northcote to provide the Consul-General with copies of letters written by Creswell and the editor of the *Argus*, S. Cunningham, which would satisfactorily explain that not only was no offence intended, but Creswell had not made the remarks. This did not allay the anger of the Consul-General who wanted an immediate apology from the government.

Finally, on 13 July, the Governor-General’s private secretary informed the Russian Consul-General that ‘the regulations of His Majesty’s Government do not permit him to receive, in his official capacity from Foreign Consular officers, complaints of the nature of that contained in your letter to His Excellency of the 8th of June last.’ The episode highlighted the new Commonwealth’s limited status as a nation: Australia was a subservient, dependent, self-governing member of the British Empire, incapable of making decisions on foreign relations. The Consul-General thought the Governor-General was head of state, when, in fact, the Governor-General was an agent of His Britannic Majesty’s government and a representative of the British monarch. As *The Argus* of 8 February 1904 noted the Governor-General was nothing more than ‘the head of a diplomatic mission.’²³⁷

²³⁶ *Governor-General’s Office: Complaint from the Russian Consul General re Creswell and Russo-Japanese War*, National Archives of Australia, Series No. A6662 MS496, accessed 20/06/06

²³⁷ Cunneen, p. 50

This may have been ‘a near run thing’ for Creswell. In future he would need to be more circumspect regarding his public comments: in correspondence with his political and journalist contacts, he would encourage use of his comments without acknowledgement. Creswell would nonetheless continue his campaign for an Australian naval defence. He would still use influential men such as Jebb and Fabian Ware - but the reprimand must have been such that he could not be exposed as the promoter, underlining the need for nondisclosure. In a letter to Ware in 1906, Creswell remarked ‘if there is anything in this screed of use pray use it but in no way must my name appear or be suggested, this of course you will at once understand’²³⁸ Two years later in a letter to Jebb continuing his advocacy for a local naval force, Creswell was still cautioning “If anything I have written is worth publishing, use it, but of course not over my name. Of course I am debarred from writing to the press.”²³⁹

At a political level, Deakin maintained his own strategy on achieving a local naval capability. In an article in the *Herald* of 12 June 1905, Deakin fielded a number of what seemed to be pre-arranged questions to which he gave prepared answers about the defence of Australia. Deakin, a month before his return to government, bemoaned the inadequacies of the local naval force and the small amount of naval defence spending compared with military defence. Nations – particularly the United States, Germany and Japan – had emerged as new sea powers, while Australia, lulled by the *Trafalgar Century*, had, according to Deakin ‘a feebleness of our obligations’. Deakin appeared to convey a sense of urgency that there was the threat from nations, which had naval stations within striking distance of Australia. His interview was intended for two

²³⁸ Creswell to Ware, Melbourne, 26 September 1906, Jebb Papers, NLA, MS 813/1/9

²³⁹ Creswell to Jebb, Melbourne 31 July 1907, Jebb Papers, NLA, MS 813/1/37-41

audiences: the public and the Labor Party. Deakin would need Labor's support to become Prime Minister again. He would need to work his affability and feign an alignment with the Labor parliamentary party. Deakin saw the need for a navy when 'we can afford it,' at the appropriate juncture; in the fullness of time. It was a question of finance, it was a question of the naval agreement 'but as this agreement is not open for reconsideration until 1911,' Deakin said in the *Herald* interview, 'and does not terminate until 1913, it is hardly advisable to discuss it further at this stage.'²⁴⁰ It was an indication that his interview may have been aimed at a third audience: British imperialists. Going against 'Home' appeared just too difficult.

Deakin became prime minister again on 4 July 1905 and by 22 August, Creswell was briefing Deakin that 'the present local vessels are either hopelessly obsolete or rapidly becoming so. To train in a modern ship for service in an obsolete one cannot be recommended.' In his two page statement, Creswell advised Deakin that there was a solution to Australia's naval inadequacy – a unique opportunity - and was incensed that the Admiralty has not suggested it: Australia could take up some of the warships that Britain was casting aside. Creswell was astounded:

that an offer of these ships was not made to Australia is the strongest prima facie evidence that Imperial policy is directly opposed to any Australian naval development. No other interpretation is possible to the preference of breaking up good ships or selling them for a few pounds. Such being the case, it was plainly useless to put forward any request.²⁴¹

Even more annoying, the First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher, was adopting for the Reserve Fleet 'the "nucleus crew" principle of maintenance proposed by me in my Report to

²⁴⁰ CPP, Vol.2 – General – 1905, p.316

²⁴¹ Remarks by Director of Naval Forces, Papers of Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/15/4017-18

Parliament.’ Creswell’s solution was for Australia to have ten to twelve of these ships as a Reserve squadron for Imperial service ‘half in commission (by Australia) with nucleus crews, half ready for commission (by Royal Navy) if required’ with the subsidy being applied to the maintenance of the squadron. It was to no avail. Deakin scrawled across the remarks by the Director of the Naval Forces, “I would suggest the following answer: The matter is being enquired into by the Minister.”²⁴²

Ignoring Creswell’s submission, Deakin proposed his own version of naval defence when he petitioned the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, on 28 August in a long letter (a *bête noir* for Elgin who would punish such writers with delayed responses), that ‘what is really required is that any defences, if they are to be appreciated as Australian, must be distinctively of that character ... No Commonwealth patriotism is aroused while we merely supply funds that disappear in the general expenditure of the Admiralty.’ Deakin proposed substituting the £200,000 paid annually under the Naval Agreement with ‘a rapid and regular service of first class steamers’ between Australia and England engaged in a mail service in peace and as armed merchant vessels in war. Lord Elgin responded dismissively ten months later on 7 June 1906 that ‘the suggestion ... does not commend itself to Admiralty’. The Admiralty felt that ‘it was not only of extremely limited efficacy, but costly in its operation.’²⁴³

Politically, there was little direction and less vision for local naval defence. The Defence Minister was president and chairman of the Navy Board but ‘from 1905 to 1910 there was an average of fourteen meetings a year ... the minister attended less than

²⁴² *Remarks by Director of Naval Forces*, Papers of Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/15/4017-18

²⁴³ *CPP*, 10 October 1906, p.3, Papers of Alfred Deakin, NLA, 1540/15/4062

half of the meetings.²⁴⁴ Bowed but not broken, Creswell wrote in his 1905 annual report to parliament that, 'there has been no scheme or design of an Australian policy decided upon and the naval Forces remain today in a condition of arrested reduction and uncertainty.'²⁴⁵ Hayne noted, in considering the impact of the Battle of Tsushima on Australian defence and foreign policy, that before 1905 the Australian government seemed incapable of arriving at any clear view on the:

strategic rationale for defence. Apart from the fact that most leaders were preoccupied with the consolidation of Federation, an internal issue, there was no clear perception of any immediate threat to Australian security. Inasmuch as it had a view the Commonwealth government accepted the British rationale, which argued that any danger to Australia would eventuate as a result of British involvement in world affairs.

Creswell and supporters of a local navy in the Commonwealth Parliament and amongst the press called for a distinctive defence policy, but 'the government on the whole continued to rely on the effectiveness of the British government for its defence needs and to adhere to the principles of the Blue Water School, where a concentrated mobile force was seen as the most efficacious.'²⁴⁶ The Australian poet Henry Lawson seemed to reflect the position mid-decade when he wrote that Australia was 'all unprovided and unprepared, the Outpost of the White!'²⁴⁷

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renewed for a further five years in 1905 and was to continue in this form until the Washington Naval Arms Limitation Conference in 1921-22. Xenophobic Australia had increasing concern for the growing power of Japan,

²⁴⁴ Hyslop, p.39

²⁴⁵ *Report by the Director of Naval Forces for 1905*, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers – General – Vol. 2, 1906, p.51 (p.7 of the Report)

²⁴⁶ Hayne, M., The Impact of the Battle of Tsushima on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1905-1909, in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 72, Part 4, April 1987, p.274

²⁴⁷ *For Australia*, from Cronin, L., *Henry Lawson Complete Works: 1901-1922 A Fantasy of Man*, Sydney, Lansdowne Press, 1984, p 244

despite the re-assurances of the Colonial Office. The poet Lawson again seemed to echo the xenophobia: ‘Who shall aid and protect us when the blood-streaked dawn we meet?’²⁴⁸ To Lawson the political thinking was not perceptive enough: something substantial and deliberate needed to be done now, for Australia was ‘in the South and alone.’ The Anglo-Japanese Alliance convinced the pro-navy Commonwealth parliamentarians that Britain had little regard for Australia’s interests: the British Fleet in Australian waters was worthless and would be better off scuttled (and this is what the British First Sea Lord intended to do); and although substantial British units would be needed to defend a vast coast against a strengthening Asian sea power, it had already bested a large European fleet. First Sea Lord Fisher had no intention of providing such a force, nor encouraging a local navy. To Fisher submarines were the answer and he had discussions with Starr Jameson, Prime Minister of Cape Colony, about a plan for Britain to build five vessels, annually allocated to the five principal South African ports. Seeing the Cape do this, Fisher reasoned, all the other colonies (particularly Australia and Canada) ‘would give up the insane, silly idea of Colonies having battleships and armoured cruisers of their own! ... NO LOCAL NAVY CAN EVER BE EFFICIENT!’²⁴⁹

The criticism by the Commander-in-Chief Australia Station, Vice-Admiral Fanshawe, of local naval defence was enough for Creswell to write to Defence Minister Playford on 22 September 1905 to complain about the old and severely run down local naval forces. There had been no new ships for twenty years and, tellingly, there was a comparable run down in personnel with only three lieutenants on the Permanent List –

²⁴⁸ *Australia’s Peril: The Warning* verses quoted from Cronin, L., *Henry Lawson Complete Works: 1901-1922.*, p 245

²⁴⁹ Fisher to Arthur Balfour, 12 September 1905, in Marder, A., *Fear God and Dread Nought, Volume III Restoration, Abdication, and Last Years, 1914-1920*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1959, p.26

and only two of them on active service! He was exasperated with the lack of understanding of the principles of maritime defence and a lack of navalist representation in parliament to promote the service, to resist reductions and pledge to maintain local forces. 'This Service is practically on the verge of collapse'²⁵⁰ a frustrated Creswell reported.

Creswell was cognisant of the growing predatory manoeuvrings of foreign powers in Asia and the Pacific, the prevailing maritime theories, the views of significant men in the Empire and whom he had to influence in the Australian arena. His reports and schemes not only detailed what vessel requirements would be suitable for Australian conditions but also Australia's position in the region, international relations, the alignment of naval powers and the strategy a local naval force could employ – within one Imperial Fleet – to meet any threat of invasion. His advocacy to date had not brought a substantial, sustaining public response, yet 'it is not the noblest call that gets answered, but the *answerable* call.'²⁵¹ A new opportunity was presented in September 1905 when the Australian National Defence League was formed in Sydney with the purpose of promoting the protection of the Australian nation and race by promoting Australian defence forces. It had a broad-base membership of business and professional men, soldiers and clergymen with an executive who included Chris Watson (Labor Party) and Sir William McMillan (MHR for Wentworth, NSW, Free Trade Party) as vice-presidents and Billy Hughes as an honorary secretary. Through the Defence League and its quarterly journal, *The Call*, compulsory naval and military training and a system of national defence, including Creswell's campaign, could be given wider promotion.

²⁵⁰ Macandie, p.137

²⁵¹ Wills, G., *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, p.13

Prime Minister Deakin needed to respond to this pressure: his tenure in office was due to the parliamentary support of Labor, and the Australian 'naval question' was a genie out of the bottle. La Nauze wrote that as Prime Minister, Deakin 'had to consider problems which lay beyond the competence, and perhaps beyond the horizon, of the devoted sailor', Creswell. The first problem was intra-imperial diplomacy: Deakin realized, according to La Nauze, that for Australia 'any steps towards the creation of her own naval force should be taken, not with the consent (for formally that was unnecessary) but with the goodwill and helpful co-operation of the Admiralty.'²⁵² The second problem was technical: to whom should he look for advice on the type of naval vessels? Whose advice should he accept? Creswell was a strong advocate but if England did not like his opinions...? La Nauze's proposition was that Deakin took a cautious approach in promoting a discussion with Britain about a navy; though it may have also displayed Deakin's timidity. Deakin would not do anything unorthodox that might jeopardise his standing in the eyes of the British statesmen and admirals. His approach centred on lobbying Britain for a solution. In so doing he worked within the context and requirements of the Admiralty. Deakin had first ignored and then dismissed the involvement of the government's own naval adviser in seeking British advice. If this would be the advice he chose to accept, Australia would be placing Britain's interests above self-interest.

Deakin's Defence Minister, Thomas Playford, supported the absolute necessity 'to establish the nucleus of an Australian navy.'²⁵³ Playford based this need on three objectives, which reflected Creswell's own longstanding advice to governments;

²⁵² La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, Pp.519-520

²⁵³ CPD, Vol. XXVII, 27 September 1905, p. 2823

namely to meet the possibility of invasion, to provide defence against raids on coastal shipping and harbours and, finally, to guard against attacks by fast cruisers on sea commerce. However, the Colonial Defence Committee (CDC), from which self-governing dominions could seek assistance or advice for their defence plans or schemes, did accept Australia's concept of defence. In early October 1905 CDC dismissed the need for a navy to protect against invasion and commerce raiding as well as a need for a Commonwealth's land forces' scheme. The impact on the naval defence of Australia from the CDC standpoint would, according to Creswell, 'involve the abolition of all Naval organization', requiring no more effort on the part of Australia than paying the Naval Agreement subsidy and leaving responsibility for naval defence to the Imperial fleet. 'The views of the Colonial Defence Committee, if concurred in, would preclude the need to frame any Naval estimates whatever.' Nor did Creswell want to be reduced to being an appendage of the military with a port examination service – of itself it would not 'justify the maintenance of any Naval Forces.'²⁵⁴ Colonel Bridges, the Commonwealth's Chief of Army Intelligence, was convinced that a military officer needed to get to England to determine an Australian defence scheme.

Unimpressed with the CDC response, Playford posed Creswell some questions regarding the formation of a navy and the place of submarines in the navy and Australian defence. Having proposed a 32-vessel navy to Treasurer Turner in June 1905, Creswell now proposed on 10 October an Australian navy of three cruiser destroyers, sixteen torpedo boat destroyers and fifteen torpedo boats at a cost of £1,768,000 (plus an annual upkeep of £532,000). 'This will provide a defence not designed as a force for action against fleets or squadrons, which is the province of the

²⁵⁴ Creswell to Playford, 10 October 1905, Papers of Alfred Deakin, NLA, 1540/15/3528

Imperial fleet,' Creswell argued, 'but as a line necessary to us within the defence line of the Imperial fleet – a purely defensive line, that will give security to our naval bases, populous centres, principal ports and commerce.' The key contribution to British-Australian co-operation in the naval defence of Australia Creswell now suggested was intelligence: 'the sea screens the enemy. We have no eyes – no intelligence of his movements. He may attack any of the populous centres or ports.' Australia could provide the means to penetrate that screen: fast destroyers could gather intelligence on an enemy fleet's movements and may 'influence the movements of an enemy in a manner very much to our advantage.' Creswell considered intelligence as vital to a nation with an entirely sea frontier. Neither a British Squadron nor an independent local navy could be everywhere; it needed to counter the advantage the sea can provide an enemy.

In determining the appropriate configuration of a local navy, Creswell did not recommend submarines for several reasons; while they had a certain advantage of 'invisibility they were still experimental craft'. In a separate report to Playford on 15 November,²⁵⁵ Creswell questioned the stability of submarines: their design and construction had not progressed to the stage where there was a recognisable 'fit' with other naval forces nor for Creswell was it clear what would be the complement of such a vessel. It was the earliest warning by Creswell to Deakin about submarines, of which the Prime Minister was to become so enamoured.

The call for a national defence scheme by service chiefs, some parliamentarians, the Australian National Defence League and some sections of the Press agitated Deakin

²⁵⁵ CPP, Vol.2 – General – 1905, *Defence of Australia, Reports by Captain Creswell, Naval Director*, Pp.311-12-13

sufficiently for him to cable Sir George Sydenham Clarke, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence requesting that the Committee consider the defence of Australia in its entirety. The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was instituted in March 1903, of which the Colonial Defence Committee was a sub-committee. Deakin wrote to Clarke on 3 October that the Naval Agreement subsidy was out of favour but may be made so if directed towards an obvious contribution to Australian naval development: 'visibly and concretely Australian in origin but Imperial in end and value.'²⁵⁶ On 10 October Clarke replied, agreeing to Deakin's request.

In the first of his annual reports to parliament, on 1 January 1906, Creswell's position on the defence of Australia was quite clear: he asserted the importance of British sea supremacy, whilst attacking the disproportionate expenditure, resources and reliance placed on land forces to defend commerce and the sea frontier should such supremacy be lost. Creswell bristled that such approaches 'scarcely come within the compass of sanity'. With coastal overseas trade valued at £145,000,000 Australia's maritime defence could only be considered, in Creswell's view, as contributing towards British sea supremacy. Those who feared that he was preaching a separate navy were wrong. He believed 'that concentration of Naval Force upon an enemy is a first principle of sea war is well known', including again the 1902 *National Review* article by Mahan, whom Creswell considered 'the greatest of Naval writers', to support his argument. He acknowledged that 'Australia is only assailable by sea, and its safety depends on the Naval supremacy of the Empire. ... Every portion of the sea forces of the Empire must act in the most complete co-operation attainable and subject to a single control in war, its purpose being the achieving and maintenance of complete *sea supremacy*.' Mahan's

²⁵⁶ Deakin to Clarke, 3 October 1905, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/ 15/3570/ 3522

article added support to Creswell's contention 'that any measure taken in Australia to defend that interest would relieve the main sea forces of the Empire.'²⁵⁷

Commodore Ray Griggs, RAN, remarked at the 2007 Creswell Oration, that Creswell was ambitious in his first annual report to parliament. 'In that document he provided an excellent articulation of what his proposed force could achieve and reinforced the economic effects of not having a viable navy.'²⁵⁸ The proposal promoted a self-sufficient navy with economic benefits to Australia with local construction reducing from seven to five years the roll out of the 32 ships. The vessels would be built in Australia 'by recognised firms' with the 'building plant being taken over by the Government, on the completion of the contract, for repair and maintenance of the flotillas, and for future new construction in which by that time Australian engineers, shipwrights and mechanics will have experience.' To Creswell his proposal was not substituting British naval protection, but rather supplementing, as a maritime nation within the Empire, the Royal Navy's local responsibility for Imperial defence. Creswell took into account that Australia could neither afford nor crew capital warships when calling for a local navy appropriate to the sea environment (physical coastal geography, sea and weather conditions). He also appreciated the need to overcome a weakness in local sea defence: developing professional skills in his officers and seamen. 'The solution of the Imperial Defence problem of the future would seem to be in the development to the limit of Naval capacity of every portion of an Empire that has been won by sea power'²⁵⁹ and to encourage Parliament to act Creswell reported: 'Australia

²⁵⁷ Macandie, Pp. 148-153..

²⁵⁸ Now Vice-Admiral Ray Griggs, AM, CSC, RAN, Chief of Navy, 2011. Navy Foundation Day Creswell Oration, Melbourne, 1 March 2007 – attended by PhD candidate

²⁵⁹ Macandie, Pp. 153-55

is, of all British possessions, the one most favourably conditioned to give effect to it.’²⁶⁰ Creswell would have agreed with Deakin’s assertions to Sir George Clarke in January 1906 that the Royal Navy was Australia’s first line of defence, Deakin hesitated at committing to establishing a navy: ‘It would be costly – extravagantly costly for 4,000,000 people to tax themselves with any navy that would give them the security even allowing for the reduced risks of war if we were only involved in quarrels of our own making in this quarter of the globe.’²⁶¹ Deakin may not have been satisfied with the Naval Agreement subsidy, however he told Clarke he had always supported it and would continue to do so until something better was formulated. To Creswell there was a better way.

Creswell’s nemesis of the Australian naval interest, Colonel William Bridges departed for England on 9 January 1906, having lobbied since June 1905 for a military officer to be despatched to the War Office to discuss an Australian defence scheme. He would then go onto Switzerland to observe the 1906 Swiss army manoeuvres; the Swiss being seen as a model for the Commonwealth Military Forces. Deakin tasked Bridges to assist the Committee of Imperial Defence by providing information on maps and plans relevant to a defence scheme but, under instructions from Deakin, not to provide opinions.

Initially Deakin did not commission Creswell to undertake a similar visit to England. Deakin may well have been daunted by Creswell, who was widely regarded as the principal navalist and advocate within Australia, with particular support coming from a range of Commonwealth parliamentarians and newspapers. If Creswell was

²⁶⁰ Macandie, P.155.

²⁶¹ Deakin to Clarke 8 January 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/ 15/ 3549

‘unrestricted’ in England, he could gain influence or hinder the cause with British politicians or senior Royal Navy officers to create an expectation of, or to sponsor, a local naval programme which Deakin may be forced to finance and manage. The Creswell approach did not comply with Deakin’s imperial federationist thinking and Creswell’s championship of a local navy was hindering Deakin’s maritime goals, correctly assuming that the creation of a navy was a matter for government not service personnel. Deakin did not think Creswell’s knowledge or expertise current and he tried to dissuade Defence Minister Playford, from promoting Creswell’s visit to London:

You obviously adopt your Director’s views as to the necessity for his seeing the Committee of Defence in order to supply them with explanations. Personally I do not think they care a straw for either his explanations or those of Bridges. Neither of those officers can be in anyway authorised to speak for the government. ... The despatch of Creswell would be a new departure of our own. It is one which I thoroughly approve as I think our naval officers must now be lacking in personal acquaintance with recent advances in naval defence. The Committee know that we disclaim all responsibility for any opinions they may express, given in answer to questions, which may possibly be put to them. ... the views they express will be theirs only and not ours.²⁶²

Deakin was not merely asserting that the government must determine defence policy: when it came to external affairs and the navy, only Deakin would allow himself to speak for Australia. Deakin considered an Australian navy as part of his external affairs policy: it would give him greater leverage with London for a place in imperial forums on regional affairs and a navy was a shield for defending the ‘White Australia’ policy. To Deakin, a navy would enable a more autonomous Australia to provide independent counsel within the Empire. With reluctant consent and with barely enough time to reach London before the CID met, Deakin sent Creswell to England, not in an official capacity, nor with the purpose of preparing for an Australian navy. Creswell’s determination to promote a local navy at any opportunity concerned Deakin; throughout

²⁶² Deakin to Playford, 6 February 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/ 15/ 3590

the Naval Director's visit, Sir George Clarke kept Deakin informed of Creswell's activities.

Officially, Playford's instructions to Creswell were 'on arrival in England place yourself in communications, through the Colonial Office, with the Admiralty and the Secretary of the Imperial Defence Committee.'²⁶³ Creswell was to garner information about torpedo boat destroyers and submarines, home coast defence, the design, construction and engineering of vessels, the training of officers and sailors and the concept of 'nucleus crews' and inspect shipbuilding yards with the view to building vessels in Australia. Given the subsequent events, one could speculate why *The Instructions of the Minister for Defence to Captain WR Creswell* were not put before Parliament at Creswell's departure for England or during his visit. The Instructions were eventually tabled on 26 September 1906. One likely reason: Deakin was trying to placate the press, parliamentarians and the public once the adverse findings in the August CID report were known. Deakin could demonstrate publicly that he had sent Creswell on a fact finding mission, while privately opposing it.

On 14 February, Clarke privately told Deakin that as regards Creswell 'I know his views well & his latest memo on the naval question ... I do not think, therefore, that his presence here would be of any assistance to us...' ²⁶⁴ Incredibly, Creswell, who had devised the scheme was not required to elaborate or defend his proposition for a naval defence of Australia, but Colonel Bridges, an opponent of a local navy, was allowed to meet with the Committee. As the Committee prepared advice for Australia, Deakin was

²⁶³ *The Instructions of the Minister for Defence to Captain WR Creswell, CMG., Director of the Naval Forces, Relative to his Visit to England to Inquire into the Latest Naval Developments*. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 21 September, 1906.
(author's copy: No. 82 of 500 printed)

²⁶⁴ Clarke to Deakin, 14 February 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/15/ 3565

being kept informed of its progress and the activities of Australia's service chiefs.

Clarke had yet to meet Creswell but:

I have suggested to Sir John [Fisher, First Sea Lord] that it might be wise to hint to Captain Creswell as to the inadvisability of him getting into print here. It is undesirable that he should float a propaganda on this side, which might be echoed as your side. The views of our newspapers here are mostly worthless in such matters but things might be viewed in Australia as supporting Creswell's views.²⁶⁵

Deakin did not counter Clarke's manipulation of Creswell: he was conspiring with Clarke to 'neutralise' Creswell.

On 25 March, soon after his arrival in England, Creswell called upon the Secretary for the Colonies, Lord Elgin, and then the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Tweedmouth, with whom Creswell left his letter of instructions as requested. Creswell had thought that Tweedmouth intended to make the necessary arrangements for his inspection visits to shipyards and naval facilities, but this was not to be the case. By 12 April Clarke was reporting to Deakin that "I have seen Creswell who has, as you say, plenty of go about him. It is unfortunate that he should become the prophet of a section of the Australian public and press."²⁶⁶ The British position turned on the need to 'manage' Creswell's presence in England.

The Lords of the Admiralty left London on their own tour of inspection with no arrangements made for Creswell's visits to shipbuilding yards. As Creswell 'had received no further instructions from them, my time in England being so short, I

²⁶⁵ Clarke to Deakin, 30 March 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/15/ 3581-2

²⁶⁶ Clarke to Deakin, 12 April 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA, MS 1540/461

decided to start independently'.²⁶⁷ With the assistance of the Agent-General for Victoria Creswell travelled the length of England visiting Thorneycrofts in London and Southampton; Yarrow, Samuel White and Company at Cowes on the Isle of Wight; Armstrong Whitworth's Elswick Works at Newcastle-upon-Tyne; Palmers Shipbuilding at Jarrow-on-Tyne; Vickers and Maxim, Barrow-in-Furness; Cammell Laird and Co at Birkenhead and the Thames Ironworks, Shipbuilding and Engineering. Creswell, unaccredited to the Committee of Imperial Defence when it considered the naval defence of Australia, was regarded as a foreign naval attaché when visiting the shipyards. He became aware of this from 'associates' of his own early Royal Navy days in high command at Devonport and Portsmouth, Feakes noted that officially Creswell was considered a disaffected person.'²⁶⁸

With still no arrangements in place by the end of April, Creswell went to the Admiralty to be told 'that the delay had been accidental.'²⁶⁹ the letter of instructions had been mislaid (and was only found a few days before Creswell's departure from England). For a visit, known in advance and also the subject of correspondence between the Australian prime minister and the Secretary of CID, the misplacing of an instrument of courtesy would not seem to be in the best traditions of the British civil service; however, to dismiss any sinister intentions would be naive. Common sense dictated that if Australia's naval chief was in the country, he should have been brought into the CID discussions; but it was politics and Admiralty condescension not reason and equality of esteem that operated.

²⁶⁷ *Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on his Visit to England in 1906 to Inquire into the Latest Naval Developments*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 21 September, 1906, p.3

²⁶⁸ Feakes, p.117

²⁶⁹ *Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on his Visit to England in 1906 to Inquire into the Latest Naval Developments*. 21 September, 1906, p.4

Creswell called separately on Captain Charles Ottley, Director of Naval Intelligence, on 30 April and then Sir John Fisher to put his proposals. From Creswell's meeting with Captain Ottley, visits were finally arranged to Portsmouth to see torpedo destroyers in commission with nucleus crews and the latest type of submarines and then the training establishments (gunnery, torpedo and signalling schools). Creswell reported that the submarines' 'defence value is still a question keenly debated, high authorities differing as to their vulnerability to counter attack ...their war value must remain largely indeterminate, to be solved only by war.'²⁷⁰

Not once in Creswell's Report was the *Dreadnought*, which was launched on 10 February 1906, mentioned. Construction had commenced in October 1905 and the result, according to Peter Padfield was 'an awesome demonstration of naval and industrial power.'²⁷¹ A dreadnought-type ship seemed financially not possible for Australia. Costs aside, Creswell's focus was a torpedo boat destroyer scheme: more practical to protect ports and trade and patrol the long Australian coastline with requisite infrastructure to develop skilful, efficient seamen. Two or three dreadnoughts – in the extremely unlikely event they had been offered – whilst more powerful, would be too few to be of benefit in a widespread attack on Australia. The distances to patrol would be too vast to be effective, while a fleet of smaller ships would offer a more useful second line of defence should the Royal Navy lose supremacy in northern or southern hemispheres.

²⁷⁰ *Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on his Visit to England in 1906*, p. 8

²⁷¹ Padfield, P., *Battleship*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2000 p.189

Creswell's six weeks' tour strengthened his long-held view that Australia needed a navy. He had been re-assured by British naval authorities that 'no heavy squadron of enemy cruisers will be permitted to assail or even approach our coasts.' Yet Creswell also reported that he was also 'warned that no fleet, however powerful, can guarantee against some losses in war.' It was, as he had always stated since 1901, 'the meanest extemporised cruiser with a few guns is completely master of the situation, and can capture, destroy or dislocate commerce.' In the 1906 Report of his visit Creswell acknowledged the primacy of the Royal Navy – 'our main defence', but the British Squadron in Australia was itself '12,000 miles from all those building establishments, arsenals, construction works, as well as training establishments and schools that supply it with a trained personnel and material.'²⁷² What if the British Navy withdrew to meet a threat or took up station elsewhere? Creswell emphasised the need and the priority for naval infrastructure and the gradual creation of naval power in Australia. There was a need to initiate a construction scheme to include four ocean destroyers, sixteen 'River' Class destroyers and four first class torpedo boats. His report to the Commonwealth parliament had a clear message for Deakin and his government: *carpe diem*. The British, however, had a different view.

The Report of the Committee of Imperial Defence upon a General Scheme of Defence for Australia, issued in May and printed by the Parliament on 15 August 1906, infuriated Creswell. His memorandum²⁷³ to Defence Minister Playford, in October 1905 regarding the defence of Australia, the formation of an Australian navy and the advisability of submarines were, in the Committee's view, 'based upon an imperfect conception of the requirements of naval strategy at the present day, and of the proper

²⁷² *Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on his Visit to England in 1906*, Pp.13-14

²⁷³ CPP, No.66 of 1905

application of naval force.’²⁷⁴ The type of destroyers Creswell had suggested, the CID Report claimed, could not be effective in the protection of maritime commerce. Indeed ‘there is therefore no strategic justification ... for the creation at great expense of a local force of destroyers ... at present no such strategic necessity exists or threatens.’²⁷⁵

The Australian press responded with patriotic outrage: ‘the British power is not immortal,’ thundered the *Bulletin*, ‘nor is the British navy guaranteed to be for ever invincible. It is not treason to contemplate the possibility that, even when Britain has lost command of the seas, Australia should aspire to keep its shores sacred from an enemy.’²⁷⁶ Indeed, as the Melbourne *Argus* told its readers ‘the patriotic Australian will only be swayed by one consideration ... what is the best thing for Australia ... we all say that Australia must be defended as adequately as our resources will allow.’²⁷⁷ The *Sydney Morning Herald* defended Creswell’s proposal by recalling the success of the Imperial Japanese Navy with torpedo-boat destroyers at the Battle of Tsushima: ‘We should prepare in time of peace for a state of war by establishing for the defence of our own ports a flotilla of torpedo boat-destroyers and torpedo boats. In no better way can harbour defence be guaranteed and it is certainly more economical than the building of a few battleships.’²⁷⁸

Nevertheless, on 25 August 1906, Sir George Clarke informed Deakin that the Admiralty could not take into consideration the ‘broad strategic principles’ of Creswell as the Admiralty ‘could not justify the great expense involved in the creation of an

²⁷⁴ *SMH*, 13 June 1906 in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., (Eds.), p.147

²⁷⁵ Macandie, p.163

²⁷⁶ *Bulletin* (Sydney), 23 August 1906 in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., (Eds.) p.148

²⁷⁷ *The Argus*, 16 August 1906 in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., (Eds.), p.146

²⁷⁸ *SMH* 13 June 1906

Australian navy on strategic grounds'. Nor could Creswell's specific proposals be considered. Clarke wrote that they would be 'cut to shreds.'²⁷⁹ 'Cut to shreds' they were by one Captain Charles Ottley the Director of British Naval Intelligence since 1905. Ottley wrote the Admiralty's memorandum, dated 1 May 1906, and submitted it to the CID, which was then largely included in Ottley's writing of the final Report. In the Admiralty memorandum Ottley vouched for the soundness of his own position relying on his experiences twenty years before, as Torpedo Lieutenant of the flagship of the then Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, Rear-Admiral Sir George Tryon: 'The ships were inefficient because officers and men though zealous were untrained.' Ottley also referred to support for his position quoting a letter written by a Mr Kelly 'one of the ablest Australian MPs' published in 1 March edition of *Pall Mall* in which Kelly wrote, 'that Australians who advocate it are either ignorant of the real merits of the question, or (like Captain Creswell) must uphold the local navy because, should it be abolished, they will thereby lose their means of livelihood.'²⁸⁰ WH Kelly, a future Liberal (Fusion) Whip, opposed an Australian navy and had on 7 September 1905 moved a resolution in the House of Representatives 'that all Australian naval appropriation be spent on the imperial navy and that the Australian contribution to the Royal Navy be doubled. This was a vain effort to head off the expected move to establish an Australian flotilla.'²⁸¹

In summarising, Ottley referred to the 'sentimental desire' of the local naval officers and men for a navy; a desire Ottley rather contemptuously suggested was shared by the

²⁷⁹ Clarke to Deakin, 25 August 1906 NLA, Papers of Alfred Deakin MS 1540 Item 15/ 3601-2
²⁸⁰ Memorandum by Captain Charles Ottley on 'Australia – General Scheme of Defence', 1 May 1906 -PRO: ADM 1/ 8905, f.87-100 cited in Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs (No.6): Australia's Naval Inheritance Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station 1880-1909*, Maritime Studies Programme Department of Defence, Canberra, 1998, Pp.125/127.
²⁸¹ Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914*, p.135

Irish in Australia and elements of the Labor Party! To Ottley, 'Japan is a potential menace in the distant future'²⁸² – an opponent against whom, Ottley said, Australia had no hope of winning given its population and military, naval and associated industrial strength. Frankly, in Ottley's view, Australia would be out of step with this desire for a local navy: it would be wiser to adhere to the existing Naval Agreement and when required seek the advice of the British Government. The matter, therefore, was settled: Sir John Fisher minuted the Ottley memorandum on 8 May with 'I think the DNI expresses the view we should adopt.'²⁸³

Heavily criticised in the wording of the Report and manipulated during his visit to England by the British Admiralty and Deakin, Creswell could have been chastened or possibly sulked; but this was not the Creswell way. He had a clear, passionate vision of the naval defence for Australia. He fought. Creswell brought together the Naval Commandants of the Australian States (Captain Chapman Clare of South Australia, Captain Frederick Tickell of Queensland, Commander FHC Brownlow from New South Wales), as well as Commander William Colquhoun and Engineer Commander William Clarkson from Victoria and, together, they issued a rebuttal to the *Committee of Imperial Defence* Report on 12 September 1906 in a memorandum to the Defence Minister. While the inclusion of the heads of the State commands may be taken for granted, the addition of Colquhoun, who had trained in England with Tickell and was a decorated Boer War veteran and Clarkson, the naval engineering expert, enhanced the calibre of the report. They were indignant: it was 'unfortunate that the Director's 1905 annual report had not been submitted to the CID'; it was a 'matter for regret that the

²⁸² Memorandum by Captain Charles Ottley on 'Australia – General Scheme of Defence', 1 May 1906 – PRO: ADM 1/ 8905, f.87-100 cited in Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs* (No.6), p.130

²⁸³ Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs* (No.6), p.124

Naval Director ... was not asked to appear before the Committee'; but to say that an attack on the Australian coast by four enemy cruisers was of 'secondary importance' really highlighted the difference for the Committee of Naval Officers between Imperial responsibilities and the right of Australians to defend themselves.

In August 1906 Creswell had proposed three ocean cruisers, sixteen destroyers (River Class, launched in 1904 and considered the first 'true' destroyers) and five 1st class torpedo boats. In September, the Committee of Naval Officers adjusted Creswell's 24-vessel proposal, no doubt taking into account what Creswell had learnt from his England visit, enlarging the size of the ocean cruisers from 800 to 1300 tons, adding another ocean cruiser of 800 tons and reducing the torpedo boats from five to four. This recommendation was predicated on the 'defence of trade routes, principal and minor ports; defence against landing parties; defence of cables and communications and their rapid concentration and mutual support is easily attainable. What made this proposal significant was that 'these vessels should be fitted with Wireless apparatus to enable them at all times to communicate with stations established on shore, and also with each other. This will aid rapid concentration.' The Committee of Naval Officers unanimously declared that:

in view of Australia's geographical situation and our distance from the Empire's base, and having regard to our conditions, general, strategic, and other, we are of opinion that a naval force raised and trained in Australia, and provision for the manufacture of all war material, are of first importance to our present security, and vital to our future.²⁸⁴

This report served to rebuke the CID, while proposing a five year plan, a farsighted strategic proposal by experienced naval officers who were competent in determining

²⁸⁴ Macandie, Pp. 165/309

requirements for local conditions. These senior naval officers told the Defence Minister that these measures would ‘afford the largest degree of self-dependence as an outlying portion of the Empire.’

The Report was to be debated in parliament and Creswell informed Fabian Ware, the editor of the London *Morning Post*, by letter on 26 September that he was pleased with the support from the newspaper. It provided a ‘platform’ to address the British public, and no doubt the British authorities, on the naval issue in Australia. Creswell told Ware that he was also somewhat surprised by the support from Sir John Forrest adding ‘if there is anything in this screed of use pray use it but in no way must my name appear or be suggested this of course you will at once understand.” Creswell’s elation did not temper his anger for a report that displayed ‘the lack of brain quality that is so plain throughout the whole memorandum’, reserving anger against Captain Charles Ottley (a Fisher protégé) the Report author:

A very angry little Naval Officer ...replies in the Memorandum in a snappy scolding irritated tone, a most improper one to make to us ... This angry little snap is solemnly endorsed and paraded – we are not ... Fancy a person of the rank and standing of a Junior Post Captain laying down the law ...²⁸⁵

Creswell angrily informed Ware, ‘Of course the fault is that a poor narrow little naval man spoke or rather wrote and his views came out neat and unwatered by the wisdom of the Elders of the Council.’²⁸⁶ Britain had been humouring Australia in Australia’s desire for its own navy, though Britain would have preferred if Australia had no navy at all! If anything, according to the CID Report, Australia should stick by the 1903 Agreement!

²⁸⁵ Macandie, Pp. 166/322-326.

²⁸⁶ Creswell to Ware Melbourne 26 September 1906, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/ 9)

It was yet another opportunity, to misquote Edmund Barton's summation of the 1902 Imperial Conference, for Britain to take the pith out of Australians!

Successive Commonwealth governments had contributed to emasculating the local naval forces. As at 1 March 1901 the Commonwealth Naval Forces (CNF) consisted of 240 permanent personnel and 1,348 naval militia at a total estimated cost of £70,837. By 30 June 1905 the actual strength was 171 permanent personnel and 870 naval militia at a total estimated cost for the financial year 1905-06 of £47,609.²⁸⁷ It had changed little by 30 June 1906: 171 permanent personnel, 907 naval militia and a total estimated cost of £53,376 for the 1906-07 financial year.²⁸⁸ It could be argued that the estimates followed a depleting navy. The simple, plain fact was Deakin to date had neglected the existing naval forces: little was done to encourage a local navy by way of manpower, ships, or the 'yeast' to its development, money.

Deakin now tried to regain the high ground in considering a coastal defence capacity for an Australian naval unit. What if Australia could help the Imperial Fleet by protecting the continent's coast and harbours so that not only Australian, but also British shipping, would be afforded some protection? Deakin referred to the Committee of Naval Officers recommendations, when speaking on the Naval Estimates in the House of Representatives on 26 September, though emphasising that the 'whole security of Australia' depended on the 'supremacy of the British navy':

By providing safe harbours of retirement, and protection for our commerce in the immediate neighbour of our coast, we shall do something towards the discharge of our general obligation. We shall be doing something but not all. As

²⁸⁷ CCP, Vol.2, General, December 1905

²⁸⁸ CCP, *Memorandum by the Minister of State for Defence on the Estimates of the Defence Department for the Financial Year, 1906-07, 30 July 1906, Appendix D*

I have stated already, the British navy on the high seas extends to us a protective power, which no effort of ours could hope to rival. It is of inestimable value to the people and to the future of this country. Under its shelter we have grown, are growing, and, I trust, will continue to grow, loyal and self-dependent, never forgetting to recognise our responsibility, or, so far as our means permit, to discharge it both to Australia and to the Flag.²⁸⁹

In content his speech differed little from three years ago. Deakin's words appeared to advocate a greater British naval presence in Australia continuing along the lines of the 1903 Naval Agreement. This was the stance Ottley and Sir George Clarke wanted and it was one with which Deakin, with an Imperial Federationist intonation, seemed to be aligning himself. Supported in government by a Labor opposition, which advocated the establishment of an Australian crewed and owned navy, Deakin's words and actions appear baffling. In the Australian parliament, he would seem to have the means, motive, and the opportunity to affect change but did not do so. Deakin's hesitant approach was remarkably deferential to the British, not wanting to offend and increasingly preferring British naval expertise rather than his local advisors. Deakin's approach was chameleon-like. On 6 October 1906 Deakin writing in the London *Morning Post*, appeared to support Creswell:

the Committee unsparingly condemned the particular proposals submitted by Captain Creswell to his Minister on the ground that they would cost far more than they were worth, and that if ever protection by ships of the kind he outlined became necessary 'it would devolve upon the Admiralty to provide them as part of their general responsibility for the strategical contribution of the naval forces of the Empire.'²⁹⁰

Eight months before Deakin had written that 'our naval officers lacked personal acquaintance with recent advances in naval defence.' Now 'Correspondent' Deakin sounded almost Creswellian when he wrote that:

²⁸⁹ CPD, Vol. XXXV, 26 September 1906, p.5578

²⁹⁰ *Morning Post*, 20 August/ 6 October 1906, p.190

Australian sentiment will not be appeased by contributions of men and money to a [British] fleet which is presently to start for Singapore, may remain some time at Calcutta, and then sail towards South America, without any Australian representative having even a title to be heard by its commanders as to its route. The Naval Commander-in-Chief on this station owes no allegiance to any of our Governments, is not an Australian, has practically no Australian officers or men, and no Australian knowledge or sympathy. His duties keep him in touch even with us. The Defence of the Empire, of course, includes that of Australia. We pay 200,000 pounds annually towards it while Canada pays nothing. Yet we get far less naval protection than the Dominion.²⁹¹

The debate continued when Captain Ottley followed up his Admiralty Memorandum and CID Report with a *Minute on Australian Defence Policy*, having received a copy of the Committee of Naval Officers report. He appeared to have had some sympathy for the local naval officers to be asked to make recommendations on the report by CID on a General Scheme of Defence for Australia: it would be tantamount, according to Ottley, to the ‘cutting their own throats’:

For a body of officers of the local Australian Navy to have recommended the abolition of the force from which they draw their livelihood, would have argued almost superhuman altruism on their part. So far as I can ascertain, the Australian Government has never held out any hope to these officers that (if the local Australian Navy is abolished) they will receive any sort of retiring allowance, pension or any pecuniary acknowledgement whatever of the fact that their occupation would thereby be gone. Surely, therefore, the inference is clear that when the Australian Government called upon the Commandant of the local Australian Navy to report upon the CID’s recommendation that the Navy should cease to exist, it was putting to Captain Creswell an unfair dilemma.²⁹²

It is intriguing that Ottley acknowledged but failed to comprehend that the local officers wanted an Australian owned and crewed navy under ‘One Flag, One Fleet’. The British Admiralty appeared to have difficulty looking beyond the man and his proposal. The British commitment in the Pacific in 1906 would not sustain the maritime defence of

²⁹¹ *Morning Post*, 20 August 6 October 1906, Pp. 191-191

²⁹² Minute by Captain Ottley on ‘Australian Defence Policy’, 12 December 1906 – PRO: ADM 116/1241B, f.374 cited in Lambert, N., *Australia’s Naval Inheritance Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station 1880-1909*, Maritime Studies Programme Department of Defence, Canberra p. 132

Australia. Being dependent on Britain for the defence of Australia without cost, according to the Commonwealth parliamentarian Bruce Smith, was a 'cheap immunity from aggression.'²⁹³

Britain's naval strategy of concentration in European waters and depletion of outlying naval stations - coupled with a foreign policy that included an alliance with Japan - left Australians feeling isolated, vulnerable and insecure. The British Colonial Office was concerned about Australia's 'White Australia' Policy, but it remained uncomfortably reticent to do anything about it. H.B. Cox, the Colonial Office's Legal Assistant Under-Secretary, advised Elgin in May 1906 that any attempt to amend Australia's immigration laws 'would be impossible if we wish to keep Australia in the Empire.'²⁹⁴ To do so, Cox later wrote, would bring direct opposition from Australia and sympathy from Canada and South Africa for the antipodean nations. Britain did not question a 'White Australia' Policy *per se*: 'All we ask,' wrote Cox in a minute to Elgin in June 1906, 'is that the methods adopted shall be such as not to injure the feelings of civilised Asiatic races such as the Japanese, and such as not to involve us in diplomatic difficulties.'²⁹⁵

Deakin went to the election in December 1906, *The Call* 'expressed strong disappointment that in spite of having indicated sympathy with the aims of the Australian Defence League, Deakin campaigned 'with absolutely nothing in the way of

²⁹³ *The Call*, November 1906, p.8

²⁹⁴ Hyam, R., *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office 1905-1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth*, Macmillan, London, 1968, p.315

²⁹⁵ Hyam, p.315

a sane defence policy”.²⁹⁶ Yet, even with the smallest political group of the three ‘elevens’ in Parliament (fifteen members in the House and five in the Senate), Deakin would again be prime minister with Labor support. What is it that would change Deakin’s January 1906 declaration to Sir George Clarke that the British Fleet must remain Australia’s first line of defence and its only efficient defence against serious attack or invasion – in effect, disavowing an Australian navy? To be in power, Deakin needed the support of Labor and to achieve this he needed to accommodate Labor’s platform in legislative undertakings and policies including an Australian navy.

²⁹⁶ Booker, M., *The Great Professional: A Study of W.M. Hughes*, New York, McGraw Hill, 1980, p.113

Chapter IV

1907-1908 Australia's Search for Security: A False Dawn but a Rising Sun

The provision of a naval defence for Australia still remained unaddressed at the start of 1907. Politically, Prime Minister Deakin continued his bold speeches at home while showing deference to Britain abroad in two ways. Firstly, Deakin continued to engage the British government to encourage their consent to an Australian navy, hoping that Admiralty expertise in design and construction and the training of Australians as officers to command the vessels and sailors to crew them would follow. He hoped the current naval agreement could be adjusted or dispensed with altogether. The second way was related to the first: warship technology was evolving rapidly and, Deakin believed, the expertise required to advise the government on the type of ships to be purchased did not reside in Australia. Deakin seemed to be drawing the conclusion there was one, who he had not wanted to send to London in 1906 to advise the CID on the formation of an Australian navy, the same one who was criticised by the CID for his naval schemes and plans and thus the one whose plans seemed to be out of alignment with the Admiralty's vision for an Empire-wide navy and therefore out of place for Australia. Creswell had been deliberately disregarded by the Admiralty in 1906 and by the end of 1907 he was also ignored by Deakin.

Captain Creswell was undaunted in his campaign to establish a national naval defence. In his *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces on the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth of Australia for 1906* issued from the Department of Defence, Melbourne on 1 January 1907, Creswell lectured parliamentarians, and particularly the

Deakin government, that 'Defence was the main incentive to Federation. On its achievement, the Land forces were organised as one Federal Force ... On the other hand, the responsibility for all sea defence beyond the range of fortress artillery was relinquished.' Yet again, the Director of Naval Forces reminded his readers that 'under such an arrangement, the Commonwealth has no power of action afloat, and is incapable of effort to resist attack in the only way in which it can be met with advantage – on the seas surrounding our coasts.' Creswell stated:

It leaves the country without any means whatever of affording a measure of protection to interests at once the most valuable and vital to our daily business – a floating trade worth £ 170,000,000 per annum. To restrict our sea defences to the protection of ports by fortress artillery would be no defence of trade ... that their defence should be a recognised Commonwealth responsibility is the direct fulfilment of the main impelling causes of Australian Federation.

He acknowledged unequivocally that 'Imperial Naval strategy is designed to achieve commanding advantage for the Empire in war – a victorious issue with the least sum of loss to the nation.'²⁹⁷ However, Creswell was equally unequivocal in affirming that Australia, a sovereign nation, had constitutionally provided for a national navy.

The Report was a very emphatic statement by Creswell displaying a certain courage and tenacity to confront the government and that his condemnation of the 1906 Committee of Imperial Defence report had not abated. In campaigning for an Australian naval defence, Creswell's parliamentary report provided an early indication that he was considering more than the protection of ports and the coast: he was an early advocate of the 'Fleet Unit' concept than Jacky Fisher, who would later define the nomenclature and its composition. 'The Imperial Fleet can give much, but not complete protection, to do

²⁹⁷ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces on the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth of Australia for 1906*, CPP – General – Vol.2 – 1907-08, Pp.3/ 82-83.

so would weaken its strategy and effectiveness' Creswell questioned, 'Why should not Australia add that which the Fleet cannot give? The interests threatened are of vital concern to our daily life and business'. He was unequivocal 'They affect us immediately, and cannot be left open to attack. The solution is therefore an Australian Force supplied by Australia for specially Australian duty, and to act in intimate co-operation with the Imperial Fleet.

Creswell included in the report's appendix an extract from the parliamentary debates of 26 September 1906 in which Deakin had cautiously alluded to the building of ships if the Government was not limited by finance and other demands. Deakin had said he would follow the advice of the Committee of Naval Officers and order four torpedo boats and in three years order eight coastal destroyers of the *Teviot* Class. This enabled Creswell to report to Parliament that, 'a clearer definition of Commonwealth Naval Defence responsibility has now been arrived at, and announced by the Government but the means are still lacking to carry it out'.²⁹⁸ It was to be a false dawn in the formation of an Australian Navy when Deakin failed to act on the Committee's recommendation. Creswell was realistic: still prepared to be disillusioned by the promises of governments, fearless in his advocacy, repeating the arguments year in and year out; laying before each of the 'elevens' in their turn the proposal for national naval defence.

Creswell reinforced his condemnation of the Commonwealth governments lack of effort by noting the position of Japan:

Only thirty odd years ago Japan, with no knowledge of Western service or methods, no knowledge of modern manufactures, or of modern iron and

²⁹⁸ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces 1906*, Pp.5-11/ 79-85.

steelworks, of shipbuilding, or of making guns, ammunitions or any modern materiel, began her defence policy – poorly equipped indeed – but self-dependence was at the base of her schemes, and a few months ago Japan fought and won the greatest sea battle since Trafalgar, and a few weeks ago she launched the world's greatest battleship.

The stark fact was thirty years ago Japan was behind Australia; as at 1 January 1907, 'Australia is in the same condition as in 1870.'

Creswell's 1906 Report was not simply a recitation of government inaction and false promises. He proposed that the scheme recommended by the Committee of Naval Officers be progressed by sending two CNF officers to England: Commander William Jarvie Colquhoun, and Engineer-Commander William Clarkson. Creswell intended for Colquhoun to be attached to a torpedo boat flotilla to gain experience in 'methods of service, drills exercises, manoeuvres, the sea qualities of various types and designs, working with nucleus crews complement'²⁹⁹ to fully comprehend the capability of the vessels. Clarkson would inspect shipbuilding yards, boilers, engines, and observe the trials of torpedo boat destroyers 'for the British and any other Navy.' Clarkson responsible to the Commonwealth government, to examine and pass the detailed plans and specifications for the vessels for tendering. Clarkson would superintend their construction, be at their sea trials and, then, put all this knowledge to the advantage of construction in Australia. To successfully undertake this construction task in Australia, Creswell called for specially skilled supervisors – whether by Australians sent to be trained in Britain or skilled Britons sent to Australia or a combination of both.

Creswell reiterated this proposal in a memorandum to Defence Minister Ewing on 1 March 1907, recommending Clarkson and Colquhoun be sent to England as special

²⁹⁹ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces 1906*, Pp.12-13/86- 87.

commissioners for the assignments outlined in his report to parliament. Colquhoun would be the executive officer, while Clarkson would investigate the latest naval architecture and engineering developments. The minister accepted the recommendations and repeated them in his instructions to the two officers on 20 March. Their commission not only included visiting England but also visiting Japan to study the Imperial Japanese Navy's methods of construction, administration and training as well as inspections of naval activities in Canada and the United States. Their commission was to have a significant impact on naval and military defence for Australia.

The pair arrived in Japan on 26 April, met the hero of Tsushima, the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Togo, and were warmly invited to visit naval shipbuilding and dockyards.³⁰⁰ Clarkson and Colquhoun inspected the naval and engineering colleges, battleships, cruisers and Japanese designed torpedo boat destroyers, workshops that manufactured torpedoes and guns, steelworks and the rolling and shaping of armoured plate; in all, a national fully integrated naval engineering infrastructure. They observed a growing shipbuilding and maritime power in Japan – a power which had harnessed the technology from Britain – but was strategically dependent on foreign oil supplies, raw materials and food, for which Manchuria and Korea were nearby sources. Clarkson and Colquhoun left Japan on 20 May for Britain. In Britain Professor JH Biles, the eminently qualified warship designer, was engaged as a consultant, and the pair toured shipyards and constructors. Clarkson and Colquhoun returned to Melbourne in March 1908. Clarkson was to be despatched overseas within months to progress the establishment of a small arms factory in Australia, while Colquhoun took up the

³⁰⁰ Japan laid down two 'Tsukaba' class, 13,800 ton armoured cruisers in 1905, followed by two 'Ibuki' class the same year. It was not until 1911 that Japan started the construction of true battle cruisers with the 27,500 ton 'Kongo' class with eight 14 inch guns. The first, the *Kongo*, was built in Britain, while a further three were built in Japan. The *Kongo's* construction marked the last time a Japanese capital ship was built overseas.

appointment, which had awaited his return, as Commandant of the Commonwealth Naval Forces in Queensland. Tragically, Colquhoun was to die aboard the gunboat *Gayundah* in August 1908.

A new opportunity to advance the campaign for a local naval defence arose when Britain summoned the self-governing colonies to a Colonial Conference in London in April-May 1907. A preliminary agenda was issued in January, to which the Deakin government added its own items on preferential trade, mercantile commerce and emigration. There was also a resolution for an imperial council with a permanent secretariat in continuous operation executing the resolutions of conferences. Deakin also proposed that the colonies/dominions have representation on the Imperial Council of Defence and that the naval agreement of 1902 re-considered. There was no specific call for a local navy.³⁰¹ As Deakin made clear through the *Morning Post* ‘the unity [of the navy] ought to accompany that of the Empire and could only be completely achieved when we have established a unity of Imperial political control.’³⁰²

Creswell’s *Report on the Naval Defence for 1906* to parliament in January 1907 was written with the Colonial Conference of 1907 in mind. It was a reminder of promises not kept and the opportunity a colonial conference would offer to promote the cause of a local navy. The Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, Vice-Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes, would have none of this. Fawkes told Deakin on 18 February, that the supremacy of the Empire depended on the Royal Navy’s battle fleets. Concentrate the battle fleets and the enemy was obliged to do the same. In Fawkes Eurocentric view ‘the

³⁰¹ CPP, *Colonial Conference: dispatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies containing preliminary Proposals on the subject of the agenda and procedure*, Session 1907, 20 and 21 February 1907

³⁰² *Morning Post*, 22 December 1906,

nearer our cruisers are to the enemy's cruisers' by the concentration of forces would prevent any enemy getting through the Suez Canal or around Cape of Good Hope. Besides, the Eastern Fleet - with its China, Australian and East Indies Squadrons in sufficient strength - could easily deal with an enemy in Australian waters. Creswell advocated the establishment of an Australian navy to complement this 'Blue Water' naval strategy, freeing the Royal Navy from protecting the coasts. Fawkes totally opposed this: The Admiralty 'is entrusted the maritime supremacy of the Empire - to apportion the ships in peace so that they may be in the best position possible at the commencement of a war.' Fawkes now proposed that the contribution under the Naval Agreement cease and that this payment instead be made for British-provided small vessels with Australians and New Zealanders serving in the British Fleet. In a flagrant attempt to cajole Deakin into not proceeding with the Naval Officers' Scheme, Fawkes wrote:

... if the Commonwealth Government, in building destroyers and torpedo boats, prevent, however unwittingly, the Admiralty from filling up the ships, they should release them from an obligation if their action prevents them from carrying it out.³⁰³

Creswell responded dismissing the Admiral's views believing that at their core Fawkes was seeking total control of naval forces in Australia.³⁰⁴

Creswell met Fawkes' challenge with his 6 March 1907 briefing paper, *Considerations Affecting the Naval Defence of the Commonwealth*, given to Deakin on the Prime Minister's departure for the Colonial Conference. It needed to be a strong and emphatic statement, as Creswell would not be accompanying Deakin to London, detailing the

³⁰³ Macandie, p.169

³⁰⁴ *Notes on the Proposals with Reference to the Naval Agreement Contained in the Admiral's Letter of 18 February 1907* in Macandie, Pp.173-175

current status of national security, future conditions and dangers (including the tilting of the balance of British supremacy of the seas), the aspirations of Germany and Japan, and the need for self-sufficiency in naval defence. It displayed the depths and benefits of Creswell's thinking and observations of world and regional affairs over the past twenty years. Paramount in this defence briefing was the vital importance of protecting coastal trade routes: a tenet in Creswell's argument since his 1901 Report. In the past, Australia was protected by 'distance from sources of attack'; but the world was changing and there were a number of assertions Creswell invited the Prime Minister to consider. Creswell informed the Prime Minister that the supremacy of the British Navy could not be assumed given the growth of foreign navies (particularly those of Japan, Germany, the United States, Russia, France and Italy). In the Pacific, while the United States was not a danger to Britain, 'it is not inconceivable that Japan might be.' Britain had secured its position in Europe and - with a string of coaling stations, forts, naval facilities and geo-political arrangements along the route to Australia - it could prevent, contain or engage an enemy, protecting Australia from attack by a European power – but, not if the attack came from a power based in Asia. The response time was too great to protect possessions or dominions in the Southern Hemisphere. In 1897 Creswell had recognised that 'the rise of Japan as a naval power and her well-known aspirations ... may have in the future an effect which will be undesirable to Australasia.'³⁰⁵ It now crystallised as a possible threat and became part of Creswell's argument for a naval defence for Australia. Germany based in China (with commercial interests and a significant naval squadron) had possessions that stretched across the western Pacific to New Guinea and no Monroe Doctrine, Creswell told Deakin, would protect Australia as it did the Western Hemisphere. For Germany, the land, the climate and the commerce of

³⁰⁵ Macandie, p.178

Australia was tempting, while ‘Japan’s need of an outlet is as great as Germany’s – perhaps greater.’ Creswell emphatically called for an immediate naval policy of self-sufficiency: a coastal defence force with vessels built locally and crews trained locally. This force, with initial help from Britain, would be built up sufficient to prevent the landing or restrict the operations of an invader. As Creswell had written in his opening remarks to Deakin, ‘with Australia, immunity from attack is in direct proportion to the strength and efficiency of Naval Defence.’³⁰⁶

Prime Minister Deakin arrived in London for the Conference on 8 April without his naval advisor. He stayed in England for six weeks, where he would argue the case for imperial trade protection and for dominion representation in the councils of the Empire. As head of the Australian government, Deakin wanted to deal on equal terms with the British prime minister and not through the Colonial Office. He therefore proposed an Imperial council comprised of colonial prime ministers to discuss common interests in imperial matters, while ‘a small, highly qualified and extra-departmental secretariat’³⁰⁷ would prepare papers for the Council and execute its decisions. Deakin also wanted colonial representation on the Committee of Imperial Defence and a review of the 1903 Naval Agreement.

In and outside the Conference Deakin engaged in negotiations to procure a navy, but it was part of a much greater tilt at achieving imperial federation. The proposals were out of context in 1907. ‘Imperial Federation’ had run its course in Britain and, in January 1906, the country had elected a Liberal Government under Henry Campbell-

³⁰⁶ Macandie, Pp.59/180/176.

³⁰⁷ La Nauze, (Ed.), *Federated Australia: Selection from Letters to the Morning Post, 1900-1910*, p.204

Bannerman, which was free trade rather than protectionist in economic outlook. As a government, the Liberals were starting to demur on the use of the title 'empire'. Campbell-Bannerman would refer to the British Empire as the 'British Commonwealth' or the 'Commonwealth of free nations.' In opening the Colonial Conference, the British Prime Minister, alluded to 'commonwealth' rather than 'imperial federation' in stating:

We found ourselves upon freedom – freedom and independence. That is the essence of the British Imperial connection; freedom of action on the part of the individual state, and freedom in their relations with each other, and with the Mother Country.

Accepting the remark at face value, how would the British government react to self-governing colonies engaging in diplomacy or having the temerity to establish their own navy? Within a year Campbell-Bannerman was dead, replaced by Asquith, who, at the imperial conference of 1911, accepted dominions as masters in their own house but 'with loyalty to a common head, co-operation, spontaneous and unforced ...'³⁰⁸ Whatever opportunity there was in 1907, Deakin did not avail himself of it.

Deakin misjudged the sentiment of the British Government with his proposals for imperial trade preference and an imperial council. Implacably opposed were Lord Elgin, Under Secretary of the Colonies, and his spokesman in the House of Commons, Winston Churchill. Churchill told Leo Amery that in regard to the Colonial Conference, 'the colonial Prime Ministers should be given a good time and sent away well banqueted, but empty handed'.³⁰⁹ 'Affable Alfred', was known by some members of the

³⁰⁸ Hyam, p.320

³⁰⁹ Amery, L, *My Political Life: Volume I England Before the Storm 1896-1914*, Hutchinson, London, 1953, p.302. For the friction between Churchill and Deakin and the impact on Churchill's attitude to Australia and its maritime defence see Freudenberg, G., *Churchill and Australia*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2008 pp.25-35

British Government as a 'windbag'. The Colonies Secretary, Lord Elgin, told Australia's Governor-General that Deakin's 'extraordinary eloquence sometimes led to points being obscured in exuberance.' Elgin preferred conciseness and sometimes would delay a reply to lengthy correspondence: 'Deakin was his favourite victim for this treatment. Correspondence which had become futile by being too long drawn out must be allowed to cool.' Elgin's cabinet colleague, the Secretary of State for India, found that 'our robust young Colonials are apt to be frightful bores ... and to hear Deakin yarn away by the hour, I believe you would be heartily glad to see their backs ...'³¹⁰ Given his prolific correspondence with influential Britons – politicians, ex-governors-general and journalists – one would have thought Deakin would be more astute. Freudenberg has argued that Deakin's, 'political misjudgement was the more surprising in that this archetypal Australian liberal ... was so adroit and sensitive a politician at home, the master manipulator of the game.'³¹¹ Deakin was working within an unfriendly, if not hostile, environment in Britain. Assailed on many fronts for his stance on imperial preference, imperial federation and removal of dominions from Colonial Office oversight, Deakin's resulting physical and mental exhaustion can be understood. What is difficult to understand is his inability to discern and assess the mood and requirements of the British government and Conference participants and to adapt accordingly.

The Admiralty's position on Deakin's navy proposals was also negative. There was concern over the finance, discipline and international status of the proposed navy, and, more particularly, control of Deakin's naval force. This would be the subject of

³¹⁰ Hyam, Pp.318/487/318.

³¹¹ Freudenberg, G., *Churchill and Australia*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2008, p.27

considerable in-house correspondence by the Admiralty's Directors of Naval Intelligence and as early as 29 April 1907, the First Sea Lord was minuting:

I agree with DNI in the absolute impossibility of agreeing to Mr Deakin's proposals. The simple thing is to tell Mr Deakin there is no objection to abrogate the present agreement and that Australia will have our best advice in arranging for any colonial naval force they like to adopt.³¹²

It would be August 1908, sixteen months later before Britain formally replied to Deakin's proposals. On the fifth day of the Conference, 23 April, Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, addressed the dominion representatives with the usual imperious pith: 'You should put your trust in us now.' Britain had:

the charge of the strategic questions ... involved in Naval defence, to hold command of the naval forces of the country, and to arrange the distribution of ships in the best possible manner to resist attacks and to defend the Empire at large, whether it be our own islands or the dominions beyond the seas

He understood the desire of Australia and South Africa to have a navy of their own but, perhaps, the 'smaller craft'? 'Small flotillas...will be admirable means of coastal defence', for 'You will be able by the use of them to avoid practically all danger from any sudden raid which might be made by a cruising squadron.' Having a supply of coal, coaling facilities and naval stores and docking facilities locally would also be helpful to the Imperial Fleet. The most important weapon Australia could acquire for a local navy, in Tweedmouth's view, were submarines. He advised Deakin that even the French 'think that the submarine is really the weapon of the future'³¹³ Sir George Clarke did not. He cautioned Deakin in mid-May that 'I earnestly hope you will not work at submarines, and that for the present nothing but destroyers capable of going out to sea

³¹² Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance*: p.148

³¹³ Macandie, Pp.183/185

will be thought of.’³¹⁴ It had been barely twelve months since Clarke and the CID had rejected Creswell’s destroyer scheme.

The Lords of the Admiralty pursued Deakin engaging in amicable co-operative discussions. Tweedmouth told Deakin: “We are quite ready to agree to your proposal that the subsidy should be dropped and to do what we can to help you towards the establishment of a local defence force.” Where there may be difficulty with the Imperial government was over dual control of the navy. The Admiralty would reluctantly concede a coastal defence force but not compromise on ‘One Flag, One Fleet’. In essence, Tweedmouth told Deakin, ‘You or we must take the whole responsibility of control.’ The Tweedmouth offer proposed an operations and command arrangement, which Australia eventually accepted four years later:

I do not see why you should not run the whole show during peace time providing for any sudden attack or raid but when the time of actual war arrives and it is necessary to send out a war fleet then I think so long as that fleet is in Australian waters your local navy should be under the Imperial commanders in chief at his disposal for any operation in Australian waters.³¹⁵

The journalist Leo Amery would later reflect on the dominion’s response to form local navies:

Lord Tweedmouth for the Admiralty accepted the principle of Dominion navies, though still only as a second best and subject to a general Admiralty control. But there was very little practical response so far as the Dominion governments were concerned.³¹⁶

Deakin did not grasp this great opportunity: it could have been the defining moment for Australian naval development.

³¹⁴ Clarke to Deakin, 16 May 1907, NLA, Papers of Alfred Deakin MS 1540 Item 15/ 1557

³¹⁵ Tweedmouth to Deakin, 2 May 1907, NLA, Papers of Alfred Deakin MS 1540 Item 15/ 1489

³¹⁶ Amery, p.315

During the conference, First Sea Lord, Jacky Fisher invited Deakin to ‘please walk straight into my room on Monday & don’t be kept waiting as they guard me like Buddha! I will wait till 8pm.’³¹⁷ Later, Deakin thought his meetings with Jacky Fisher at the Admiralty went well, but the Admiralty had only ‘gracefully yielded to the argument for an Australian force so that they might persuade the layman Deakin to provide marginal frills to the Royal Navy’s squadron, in place of the self contained coastal force which they regarded as an Australian aberration to be discouraged.’³¹⁸ For Deakin, any vessel for local defence would be regarded as Imperial – in Australian waters or part of a British Squadron. It would be little more than that provided in the Australasian Defence Act of 1865 or the Naval subsidy agreements. It would not matter: the Committee of Imperial Defence ‘refused in the name of purity of strategic doctrine to countenance anything substantial in the way of local or localised naval forces.’³¹⁹

In Australia, meanwhile, advocates of a local navy were ready to respond to Tweedmouth’s challenge to Deakin. Charles Adam Jeffries writing in *Lone Hand* advocated that ‘it was not only wise but indispensable’ that Australia take responsibility for naval defence because of concern over invasion from the north, ‘in the empty and at present defenceless north’, which could be populated by the invader’s people. Jeffries left little doubt about whom he was writing. He did not see an Australian army being able to oppose the invader ‘but if it were backed by an Australian fleet which could hold the sea and cut off the invaders’ communications and supplies, the invading force could be isolated and ground to powder.’³²⁰ Jeffries’ faith in the capability of an Australian

³¹⁷ Sir John Fisher to Deakin, 5 May 1907 NLA, Papers of Alfred Deakin MS 1540 Item 15/ 1507

³¹⁸ La Nauze, J., *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, p. 526

³¹⁹ Gordon, D.C., The Admiralty and Dominion Navies, 1902-1914 in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Dec., 1961, Pp. 407-422/411

³²⁰ *Lone Hand*, June 1907, p.206

naval force of such a strength and type to defeat, contain or turn away a navy that had once destroyed the Russian Baltic Fleet while admirable was simplistic and unlikely. His case for how and why an Australian navy could be built was sound; all that seemed to remain was the question of when this might occur. Echoing the calls of Creswell, Jeffries wrote that the navy needed to be built in Australia by Australian engineers and workers with Australian materials (iron ore, copper and hardwood) for in time of war there would not be the reliance on supply or repair overseas. By local construction of warships, resources would be developed, steel mills established and thousands of trades and labouring positions created. Jeffries concluded that:

Each separate sea-washed portion of the scattered empire must be a self-contained military and naval entity, with its own fleet, its own coast defence, its own army supplied by its own factories ...in Australia public opinion is now practically unanimous that there shall be both an army and a navy.³²¹

This support could also be found with the Labor Opposition keen not only for an Australian navy, but also one that was self-sufficient with the ships built locally. In early 1907 the caucus was being petitioned to support the local 'construction of torpedo boats',³²²

To Creswell having an Australian navy would not be merely 'political expediency over the demands of theoretical strategy ...' or '... the substitution of the principle of Imperial Alliance for the principle of Colonial dependence'. Writing to Richard Jebb, Creswell defined the task for all those who desired a local naval defence:

Speaking for Australia only, that the change is against the stated strategy, this is the very thing I distinctly deny. It is on the purely Naval side of the question

³²¹ *Lone Hand*, June 1907, p.206

³²² Weller, P. (Ed.) *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949, Minutes of the Meetings of the Parliamentary Labor Party, Volume 1 1901- 1917*, Pp.189-190

that I have been interested, and have worked simply because impelled by the immense strategical advantage gained by the Empire and with it Australian defence. All effort is individual effort first. To make it co-operative effort - the bundle of sticks in place of the individual twigs - is the work of the legislator, the administrator, and, in Naval work, "the function of the Admiralty".³²³

Creswell revealed to Jebb that 'Poor Deakin, is, I fear, very unwell, and is giving his friends cause for serious anxiety.' Deakin departed Britain on 20 May 1907, returning to Australia physically and mentally unwell. Murdoch described it as 'this shattering experience ... What sustained him was the belief that his country needed him.'³²⁴ The representation of his Protectionists in Parliament would not support this conviction, though he would not be the last prime minister to cling to a belief of remaining in office so long as the party and the country needed him. For two months after his return he suffered acute giddiness. The degeneration in memory and concentration, which had commenced in 1905, increased.

Creswell was devastated that the efforts to establish a naval defence should falter because Deakin was ill :

After his brilliant success in England it is hard luck indeed. Of course the Naval business suffers very considerable delay and that is trying to one's patience, but after getting the stone so near the top to have it rolling down again. ... Deakin's illness is a first class national disaster. I fear unless he has immediate and long rest that the consequences will be serious. He looks a worn and harassed wreck.³²⁵

Officially the shattered Deakin took a break for two months. He was convinced that submarines should be part of the Australian navy. Creswell could not believe it and opposed the Admiralty proposals for nine submarines and six First Class torpedo boats to be built. Creswell had told Defence Minister Ewing in a memorandum on 2

³²³ Creswell to Jebb, Melbourne 31 July 1907, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/37-41

³²⁴ Murdoch, W., *Alfred Deakin*, Bookman, Melbourne, 1999, p.252.

³²⁵ Creswell to Jebb, Melbourne 31 July 1907, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/37-41

September 1907 that he was ‘against the adoption of the submersibles,’³²⁶ - supporting his assertion with facts and figures – from their limited range, their weakness under a diversity of sea conditions to limitations at night, this was not a vessel, at its present stage of development, for an Australian navy.

Deakin was worn out by his efforts to move the relationship between Britain and the dominions and colonies to a more mature level, to the partnership envisaged by imperial federation. Amery, felt that Deakin ‘was an ardent Australian nationalist, prepared to state at its highest Australia’s claim to independence and to national equality with Britain.’:

But he was no less whole heartedly an Imperialist for whom the two ideals of nation and Empire were complementary and mutually indispensable, and who regarded himself as completely and of right a citizen of the Empire as of Australia or of his native Victoria.³²⁷

In the end from the Colonies Secretary came the offer of a dominions section within the Colonial Office in answer to Deakin’s call for greater union with Britain. The Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Wilfred Laurier, experienced in the machinations of colonial conferences, having attended the 1897, 1902 and 1907 Conferences, was not one to be manipulated by either Britain or Australia on an imperial council, preferring autonomy over unity within the British Empire. In later years he reflected upon the performances of his antipodean counter-parts at these colonial conferences. ‘The Australians for the most part were a disappointment, distinctly inferior to the Afrikaners (Louis Botha and Jan Smuts). Perhaps it was their remoteness, perhaps their racial unity, that gave them a

³²⁶ Macandie, p.200

³²⁷ Amery, p.310

parochial insularity, a lack of perspective in world affairs.’ Laurier found that ‘Deakin was a very likeable man, of brilliant endowments, a splendid orator, with much fire and force. He was open minded to new ideas; perhaps too much so, as he seemed unable to hold any steady course.’³²⁸

In August Deakin wrote to Sir John Fisher, following up on their discussions in London. For Deakin ‘the best defence of this country can be secured by a joint Eastern Squadron of powerful ships operating wherever necessary.’³²⁹ He noted that both had agreed that such a squadron would come from combining the China Station, Australia Station and the Indian Squadron. The Naval Agreement would be cancelled with a local navy left for the defence of harbours and ports. “You strongly urge submarines at each principal port’ Deakin reminded the Sea Lord. Deakin concluded by affirming the ‘One Flag, One Fleet’ concept, but emphasised what was a constant feature of Creswell’s proposals: ‘We want the most effective ships and efficient men here with ample prospects of advancement to the latter [British Navy] when they merit it.’ He then added what might be described as the ‘Creswell corollary’ which acknowledged loyalty to the Empire of a maritime dominion with its own navy: ‘We also want a flexible relation as intimate as possible between our Government and the Admiralty, which shall encourage the development of our local defence to the fullest extent and in such a form as to supplement to the best advantage the Imperial Navy in our hemisphere.’³³⁰ The First Sea Lord may have been thinking about this Deakin correspondence when he wrote to Lord Tweedmouth on 1 October 1907 that “the Colonies one and all grab all they

³²⁸ Skelton, O., *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier*, Volume II, Oxford University Press, London, 1922, p.342

³²⁹ Deakin to Fisher, 12 August, 1907 in Lambert, N., *Australia’s Naval Inheritance.*, p.149

³³⁰ Lambert, N., *Australia’s Naval Inheritance.* Pp. 150-151.

possibly can out of us and give us nothing back. They are all alike!’³³¹ By 7 November, the Director of Naval Intelligence was minuting agreement: ‘It seems as if Mr Deakin wants to get all that he now has without paying the Imperial Government any thing for it, with the right of control thrown in.’³³²

By the end of 1907 Deakin was prepared, finally, to put before parliament his national defence policy. What was clear was the Prime Minister was no longer listening to Creswell. As the historian Meaney has put it ‘Deakin and Ewing had gone over Creswell’s head in proposing the naval section of the 13 December policy speech, and they had, without informing their Director of Naval Forces, accepted Admiralty advice on a flotilla of submarines and torpedo boats.’³³³ Deakin and Ewing had also ignored the Military Board and worked with a junior officer, Major J.G. Legge, who reported to the Defence Minister and generally aligned with the government’s views, in proposing the Swiss system of military training.³³⁴ Colonel Bridges, Chief of Intelligence, had investigated the Swiss model, finding it unsuitable for Australia.

Deakin commenced his defence policy speech, as he said to the House of Representatives, ‘to a small attendance in this last hour of our last session this year.

We now propose a new organisation for the defence of Australia ... to initiate a departure, contemplated at the inception of Federation ... to lay the foundation of our defence upon a basis as wide as the Commonwealth, without distinction of the States.’³³⁵

³³¹ Marder, , *Fear God and Dread Naught*. p 139

³³² Lambert, N., *Australia’s Naval Inheritance*. p. 153

³³³ Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific*, p157

³³⁴ For the military’s reaction to the Deakin-Ewing moves see Coulthard-Clark, C., *A Heritage of Spirit: A biography of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges, K.C.B., C.M.G.*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979, p.65

³³⁵ *CPD*, Session 1907-08, Vol. XLII, 22 November to 13 December 1907, p.7509

Deakin's declaration failed to credit proposals of Colonial naval officers prior to Federation to lay the foundation of a navy: firstly, in 1897 when SA Premier Kingston sponsored Creswell's proposal to the Colonial Conference of ceasing the naval subsidy to fund 5000 Australians trained for the Royal Naval Reserve in Australian waters; and secondly, in 1899 when the Committee of Naval Officers sought a local share of sea defence. Creswell's 1901 *Best Methods* Report reinforced the latter: 'our future must be that of a maritime state.'³³⁶ These proposals contemplated a national approach, but the only result after six years had been the Reid-MacLean government's 1905 implementation of the Watson government's agenda of a Council of Defence, a Navy Board and the office of Director of Naval Forces.

Little was new in the Deakin defence policy statement: it was reminiscent of Creswell's *Best Methods* Report of September 1901 and little more than a recitation of Creswell's January 1907 report to Parliament. Deakin acknowledged a shared sentiment with those who had been fighting for a local navy: 'we require a maximum of navalism', for the navy is the guarantor of freedom for the Empire, 'its first line of defence.' Yet, when Deakin claimed a new organisation and a new approach, it was a combination of Creswell's past propositions and Deakin's own imperialist federation affinity for closer union with the British Navy through involvement of the Commander-in-Chief Australia Station. For six years there had been a failure to associate national defence (including a national navy) with national identity and status. Now, Deakin grasped at last the significance of the navy: 'we owe to naval power and the British flag our freedom in and ownership of our political liberties and social standards.'³³⁷ The navy protected national integrity and, for most Australians at this time, the essence of national integrity

³³⁶ Macandie, Appendix I, p. 300

³³⁷ CPD, Volume XLII, 13 December 1907, Pp.7510-7511

was the 'White Australia' policy; hence this could only be maintained because of the 'White ensign'. As Deakin declared, 'Withdraw that, and peril would be instant.'³³⁸ Deakin thus recognised what Billy Hughes and Chris Watson had appreciated more than four years ago: to preserve the Australian way of life, underpinned by the 'White Australia' policy, Australia had to protect its shores.³³⁹ Deakin shared with the House the *sine qua non* of British imperial security policy 'that the control of naval defence and foreign affairs must always go together,' which 'implies for the present, seeing that we have no voice in foreign affairs, we are not obliged to take any part in Imperial naval defence.' The imperial federationist in Deakin still clung to the hope of a seat at an imperial council and equal participation by the dominions with Britain in imperial affairs for 'it implies, also, with equal clearness, that when we do take a part in naval defence, we shall be entitled to a share in the direction of foreign affairs.'

Deakin's position seemed isolated – and baffling given his acceptance in September of 1906 of the Creswell/Navy Officers proposals - when he rejected a local navy as 'a little land-locked navy ... of a small flotilla cut off by itself, its officers and men removed from the possibilities of promotion or advancement, except by the slow and often unsatisfactory process of seniority, and with few opportunities for them to keep abreast of the rapid advances made in their branches of the service.'³⁴⁰ To the *Bulletin*, Deakin's 'naval defence scheme is timorous and unsatisfactory. The scheme bears strong internal evidence of being dictated, not by Australian interests, but by foreign considerations.'³⁴¹

³³⁸ CPD, Volume XLII, 13 December 1907, Pp.7510-7511.

³³⁹ *SMH*, 13 November 1903

³⁴⁰ CPD, Vol. XLII, 13 December 1907, Pp. 7512/.7517.

³⁴¹ *Bulletin* (Sydney), 26 December 1907 in Greenwood, G. and Grimshaw, C., p.169

It is somewhat perplexing that Walter Murdoch, sympathetic Deakin historian and family confidante, would write that Deakin:

...never allowed Parliament to lose sight of their duty, though it was not till the end of 1907 that he was able to introduce – in a great and historic speech – a complete national scheme. His defence policy was one of the greatest services he rendered to Australia, it was largely owing to his courage, his insistence, and his foresight, that the Commonwealth was as ready as she was when the hour of her testing came in 1914.³⁴²

This was simply not true. From Federation to the end of 1907, Deakin forestalled the creation of the navy despite the support and the advocacy of Labor parliamentarians. On Deakin's prime ministerial watch the cause of an Australian navy did not advance. Despite his oratorical eloquence on 13 December and supposed qualities cited by Murdoch, Deakin's scheme failed to impress the Admiralty and it did not produce the construction of one ship nor lead to the dispensation of the naval subsidy for the training of one Australian sailor in a British ship on the Australia Station. The Deakin scheme was another example of the inconsistent, inadequate defence policies of Commonwealth governments since Federation which, except briefly in 1904-05, Deakin led or of which he was the senior minister. When Parliament returned after the Christmas break, debate was dominated by tariff, trade and customs; almost all of 1908 would go by – beyond the visit of the Great White Fleet – before Deakin's defence policy was translated into a bill before the House.

³⁴² Murdoch, W., *Alfred Deakin*, Bookman, Melbourne, 1999, p.221

Creswell had been present in the House when Deakin made his speech on 13 December. 'The House adjourned in silence. It was a great disappointment to the supporters of Australia's naval expansion schemes', Henry Feakes had watched Creswell leave Parliament 'the dejection of the naval director, Captain Creswell, when leaving the House on this occasion, remains for me an indelible memory. His labours seemed to have been in vain. He was already two years over the Admiralty retiring age for naval captains. Any disgruntled critic could urge his retirement. But all was not lost.'³⁴³

Later that evening Creswell wrote to Defence Minister Ewing, rendering a refrain that had been a constant in his service in the Commonwealth Navy and for which Creswell told the Minister he should not be misinterpreted: 'I feel sure you will acknowledge of your experience that the sole purpose of my official work – the single end I have in view – is the naval defence of Australia, and its future Naval development.'³⁴⁴ He was grievously disappointed to find that the government did not consult him.³⁴⁵ It was one of the lowest points in civil-naval force relations of the Deakin governments. It was disappointing for Creswell to learn – via the press – that Deakin had arrived at the submarine proposal after long and frequent communication with the Admiralty. Creswell could have presumed, at least as Director and the government's naval advisor, to be acquainted with the views of the government. Indeed, as Creswell pointed out to the Minister, he was not alone in his opposition to submarines: from Sir George Clarke to Commanders Colquhoun and Clarkson, who were in England at this time, 'whose

³⁴³ Feakes, p.129

³⁴⁴ Creswell to Minister of Defence, in Macandie, p.206

³⁴⁵ Colonel Bridges, Chief of Intelligence was as disgusted as Creswell with Deakin's defence policy and equally swift in expressing it. Bridges sent a copy of Deakin's defence speech to his old mentor, Major-General Hutton, recording that 'you will be no more pleased than I am. I can say, however, that the Board have never been consulted' (Bridges to Hutton, 17 December 1907, Hutton Papers, cited in Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923*: Volume 1: p.157)

views have been communicated to the Government as unqualifiedly condemning these vessels for Australia.’³⁴⁶

Creswell was appalled with the Prime Minister’s apparent disowning of the September 1906 proposals as ‘the plan of naval construction suggested by our local officers two years ago, has since been reviewed, in connection with the necessary disabilities attaching to any isolated little service of our own with its costliness and lack of stimulus and training facilities.’³⁴⁷ Creswell, since September 1906, had been working on this plan – a plan that Deakin had publicly supported - despatching Commander William Colquhoun and Engineer Commander William Clarkson overseas - whilst discussing with the visiting distinguished Professor Biles, in August 1907, the appropriate ship designs for Australian maritime conditions and the building of vessels, particularly in Australia. The gnarled hands of naval poverty had reached out from Creswell’s reports time and again to implore the Commonwealth governments to grasp the strategic thinking and the vision of local naval defence and to budget accordingly. Amazingly, it is only when recounting the Deakin 1907 policy statement in his *Alfred Deakin a Biography* that John La Nauze first introduced Captain Creswell, ‘the progenitor of the Australian Navy’. La Nauze, neglecting to mention Creswell’s total opposition to the Deakin defence policy, claimed that Deakin’s ‘practical aims coincided’ with Creswell’s, ‘but as Prime Minister he had to consider problems which lay beyond the competence, and perhaps beyond the horizon, of the devoted sailor.’³⁴⁸ La Nauze first praised Creswell, after all ‘Deakin had no delusion that he was an authority on naval warfare,’ and then dismisses Creswell’s competence in the diplomatic and technical

³⁴⁶ Macandie, p. 207

³⁴⁷ CPD, Vol. XLII, 13 December 1907, p.7516

³⁴⁸ La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, Pp. 519-20

field. 'The Admiralty, as Deakin was to find, looked on Creswell and his plans with suspicion and even hostility.' La Nauze casts more doubt on Creswell by adding, 'Or should it be remembered that Creswell, though an honest and patriotic officer, could after all have no direct knowledge of rapidly changing conceptions of naval strategy?'³⁴⁹ La Nauze effectively paves the way for Deakin to be acclaimed as founder of the navy.

La Nauze's assessment seems very one-sided: as early as 1901 Creswell urged the despatch of Clarkson to England to ascertain naval technical developments.³⁵⁰ Creswell had investigated and trialled wireless telegraphy in 1903. His reports and advice to governments, as well as his general correspondence, on naval schemes reveal a professional officer with significant understanding and local knowledge of vessel type, crew requirements, costs, and the geo-political, strategic and tactical situations within the region and world-wide. It hardly reflects someone who lived in a vacuum. Deakin's advocacy skills lay in the tact, the subtlety and the discretion of negotiating with the Commander-in-Chief, Australia Station, the Admiralty and the British Government. Deakin had neither the competence nor the perspective to undertake the advocacy of an Australian navy in areas for which Creswell could provide the professional advice for a local navy, cognisant of the strategy, planning and training reflecting Australian conditions. Charles Bean said of this time that 'Mr Deakin was always weak in performance. He could build a great policy, but he could never ask the electors to face frankly the cost of it.'³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, Pp. 519-20

³⁵⁰ Creswell to Tennyson, 21/1/1901 *Tennyson Papers* NLA 347/5/38

³⁵¹ Bean, C.E.W., *Flagships Three*, Alston Rivers, London, 1913, p.228

By January 1908, criticism of Deakin's defence policy had extended to his admirers. 'No one at the Admiralty except Fisher and two of his jackals believes in submarines for Australia'. Arthur Jose protested to Deakin 'and there is grave reason to believe that Fisher himself favours them not for their defensive qualities but because the adoption of them puts a stop at once to any independent development of an Australian squadron.'

Jose considered Fisher an 'anti colonial schemer' and concern was that Deakin was being duped by 'the glamour of what Professor Biles called "that harlequinade" of a naval demonstration got up expressly to fascinate you while you were at home.' His letter to Deakin repeated the arguments Creswell had given Defence Minister Ewing: submarines look wonderful and may perform well in British home waters, but off Sydney Heads or outside Port Phillip Bay the heavy roll of the open seas would be their demise. Jose did not want to appear 'ill-tempered and arrogant', but he needed to tell Deakin that Britain might not be available when Australia was in trouble and what was planned fell short of a real Australian Squadron. Ominously, Jose warned Deakin that pursuing 'a substitute for a real local squadron is pretty sure to lose you the scheme and, possibly, the Ministry.'³⁵²

Captain Creswell was certainly not going to defend the government. From his office in the Department of Defence in Melbourne, the Director of Naval Forces issued *The Naval Defence of the Commonwealth of Australia for the Year 1907*. It was a damning document, tinged with bitter disappointment of the false dawns of a naval defence. He recalled Deakin's promised support of September 1906 for a navy, but little had improved since Creswell's 1905 Report, in which it was noted that in terms of personnel, neglect had 'reduced the list of permanent officers to a condition bordering

³⁵² Jose to Deakin, 13 January 1908, Deakin Papers NLA 1540/15/3620-21-22

on collapse.’ If Deakin was contemplating a ‘new organisation’, Creswell argued, there were not sufficient officers to train and lead the force as ‘an increase in personnel was necessary to give effect to the naval policy announced by Mr Deakin in September 1906 but was reduced by one-half’, noting that the Estimates of 1907-1908 ‘underwent considerable reductions.’ The Estimates had not been passed at the time of Creswell’s writing of the report and ‘its condition remains therefore as reported in 1905 – two more years in which nothing has been done.’ Critically, this had long-term implications for achieving the goals of an Australian navy. Australia did not enlist and train seamen in sufficient numbers in the years before 1907/08 to crew or command the future Fleet Unit in four years, nor have officers to command or be of flag rank in the Great War in seven years.

Creswell’s Report deprived the Deakin Defence Policy statement of credibility. Creswell reminded Deakin of ‘the character and type of vessels it was decided to provide under the 1906 Government programme.’ This was why, firstly, Colquhoun and Clarkson were despatched to England to gather information to prepare designs and specifications to tender for vessels suitable for ocean conditions for ‘strong seas and weather is the *sine qua non* qualification for vessels for Australian service. A second condition is great radius of action to suit our great distances.’³⁵³ Secondly, to ensure the best, up-to-date advice was received, the government continued to retain the services of Professor Biles, a member of the Admiralty Committee on Designs. Biles had proposed vessels suitable for these conditions – and it did not include submarines: four ocean destroyers, sixteen destroyers and four First Class torpedo boats. Deakin preferred nine

³⁵³ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces on The Naval Defence of the Commonwealth of Australia for the Year 1907*, CPP – General Vol. 2 1908, 11 December 1908, Pp. 413/413/420 (Pp.7/14 of the Report)

submarines and six First Class torpedo boats. The parliament and government needed to be clear about the two schemes, Creswell retorted: 'the Destroyer Scheme is for coast Defence, including ports. The Submarine Scheme is for Port Defence, and leaves the coast bare.' More pointedly, the government endorsed 1906 Naval Officers' Scheme – defence beyond the ports – protected trade; the other, the submarines of Deakin's defence policy, defended ports only and trade, without protection, ceased. Creswell had a clear, definite vision of what was required: 'The work required of an Australian service is purely Australian defence against raiders that may escape the British Fleet,' Creswell reported, 'not, as is so commonly believed, engagement with a naval power that has already overcome the British Navy.'³⁵⁴

Creswell could have been forgiven if bitter indignation provided the tenor of his report; or if he had been baffled by Deakin not taking up the Tweedmouth offer of a local defence force – a small beginning but a real naval squadron - with Admiralty help. What was bewildering to Creswell was Deakin's failure to synthesise the desire for a navy with Australia's maritime environment (not only geographical conditions, but also engineering and technical capability and availability to furnish personnel for service) and to utilise local naval expertise to explain and promote local naval defence. If civil-naval relations had a role in the development and governance of a naval defence of Australia, Creswell found it abysmally wanting in Deakin and his government. 'It is unfortunate that, in considering the present proposals suggested by the Admiralty, and recommended to the British Prime Minister, there was no Australian Naval officer present'- at the recent Colonial Conference not Clarkson, not Colquhoun, not Creswell

³⁵⁴ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces 1907*, CPP – General Vol. 2 1908, 11 December 1908, Pp.413- 429 (Pp.7-14 of the Report)

nor even Muirhead Collins stationed in London– ‘to inform upon points the importance of which it required local experience to appreciate.’ Commonwealth governments, Creswell declared, generally stood condemned for their inadequacy and ineffectiveness in promoting an Australian navy:

Every previous discussion in London on Australian Naval matters has been characterised by the same absence of informed experience of Australian Naval Service with Australian personnel under an Australian Government. It may only be coincidence but it is noteworthy that every arrangement between the Admiralty and Australian Governments hitherto has failed both in permanence and mutual satisfaction ...

With a cold targeted courtesy Creswell pointed out that, ‘The lack of that clearer definition of Australian conditions by a professional officer I am endeavouring to make up for in this report.’³⁵⁵ It was not surprising with the impending triumph of the Great White Fleet’s visit, Creswell’s Report of January 1908 was not ordered to be printed until 11 December 1908 - even beyond parliament’s debate on the defence bills. Nothing was to interfere with a popular visit which could garner support for Deakin’s naval scheme and support for his ministry.

Creswell would continue to be proactive – if not provocative – with his basic call to ‘get ships, train men’. His venom would not dissipate. In a long letter to Richard Jebb, London’s *Morning Post* correspondent, Creswell called Deakin’s defence policy:

a policy of future barrenness, utter barrenness. I am for naval efficiency first and before anything – for spending our money to the best and most effective naval purpose – let the lawyers, ministers and rich argue out the control question and when they have spouted forth for a year or so and arrived at a decision it

³⁵⁵ *Report by the Director of the Naval Forces 1907*, CPP – General Vol. 2 1908, 11 December 1908, Pp. 419-420 (Pp.13-14 of the Report)

won't matter two shakes what that decision is for what will be done in war will be decided by the conditions of dangers of the moment.

As Director of Naval Forces, he was determined not to be the commander of a decrepit, small and obsolete navy for 'nothing can be done without Naval Force. An injurious policy has been contrived to ensure our doing nothing and having no Naval policy – Deakin described it as 'recommended by the Admiralty'. I credit the 'Post' and its very able defence writer with the sharpness to see through the Admiralty's recommendations.' British journalists, such as Jebb and Were, were provided with arguments and encouraged to write about the Australian situation by Creswell. Commonwealth parliamentary debates were 'peppered' with references to Creswell whenever the local naval issue was raised. Creswell's lobbying was needed to counter what was being recommended to the Admiralty and 'Fawkes of course had a hand in this. He, if he had his way, would practically resort to the first Agreement – already damned and frequently.'³⁵⁶

Two events over the next twelve months would provide the catalyst in Australia and focus attention in Britain on the Commonwealth's seriousness about a naval defence, security and its place in imperial forums to discuss, at least, regional matters. The first catalytic event was the visit of the United States' Atlantic Fleet³⁵⁷ - known as the Great White Fleet - while the second was the unilateral ordering of 'Fisher's Destroyers'. With the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan was now the dominant power in North Asia and had unprecedented latitude arising from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The threat was not immediate, but the reach and observed capability from visits of Japanese squadrons to Australia, along with Britain's reduced naval presence -

³⁵⁶ Creswell to Jebb, 24 March 1908, Jebb Papers, MS813, NLA

³⁵⁷ There was no Pacific Fleet at the time and San Diego was just being developed as a naval base.

both of which Creswell had written about for the past eight years - made Deakin, in particular, contemplate a closer relationship with the United States in the Pacific should the British withdraw completely. The tensions in the United States over Japanese immigration to California during 1907 and 1908 added another focus of commonality for the xenophobic Australians. Should the situation deteriorate into armed conflict between these two new imperial powers in the Pacific, Australia would have to decide between sentiment (for the Mother Country, Japan's ally) and self-interest (Pacific white nations dealing with the frictions arising from migrant Asian residents and migrating Asian populations). Deakin decided to invite the United States Navy's Atlantic Fleet to visit Australia during its world cruise; an opportunity for Australians to not only view a possible contender to fill the British naval vacuum, but also acknowledge that this was a Pacific nation which shared Australia's view on regional affairs, had similar interests and took similar stances. The invitation seemed out of character for Deakin, and it indeed caused friction between the Australian and British governments.

Prime Minister Deakin had forwarded the invitation directly, circumventing the usual cumbersome 'imperial channels', to the American Ambassador in London, asking for his help to persuade the fleet to be sent to Australia.³⁵⁸ In his invitation Deakin noted that:

No other Federation in the world possesses so many features [in common with] the United States as does the Commonwealth of Australia ... and I doubt whether any two peoples could be found who are likely to benefit more by any thing that tends to knit their relations more closely.... Australian ports and portals would be wide open to your ships and men.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Harper, N., *Australia and the United States. Documents and Readings in Australian History*, Nelson (Aust.) Ltd. Melbourne 1971. p. 59

³⁵⁹ Reckner, J., *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988 p.76-77

When President Roosevelt received the letter, his Secretary of State, Elihu Root, commented “The time will surely come, although probably after our day, when it will be important for the United States to have all ports friendly and causes of sympathy alive in the Pacific”. Roosevelt was aware of the long-term value of accepting the Australian invitation when he wrote ‘some day the question of the Pacific will be a dominant one and it will be necessary to know the sentiment of Australia and New Zealand.’ Indignant at Deakin’s actions, the Colonial Office chided that arrangements should have gone through proper channels: a proposal from Deakin put before the Governor-General for transmittal to the Colonial Office in London and then onto the British Government. The same circuitous reply would take months. The United States’ favourable response to Deakin’s invitation came while he was addressing a public meeting on 13 March. He told the gathering: “The least we can do is give three cheers for the United States ... I venture to say that a welcome such as no fleet has ever seen outside its own country will be given in Australia to the American Fleet.” Deakin’s defence minister, speaking to the press the following day, shared the sentiments of the U S President “We feel that our future in the Pacific is bound with that of the United States.”³⁶⁰

Did Deakin by his invitation want to ensure the friendship of the Americans should there be trouble in the Pacific? Atlee Hunt, Permanent Head of the Department of External Affairs, later rejected the claim that Australia was looking to America to replace Britain as the defender of Australia. It is possible Deakin was using the United States as leverage to get Britain to end the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and to strengthen

³⁶⁰ Reckner, Pp.76- 78

its naval presence in the Pacific.³⁶¹ Deakin had pushed at the 1907 Imperial Conference for self-governing colonies to share in the framing of imperial policy and failed:

He had hoped thereby to compel the British government in developing its defence and foreign policy to take more seriously the situation of the Pacific Dominions. The American–Japanese war scare of 1907-08 and the [later] Anglo-German Rivalry of 1909 had intensified and clarified this Australian sense of strategic vulnerability.³⁶²

In his guise as special correspondent to the London *Morning Post*, Deakin declared ‘what is aimed at is the actual presence of the United States vessels in our principal ports.’ He wrote of himself that, ‘The Prime Minister has also probably had in mind the reflex action of such a great naval demonstration upon his defence scheme ...’ Politically, Deakin expected to lose executive office at any time. This visit had the short term goal of shoring up Deakin’s support in the electorate for his naval scheme and ‘their mere appearance will provoke a closer consideration of some of many problems of national defence.’ For the present, Deakin would await the Admiralty’s reply to his naval proposals ‘for a local flotilla capable of acting with the Imperial squadron upon our coasts, ...’, but for local and London consumption the imperial federationist wanted to ‘emphasise the fact that all his projects are formulated upon the assumption that the control of the high seas will remain with the British Navy.’³⁶³ To Leo Amery, Deakin wrote that the visit of the United States fleet was to be welcomed ‘if we had obtained all that we are seeking in the shape of Imperial federation. It has nothing to do with our national development but everything to do with our racial sympathies – If we can help

³⁶¹ Harper, *Australia and the United States*. Pp. 59-60

³⁶² Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific*. p. 192

³⁶³ La Nauze, (Ed.) *Federated Australia*., Pp. 229-230.

to balance the pro-German and anti-British prejudices of the U.S. we shall have done good work for the Empire.’³⁶⁴

The Director of Naval Forces did not share the government’s sentiments. Creswell opposed the visit of the United States Fleet in 1908, so Prime Minister Deakin directed the acting Secretary of the Defence Department, Samuel Pethebridge, to take charge of the Fleet’s reception in Australia. It may seem ironic that Creswell could be considered as a pro-imperialist to Deakin’s independent approach. He was not: Creswell was reinforcing his argument that Australia should have its own naval defence and represent the Royal Navy in the Pacific. Creswell was angry at Deakin’s encouragement of the United States’ presence in the Pacific. Writing to Jebb he underlined his indignation:

The proud result is the spectacle of Australia appealing for American aid in the Pacific - Australia looking outside the Empire for protection. Really, we should now be in a fair way to do for ourselves, to relieve your burden, to take up the increasing burden of an increasing two power standard - To be in a position in Australia to threaten the German colonies (as they soon will be) Java and Sumatra instead of ourselves by them.

If Britain wanted to withdraw from the Pacific, if it wanted to play a dangerous game at alliance with Japan, then Creswell, while bemoaning the inadequacy of Australia’s maritime capability, implored consideration for Australia as the Imperial naval presence in the Pacific. ‘For years some of us’ he wrote, ‘... have preached what is admitted today ‘Great Britain has relinquished the Pacific’ It means that a German War would threaten Australia particularly if Holland has been absorbed and Holland’s colonies north of us.’³⁶⁵ What was even worse, while denying Australia a naval capability,

³⁶⁴ Alfred Deakin to Leo Amery, 16 May 1908, *The Papers of Alfred Deakin*, NLA

³⁶⁵ Creswell to Jebb, 24 March 1908, Jebb Papers, MS813, NLA

Britain was investing the Japanese with the ‘designs and secrets’ of its most advanced warship. To Jebb, Creswell wrote:

A German-Jap alliance would be our death knell. Could there have been anything more fatal, than for years to have built up and strengthened Japan, given her, among other things, what no power ever gave another – the Dreadnought designs and secrets. Australia meanwhile kept naked. . . . This last dying attempt, most of it force of habit, by John Fisher and Fawkes to keep Australia Naked has the commendations of the ‘Post’s’ leaders!!!!

As to Deakin, Creswell was incredulous:

I suppose Deakin is so good on the main question that they won’t fight him because he is so often on one point ... Naval, where he is such a fool. However I have not fought this question since ’93 to drop it now³⁶⁶

Initially Creswell’s had been a lonely unrelenting fight for a local naval defence. By 1908, a growing receptive public and Commonwealth Parliament were calling for locally constructed ships, Australian crews and responsibility and command for an Australian navy. The *Melbourne Age*, told its readers that Australia’s geographic position demanded that it must have a navy - for the sea could bring both friend or foe to the country’s shores:.

Australia is an island continent. Our destiny lies on the sea. No friend or enemy can reach us save by the sea. A friend is coming to us soon along the ocean highways; but who shall dare to say that almost as powerful an enemy may not one day steam into our waters in ironclad might to fight us for our heritage? Nothing is plainer than we must have a navy. We must arm, and inasmuch as the sea while we possess no war ships puts us at the mercy of any hostile Power possessing ships, it is our first duty to arm navally.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ Creswell to Jebb, 24 March 1908, Jebb Papers, MS813, NLA

³⁶⁷ *The Age*, Melbourne, 17 March 1908, in Crowley, F.K., *Modern Australian Documents 1901-1939*, Vol. 1, p. 125

The Great White Fleet called at Sydney on 20 August 1908, then Melbourne where it sailed into Port Philip Bay on 29 August and finally Albany in Western Australia, arriving on 11 September to load coal before the long voyage to Manila. Captain Frederick Tickell as Naval Commandant of Victoria was responsible for the Melbourne programme for the US Fleet. He had only days before attended the funeral of Captain William Colquhoun, who had replaced Tickell as Queensland Naval Commandant in March. During the US Fleet's visit Tickell participated in the first ship-to-ship communications by wireless when he sent a message from one US warship to another and received a reply.

Prime Minister Deakin spent much time and energy making arrangements to entertain the fleet and the press devoted vast amounts of space to the reporting of the historic visit and the planned social programme. Massive crowds flocked to see the fleet. *The Age* of Melbourne reported that the arrival of the fleet in Sydney was witnessed by 400, 000 people. For its arrival in Sydney, Deakin sent the American fleet a message, so phrased that one would suppose Deakin was greeting a maritime 'messiah':

Australia's people greet the Americans who man the greatest armada that ever sailed the Southern Seas. You fly the flag of the nation nearest to our own blood, which shares with our mother country the armed guardianship of two oceans. We have awaited your coming with joyous expectancy and now welcome you gladly under sunny skies to a land that lies lapped in peace.³⁶⁸

The majority of newspapers made little or no attempt to analyse the motives for the visit, while the enormous public participation emphasised the earnestness of a stronger

³⁶⁸ *The Age*, Friday, 21 August 1908, p. 5

relationship. Admiral Sperry, the fleet's commander, called his fleet's visit a 'monumental success.'³⁶⁹

Whatever the public genuinely thought about the visit of the Great White Fleet, 'there is little reason to question Thomas A. Bailey's conclusion that, "the alleged Oriental peril bore an important relation to the extravagance of the welcome [in New Zealand and Australia]." In both countries there existed a current of popular concern, sometimes approaching hysteria, over the intentions of the Japanese.' Deakin appeared to have high hopes that the visit would inspire Australia to create a navy of its own. When Australia spoke on security or foreign policy issues or took a particular stand, Deakin wanted it to do so with the impact of (a nation like) the United States or as an arm of the British Empire. More importantly the Mother Country needed to see, for those who shared Deakin's view that, as a new nation within the Empire, Australia had its own voice and views. Deakin needed to have the leverage of seapower. The navy would increase Australia's standing for membership in the councils of the Empire and as part of the Imperial Fleet, preserve and protect Pacific possessions and project the Empire in the region:

It was Australia's way of telling Great Britain something extremely important, something ... that she had difficulty in telling the Mother Country about up to this time. It was that if England expects, as she has the right to expect, that {Australia} shall come to the assistance of the Mother Country when that country may be enfeebled.³⁷⁰

Franklin Massey, a correspondent with the New York *Sun* noted:

³⁶⁹ Harper, *Australia and the United States*. p. 54

³⁷⁰ Reckner, p.91

the Mother Country must take heed at this very moment of Australia's dread and Australia's aspirations. Australia's dread is the yellow peril, and influx of Orientals into this fair land ... In short Australia meant by this welcome to the representative of a people who lately had shown signs of anti-Japanese feeling {In Hawaii and California} to tell Great Britain that Australia demands of the Mother Country the right to make Australia a White Man's country and she expects the Mother Country to accede to that demand, to the comfort and profit of both Mother and Daughter.³⁷¹

Britain was not unsympathetic to dominions determining that they shall be 'a White Man's country', according to Sir Charles Lucas, the Head of the Dominions Department at the Colonial Office. Nor did Britain want to interfere with immigration policy, but Lucas advised Colonies Secretary Elgin in a memorandum in July 1908, 'We may conceivably have to choose between our self-governing Dominions and the Japanese alliance ...' and, as if prefacing the enthusiasm and boldness from both sides of the Pacific, Lucas told Elgin 'the matter is now, and will always be, one which may give cause or pretext for complaints against us by the United States, and for attempts at interference on the part of the United States in our relations with the Dominions.'³⁷² Lucas' contention, if made public, would only add to Australians' abiding concern that Britain would preserve itself and its international relationships before it would preserve or protect a dominion in the Empire.

The *New York Times* also sensed the Australian search for identity. It declared 'that in future, affairs in the Pacific could not be settled without regard to Australia, and went even further by adding that America's problems often paralleled Australia's in the Pacific.'³⁷³ In this regard, Australia, the maritime nation, would need to be a sovereign

³⁷¹ Souter, G. *Lion and the Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2001., p. 174

³⁷² Hyam, p.316

³⁷³ Hayne, M.B. 'The Impact of the Battle of Tsushima on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1905-1909', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 72. Part 4, April 1987. p.282

naval power to assert its identity and security in the Pacific. 'Without such a navy a war declared tomorrow between Britain and almost any hostile power would infallibly involve us in most dire trouble,' *The Age* newspaper declared:

The Imperial Australian Squadron, poor thing that it is, would be withdrawn immediately from our waters to the more distant scenes of conflict. Of this there is not the smallest shadow of doubt. Britain had repeatedly warned us that we must expect it. Our situation then would be positively hopeless, hideously hopeless.³⁷⁴

Locally, the Commandant of the Commonwealth Naval Forces of Victoria, Captain Frederick Tickell, already thought that the Commonwealth Navy was 'in most dire trouble' and had difficulty perceiving the delivery of the Deakin' proposal for a navy. He reported his concerns about the scheme's deficiencies and lack of detail regarding personnel, training or establishments to the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Robert Muirhead Collins in a memorandum for the information of the Defence Minister. His first concern was that of insufficient personnel for the service. 'At the present time,' he wrote, 'there is little or no inducement for the Australian to take to the sea as a profession. His ambition to become a sailor is checked by a lack of opportunity.' None was to be found in the merchant navy and as to the Royal Navy there was 'such restrictions that it is almost impossible for him to accept.'³⁷⁵ Tickell considered the lack of Australian naval cadets for training at British naval colleges as being due to the age clause (12.5 years) and the inabilities of parents to financial support and supervise their sons in England; nor were the cadets, given the distance from home, able to visit or vacation with their parents. In Tickell's view training ships were needed before

³⁷⁴ *The Age*, August 3 1908. quoted in Hayne, M.B. 'The Impact of the Battle of Tsushima on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1905-1909', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 72. Part 4, April 1987, p.283

³⁷⁵ Tickell to R. M. Collins, 28 September 1908, *Papers of Alfred Deakin*, Ms 1540/ 15/ 3660-6, NLA

Federation, but now it was an imperative: 'It is the personnel, not material, that will make an Australian Navy.' This was all very well, but there were the twin issues of accommodating existing personnel into the flotilla configuration and adequately crewing the vessels whilst awaiting cadets to complete their training. Tickell seemed to assume the Royal Navy would be providing the crew (and, in fact, it substantially contributed to the ships' crews in the early years of the Royal Australian Navy), but he contended that the local Permanent Force was quite capable of destroyer duty.

Tickell did not think that the proposed submarines and destroyers should be massed at a single port, as were the British ships on the Australia Station at Sydney; they provided no protection to Adelaide, Brisbane or Melbourne. To Tickell, submarines were 'of low speed and dependent on fine weather for making a passage,' while destroyers were not weather dependent, they would take six days to get from Sydney to Adelaide. For Tickell, one thing would be certain - a marauding cruiser would have done its damage and departed before a CNF destroyer arrived. However dispersed among the ports, the ships would distribute the strain on a single shore establishment, whilst establishing or increasing marine engineering skills base in the local workforce and, Tickell claimed, 'there are establishments in Australia quite capable of building submarines and destroyers should sufficient inducements offer.'³⁷⁶

Labor continued to call for an Australian owned and crewed navy, strengthening its defence platform at its national conference held in Brisbane in 1908. Labor was not unopposed inside or outside the Conference but it did give the Federal Parliamentary Party the unequivocal backing to act in a clear, deliberate way. Yet this failed to prompt

³⁷⁶ Tickell to R. M. Collins, 28 September 1908, *Papers of Alfred Deakin*, Ms 1540/ 15/ 3660-6, NLA

Deakin, who depended on his alliance with Labor to be in government, to establish a local naval force. In a series of questions the Member for Lang (NSW), William Elliot Johnson, asked Deakin in the House on 22 September when would the Commonwealth be ‘absolutely determined to secure an adequate coastal navy? Have the people of the Commonwealth ever been consulted on the subject? Has the Government proposed, or does it contemplate proposing to the British Government any reductions of the British Fleet in Australian waters?’ Deakin replied that ‘the Government has not suggested, is not likely to suggest any reduction of the British Fleet in Australian waters; quite the contrary.’³⁷⁷ This was an ambiguous approach by Deakin. Since becoming Prime Minister in 1903, he appeared to vacillate between embracing and then standing aloof from efforts to have an Australian navy. He vacillated over having the support of the British Admiralty before proceeding; the British Admiralty had Deakin right where they wanted him: in government and in step with Imperial policy.

On 24 September 1908, ten months after Deakin’s defence policy statement Defence Minister Thomas Ewing introduced a Bill for naval and land defence into the House of Representatives. Ewing’s Second Reading speech on 29 September was mostly devoted to land defence and army logistics, reserving some criticism ‘to those opposite for putting complete faith in the British Navy.’ He asserted that ‘Civilization in Australia stands in more danger of absolute destruction than it does in any other part of the British Empire.’ It was not until an interjection from Sir John Quick (eight CPD pages into Ewing’s speech) querying, ‘what is proposed with reference to Naval Defence’³⁷⁸ that Ewing made his first substantive comments about the matter. The facts were, according

³⁷⁷ CPD, 3rd Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 47, 16 Sept.-27 Oct. 1908, p.189

³⁷⁸ CPD, Vol. XLVII, 16 Sept – 27 Oct 1908, Pp.437/455

to Ewing, 'that the British Navy was not the sea power it used to be. It was losing the dominance it once had and 'it is doubtful whether it will be able in a little time to hold its own successfully.' There was no reference to creating a local navy. What the defence minister did tell the House was that Britain's first resort is also its last resort: it will look after itself and prevail. 'The British Navy – and I say this as an Australian has as its main responsibility the protection of the heart of the Empire. If the heart goes, everything goes. We might be scorched and hurt a little; still the Empire would recover and the white man win ...' Ewing said in an oblique reference to the triumph of the white man over Australia's perceived threats; but '... The main work of the British Navy is to protect the heart of the Empire.' Australia needed to look after itself. The next logical step from this annunciation, one would have thought would be the creation of local naval protection of coast and commerce, but no, Ewing advised the House that in preparation for such an eventuality there would be '200,000 men of the National Guard partly trained and with, at least a knowledge of the rudiments of the work.'³⁷⁹ Defence of Australia would be land defence and he returned to that topic after responding to the Quick interruption.

The Defence Bill was opposed by the Free Traders and the conservative Protectionists. This anti-local navy, pro-imperialist parliamentary bloc were at ease with, and had complete confidence in, the supremacy of the Royal Navy to discourage or destroy any invading force. It was inconceivable that an enemy of Britain, - the perception being that the enemy was European - and hence of Australia, could or would mount an armed force, travel unimpeded across the oceans of the world and land an army on Australian soil without being challenged – and destroyed – at sea. Sir George Reid, the leader of

³⁷⁹ CPD, Vol. XLVII, 16 Sept – 27 Oct 1908, Pp.437/455.

the Free Traders was not averse to using the advocates for a local navy in opposing Deakin's Bill. He chided Deakin:

The Prime Minister is at issue with his naval advisers on his naval policy. That is an extraordinary state of affairs. The naval advisers of the Government – Captain Creswell and a committee of naval officers – are absolutely opposed to the obtaining of the submersibles which the Prime Minister desires – probably on good advice from the Mother Country... Captain Creswell is the gentleman, who more than any other officer, has inspired the movement of naval defence.

It was unreserved recognition for Creswell from one of the principal opponents of a local navy, who would still argue, as he had done in July 1901 with the first defence bill, that 'if we have an efficient protection, why should we duplicate vessels merely for the sake of hoisting our own flag?' Australian sentiment was in the balance for and against a local navy but Reid's view of the defence of Australia remained absolute:

The Imperial Government and the people of the Mother Country, are responsible for every act of the Military and Naval Forces, whether Imperial or colonial. The responsibility in time of war is absolutely with the Imperial Government and the British people, not with Australia.³⁸⁰

Supporting the imperialist position the Director of Military Studies at Sydney University, Colonel Hubert Foster wrote two articles for the *Argus* on (3 and 14 October 1908) on the defence of Australia. A retired British army officer, he came to Australia in 1906 to take up the University of Sydney appointment. He became Chief of the Australian General Staff in 1916. As one historian put it 'Always an apologist for the British view of Australian naval defence, he [Foster] consistently opposed the views of ... Creswell.'³⁸¹ Foster contended that 'Australia is, by her geographical situation, in less danger of attack than any other part of the Empire. Japan the nearest naval power is

³⁸⁰ CPD, Vol. XLVII, 16 Sept – 27 Oct 1908, Pp. 455/652-3

³⁸¹ Foster, L., *High Hopes: the men and motives of the Australian Round Table*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1986, p.77

as far away as Turkey from the United States. From Sydney to Yokohama the distance is that of New York from Athens' He relied on the supremacy and presence of the Royal Navy for 'no nation in the world can attack Australia without the certainty of having on its hands an immediate war with Great Britain.' Australia, in Foster's view, could also be confident and secure because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and, therefore, with supremacy at sea assured, there was little value in creating a local naval flotilla.

Ewing sought Creswell's views on Foster's articles, Creswell replied with the undeviating arguments with which he had advised past governments. 'All defence must depend upon the power of foreign navies' Creswell asserted:

If there were no foreign navies, possibly one gunboat or cruiser would suffice to ensure unchallenged supremacy. If there were but weak foreign navies, a moderate but relatively strong navy would be required to ensure supremacy. With the growth in strength of foreign navies, the standard of force to meet them must be raised.

Then most tellingly, he advised the minister, 'There is no law of eternal friendship or indissoluble alliance. The friend of today may be the foe tomorrow.'³⁸² Creswell did not like Deakin's Admiralty-inspired scheme for a local navy nor did he like the appearance of an *entente cordiale* there appeared to be between Australia and the United States with the visit of the Great White Fleet. The reality was Britain was withdrawing warships, relying on Japan to substitute for the balance of naval power in the Pacific, while the government seemed to be flirting with the United States as a protector rather than having a realistic naval plan to build and deploy suitable warships to defend Australia. Creswell repeated the warning of some English writers at the time 'that the time is fast

³⁸² CPP - General – Volume 2, 1908, Pp.365/370-371

approaching when the existence of Australia will depend on the goodwill of America and the politeness of Japan.’

One only had to look at *Brassey, Jane* and other naval journals, according to Creswell, to observe the change that had come across the navies of the world. Creswell told the minister that ‘today Great Britain’s supremacy is commanding but the Dreadnought launch marks an epoch, and every year that passes since sees the value of the older type, on which British supremacy mainly rests today, sensibly diminishing.’ The rate of construction of battleships by foreign naval powers equalled Britain, in Creswell’s view, as he forewarned the Deakin government of what would be termed the ‘Dreadnought scare’. ‘The Japanese average rate of ship construction has been only two years to the British three. Germany has authoritatively declared her ability to build as fast as Great Britain. In 1911 Germany will possess but one less Dreadnought than Great Britain. In the same year, Japan will have one or, perhaps two, dreadnoughts less than Great Britain ...’ Creswell needed to make it clear in Ewing’s mind, and for whoever else may read his views, that ‘supremacy depends primarily in modern Naval warfare not upon the number but upon the class of vessel.’ Further, he reiterated a central theme in his campaign for a naval defence that ‘to an Admiralty charged with the conduct of a great naval war there could be no more weakening distraction than responsibility for the safety of great interests at a great distance.’³⁸³ This correlated with Ewing’s contentions that Britain’s prime naval directive was defence of the homeland; Creswell had been arguing the local navy cause for so long that in a barb directed as much to governments as to people of Foster’s ilk he said that ‘British sea supremacy for a century, and in

³⁸³ CPP - General – Volume 2, 1908, Pp.365/370-371

Australia the added safety of thousands of miles of ocean, have been the main contributing causes to our indifference.’³⁸⁴

The Labor parliamentarians continued to alert Australians of the current maritime security position. Speaking in the Defence Bill debate Billy Hughes said, ‘There is every reason to believe that, at least, one Power has the deliberate intention of invading, or striking a blow at, Great Britain, in which event, of course we must suffer in common with other parts of the Empire.’ This echoed the Creswell’s advice to Defence Minister Ewing in October 1908. Hughes pressed the Naval Director’s line on the strength, disposition and availability of the British Fleet, when he said in the House that:

It is clear that by the readjustment of the British Fleet there is in the whole of the Pacific only the Australian Squadron, which consists of one first-class protected cruiser, two second-class, five third-class, and two small ships unclassified. Of these vessels there is only one which, if in England, would not be on the scrap-heap – that is the *Powerful*. ... There is nothing between us and invasion, or even a raid, except the *Powerful*, which, on the face of it, is quite unable to police, much less defend, 8,000 miles of coastline.³⁸⁵

By the end of 1908 Labor had formed the view that its 27 Members of the House of Representatives had a better claim to be the government of the day than Deakin’s 15 Liberal Protectionists. Decidedly, Deakin wanted Australia to have a greater voice within the Empire and greater protection for its borders. The integrity of both and of himself, as prime minister, was now at stake. Mentally and politically he was diminishing. The cache of personal regard was no longer enough to keep him in power with the consent of Labor, whose leader, Andrew Fisher, advised the House on 6 November that the party would withdraw support for the Deakin government. On 10

³⁸⁴ *CPP* – General – Volume 2, 1908, Pp.370-371/373.

³⁸⁵ *CPD*, 7 Oct., 1908, pp. 865-866

November 1908 Deakin resigned and the Defence Bill lapsed. On 17 November Labor formed government with Andrew Fisher, as Labor's second Prime Minister and George Pearce, the nation's ninth Defence Minister within eight years. The creation of a navy was uppermost in their minds.

CHAPTER V

1909 – 1911 Building a Naval Defence: “A good sturdy dependable Naval Cub in the Pacific”³⁸⁶

As the first decade of the new Commonwealth drew to a close, Creswell was still battling people, time, place and finance to have an Australian crewed and owned navy established. His argument became more persistent, firstly highlighting the growing strength of the seapower of Japan which was accompanied by the Japanese army's territorial expansion into North Asia; and, secondly, the close proximity of Germany's colonial possessions to the north of Australia coupled with its taunting naval race with Britain.

It could be claimed that Creswell was the founder of the Australian Navy but the part political parties and governments played in the foundation should not be ignored. Late in the first decade it was the political decisions that set the navy's establishment in place and time. It would still be a struggle: a 'tension' between those who favoured an Australian navy and those who saw it as an affront to Imperial unity of control; between aspiration and what was finally put in place. Nor was there one version of a way forward. Though a few contemporaries have been anointed with the accolade of 'founder', the one constant thread through all the years of struggle was Creswell. Andrew Lambert described this 'tension' well when he wrote that:

Navies have always been costly, resource intensive organizations demanding professional skills and experience that cannot be acquired as easily, and more significantly as quickly, as those of contemporary armies. It has been far easier for great naval powers to create armies than vice-versa. If a nation is to sustain

³⁸⁶ Creswell to Jebb, 9 February 1909, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/45

the costly commitment to naval power the body politic must be convinced there is a real need.³⁸⁷

Creswell knew what it would take to acquire a navy, yet in the ten years since Federation there were three abiding factors in his unanswered call: Commonwealth revenues, Australia's small population and the lack of a consistent, proactive Australian naval defence policy.

Economies of scale had little relevance when six Australian colonies federated, what revenues there were went to establishing departments of state, a high court and government agencies and providing social welfare, such as pensions. One revenue source, customs duties, which had been transferred from the colonies under the constitution, came at a price: to gain this financial power the constitution provided for three-quarters of the customs revenue to be re-distributed to the States for a period of ten years. Creswell's successive naval schemes were modest in the type and number of vessels proposed for coastal and commerce protection, within the context of an Imperial navy presence in Australia and under Imperial command and control in time of war. While Creswell's cost projections and cost benefit analysis for his various schemes supported his arguments, there were still real – and imagined – dividends from a naval agreement with Britain for the early Australian governments with limited revenues. For a fraction of the cost, Australia had Royal Navy ships, men and infrastructure; and, it was imagined, for the naval agreement said so, training would be provided to Australians and if attacked the Royal Navy would protect them.

³⁸⁷ Lambert, A., Ch.9 *Naval Warfare*, in Hughes, M. and Philpott, W., *Modern Military History*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2006, p.173

The second factor, the small population, impacted across the economy, the social infrastructure and the very functioning of the Australian community: the population in 1901 was 3,788,000 people and by 1913 it had only increased to 4,820,000. Creswell identified the number of men required to crew the vessels in his schemes, but unless he offered pay in excess of the Royal Navy or local civilian occupations, he could not hope to have the necessary complement for a local navy. For years Creswell had reported the government neglect in the recruitment, training and operational experience of Australian seamen. The Admiralty stifled local navalist ambition by arguing that Australia's ability to finance a navy and its small population to generate skilled crews were prohibitive to it possessing a credible naval force. When the 'Fleet Unit' was commissioned in the second decade, all ranks (officers and sailors) were substantially filled by seconded and former Royal Navy men. The U.S. naval theorist, Mahan, had wondered at laws, such as those passed in Australia, that restricted immigration and excluded certain people from the country. 'Fill up your land with men of your own kind, if you wish to keep it to yourself,' Mahan conceded, though he wondered how long immigration laws would last. 'It is very different for those who are severed from their like by sea', particularly when one is trying to resource this outpost of the Empire and provide a naval defence for 'all the naval power of the British Empire cannot suffice ultimately to save a remote community which neither breeds men in plenty nor freely imports them.'³⁸⁸ There was an addendum to this recruitment dilemma: Henry Feakes noted a further limitation for officer entry to an Australian navy, where defence regulations stipulated 'that candidates for commissions in the Commonwealth naval forces must be the bearers of a commission in (a) Royal Navy, (b) Royal Naval Reserves, and in possession of a Master

³⁸⁸ Westcott, A. (Ed.), *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, Dover Publications, Mineola, 1999, p.350

Mariner's certificate.'³⁸⁹ Preference was given to candidates of Australian birth, but tenure in the CNF gave all the appearances of being temporary as all entrants were commissioned as sub-lieutenants, on probation and subject to the commission being withdrawn with three months' notice.

The third factor, the lack of a consistent, proactive naval defence policy, came from the collateral damage arising from the disruptive changes of government and prevailing policies favouring the development of the land forces first. There had been eight defence ministers between 1901 and 1908 though, except for brief tenures by Watson and Reid, Alfred Deakin was prime minister throughout this period. Deakin was aware that Australia only had certain sovereignty to the shoreline – not beyond. If the Commonwealth could not have an autonomous foreign policy, the value and utilisation of a sea-going navy was limited.

George Pearce, Labor's Defence Minister, believed that Australia did have the fiscal strength to maintain a navy; the party had called for it and he was determined that this should occur. He wrote to the new Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, on 21 January 1909:

I feel strongly tempted to say we should order the torpedo destroyers now and take the responsibility when Parlt. meets, delay I think in this matter will damage us with the people, more than it will gain for us with Parlt. I believe such an action would be the most popular thing we could do.³⁹⁰

The Labor platform had called for an Australian owned and controlled navy since 1904 and the most recent Labor Party Conference had re-endorsed this call. Pearce told Fisher, 'I am more than convinced as to its wisdom and urgency.' Here was the

³⁸⁹ Feakes, p.145

³⁹⁰ Pearce to Fisher, 21 January 1909, Papers of Andrew Fisher: NLA 2919/6/9

opportunity to bring the party's goal to fruition; if not, Pearce feared 'that if we delay till Parlt meets, we may not get the opportunity, and our opponents may.' Against the call for an Australian navy, the anti-navy parliamentarians – mostly pro-imperialists in the Free Trade Party - had combined with Deakin's supporters to quarantine money on naval expenditure, which could only be released following parliamentary debate. Pearce advised Fisher, "Our Party has made the question of an Australian navy; we have made public opinion on this question. I strongly urge we should reap the harvest whilst we have the chance. I trust you will give this your earnest consideration."³⁹¹

To Pearce's call Creswell also added his plea to the Prime Minister on 5 February: 'The Commonwealth is without any power of Naval defence on its coasts, and has it only to the most limited and fast diminishing degree within its ports.'³⁹² The 1903 Naval Agreement promised the local naval force would be strengthened and brought up to date yet this had not materialised. Between 1901 and 1909 in Australia there was little naval policy, little direction and no capital expenditure. The local naval presence and morale could have withered and died. Hyslop has argued 'That it did not was due in the main to Creswell's leadership.'³⁹³ Creswell was preaching to the converted when he told Fisher, 'our Naval Defences are at the front doors of the Commonwealth.'³⁹⁴

For Andrew Fisher, Labor had the will, now was the time and Australia could demonstrate, at least in part, that it had the manufacturing capability. There was also the £250,000 unspecified defence trust fund. Creswell advised Pearce how this could be used: 'order three Destroyers now, instead of two destroyers and one 1st Class T.B,' at a

³⁹¹ Pearce to Fisher, 21 January 1909, Papers of Andrew Fisher: NLA 2919/6/9

³⁹² Macandie, p.216

³⁹³ Hyslop, p.159

³⁹⁴ Macandie, p.217

cost of £256,000 as opposed to £217,000. Creswell suggested that as the destroyers took fourteen months to build, the extra funding could come out of the next year's estimates. Creswell had not forgotten his goal of establishing local infrastructure: 'Also it would be possible to send home skilled workmen to get instruction in the home yards in the building of Destroyers.' These acquisitions were part of Creswell's scheme of four ocean-going destroyers, sixteen (River class) destroyers and four 1st Class torpedo boats. Fisher immediately adopted Creswell's destroyer scheme with a slight variation: there would be four ocean destroyers, nineteen (Improved River Class) destroyers and one police vessel.³⁹⁵ On 5 February 1909, Fisher issued the order to build the first three destroyers (hereafter known as 'Fisher's Destroyers' and commissioned as HMAS *Parramatta*, *Yarra* and *Warrego*) without consulting the Commonwealth Parliament, the Admiralty or the Commander-in-Chief of the Australia Station.

In early February Prime Minister Fisher addressed the annual luncheon of the Australian Native Association in Melbourne at which Deakin was also present. While Fisher acknowledged Deakin's advocacy for the defence of Australia, Fisher was providing more: executive action. He knew what would appeal to this most xenophobic of audiences: Labor would deliver for Australia its 'own navy, controlled by our own people and co-operating with that of the mother country.'³⁹⁶ Why? For the reasons that made politicians and most Australians on at least one issue bi-partisan: Australia with New Zealand according to the *Melbourne Age* were 'outposts of the great white race ...

³⁹⁵ Macandie, Pp. 217/218/341-342.

³⁹⁶ *The Age*, Melbourne, 2 February 1909

the guardians of the civilisation, of institutions and of the safety of a white people.’³⁹⁷

The nation’s fears and resolve were reflected in the poet, Henry Lawson, who wrote in 1908 that ‘the White world shall know its young outpost with pride ...’³⁹⁸ Lawson called on this outpost of the British race in the South to be vibrant and prepared to participate in a sub-imperialism of its own, securing Pacific islands for the Commonwealth.

The cornerstone of the security of Australia, for Creswell, was naval defence. In correspondence with Richard Jebb, Creswell acknowledged that ‘matters in Europe are looking black’ and war with Germany would surely come. One needed to be vigilant when war came for ‘then it will be hard enough times especially if brother Jap wants to land here.’ He had informed Jebb in 1907 that ‘It has always been the great Naval action in Europeans waters that will decide Australia’s fate, - so we have always been told. Is there the same certainty now that the Jap has had the Pacific made over to him? How long will that alliance last?’³⁹⁹ This would be a long standing concern for Creswell, which could be eased by local naval defence: ‘From your point of view in England, is not this an additional reason for developing the Naval capacity and resources of Australia to the utmost? Some day we may need of ourselves to be strong

³⁹⁷ *The Age*, Melbourne, 2 February 1909

³⁹⁸ In spite of all Asia, and safe from her yet,
Through wide Australasia my standards I’ll set;
A grand world and bright world to rise in an hour—
The Wings of the White World, the Balance of Power
Through storm, or serenely – whate’er I go through –
God grant I be queenly! God grant I be true!
To suffer in silence and strike at a sign,
Till all the fair islands of these seas are mine. Cronin, L., (Ed) *Henry Lawson: A Fantasy of Man*, Vol. 2, Lansdowne, Sydney, 1984, *The Song of Australia* (1908), p. 426

³⁹⁹ Creswell to Jebb, 9 February 1909, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/45

in the Pacific’⁴⁰⁰ It reflected the growing political and popular consensus from 1907 to 1909, according to Meaney, of a ‘new strategic perspective ... a serious possibility, an invasion of Australia, which would be launched by an Asian power.’⁴⁰¹ Creswell was also alluding to the geo-political challenges of Europe being different to Australia, which sought security in the Pacific.

Creswell could advise Jebb in 1909 that ‘At last it is a Labour Govt. that makes a beginning to do something for Australia. To Creswell there was a sound plan by a good minister of ordering destroyers and establishing a dockyard for future warship construction. While this was private correspondence, Creswell was well aware of the influence Jebb could have promoting the credentials of the Director of CNF to the British public and authorities. Creswell envisaged a fleet which would steadily develop, within an evolving naval defence replete with engineering infrastructure, training facilities and an intelligence service. He adhered to the principle of an Australian navy within ‘the one flag, one fleet’ Empire, apprising Jebb that:

Deakin’s silly Naval Scheme, largely Admiralty planned is ‘blown out’. I will be glad if you tell all and sundry that we have no idea of an ‘independent’ Navy – but if a force capable of the closest co-operation with the Navy. Our fitness for this depends entirely with the Admiralty and this must be impressed upon them.⁴⁰²

Creswell’s aspiration was that the ‘British Lion’, the Royal Navy, would:

Let our Navy people join their Gunnery and other schools and learn in their fleets and generally say ‘here is a promising colt let us teach him cricket, give every start and bye & bye he will be a good man in the eleven’. If they do that

⁴⁰⁰ Creswell to Jebb, 31 July 1907, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/37-41

⁴⁰¹ Meaney, p.194

⁴⁰² Creswell to Jebb, 9 February 1909, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/45

they will touch Australian enthusiasm in a way they will not have thought possible resulting in a good sturdy dependable Naval Cub in the Pacific.⁴⁰³

More than British co-operation would be required to realise the 'Fisher Destroyers'. Recalling the early phase of procurement some months later, Andrew Fisher, whose government wanted to maximise local warship construction, said that the Commonwealth could not obtain the construction specifications unless it agreed to have at least one of the vessels built in Britain. His government was 'politely informed by the firms concerned that they conducted their business for profit and not on a purely sentimental basis. Like everyone else they were prepared on occasions to cry out for the defence of the Empire but they desired to deal with us on a business basis.'⁴⁰⁴ Thus the Fisher government, by agreement, proposed that two destroyers be built in Britain and the third assembled in kit form and sent to Australia for construction. Pearce wrote to Fisher on 10 February that Robert Muirhead Collins, the Commonwealth's representative in London, had advised him that quotations were being submitted and that particulars should be sent by 23 February. In his letter, Pearce also told Fisher that Hughes was wiring him to not accept the tenders until the manager of the NSW State Dockyard had been consulted about constructing the ships locally. Pearce rejected this, wanting the first 'boats', as he put it, to 'be constructed on safer rather than experimental lines.'⁴⁰⁵ By April Collins wrote to Fisher advising him that McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, was 'anxious to assist the Commonwealth government in their naval defence in every possible way' and only wishes to 'know what the Commonwealth government wishes to do.'⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰³ Creswell to Jebb, 9 February 1909, Jebb Papers, NLA 813/1/45

⁴⁰⁴ CPD, Vol. LII, 13 October 1909, p.4458

⁴⁰⁵ Pearce to Fisher, 10 February 1909, Papers of Andrew Fisher: NLA 2919/6/1

⁴⁰⁶ Muirhead Collins to Fisher, 2 April 1909, Fisher Papers: NLA 2919/6/6

To assist Collins, Engineer-Commander William Clarkson, already in Britain, was directed to participate in assessing the tenders. Clarkson recommended the 700-ton, fast, oil-burning and turbine-driven vessels proposed by the consortium of William Denny and Brothers of Dumbarton and Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering of Govan. Clarkson remained in Britain as the naval engineering representative during construction. The *Parramatta*, with a displacement of 750 tons, was laid down at the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company on 17 March 1909 and was completed with armaments and stores for a cost of £82,500 - the cheapest ship ever built for the Australian navy! *Yarra*, of 700 tons, was built by William Denny and Brothers and laid down in 1909, while the *Warrego*, (700 tons' displacement) built by London and Glasgow Engineering and Iron Shipbuilding Company of Govan, was laid down in 1910. The latter was dismantled and re-assembled at Cockatoo Island Dockyard, Sydney.

Pearce, having recommended the ordering of the destroyers, now sought Creswell's counsel to counter the arguments that would come from those who opposed a local navy. Pearce posed two questions to the Director of Commonwealth Naval Forces in February 1909: Why does Australia require any naval defence? Why that is more than any other British dependency? Creswell took Pearce through the reasoning for his proposals. There were details that could be questioned e.g. destroyers versus cruisers or his opposition to submarines, but his arguments were compelling. "Our coastlines are our business lines", Creswell told Pearce on 22 February. "Australian coastal defence protects imperial food and raw material...until it can gain the open sea and safety."⁴⁰⁷ He was very clear when he informed Pearce that should the British Fleet be completely

⁴⁰⁷ Macandie, Pp.223/227

pre-occupied elsewhere ‘this country would be open to invasion. If we are without any Naval defence whatever, the sea up to the line of our beaches is as safe to an enemy as the waters in his own harbours.’ There was a basic condition ‘fundamentally influencing our defence – isolation. We are at the end of the world.’ The Pacific was an area of European colonisation and the basing of squadrons for European navies. Creswell was particularly concerned about ‘the ownership of the immense archipelago stretching from East to West to the North of us’ – a strategic concern to which he would return in 1912 and 1918 in reports to the Commonwealth government.

In his straightforward, unambiguous manner Creswell advised Pearce, ‘We must have a sea force...a squadron of half a dozen Dreadnoughts with cruisers, destroyers and smaller torpedo craft in due complement would render us perfectly safe, but that was quite beyond our means.’ Creswell knew that for the politician cost would be a major consideration, so he reasoned that a feasible Australian naval force would be supplementary to and effective for co-operation with, the Royal Navy: defensive, responsive and self-sufficient (i.e. an Australian naval defence with infrastructure to build, repair and supply such a force). As a defensive force, the torpedo boat destroyer seemed to be commensurate with Australia’s needs and financial means and, as a flotilla force, be complementary to the Royal Navy Squadron despatched when trouble arose in the Pacific. Creswell was basing such a naval force on the assurance given by British government’s that the Royal Navy would defend the dominions in the Pacific. The new Commonwealth government, Creswell counselled, should consider that ‘any Australian Naval Force is ... a portion of the sea power of the British Nation the world over.’⁴⁰⁸ Therefore, Creswell advised that ‘The force we require must completely meet our local

⁴⁰⁸ Macandie, Pp.223/227/225/226/230.

needs, and be at the same time the most valuable auxiliary or supplementary force for co-operation with the Royal navy.’⁴⁰⁹ Five months later, at the Imperial Conference in London, the Admiralty would make an offer, initially baulked at by Deakin’s representative, which, remarkably, resembled Creswell’s ‘sea force’: locally complete and supplementary to Royal Navy needs.

In Creswell’s twenty-two years of advocacy, his schemes and correspondence revealed a vision of a credible self-reliant naval defence. There needed to be warships of the quantity and type suitable for Australian conditions, well-equipped infrastructure: officer, entry and specialist training of personnel; skilled local construction and maintenance engineering facilities; wireless telegraphy; and an intelligence gathering and assessment service. Finally, and significantly, there needed to be a capability which could be neither bought or recruited: experience, particularly operational experience, and professionalism. Time may bring both, but only interchangeability with the Royal Navy would bring them sooner.

1909 would prove to be a defining year for Creswell, Australian naval defence and the Empire. Prime Minister Fisher, with the initial naval acquisitions underway, drafted a memorandum to the Colonies Secretary in April 1909 outlining the views of the Labor government on naval defence and Australia’s future relationship with Britain and the Admiralty. Fisher wanted to signify that Australia was to be a sovereign naval power: capable of operating a navy to secure Australia’s borders and contributing to Imperial defence in time of war. The draft was given to the Governor-General, Lord Dudley, who objected to the clause requiring, in time of war, consent of the Commonwealth before an

⁴⁰⁹ Macandie, p.230

Australian warship was placed under the command of the Admiralty. Dudley largely re-drafted the clause himself to make the transfer automatic, which the government accepted. Cunneen has said that ‘Dudley can be criticised not only for interfering in a matter of Australian concern, but also as exceeding his diplomatic instructions.’⁴¹⁰ The memorandum sent by Fisher to the Colonies Secretary in April 1909 advised the continuance of the current naval agreement, ‘to provide, equip and maintain the defences of Naval bases for the use of the ships of the Royal Navy’ and the establishment of a local navy consisting of a torpedo flotilla whose sphere of action would be coastal defence with the Director of Naval Forces and his officers to come under the sole control of the Commonwealth Government in peace time. Sharing the burden of maintaining Britain’s supremacy as a naval power, according to Fisher, would be achieved ‘by encouraging Naval development in this country, so that the people of the Commonwealth will become a people efficient at sea, and thereby better able to assist the United Kingdom with men, as well as ships, to act in concert with other sea forces of the Empire.’ If naval vessels travelled outside Commonwealth territory, and assuming vessels of the Australian navy would be where the British Navy was present, command would devolve to the British naval officer – ‘if senior in rank to the Commonwealth officer.’ In the Dudley-approved war provisions ‘all the vessels of the Naval Forces of the Commonwealth shall be placed by the Commonwealth Government under the orders of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.’⁴¹¹

To do this each commander of an Australian vessel would have sealed orders and instructions to this effect when a state of war or emergency arose. When it came to coastal defence vessels, the approval of the Commonwealth government would be

⁴¹⁰ Cunneen, p.80

⁴¹¹ Macandie, p.235-6

required. Essentially, though there would be later avowals and Admiralty refinements, Fisher was presaging what occurred in the Great War six years later: the governor-general's declaration transferred the Australian Fleet to the Admiralty, the *Australia*, *Melbourne* and *Sydney* were removed to the northern hemisphere. In 1916, the Admiralty would seek and be given approval by the Australian government for Australia's destroyers to be deployed from Asian waters to the Mediterranean.

The intelligence from the Commander-in-Chief Australia Station, Vice-Admiral Richard Poore, to the Admiralty's First Lord, Reginald McKenna, was that the new Australian Prime Minister 'does not think imperially'.⁴¹² Poore appeared somewhat affronted when in a meeting with the Prime Minister on 7 March, Fisher said, 'there is a growing idea that a great empire cannot be governed or controlled by one central power and therefore it is the duty of each colony to take care of itself and be entirely self supporting and capable of undertaking its own defence.' To Poore, Fisher just did not understand the imperative: to keep open the trade routes, its lines of communication, Australia needed the Imperial Navy for its very existence. The Vice-Admiral acknowledged Fisher as 'a shrewd man of the people: quiet and conscious of his lack of training for the post he holds. I should think he has a fair share of obstinacy but in the hands of a clever man would be easily led. Not a great leader, nor will he ever be.'⁴¹³

Over the next five years, the shrewdness and obstinacy of Fisher brought not only the achievement of foundation social and infrastructure legislative programmes but also the establishment of an Australian navy, with training colleges for both army and navy along with requisite engineering and logistics (small arms factory, dockyards and

⁴¹² Private letter from Vice Admiral Richard Poore to First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna, 8 March 1909 – McKenna Mss, 3/9 in Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs*. p.173

⁴¹³ Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs*. p.173

purchase materiel) for the defence services. Seemingly exasperated, Poore wrote in his private letter to McKenna that, 'a certain type of Australian politician wants an Australian Navy: Australia does not want an Australian Navy.' If Poore correctly assessed Fisher's qualities as 'a shrewd man of the people', then his anti-navy claim suggests that: Poore misread the mood in Australia. One needs to remember that Admiral Poore was representing Britain in the South, not Australia; to Britain he owed allegiance and intelligence on Australia's thinking about naval defence. The new Labor government's meaning was clear: Australia wanted a navy and *Parramatta, Yarra, Warrego* would be the tangible proof of that. Alfred Deakin, however, was another matter. Poore reported to McKenna that Deakin had been 'speaking at different meetings and leaving his audiences cold. He is at present sitting on the fence, holding out hands to Mr Fisher and the Leader of the Opposition alternate – I think he will eventually find a resting place in the ditch.'⁴¹⁴

In Britain, a greater concern was about the accelerated battleship construction by Germany. The First Lord of the Admiralty, McKenna, and his First Sea Lord, Jacky Fisher, sought a construction programme of six dreadnoughts but faced a cabinet which opposed the laying down of even four. Fisher encouraged a public campaign of 'we want eight and we won't wait'. Finally, a compromise was agreed for four dreadnoughts to be laid down in 1909 and, if required, for four more no later than 1 April 1910. Though the campaign in Britain had been to gain domestic support for increased naval spending, New Zealand willingly offered to fund the construction of a dreadnought for the Royal Navy. Initially the British government declined. However the opportunity having been presented, no encouragement was needed for First Sea Lord

⁴¹⁴ Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs*. Pp.173-174.

Fisher to present a scheme, in which dominion nationalism could be sated and, through greater and more permanent assistance, British capital ship supremacy over Germany could be assured.

In Australia, the reaction pitted nationalism against imperialism. The Commonwealth government was urged by sections of the public to present a dreadnought to the British Navy. 'Germany has stolen a march on Britain, and Britain's naval supremacy is threatened... Is Australia rich and loyal enough to give Britain the wherewithal to build a Dreadnought?'⁴¹⁵ Melbourne's *The Age* challenged. The public mood in New South Wales and Victoria was such that the state government was prepared to buy a dreadnought; subscription lists of donors were drawn up, meetings were held and even the Governor-General, Lord Dudley, did some private lobbying. Dudley suggested to Andrew Fisher that 'the moral effect of presenting a dreadnought might be very great, as illustrating the solidarity of the Empire.'⁴¹⁶ Opposition Leader Deakin awaited the wind of public opinion and when it predominantly favoured a dreadnought for Britain, he called for its purchase. 'His fervent and uncritical endorsement of the Dreadnought cry was hasty and opportunist', Deakin's biographer, La Nauze, asserted. 'He had committed himself to this specific proposal without knowledge of the needs or desires of the British government and without reliable information about the reality of the 'crisis'.'⁴¹⁷ Later, when Deakin gained office, as so many times before, he tried to avoid commitment, couching the purchase of a dreadnought as merely 'a desire'.

⁴¹⁵ *The Age*, Melbourne, 19 March 1909

⁴¹⁶ Cunneen, p.79

⁴¹⁷ La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, p.557

By contrast, the Fisher government did not waver: it would build and crew a navy of ocean-going destroyers. This would be the Australian contribution to Imperial defence.⁴¹⁸ The mood of the public may have shifted from possessing a local navy to building a dreadnought for Britain but Fisher wanted to replace a supposed British naval crisis and local hysteria with consultation. Urged on by Defence Minister Pearce to discuss colonial naval defence and co-operation with the imperial navy, Fisher called for a conference to be held in London on Imperial defence. Britain agreed to an Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence and arranged for self-governing dominions to meet in London in late July. Whoever attended from the government, Pearce advised Fisher, should be accompanied by Captain Creswell,⁴¹⁹ Fisher agreed.

After the rising of Parliament, Prime Minister Fisher, in government for barely three months, travelled to every state to better acquaint the Australian people with Labor's policies. At Gympie on 30 March 1909 Fisher called for a land tax to break up the great estates, a stronger conciliation and arbitration act and a change to the Constitution to nationalise monopolies. He also called for an Australian defence force with compulsory military training, a munitions industry and, particularly, a navy consisting of four ocean destroyers, sixteen (improved River Class) destroyers, in addition to the three already ordered, and one vessel for police duties; twenty-four vessels in all. For Deakin, Cook and Forrest (who led the anti-Labor Protectionist conservatives) the Fisher speech 'smacked' of socialism. Deakin brought the Protectionists (supported by

⁴¹⁸ The offer of paying for a dreadnought was in the end declined by the British Government. The Lord Mayor of Sydney, on behalf of the NSW committee, wrote to the Prime Minister (Deakin) on 13 October 1909, offering the money raised, £35,000-40,000, to establish a naval college for the training of officers. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, Volume 2, 1909) Eventually the money was split down the middle: half for a Naval College at Jervis Bay, half for a scheme, beginning in 1911, which saw 20 British youths per fortnight migrate to Australia to be taught agricultural skills and then move to rural areas where there was a shortage of labourers. The scheme was aptly named the Dreadnought Scheme and lasted to 1939 with 7500 boys migrating to Australia.

⁴¹⁹ Pearce to Fisher, 20 April 1909, *Papers of Andrew Fisher*: NLA 2919/6/99

manufacturers) and the Free Traders (merchants) together - each normally suspicious of the other - into an uneasy alliance against Labor. Deakin, more than at any other time since Federation, did not have the numbers in parliament – and what numbers he had were now primarily Victorian based. He needed to ‘fuse’ with others if he was to have the prime ministership and break free of following a Labor based legislative programme. Deakin struck a bargain with the conservative, pro-imperialist, anti-local navy Free Traders: their leader, Sir George Reid, whom Deakin detested, would be ‘jettisoned’ and rewarded with the appointment as Australia’s first High Commissioner in London once Deakin was in government. Joseph Cook (the new Free Trade leader) would be Deakin’s deputy in a ‘fusion’ of the two parties into the Liberal Party; the ‘three elevens’ had become two.

Conspiring with his new colleagues, Deakin moved on the Fisher government at the Address in Reply, which had outlined Labor’s programme for the coming session of Parliament. Deakin defended his action to the House by saying, ‘I object to a Government in a minority filling any office or any representative position while under challenge.’⁴²⁰ It was a baffling contention when one considers that Deakin and his dwindling Protectionists had been the beneficiary of past support that permitted him to lead minority governments - governments which minimised parliamentary sittings to avoid challenges. The end came quickly. Willie Kelly, the anti-local Navy, Labor hater, referred to so admiringly by Ottley in his 1906 CID memorandum, moved that the debate be adjourned, which Labor opposed. Effectively, it was to be a motion of no confidence and on 27 May 1909, Fusion (the Liberals) defeated Labor in the House of Representatives by 39 votes to 30. The real reason for the haste may have been that

⁴²⁰ CPD, 4th Session, Vol. 69, 27 May 1909, p118

Deakin did not want Pearce to represent Australia at the Imperial Conference. ‘Kelly, some time later, explicitly agreed that this was indeed his intention.’

As La Nauze conceded, if Deakin knew of Kelly’s intention in advance, it was an ungenerous and unworthy course to permit the government to be slain on the motion, not merely of a private member, but of the private member most objectionable to the Labor party. Fisher asked whether Kelly had moved his motion with Deakin’s concurrence and Deakin replied, ‘Certainly’.⁴²¹ If he was not surprised by the tactic, ‘to his dismay Deakin found that all those with whom he had laboured to lay the foundations of a liberal bourgeois state were on the opposite side of the House, while his erstwhile opponents had become his political friends’⁴²² sitting behind him as members of the conservative Liberal Party. His new won friends, who would keep him in power in the short term, were arch-imperialists and opposed to a local navy.

Labor politicians regarded Deakin’s actions as duplicitous and unprincipled. As one historian put it ‘Fisher presided over unforgiving men who were determined to make the life of the succeeding Ministry of Deakin and Cook as difficult as possible.’⁴²³ The fury was not confined to the Labor Party with Deakin likened to Judas Iscariot by Sir William Lyne for withdrawing his support for the government; he found what Deakin had done as ‘most contemptible’.⁴²⁴ Fisher attempted to gain a dissolution of parliament from the Governor-General, but Dudley refused the request. Fisher’s position was untenable: on 1 June the Labor government resigned. The only alternative was the new majority party in the House composed of Free Traders, who opposed a local navy, and

⁴²¹ La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, Pp. 566-567

⁴²² Clark, M., *A Short History of Australia*, Mentor Books, Revised Edition, New York, 1969, p.202

⁴²³ Murdoch, J., *A Million to One Against: A Portrait of Andrew Fisher*, Minerva Press, London, 1998. p. 64

⁴²⁴ CPD, Vol. 69, 27 May 1909, p.126

the smaller numbered Protectionists who, if they did not align with Labor, would, at least, support a policy to petition the Admiralty for a local squadron. The Governor-General then called upon Deakin to become Prime Minister with Joseph Cook as Defence Minister.

The immediate concern for the new government was representation at the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence in London in July 1909. So precarious was Deakin's hold on office that he could not spare a senior minister to travel overseas; it had to be left to the Honorary Minister and former Free Trader, Colonel Justin Fox Greenlaw Foxton, to lead the delegation. In parliament, the Member for Lang (NSW), William Johnson, drew the Prime Minister's attention to a newspaper report that Captain Creswell was being sent to the Imperial Conference in London to act as an 'expert adviser'⁴²⁵. He asked, "If so, is it expected that such candour will be encouraged by sending to the Conference as 'expert' an officer whose proposals it has already characterized as being 'based upon an imperfect conception of the requirements of naval strategy at the present day and of the proper application of naval force?'" Deakin, in reply, advised that:

It is proposed to send Captain Creswell to London, and, in fact he is now on his way. He is the principal naval officer of the Commonwealth. He has, I believe, differed from even the Lords of the Admiralty on certain questions. The honourable member will recollect that the Conference is called, among other things, for technical discussion.⁴²⁶

and with that Deakin finally acknowledged Creswell's repeated complaint:

⁴²⁵ Frederick Tickell was to serve as acting Naval Director while Creswell attended the Imperial Defence Conference.

⁴²⁶ CPD, Vol. 49, 23 June 1909, p. 274

That technical discussion could not take place without the presence of a naval officer. Captain Creswell as the principal naval officer of the Commonwealth was necessarily the proper officer for that post. I have no doubt he will render good service in the Mother Country.⁴²⁷

Creswell went to the Conference having fostered with the last Defence Minister the introduction of a destroyer flotilla scheme premised on a government's ability to pay. He was attending an imperial conference where he had no 'allies' with a minister from two fused parties, one of which was opposed to a local navy and the other had a 'destroyers and submarines' local navy policy. So, what was the new government's naval policy on which Creswell could provide technical advice?

The Imperial Conference opened in London on 28 July 1909 with delegates from Canada, New Zealand, Cape Colony, Newfoundland, Natal, Transvaal and Orange River Colony joining Australia's Colonel Foxton, with Colonel Bridges and Captain Creswell as advisors. In opening remarks British Prime Minister Asquith assured delegates that for the British 'with the other great Powers of the world...so far as we can foresee, there is no immediate and no imminent cause of a quarrel' despite Germany accelerating its warship building programme. In this regard the Empire was faced, in Asquith's words, with 'new contingencies, new possibilities' and Britain's response was the construction of at least eight capital ships of the *Dreadnought* or *Invincible* type. He then admitted that the Naval Agreement, 'the futile tribute' in the view of many Australian politicians, was 'an existing state of arrangements, which, however well adapted it may have been to the past, is after all more or less and recognised by all parties to be more or less, of a makeshift and a provisional arrangement.'⁴²⁸ However,

⁴²⁷ CPD, Vol. 49, 23 June 1909, p. 274

⁴²⁸ *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence*, Papers of Alfred Deakin NLA MS 1540/15/3675-7, Pp. 3-4

defending the Empire was a substantial cost to Britain and, for the Asquith government, all parts of the Empire should contribute to the maintenance of one navy under one command. Colonel Foxton responded that Australia wanted its own portion of Imperial naval defence not some 'isolated small naval squadron' that could be 'fossilised',⁴²⁹ which included not only the interchangeability of officers and men, but also of vessels to ensure an equal standard of training, maintenance and efficiency. Foxton and Creswell advanced arguments based on fiscal, procurement and workforce capability.



John Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher

On the third day of the Conference, 3 August, attention turned to naval defence. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna suggested that the Dominions embrace the fleet unit concept: one armoured cruiser (*Indomitable* class), three unarmoured cruisers (Bristol class), six destroyers, three submarines and the auxiliary craft of stores and depot ships. This came at a price tag of £3.75 million, an annual maintenance cost of £170,000 and a wages bill for naval personnel, at English rates, of £155,000.

⁴²⁹ *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence*, Papers of Alfred Deakin NLA MS 1540/15/3675-7, Pp. 3-4

McKenna indicated that Australia with its fleet unit would combine with two other units to form the 'Australasian Fleet', but he did not expect any dominion to be capable of furnishing a fleet unit immediately, nor for several years. An armoured cruiser of the 'Indomitable' type, crewed by Australians presently in the navy supplemented, if required, by British officers and seamen, would suit the immediate purpose. McKenna advised:

If the Commonwealth Government desired to have in future a Navy of its own, it would have to begin to take thought now for the training of its own men ... I do not think the Commonwealth has the means of building ships of this type; but here again, I think, steps might be taken to start works, at any rate for hulls and machinery.⁴³⁰

The McKenna concession – build a dreadnought but do not think this is the start of a navy – left the Conference astonished. Given the history of the Admiralty's objections to local naval forces, the dominion representatives sought more time to consider the First Lord's proposal.

In subsequent days the Admiralty, especially McKenna and Fisher, increased the pressure on Foxton and Creswell to accept the fleet unit proposal. Belittling the destroyer flotilla scheme, variously proposed by Creswell, the Naval Officer's Committee in 1906, Deakin and the 1907 British government (Tweedmouth), Jacky Fisher emphasised that a fleet unit must be to Britain's specifications and 'if any Dominion desires to have a navy of its own that navy must be founded on a permanent basis, and the only permanent basis upon which can found it is one in which you offer a

⁴³⁰ *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence*, Deakin Papers, Pp.35/64.

life-career to the men who enter your service.’⁴³¹ Foxton suggested that Australia start with destroyers. ‘Waste of money’ the First Sea Lord rebutted Foxton; if Australia wanted to make a real contribution to the naval defence of the Empire then it needed to be an *Indomitable* type of battle cruiser. Foxton tried to ‘water down’ the offer of a dreadnought: the Commonwealth, Foxton said, ‘did not comprehend the maintenance of the vessel as well as its original cost. The offer was an expression of a desire ...’⁴³²

Creswell, putting aside momentarily the destroyer argument, emphasised that the foundations of an Australian naval defence needed to be laid: training schools, dockyards, gun factories and other establishments based on what Australia could afford. This would be a better long term investment, Creswell suggested, than building a dreadnought now. Creswell stressed throughout the discussions that his comments were predicated on there being no immediate danger – as Asquith and McKenna had stated in the plenary sessions - and therefore no urgent current need for more vessels of the *Indomitable* type Creswell was trying to integrate the Admiralty’s stance of ‘One Flag, One Fleet’ with Australia’s ability to sustain the purchase and maintenance of ships and the availability and training of Australians crews. Creswell could argue that large ships, such as dreadnoughts, were not suitable for coastal defence: their role was part of a ‘Blue Water’ (deep ocean) navy. Creswell did contend that constructing a capital ship in a British shipyard was inconsistent with the expenditure policies of Commonwealth governments while a dreadnought did not meet current Australian naval requirements or development.

⁴³¹ *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence*, Deakin Papers, Pp.35/64.

⁴³² Lambert, N., *Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs*. p.182

British command of all the oceans assured protection locally, regionally and the sea highways between Australia and 'Home'. Australians knew this because any attempt at establishing a local force had been met with ridicule or parochial rebuttal by Britain. Even when Britain forged an alliance with the nation Australians feared most, Japan, and even when warships were being withdrawn from the Australia Station, successive British governments and the Admiralty assured Australians of British naval protection. So, when Australians thought 'local navy' in the past, it was wishful thinking to hope for ocean going cruisers and torpedo boats; Creswell did – and had been 'punished' for it. The enticement for Australia now was that the British appeared to realise that something needed to be done about the naval situation in the Pacific: for while the Admiralty felt secure with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, its expiration in three years time would be too late for a re-appraisal of naval requirements in the area.

The First Sea Lord underscored the argument put to the Australians so far. He reiterated the need for dreadnoughts; otherwise Australia's contribution was valueless. War would come in four to five years, he prophesised, and a dreadnought took at least two years to build. Fisher, very well aware of Australia's desire for its own navy, suggested that their offered dreadnought along with their own coastal defence forces would form a solid deterrent in combination with the Royal Navy to any aggressor in time of war. The 'fleet unit' was to be of common configuration across the British Fleet. Be it in ship design and construction, repair and maintenance, training, discipline or tactical doctrine, officers and ratings from 'Home' or dominion navies would be able to operate seamlessly. Promotion and interchange of service personnel was therefore not only possible but to be encouraged for effective workforce and succession planning. Fisher hoped that Canada, South Africa and India might also become involved in their

own defence by making the same offer as Australia and New Zealand. The Canadian delegation rejected outright the dreadnought proposal, but were prepared to build the other warships for a fleet unit in Canada.

Foxton, recovered from the earlier rebuke from Fisher, re-entered the debate and volte-face enthused about the fleet unit proposal, though he expressed his doubts that Australia could meet the £500,000 upkeep. In any case, Foxton advised, he would need to get Deakin's approval for this scheme. Creswell must have realised that if the government was prepared to adopt the fleet unit proposal, it was no longer necessary to maintain 'a sustainable naval development only' argument. He had suggested to Labor's Defence Minister Pearce in February 1909 that Australian naval force of 'a squadron of half a dozen Dreadnoughts with cruisers, destroyers and smaller torpedo craft in due complement would render us perfectly safe.'⁴³³ Now the British government was sanctioning a variation of Creswell's suggestion to complement the Imperial Fleet. Australia would accept the proposal, legislating to establish its own navy in 1911, following an investigation by Admiral Reginald Henderson, R.N. into the Commonwealth's organizational and current and future strategic requirements. The Australian Fleet would consist of one battle cruiser (eventually the *Indefatigable* class, *Australia*), three protected cruisers (*Bristol* class) – *Melbourne*, *Sydney* and *Brisbane*, six destroyers (*River* Class) – *Yarra*, *Parramatta*, *Warrego*, *Swan*, *Derwent* and *Torrens*, and three submarines ('C' class), later amended to two submarines of 'E' class.

Britain, while locked in a naval rivalry with Imperial Germany, was finally admitting that the Pacific could turn nasty. By his Royal Navy re-organisation plans of 1904,

⁴³³ Macandie, p.226

Jacky Fisher contributed towards closing the *Trafalgar Century* and, as a consequence, helped to dissolve *Pax Britannica*. The battleships had been going home for some time, re-deployed to fleets to defend Britain in a war all knew was coming. Fisher and the Admiralty envisaged in the fleet unit the answer to the peacetime protection of the possession and interests of the British Empire in the Pacific. As the First Sea Lord told Viscount Esher, it would mean the dominions and India ‘running a complete Navy! We manage the job in Europe. They’ll manage it against the Yankees, Japs, and Chinese, as the occasion requires out there!’⁴³⁴ The Admiralty would allow a naval unit of its determination - but assigned to the Imperial Fleet in time of war. While the ‘fleet unit’ was created in Britain’s global naval strategic interest, the Admiralty was not entirely conceding local navies to the dominions: if attacked, England expected every dominion to do its duty. The new Trafalgar, it was assumed, would be in the North Sea (Jacky Fisher’s prophesised ‘Armageddon’), not in the South Pacific or off the coast of Canada, South Africa or China. Writing to Gerard Fiennes, a confidante and a naval journalist with *The Times*, Jacky Fisher said:

I coined the title of ‘the Pacific Fleet’ for the great Imperial Navy to be hereafter provided as one homogeneous whole by Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India. The keel is laid (though no one knows it) of that great Pacific Fleet, which is to be in the Pacific what our Home Fleet is in the Atlantic and North Sea – the Mistress of that Ocean as our Home Fleet is of the Atlantic.⁴³⁵

Foxton cabled Deakin on 11 August outlining the fleet unit proposal and then by letter to Deakin on 13 August reporting about all the hard work he had put in, particularly such adjustments to the proposal that ‘would be acceptable in Australia, assuming the adoption at all.’⁴³⁶ To ensure Deakin appreciated his key role – Foxton would later

⁴³⁴ Fisher to Esher, 13 September 1909, in Marder, AJ, *Fear God Dread Nought*. p.264

⁴³⁵ Fisher to Fiennes, 14 April 1910, in Marder, AJ, *Fear God Dread Nought*. p321

⁴³⁶ Foxton to Deakin, 13 August 1909, *Papers of Alfred Deakin*, NLA MS 1540/15/3705-12

petition Deakin unsuccessfully for an imperial honour as a reward – he noted that ‘Creswell’s advocacy of Destroyers only fell to pieces at once under the criticisms of Fisher, Ottley and others at our meeting at the Admiralty. He is I think converted on that point.’⁴³⁷ Foxton was hardly going to show himself in a poor light when he, the only Australian witness reporting back to his Prime Minister, had Creswell on hand to blame for the hesitancy. It was Foxton who responded to the fleet unit proposal with pursuing the affordable destroyer option whilst downplaying the offer of a dreadnought as ‘a desire’. It was Foxton who had been silenced by the withering rebukes of Fisher, as the *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence* record. Deakin telegraphed Foxton on 19 September 1909 that the Admiralty proposals were acceptable. Deakin’s ‘only a desire’ had become a reality.

1 March 1901, the day the constitution provided for the defence forces to become a Commonwealth responsibility, is recognised as the Navy’s Foundation Day. Arguments would ensue for a number of years as to which party was politically responsible for the foundation of the Australian navy. The fact was, the placing of the order on 10 February 1909 for ‘Fisher’s Destroyers’ with initially two to be built in Britain and a third to be re-assembled in Australia was not revoked; the keels for Australia’s first warships were laid in March 1909. Defence Minister Pearce recounted in his autobiography, that when the Fisher Government came into office at the end of 1908 ‘a vigorous defence policy’ was pursued:

This was the first definite step for the commencement of the Royal Australian Navy. These ships were ordered before the orders given by the third Deakin government for the battle cruiser *Australia*, which in certain quarters has been claimed as the beginning of the Royal Australian Navy. In fact it was the placing of the orders for these destroyers by the first Fisher Government that led

⁴³⁷ Foxton to Deakin, 13 August 1909, *Papers of Alfred Deakin*, NLA MS 1540/15/3705-12

to its downfall, as the parliamentary opposition claimed we had acted without the authority of Parliament in placing those orders.⁴³⁸

This was the basis for the claim by Prime Minister Fisher and Defence Minister Pearce that they, and not Deakin, were the political founders of the Australian Navy. Writing two years later, in June 1911, Pearce would still claim that ‘the historic ‘Dreadnought Scare’, so far from forcing the growth of public opinion in the direction of ‘One Navy, one control’, had in Australia the opposite effect of solidifying opinion in favour of an Australian owned and controlled Navy.’⁴³⁹ Deakin’s Liberals came to regard ‘the Scare’ and the fleet unit plans of Sir John Fisher as the origins of the Australian navy. Labor accepted the unilateral action of Andy Fisher and Pearce and the delivery of actual warships as the culmination of Labor policy since 1904. In a similar way Hyslop asserted, that ‘Australia now had a naval policy’⁴⁴⁰ as a result of accepting the Admiralty proposal of a 12 ship unit within a British Eastern Fleet, remains a difficult claim. There was no underpinning principle, strategic or political, no cabinet or party or parliamentary consideration for this ‘naval policy’. Deakin had simply said ‘Yes’ in a telegram and later sought parliamentary approval.

The 1909 Imperial Conference on Naval and Military Defence turned out to be more about consideration of British naval needs and strategy than facilitating an independent navy for Australia. It was a convergence of unequal maritime interests: between the threat of Germany in Europe for Britain and, for Australia, the potential threat of Japan in the Pacific. However, ‘the outcome thereby was not the attainment of an independent Australian navy’, Ross Lamont has noted. ‘Instead Australia acquired a fleet unit,

⁴³⁸ Pearce, G., *Carpenter to Cabinet*, p.70

⁴³⁹ Macandie, p.272

⁴⁴⁰ Hyslop, p.161

subject more to imperial considerations and strategic requirements than to Australian.⁴⁴¹ An Australian navy was acquired more out of the rivalry between Britain and Germany, than recognition of the Commonwealth's – or Creswell's – aspirations to establish and develop its own naval defence. For at least the next ten years, it would be a navy that was not truly Australia's.

The outcome for Alfred Deakin would be an Australian navy to complement a foreign policy – the 'White Australia' policy being the cornerstone - reflecting Australian interests. The threat of conflict with Japan, however remote Britain may think it may be, did not leave Australian consciousness. In an effort to protect Australia from the Japanese, Deakin wrote to Lord Crewe, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in September 1909 seeking Britain's help to create a 'Pacific Pact' among like-minded nations and persuade the United States to extend the Monroe Doctrine into the South Pacific. In this letter, Deakin suggested that the Commonwealth, when deemed appropriate, would the warships of other nations (particularly, the United States) to visit each other in an effort to foster friendly relations with like minded Pacific powers. As if to underline Australian concerns, Deakin had not been impressed by the uninvited visit of the Japanese Naval Squadron to Australian ports in 1903, and he was not keen to have such a thing happen again.

The reception in London to this letter was rather predictable: Lord Crewe called it "Deakin's curious letter" and added that he rather dreaded a concrete discussion

⁴⁴¹ Lamont, R., 'A.W. Jose in the politics and strategy of naval defence, 1903-1909', p.213 in Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *Southern Trident: Strategy, history and the rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001

between 'Australia and ourselves on these subjects'. Deakin received a reply from Crewe on 15 December 1909 rejecting his proposed 'Pacific Pact'. Lord Crewe wrote 'regarding the Monroe Doctrine, one has to remember that this so-called principle is really only an assertion, which those who advance it are presumably prepared to back by force. We acquiesce in it generally, because it suits us to do so, but I don't know that we should agree to every application, which the United States might conceivably choose to make of it.'⁴⁴²

Deakin's foray into international relations presumed preservation of the White Races of the Pacific, backed by a naval capability, but in Australia's case that naval capability needed to be made a reality. To progress this the Deakin government proposed a Defence Bill detailing the requirements for having a fleet unit with three-quarters of a million pounds set aside for naval defence. Accompanying the Defence Bill was a Naval Loan Bill seeking to authorise the Fusion Government to borrow £3.5 million on the open market. It was envisaged that a preliminary capital outlay of £3.75 million would be required for one armoured cruiser of the 'Indomitable' class, three armoured cruisers of the 'Bristol' class, six destroyers and three submarines. 'Invincible', 'Indomitable' or 'Indefatigable' Class? References at the time varied, as if one was unsure what Australia was getting or, perhaps, acknowledging that the class had varied little since the *Invincible*. The *Indefatigable* class *Australia* and the *New Zealand*, according to the historian H.P. Wilmott, were irresponsibly laid down at a time, when the British had introduced the *Lion* Class as a successor to the *Invincible*. He considered that 'the

⁴⁴² Meaney, N. *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870's to the 1970's*. Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985, Pp.185/188-189.

Indefatigable class was one of the worst classes, if not the worst class, of capital ship laid down before the First World War.⁴⁴³

Speaking in the debate on Deakin's Defence Bill, Opposition Leader Fisher said, 'our primary purpose and almost our sole duty is to provide for the defence of this great island continent and the territories under its control.' The Labor parliamentarians could agree to the bill as 'the scheme will work out ultimately for the good of Australia, and, if passed into law, help to safeguard the best interests of the Empire.' He alleged the Liberals were introducing Labor's proposed destroyer scheme 'in addition to the armoured cruiser of the 'Indomitable' class.' For Fisher, 'the only difference ... is that we had the courage to do a new thing, and the responsibility for it.' What was particularly reprehensible to Andy Fisher (and no doubt Creswell) was 'that until we enter upon the construction of these vessels in Australia, we shall suffer a loss of prestige, and miss an opportunity to have men trained for the work. Many people think that because such vessels have not been built in Australia they cannot be constructed here.' Fisher recognised the necessity of a link between the British and the Australian navies, but insisted that 'the sole control of the fleet must be with the Commonwealth.'⁴⁴⁴ The Naval Defence Bill and the Naval Loan Bill was approved by parliament on 24 November.

On 16 November Creswell voiced the need to move expeditiously: the Admiralty had recommended that the construction of the 'Indefatigable' class cruiser should proceed

⁴⁴³ Willmott, H., *The Last Century of Sea Power*, Volume 1: *From Port Arthur to Chanak, 1894-1922*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (USA), 2009, p.139

⁴⁴⁴ CPD, Vol. LII, 13 October 1909, Pp.4457/4459.

forthwith because of its long construction period.⁴⁴⁵ Yet the Deakin government seemed somewhat ‘flat-footed’: support for a local navy capability was so overwhelming (the parliamentary vote for the bills were thirty-six to six), the necessary arrangements should have followed immediately after legislative approval. It was not until 8 December that Defence Minister Cook sought advice from Creswell on the next steps to be taken to give effect to the fleet unit scheme. The following day, 9 December, Cook cabled the Colonies Secretary that the Commonwealth Parliament had approved the fleet unit scheme and the funds to construct the ships. The Admiralty was asked to make arrangements for the construction without delay of the armoured cruiser of the *Indefatigable* type (the future HMAS *Australia*), then the three improved Bristol type cruisers. It was not until 29 December 1909 that Cook cabled the Colonies Secretary to acknowledge the three ‘Fisher Destroyers’ under construction in Scotland and proposed that the remaining three be built in Australia. Incredibly, Cook advised that the Commonwealth government looked to the Admiralty for assistance, suggestions or recommendations in building the destroyers. This was an astonishing approach by Cook, given the years Creswell, Professor Biles and Clarkson had already spent on research, design and construction for the destroyer building programme. In March the following year, Deakin and Cook accepted the tender of John Brown and Company to construct *Australia* with the keel laid on 26 June 1910 at an expected cost of £2 million.

To achieve a local navy, Deakin determined that the Admiralty had to be part of the solution. As a dominion within the Empire any local naval force would be part of an Imperial fleet – at least operationally. Britain possessed the local repair and maintenance facilities (as Australia Station assets). Britain had the expertise not only

⁴⁴⁵ Macandie, p.250- 254

for design and construction of warships, but for basic, officer, gunnery, torpedo and technical training; and Britain needed to be the source of skilled seamen to substantially crew and command Australian vessels initially until local competency and crew in sufficient numbers were acquired.

The Deakin government fell prior to proclamation of the Naval Defence and Loan Acts. Labor could stand Deakin's prevarication no longer. It was too little, too late on naval matters. 'Deakin introduced the first concrete measures for Commonwealth defence, but he did so, on the inspiration of the Labor Party; without their support he could not have carried them forward.' Booker has noted: 'The conservative politicians had no interest in an independent defence force, being content to leave it to the British, and Deakin alone could not have won sufficient support from them for the kind of programme he inherited from the Labor leaders to be able to put it into effect without Labor's help.'⁴⁴⁶

Deakin's naval defence policy had been acquiescence in Britain and shadow boxing at home. He talked schemes and programmes, as he talked in the same breath of the unavailability of finance and deference to what Britain would allow. Deakin saw the creation of an Australian navy as something Australia should do, but it was not something he did. It was only in the last months of his insecure government, with pro-navy Labor support, that the bills passed.

Deakin had lacked executive assertiveness. "Like so many gifted advocates" Admiral Feakes asserted, "he was apparently weak in execution."⁴⁴⁷ Generally, he could

⁴⁴⁶ Booker, *The Great Professional.*, p. 138

⁴⁴⁷ Feakes, p.129

persuade parliamentarians to accept his thinking or legislative programme but to Feakes it would almost appear “that the greater the advocate, the lesser the executive.”⁴⁴⁸ Defending her grandfather, Judith Harley said that ‘real achievements require time, influence and tact. Deakin was neither a naval officer nor a strategist’⁴⁴⁹ and yet Deakin did not value the expertise about him. What Deakin failed to do was lead: he did not bring Creswell or other local naval officers into his counsel. He did not allow the advocacy and negotiations to be undertaken by his relevant ministers, seemingly allowing the navy to be caught up with his political destiny and spiritualism. (Deakin believed:

in prophecy and inspiration ... whose insights and experiences gradually convinced him that his political labours were mandated by the Divine will, and that the fate of his beloved nation was somehow linked to his own capacity for spiritual gnosis and moral improvement.⁴⁵⁰

He did not put in place an organisation of naval administration to support his ‘concept of an Australian Fleet’, nor, for instance, make better use of Tickell, Clarkson and Colquhoun. These three serving officers not only could have delivered technical data, options and strategic considerations to government but also bring an appreciation of a local naval capability to a broader audience (parliamentarians and the general public). Unlike Fisher and Pearce, Deakin did not translate advocacy to action. He did not convert oratory into deeds. Deakin was not the catalyst for acquiring a navy. He was not a visionary. He accepted that the instruments of naval warfare would protect the interests of Australia, but Deakin did not transcend the orthodoxies of his day: only with the consent, expertise and unity of control of the British Navy, whose fleet would remain the prime protector in Australian waters, would a local naval force be possible.

⁴⁴⁸ Feakes, p.129

⁴⁴⁹ Harley, J., *Alfred Deakin and the Australian naval story* in Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *The Navy and the Nation*: p.297

⁴⁵⁰ Gabay, A., *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.2

Deakin spent time in this 'worthy course' building relationships to gain approval to gain access to the naval expertise and the construction yards. However, his influence was ineffectual and his tact looked more like subservience. Disguised as the *Morning Post*'s special correspondent, Deakin in part condemned the governments he led when he said in January 1910 that:

During the previous eight years of the Commonwealth, though much has been said, nothing has been done even approaching the work accomplished during the last few months towards the organisation of up-to-date forces naval and military.⁴⁵¹

What Andrew Fisher did in government was respond to his party's long-standing position on naval defence – for a truly Australian navy; a navy according to a Creswell concept of cruisers and destroyers into which a dreadnought would now be incorporated. What Deakin did was respond to the priorities of Britain for a dreadnought, followed by cruisers and destroyers; a fleet unit according to a Jacky Fisher concept.

Deakin was ultimately impotent in achieving a local navy. His potency to manipulate the conduct of parliament was also fading. Arthur Jose in a letter to Deakin in March 1910 warned him that 'you don't know the men with whom you are now entangled ... I –and not only I– am so miserable about your connection with the N.S.W. 'fusionists'.'⁴⁵² After 1910, Deakin would never have majority support again on the floor of the House; he could not be trusted by Labor and he never served as Prime Minister again and, since at least 1907, dementia was closing in on him. In the Senate on 13 September 1911, Liberal Senator James McColl praised Deakin's efforts in setting aside funds, calling for

⁴⁵¹ La Nauze, J. (Ed.), *Federated Australia*. p.274

⁴⁵² Jose to Deakin, 11 March 1910, MS 1540/15/3694, Papers of Alfred Deakin.

an Australian navy and for making one of the finest speeches in the House on the matter. Referring to Deakin's frequent, profuse utterances, Labor's Defence Minister, Senator Pearce replied mockingly, 'If eloquent speeches could have built a navy, we should have had the biggest navy in the world.'⁴⁵³

⁴⁵³ CPD, 4th Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 60, 5Sept.-10 Oct. 1911, p.351

Chapter VI

1910- 1913 An Australian Navy: 'A great bond of union'

In the four years leading up to the outbreak of World War I, the themes of the past decade continued to reverberate: though Britain acknowledged the Commonwealth's aspiration for a navy and agreed to assist Australia in achieving it, Britain did not deviate from its naval creed of One Flag, One Fleet. Britain still played the role of the controlling parent. In the pre-war period the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill would disparage local navies. Australian politicians continued to bicker over who deserved the credit for establishing the navy, while not confronting Britain to substantiate its commitment to an Imperial Pacific Fleet. Meanwhile, Creswell's task as the pre-eminent Australian navalist was made difficult by divisions amongst members of the Naval Board. The Commander-in-Chief Australia Station, Vice-Admiral Sir George King-Hall, encouraged Creswell to resign and with the personal and public traumas of 1913 Creswell considered resignation. These difficulties made Creswell's vision of a genuinely Australian navy ever more difficult to achieve.

The Liberal government was defeated at the general election held on 13 April 1910 with Deakin barely holding his electorate, Ballarat, by 443 votes. Labor won in a landslide, becoming the first political party in a federal election to have majority in either House. Andy Fisher was Prime Minister for the second time at the head of the world's first *elected* socialist government. On entering government Labor scrapped any idea of a defence loan; Deakin had proposed a loan to pay for a navy, Fisher a land tax. Deakin's financing was object specific, Fisher's land tax proposal was targeted to not only pay for a navy but also finance an assisted immigration programme that directly would

increase the population in Australia and indirectly could provide recruits for its defence forces.

The Labor Government brought in its own Defence Act for the administration, control and organisation of the defence forces. Much of the Act reflected the February 1910 report prepared by Lord Kitchener, who had been invited by the Deakin Government in late 1909 to critique Australian defence and its requirements. His strategic considerations were based on the Empire's existence being dependent on British sea superiority. 'No British dominion can be successfully and permanently conquered by an organised invasion from overseas'⁴⁵⁴ his report stated. Kitchener held to the British naval stratagem: concentrate the Royal Navy in the theatre of operation (Europe), while dominions maintained adequate land forces against local attacks until Britain had asserted its sea superiority and then proceeded to the affected dominion. His report submitted in February 1910 proposed an 80,000 personnel peace time strength army, with 107,000 available in wartime provided through compulsory service; an un-Creswellian approach to the defence of Australia.

To progress the Party's navy policy, Pearce placed before cabinet on 16 May a proposal for a senior Royal Navy officer to visit Australia and advise the government on a naval defence scheme for Australia. He wanted 'sound, experienced and unchallenged' expert advice on training, gunnery, torpedo and signal schools, a boys' training school and the location of naval bases. In an obvious reference to Creswell, Pearce stated he 'fully valued'⁴⁵⁵ the advice in the Commonwealth, but he sought the expertise of a British

⁴⁵⁴ Kitchener's Report, CPP, Vol.2, 1910, Pp.85-87

⁴⁵⁵ Heydon, P., *Quiet Decision: A Study of George Foster Pearce*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1965, p.227

naval strategist, possibly Beaumont, Custance, Seymour or Neal. In doing this, he advised the cabinet, it would counter not only local or parochial interests (presumably Creswell), but defeat the challenges from anti-local navy lobbyists. He told his colleagues, 'we are practically commencing our Naval Policy.'⁴⁵⁶ This would be an undertaking of extraordinary expenditure, building the fleet unit to Royal Navy specifications in British shipyards. Creswell was unlikely to have felt slighted by the Australian government utilising British naval expertise. In advocating an Australian navy, Creswell had always been in favour of a modern navy reflecting the latest technical developments.

On 24 May the government decided to enquire whether the recently retired First Sea Lord Jacky Fisher could come to Australia. Fisher, who resigned on 25 January 1910, already thought that Kitchener had forgotten that Australia was an island, criticising the emphasis that Kitchener placed on land forces. He wrote to Lord Esher on 27 May 1910 of his reaction to the Australian proposal: 'I've declined. I'd go as Dictator but not as Adviser.' To date, the posture of non-Labor Commonwealth governments had been land before sea in developing a self-defence force. Fisher had not agreed with an army man, though distinguished, providing the first defence review. He told Esher, 'they have commenced all wrong and it would involve me in a campaign I intend to keep clear of with the soldiers. By the wording of the telegram I expect further pressure. Besides what a d-d fine thing to get me planted in the Antipodes.'⁴⁵⁷

The retired First Sea Lord, though residing on continental Europe, was still influential in British naval appointments, strategy and development, while observing and critiquing

⁴⁵⁶ Heydon, p.227

⁴⁵⁷ Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*. p 327

European naval power interplay. All this could not be done from the Southern Hemisphere. Instead, Lord Fisher and the new First Sea Lord Admiral Sir A.K. Wilson strongly recommended, and the Australian government accepted, the recently retired Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson. Admiral Henderson had never held a sea-going command and had spent the last ten years of his naval career in control of dockyards and reserves. Creswell had known Henderson when they served together aboard HMS *Phoebe* during the world cruise of Admiral Phipps-Hornby's Flying Squadron in 1869. He brought with him fellow Fisher 'acolytes' on his staff: Captain Francis Haworth-Booth, Staff Paymaster H.W. Eldon Manisty and Lieutenant John Ambrose Slee.

Jacky Fisher may have declined to conduct a review of naval defence for Australia; however, he did give the Antipodes the benefit of his advice. Stating the obvious, Fisher wrote to Australian Defence Minister Pearce in July 1910 that "Australia is an island like England" and encouraged Pearce to consider the strategic thinking of Sir Julian Corbett's latest work, *The Campaign of Trafalgar*. Corbett's work was reviewed in the *Times Supplement* of 7 July 1910 and Fisher provided Pearce with a copy of the newspaper, drawing Pearce's attention by underlining a significant observation:

... Throughout the entire campaign the responsibility for the defence of these islands and for the maintenance of Empire devolved upon the seamen; the function of the soldiers were secondary and subordinate. It was essential, however, that the defence should take on the character of offence, and that the military forces should be used as it were as projectiles to the guns of the Fleet.⁴⁵⁸

Pearce realised that 'a navy is a creation of slow growth and must have small beginnings.' He also appreciated the place the navy had in the defence of Australia: 'It is better for us to meet the invader on the sea – a truism that has always been recognised

⁴⁵⁸ Literary Supplement of *The Times*, 7 July 1910, quoted in Pearce, G., *Carpenter to Cabinet: 37 Years of Parliament*, 1957, Hutchinson & Co, Melbourne. Pp. 100-101

in the island home of our race. The Australian Navy, small as it is, is a perpetual guarantee to the Australian people that there can be no invasion of the Commonwealth until their fleet has been destroyed.’⁴⁵⁹ For Australia, it became an early truism: an Australian military force could not be delivered to a theatre of war, except by sea.

The Australian Navy would be the creation of Australia declared acting Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, when speaking on 16 November in the debate on the Naval Defence Bill, and this included declining acceptance of an Admiralty contribution of £250,000 towards the maintenance of this fleet: “We propose to accept nothing from Great Britain, but to pay for the whole fleet ourselves; since we are going to do the work, we might as well do it well.”⁴⁶⁰ Hughes thought it remarkable that the Empire was robust enough to allow diversity amongst the dominions, and yet be one Empire. Therefore it was possible he said ‘to create an Australian Navy, which shall be under Commonwealth control, and yet shall be an integral part of the British Fleet in time of disturbance, or where an emergency shall arise. The principle is that it shall be a Commonwealth Navy, manned and officered by Australians.’⁴⁶¹

Joseph Cook, the former Liberal Defence Minister, followed Hughes in the debate and bristled at Labor’s references to ‘our naval scheme’, claiming it was the Liberals’ scheme. He was reminded by members on the government benches as to who purchased the destroyers, which were part of the current scheme and Labor’s longstanding support for a local navy. On 25 November 1910, the Naval Defence Act was given royal assent,

⁴⁵⁹ Macandie, p.273

⁴⁶⁰ Turner, H., *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth. A Chronicle of Contemporary Politics 1901-1910*. Mason, Firth McCutcheon, Melbourne, 1911. (Facsimile edition published by Heritage Publications, Melbourne, date unknown) Pp.294-295

⁴⁶¹ CPD, 3-25 November 1910, Vol. LIX, 4th Parliament, 1st Session, Pp. 6250-6251

confirming the 1909 Naval Agreement of an Australian Fleet Unit comprising one armoured cruiser, three unarmoured cruisers, six destroyers and three submarines.

The destroyers, *Yarra* and *Parramatta* steamed from Portsmouth on 19 September under the overall command of Captain Frederick Tickell, CMG, CNF, with Lieutenant Commander Feakes, CNF commanding the *Parramatta* and Lieutenant Commander T.W. Biddlecombe, CNF the *Yarra*. *The Times* reported that, ‘the ships are commissioned as vessels of His Majesty’s Navy for the passage and temporary commissions have been issued by the Admiralty to all officers.’⁴⁶² It was not yet a navy Australia could call its own. The destroyers were accompanied to Australia by the cruiser, HMS *Gibraltar*, which carried the destroyers’ relief crews, commanded by Captain EPFG Grant, RN. The wife of the British Prime Minister, Mrs Herbert Asquith, had launched the *Parramatta* on 9 February 1910 from the Fairfield Ship Company’s yard at Govan, Scotland with words that set *Parramatta*’s place in Australia’s history and the Australian Navy’s place within the Empire. ‘First-born of the Commonwealth Navy, I name thee *Parramatta*.’ Mrs Asquith invoked. ‘God bless you and those who sail in you, and may you uphold the glorious traditions of the British Navy in the Dominions overseas.’⁴⁶³ The *Yarra* was launched from Denny’s yard Dumbarton a few weeks later on 9 April. On 23 November 1910, the small flotilla arrived at Fremantle, having first reached Australia at Broome on 16 November. Feakes later recalled Creswell met the arriving destroyers and declared to the young officers onboard ‘You will benefit by the labours of your predecessors; the new navy will be your inheritance.’⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² *The Times*, Sep 15, 1910

⁴⁶³ Quoted in Feakes, H., *White Ensign-Southern Cross*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1951 p. 138

⁴⁶⁴ Feakes, p.146

Prime Minister Fisher enthusiastically embraced the development of the Australian Navy, but was of the view that Australian warships should be at the disposal of the British Admiralty in war time. In Mahan's view the decisions of the Fisher government provided the right balance in the security and protection of Britain and Australia:

The British Empire territorially is an inheritance from times not democratic, and the world is interested to see whether the heir will prove equal to his fortune. There are favourable signs; one of the most so that has met my eye has been the decision of the Labour Government of Australia that in time of war the Australian Navy should be at the absolute disposal of the British Admiralty. Such sentiment, realised in commensurate action, is effective imperial democracy.

According to Mahan, 'the security of the British Empire, taken as a whole with many parts, demands first the security of the British Islands as the corner stone of the fabric; and, second, the security of the outlying parts.'⁴⁶⁵ Creswell, too, was pragmatic enough to realise that British control over the Australian fleet in wartime was inevitable.

Australia's naval development and relationship with the Royal Navy prompted Prime Minister Fisher to suggest an Imperial conference on naval matters. The Admiralty initially responded by calling for the creation of a three-unit Pacific Fleet (the East Indies station, the China station and the Australian station). The Australian unit would be controlled, financed and, eventually, in time, would be entirely crewed by Australians but would be part of an Imperial Fleet. It was a fobbing attempt not to have a conference and a reiteration of Jacky Fisher's Fleet Unit proposal. The British government finally agreed to an Imperial conference in mid-1911.

⁴⁶⁵ Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Strategy. Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan*. Introduction by John B. Hattendorf, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis Md., 1991 p. 364

From the Opposition benches, Deakin maintained his declarations to Britain, and the world at large, that Australia's interests needed to be taken into account when matters of foreign and defence policy were being considered in imperial forums. On the last day of sitting of the House of Representatives in 1910, 25 November, Alfred Deakin delivered what Meaney considered one of the greatest and most prescient speeches in the Commonwealth Parliament. To the ministers (Andrew Fisher, George Pearce, Defence Minister, and Egerton Batchelor, External Affairs Minister) who would attend the Imperial Conference in 1911 Deakin affirmed what had become bipartisan policy: 'Australia is being forced into a foreign policy of her own because foreign interests and risks surround us on every side. A Pacific policy we must have' Deakin declared. 'They (foreign politics) affect our business more and more. We must be observant, like every other nation, providing buffers to prevent shocks, and placing intervals, between us and danger centres' ⁴⁶⁶

Deakin favoured the Imperial Conference concept, but considered that the growing needs and emergencies of the Empire were such that an Imperial response required Britain and the dominions to work in concert. He would not let go of his proposition for an imperial council, advocating the need for a body "representative of our race in every part of the world", to follow through on the resolutions of Imperial Conferences, which met only every four years. "It is by means of an Imperial Conference, and in no other way, that the peoples overseas can obtain a voice in Imperial affairs, which are their own affairs, as they are affected by interests or actions within or without the Empire."⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy*. p. 205

⁴⁶⁷ La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin A Biography*, p. 205

The navy had emerged as the instrument of protection and security for this maritime nation and on 1 March 1911 Admiral Henderson delivered his report for the structure and development of the naval organisation. He recommended a navy board of administration and a £23,000,000 staged development of the Commonwealth's navy over twenty-two years for a fleet of 48 vessels (eight dreadnoughts, ten protected cruisers, eighteen destroyers and twelve submarines), three depot ships and one fleet repair ship. This would be a 'Two Ocean' type navy of 15,000 men. The Eastern Division would have Sydney as the headquarters with the First Main Squadron of four *Invincibles* and the First Cruiser Squadron of five improved *Bristol* classed vessels based in Sydney. Based at Brisbane would be the First Destroyer Flotilla (six destroyers), while at Westernport, Victoria there would be the Second Destroyer Flotilla along with a submarine flotilla; another submarine flotilla would be based at Port Stephens on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. The Western Division would be based at Cockburn Sound, Fremantle, Western Australia and comprise the Second Main Squadron (four *Invincibles*), the Second Cruiser Squadron, a destroyer flotilla and a submarine flotilla. Included in the Western Division was a submarine flotilla based at Port Lincoln, South Australia.

Henderson in his report's introduction raised the old spectre that 'once the Command of the Sea is lost by the Empire, no local system of defence, Naval or Military, could secure Australia's autonomy and she would be the prey of the strongest Maritime Power.' He reinforced the long-time stratagem that only 'Unity of purpose ... will give great strength to the Sea Power of the Empire, and, unity of control in War of all the Naval Forces of the Empire is of paramount importance.' As the Report unfolded it became evident that Henderson concurred with and may have been influenced by his

colleague of midshipman days: the argument, logic, recommendations and sentiments were Creswellian. Henderson repeated the dictum which Australian navalists well knew, that ‘being girt by the sea and having no inland frontiers to protect, Australia is compelled to regard the sea itself as her first and natural lines of defence.’⁴⁶⁸ It was the sine quo non of the naval officers’ committees of 1899 and September 1906 and the annual reports of Creswell to parliament. Yet Britain, threatened – real or imagined – by the loss of ‘One Flag, One Fleet’, had denied Australia a local navy for years. It should be remembered that Creswell’s 1901 report had envisaged four cruisers for Australia by 1909.⁴⁶⁹

Lord Fisher, misguidedly assured Henderson that “you will live to be gratified to see its completion.”⁴⁷⁰ It was a vision of a fifty-two vessel navy with fifteen thousand personnel by 1933. By 1934 Australia had six ships in commission and thirteen in reserve and a strength of 3248 personnel.⁴⁷¹ Australia had neither the political will, economy or population required to sustain such a naval force. This flaw was accentuated when Henderson’s report underlined the enormity of the task. Australia would struggle, given the restraints of population and economy, to match even a ‘One Power Standard’. In the Asia-Pacific region Japan, with a 113-ship navy by 1914, was utilizing British technology and expertise, to build its own warships. Henderson reported:

If Australia were an independent Nation, the Sea Power required by her to render her immune from aggression would be determined by the Sea Power of her possible enemy or enemies; the existence in a state of independence could

⁴⁶⁸ CPP, 1911, Vol. 7, No.7, Pp.87-157 Henderson Report, Pp 6-7

⁴⁶⁹ Macandie, Appendix I, p.302

⁴⁷⁰ Fisher to Henderson, 29 September 1911, Marder, *Fear God and Dread Nought*, p 387

⁴⁷¹ *The West Australian*, 1 August 1934, p.14.

only be assured by the maintenance of an Australian Naval Force equal to, if not greater than, that of the possible enemy.

Power given under the Constitution to have a defence force was never utilised because of Australia's deferential relationship with Britain. As Henderson noted, this meant that 'Australia cannot, do more than undertake her share of the burden now borne, almost entirely, by the Mother Country.' Australia had little choice but to acquiesce: Australia was bound to the Royal Navy by 'the enormous cost of modern Navies, coupled with the present comparatively small population of the Commonwealth.'⁴⁷²

The Henderson Report was in line with Creswell's vision of a naval defence reflected in his many reports, not only with regard to ships and infrastructure (bases, dockyards, training schools), but implicitly the maritime doctrine underpinning it. The Report was extensive – seventy pages in length - covering control and administration, personnel, training, naval bases, communications and intelligence systems, naval reserves and stores. The minutiae of the report was extensive: from the remuneration rates of officers and ratings to the clerical requirements for the Navy Board (twenty six in total) and that the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fleet Unit would even include 22 bandmen and 3 ship's musicians; it was also a small, subtle example of the 'parental' guidance by the Royal Navy to the infant Australian Navy.

One of the significant recommendations related to control and administration. It would prove controversial to the Royal Australian Navy's operation and relationship with the Commonwealth government over the next eight years. Henderson noted that the current Board did not 'appear to have any executive authority or control over the Naval Forces

⁴⁷² CPP, General, 1911, Vol. 7, No.7, Pp.87-157, Henderson Report, p.7

...’ and under the Defence Act of 1910 ‘the control of the Naval Forces, under present conditions is, therefore, exercised by the Government (i.e. the Minister of Defence) through the Naval Board, but the Naval Board has no power of its own, and is merely a mouth-piece.’

Henderson brought to the Commonwealth Government’s attention that in Britain the Board of the Admiralty ‘is responsible *as a whole* for the government of the Navy, and is appointed, and acts, as a single authority.’⁴⁷³ He recommended that the Commonwealth Naval Board should be similarly constituted with each member of the Board having specific responsibilities. Of all the recommendations that Henderson put forward, this would have been the one to gain Creswell’s strongest endorsement. Henderson may have been made aware from Admiralty briefings or discussions with Creswell of the attitudes of past Commonwealth governments to constituting a naval force and the ‘false dawns’ on commitments to an Australian navy.

Whatever the failure of past governments to provide for a local naval capability, it is the hallmark of a constitutional democracy, that it is the determination of the peoples’ representatives what, how, when and where national resources are committed. Two years earlier, Andrew Fisher relied on William Creswell and expeditiously requisitioned the ‘Fisher Destroyers’, while Deakin relied on Britain for advice and accepted the Jacky Fisher Fleet Unit model. Now, with an overwhelming parliamentary majority and a political platform, which had long included the creation of an Australian owned and controlled navy, the Labor Government would determine the measures necessary for an integrated naval defence. While the arrangements would prove difficult for Creswell in

⁴⁷³ CPP, General, 1911, Vol. 7, No.7, Pp.87-157, Henderson Report, p.28

particular in the future, executive authority and control would rest with the Minister.

Robert Hyslop noted that:

... some of Henderson's ideas on politics and administration were quaint ... Henderson had apparently forgotten that the relationship between Minister and Navy Board was almost precisely the same as that between First Lord and the Board of the Admiralty [and] Henderson seems to have missed the point that in cabinet government a board or a committee can only be advisory.⁴⁷⁴

It would be the cornerstone of the civil-defence services relationship: the defence services were-and- are the instruments of the state, subservient to the state, affirming the state's national security and foreign policy.

On 1 March 1911 the Australian Naval Board was formally reconstituted and on 11 April, the Australian Naval Office was opened at 460 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The sixty-year-old Creswell was promoted to Rear-Admiral, knighted (Knight Commander of St Michael and St George) and made the First Naval Member of the Board. The rest of the Board consisted of a President (Minister of Defence), the Second Naval Member (Captain BM Chambers, RN), the Third Naval Member (Engineer Captain W. Clarkson, CNF), and the Finance and Civil Member (HWE Manisty, RN). Where once Creswell had one staff clerk and a coxswain for administrative staff, now he headed more significant arrangements with the appointment of professional naval officers who would exercise responsibility for recruitment, training and stores (Second Member); bases and establishments – including control of dockyards, construction and repair of ships (Third Member); and finance and contracts (Finance and Civil Member). Creswell needed to co-ordinate and encourage co-operation between talented, but untried executive officers, while as First Naval Member be responsible for war preparation, intelligence, ordnance,

⁴⁷⁴ Hyslop, Pp.34-35

fleet operations, naval works and senior appointments. These key officers knew Creswell and were aware of the direction the Australian Navy was to take. Manisty had been secretary of the Henderson Naval Mission and was now Secretary of the Australian Navy Board as well as the Finance and Civil Member, while, Captain Francis Haworth-Booth, RN, also a member of the Henderson Mission, became the Naval Adviser to the High Commissioner for Australia, a position he held until 1920.

Clearly, Australia needed British co-operation during its navy's infancy. It did not have sufficient skills, training or expertise to crew each vessel. Nor did it have, understandably, an ample senior or junior officer class. For two senior officers, age and a non-Royal Navy background seemed impediments to executive functions, yet both were to perform significant roles in wartime. Chapman Clare, 57, who had been second on the Commonwealth Naval Forces' seniority list, was appointed District Naval Officer, Western Australia. Having delivered the destroyers *Parramatta* and *Yarra*, Captain Frederick Tickell, 54, third on the seniority list, was appointed Director of Naval Reserves. Henderson made it quite clear in his recommendations that the appointments of Naval Adviser in London and the Second Naval Member should be officers of the Royal Navy. For Henderson, the Naval Representative was a channel of communication between the Board and the Admiralty, maintaining harmony and uniformity between the two Boards and generally looking after the naval interests of Australia. In particular, with the position of Second Naval Member, as Britain was providing so many officers and ratings to the Fleet Unit 'it is desirable that such officers and men should know that they are represented by one of their own officers on the Board under which they are serving.'⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ CPP, General, 1911, Vol. 7, No.7, Pp.87-157, Henderson Report, p.29

Henderson was seeking a situation where the British Navy would look after their own, while also maintaining unity of control. For Australians, the inference was that it would not be entirely a navy of their own. It was in evidence when on 15 November the Australian Blue Ensign was hoisted in the torpedo destroyers *Parramatta* and *Yarra* at Port Phillip. The Admiralty had approved the flying of the White Ensign only for the ship's passage from the United Kingdom.

Australia's acquisition of a naval capability, plus the protection of Britain's Pacific interests by its ally Japan, allowed Britain to concentrate its naval forces in Europe. For many Australians the enemy was not in Europe and the threat of invasion did not come from a European force majeure in the South Pacific. Richard Arthur writing in the radical journal, *Lone Hand*, was in no doubt when he identified that 'there is one nation, and one nation only, with whom we have a standing possible casus belli on account of the exclusion of her subjects, who is earth hungry owing to overpopulation of her own territory, and who could easily strike at Australia. That nation is Japan. Japan is therefore is the enemy. If Japan is not the enemy, then there is no enemy.' For Arthur, Japan had the warships and transports to land an army of 250,000 men on the east coast of Australia within 16 to 18 days of leaving Japan. 'It would take the Japanese fleet something under ten minutes to destroy utterly this Australian flotilla were it mad enough to venture into the open.'⁴⁷⁶

The *Sydney Morning Herald* also had concern about Japan's territorial ambitions and would not let its readers forget Britain's past lack of concern over foreign domination of

⁴⁷⁶ *Lone Hand*, 'The Sham of Our Defence' by Richard Arthur, May 1911, Pp.2/4.

the Pacific: ‘There is nothing more certain than that the brown and yellow races must come south in course of time. ... That the indifference or sentimental bias of the home Government lost us a great opportunity in New Guinea is a matter of history, and for that supineness and lack of foresight we may yet have to pay dearly’⁴⁷⁷ Yet without an alliance, it may be conjectured, Japan could become more unfettered in its expansion, threatening Britain’s interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Responding to this scenario, British naval forces could not be diminished or diverted in the northern hemisphere. British naval stations would need to be strengthened, changing the current naval strategy and balance of supremacy in the North Sea. With a sense of inevitability, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would be renewed in 1911. British Asia-Pacific interests would continue to be dependent on Japan, while at the same time the benign attitude of the United States would allow open sea lanes, with no perceived threat to British interests in the western hemisphere.

The Australian delegation assembled in London in May 1911 for the Imperial Conference still dissatisfied with the defence arrangements in the Pacific and with a desire to exercise some influence on imperial foreign policy. Matters concerning naval and military defence were discussed separately with the Foreign Office and the Admiralty within the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). Australia’s position regarding defence seemed emphatic: ‘Australia believes that in the interest of the Empire itself’, Defence Minister Pearce wrote, ‘we cannot leave British interests in the Pacific either to the arbitrament of the European nations or the friendly keeping of an Asiatic ally.’⁴⁷⁸ On arrival in London Prime Minister Fisher declared ‘that the Labor

⁴⁷⁷ *SMH*, 28 January 1911.

⁴⁷⁸ Macandie, p.272

Party's present view was that "Australia must first be able to defend itself before she could consider her share in a general Imperial defence scheme."⁴⁷⁹ Britain would need to give Australia some guarantee to its security and protection from attack. Although the British ministers in office in 1909 and 1911 would give guarantees, particularly with reference to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, there was one abiding preferential element to Imperial defence policy: 'Home' before dominions. By 1913-14, Australia would realise, with British admissions, that an Eastern Fleet was an illusion and rather than diminish the British naval forces in Europe, the Admiralty wanted dominion contributions to defend Britain.

In his opening remarks at the Conference on Tuesday 23 May, Prime Minister Fisher said, 'With regard to Defence, speaking for the Commonwealth, our object is to protect the liberties of our people, and assure the safety of our country.' To make it clear to Foreign Office and Committee of Imperial Defence officials present (including the ubiquitous Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Ottley, Secretary of CID), Fisher added, 'Aggression is not our aim.'⁴⁸⁰ When the dominion leaders met with the CID, discussions turned to imperial control of the dominion navies in time of war. The Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier made his position quite clear as he had done in introducing his country's Naval Service bill into the Canadian parliament in January 1910: 'If England is at war we are at war and liable to attack. I do not say we shall always be attacked, nor do I say we would take part in all the wars of England. That is a matter that must be guided by circumstances, upon which the Canadian parliament will

⁴⁷⁹ Day, D., *Andrew Fisher Prime Minister of Australia*, Harper Collins (Fourth Estate), Sydney, 2008, p.220-221

⁴⁸⁰ CPP, General, Volume 3, 1911, *Proceedings of the Imperial Conference*, p.27

have to pronounce, and will have to decide in its own best judgement.’⁴⁸¹ As the leader of an autonomous self-governing Commonwealth, Fisher, in principle, agreed with Laurier’s stance. However, he could not envisage a situation in which Australia would not support Britain in time of war.

The memorandum of the conference between the Admiralty and the representatives of Canada and Australia in June 1911 resulted not so much in affirming the exclusive control by the dominions over their navies, but their subservience to the Admiralty. The King’s Regulations and the Imperial Naval Discipline Act were to apply to the Australian Navy. Training was to be treated in a similar manner, facilitated by the interchangeability of British and Australian naval personnel. Further, the ships of Canada and Australia would have the White Ensign at the stern ‘as a symbol of authority of the crown’ and the national flag at the jackstaff. By Navy Order No.77, which appeared in the Commonwealth Gazette of 5 October, the White Ensign of His Majesty’s Australian Ships replaced the Blue Ensign, (which was part of the apparel of British government ships and others of special status). As Rear-Admiral Feakes later recalled, Creswell’s:

disappointments and frustrations were many, but he had the satisfaction finally to control a force whose vessels flew the White Ensign at the Ensign Staff and the Southern Cross at the Jack Staff, the White Ensign under which he had been born and bred, and the Southern Cross, symbol of the country in which he completed his life’s work.⁴⁸²

Possession was all pervasive in the Conference memorandum: If the Canadian or Australian government desired ‘to send ships to a part of the British Empire outside their own respective station, they will notify the British Admiralty ’and if they sent

⁴⁸¹ Skelton, pp.327-328

⁴⁸² Feakes, p.105

ships 'to foreign ports, they will obtain the concurrence of the Imperial Government, in such a manner as is usual between the British Admiralty and the Foreign Office.' Further, commanders of dominion ships in foreign ports were to furnish the Admiralty of their proceedings and obey any instructions received from the British government 'as to the conduct of any international matters that may arise.'⁴⁸³ That these provisions to the legal and administrative status of dominion navies needed to be made was remarkable enough, but the permeation of the administration, operation, training and seniority permitted the Admiralty's control over the Australian Navy.

What Britain was re-asserting at this Conference was that the dominions of the Empire were not sovereign: they self-governed to their shoreline. Take to the sea and in defence, trade and foreign relations it was the Union Jack and White Ensign that defined their existence and protection. When dominions abdicated responsibility for foreign relations, the Imperial government needed to know that there was no bumbling intrusions into international affairs, which impacted on British interests or for which Britain would have to extricate itself or the offending dominion. The Australian navy was appropriately 'branded' when on 10 July King George V granted the title 'Royal Australian Navy' to the Permanent Commonwealth Naval Forces and the Royal Australian Reserve with the Royal Assent later signed in October, in time for the launch at Clydebank in Scotland on 23 October of the battle cruiser, HMAS *Australia*.

As a result of briefings by the Foreign Office and the Admiralty at the 1911 Imperial Conference, Fisher, Batchelor and Pearce considered a European war inevitable. On their return the ministerial delegation had no difficulty in persuading the Cabinet to

⁴⁸³ Macandie, p.272

agree to a more rigorous defence policy. For the Australian government, it remained only to restrain the dominant power in Asia. The delegation particularly appreciated the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, consulting with the dominions regarding the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Conference was well aware of Australia's fears, though the Canadian Prime Minister thought them unfounded. 'The Australian delegation was intensely relieved to learn that Britain's treaty with Japan, the country Australians feared most, would be renewed until 1921: "Now we're safe for another ten years," remarked Fisher.'⁴⁸⁴ It deferred invasion but did not allay concern. A *Round Table* article written in May 1911, possibly by former Prime Minister Chris Watson, expressed the view that:

the rapid rise during the last few years, of two military powers, Germany and Japan, the one apparently challenging the mother country's supremacy on the sea, and forcing her to concentrate a large portion of her defensive strength in her own waters; the other a possible menace to white civilization throughout the whole Eastern world. Australia, virtually an outpost, peopled by a mere handful of Europeans, facing the teeming millions a newly awaken Asia cannot close her eyes to the grave peril of isolation, and the absolute need of union with her fellow Europeans of her own race, who will aid her to hold her own.⁴⁸⁵

The sense of vigilance was captured in a directive jointly signed on 25 October 1912 by Fisher and Defence Minister Pearce: 'In case of war Major General Kirkpatrick of the Commonwealth Defence Forces shall take command and that he be verbally advised of this by the Minister of Defence.'⁴⁸⁶

In the midst of these pre-war soundings and preparations, parliamentarians still descended into squabbling over who founded the Australian navy. On his return from

⁴⁸⁴ McMullin,, *The Light on the Hill*. p. 74

⁴⁸⁵ Robson, L.L., (Ed.) *Australian Commentaries: Selected Articles from the Round Table 1911-1942*, August 1991, vol. I, pp. 497-500, p. 24

⁴⁸⁶ Papers of Andrew Fisher: NLA MS 2919

the Imperial Conference, Defence Minister Pearce was challenged in parliament about Labor's claim to be responsible for creating the navy. "Mr Deakin was always in favour of an Australian Navy" a Liberal senator asserted. "Then why did he not bring it forward?" Pearce replied:

As a matter of fact, he was a member of the government which turned it down, and which introduced the proposal for a naval subsidy ... It is true that in 1906 he advocated the creation of an Australian Navy; but it is also true that in 1903 he was a member of the Government which adopted the naval subsidy in opposition to the votes of the Labor Party, which advocated the establishment of an Australian Navy; So that between 1903 and 1906 his views changed.

The Liberals then moved to claim ownership for the fleet unit. Pearce produced an Admiralty memorandum of 20 July 1909 to contend it was the British who originated the term, quoting from the memorandum that "a scheme limited to torpedo craft would not in itself, moreover be a good means of gradually developing a self-contained fleet capable of both offence and defence." The Defence Minister informed the Senate that 'unless a naval force – whatever its size – complies with this condition it can never take its proper place in the organization of an Imperial Navy distributed strategically over the whole area of British interests.' The value, as Creswell and Jacky Fisher had foreseen, 'such a fleet unit would be capable of action, not only in defence of the coasts, but also of the trade routes, and would be sufficiently powerful to deal with small hostile squadrons should ever such attempt to act in its waters.'⁴⁸⁷

Australia was the more advanced of all the self-governing dominions in developing a local naval defence, but following the Imperial Conference the commitment of Britain to a fleet for the Pacific dominions soon faded. In October 1911 McKenna was replaced

⁴⁸⁷ CPD, Vol.60 5 September – 10 October 1911, Pp. 87-88.

as First Lord of the Admiralty by Winston Churchill, who was keen to further rationalise British overseas squadrons in favour of concentration at 'Home'. The Director of Naval Intelligence, Rear-Admiral Alexander Bethell, *reminded Churchill on 1 November* that ' "We are under a *promise* to Australia and New Zealand to maintain a fleet of a definite size in the East divided between the East Indies and China stations and they will no doubt protest if we do not carry out our obligation." Churchill was unmoved. A fortnight later Bethell was banished to command the East Indies squadron.'

By January 1912, Churchill wanted every ship in Australian waters brought 'Home'. The First Lord informed the Colonial Secretary that he doubted whether the Commonwealth would hand over HMAS *Australia*, while the New Zealand government should be pressured to allow their battle cruiser to be kept in 'Home' waters. Churchill was critical of the 1909 Agreement with Australia, finding 'the whole principle of local Navies is of course, thoroughly vicious.'⁴⁸⁸ Churchill advised the Governor-General of Australia that as First Lord, he had to remind Vice-Admiral Sir George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Station, 'that he must be careful to stick to his task' and not pursue 'his desire to see New Zealand join forces with the Australian Navy' as Churchill was 'certainly not prepared to encourage this idea.'⁴⁸⁹

In July 1912 Churchill informed newly elected Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden that 'the decision to allow local navies ... was a "thoroughly vicious departure from the fundamental strategic principles of concentration and centralised British control."⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Lambert, N., 'Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-1914', in Neilson, K., and Kennedy, G., (Eds.), *Far Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Schurman*, Frank Cass & Co., London, 1997, p.70

⁴⁸⁹ Winston Churchill to Lord Denman, 13 December 1912, *Denman Papers*, NLA MS 769/42.

⁴⁹⁰ Milner, M., *Canada's Navy: The First Century*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999,

Instead Churchill wanted Canada to give Britain \$35 million to build three of the latest battleships. Borden accepted 'One King, one flag, one Empire and one Navy – a powerful navy to vindicate the flag and to maintain the Empire.'⁴⁹¹ For a dominion to make this naval contribution, the British government would grant Canada representation on the Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.). To help Borden convince the Canadian parliament (ultimately unsuccessfully) to approve these purchases, the Admiralty prepared a memorandum on the status of British naval supremacy and Britain's disposition to respond to threat. There were two revealing features of this memorandum, which had implications for the Pacific dominions: firstly, by 1912 Britain had only 76 vessels on overseas stations compared with 160 vessels in 1902 and, secondly, the British now proclaimed two kinds of supremacy: general and local. It still meant, at best, Australia was on its own until, or if, help arrived. The memorandum was explicit about Britain's naval position: the Royal Navy retained global reach and the right to a fleet unit within the Imperial Fleet imposed responsibilities upon Australia. To the Admiralty 'general naval supremacy consists in the power to defeat in battle and drive from the seas the strongest hostile navy or combination of hostile navies wherever they may be found.' This seemed a more vigorous engagement and, implied a European 'Battle of Armageddon' while 'local superiority consists in the power to send in good time to, or maintain permanently in, some distant theatre forces adequate to defeat the enemy or hold him in check until the main decision has been obtained in the decisive theatre.' The Admiralty repeated the oft-recited mantra that 'it is the general naval supremacy of Great Britain which is the primary safeguard of the security and interests of the great Dominions of the Crown.'

⁴⁹¹ p.26
Roskill, S., *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Volume I 1877-1918*, Collins, London, 1970, p.121

The Admiralty also gave the ‘traditional’ warning that this safeguard was intact ‘so long as her naval strength is unbroken.’ Dominions needed to forgo their sectional interests and support Britain’s battleship programme against an intensifying naval race - not only by the building programme of Germany but by many Powers. The eurocentric Admiralty noted “Whereas, in the present year, Great Britain possesses eighteen battleships and battle-cruisers of the Dreadnought class against nineteen of that class possessed by the other Powers of Europe, and will possess in 1913 24 to 21, the figures in 1914 will be 31 to 33; and in the year 1915, 35 to 51.”⁴⁹²

The Admiralty’s memorandum did not allay the Fisher Labor government’s concerns regarding Britain’s commitments to the Pacific dominions. Britain wanted Canada, New Zealand and Australia to bind with the Royal Navy to defend ‘Home’. The offer of representation on C.I.D., Prime Minister Fisher perceived, would provide little influence on imperial defence or foreign policies. Fisher rejected both propositions in late 1912, proposing to the Colonies Secretary a conference in Australia to discuss a common naval policy, co-operation in naval defence and better ‘maintenance of Imperial rights ...especially for the defence of the North and South Pacific Oceans.’⁴⁹³ It was a provocative suggestion, further compounded when he suggested New Zealand, South Africa or Canada as alternative venues. Fisher was asserting Australia’s autonomy, and that of the maritime dominions in these matters, and the need for these dominions to be treated by Britain as equals. No conference took place.

⁴⁹² CPP, General, Session 1912, Volume II, p.119

⁴⁹³ Cable, governor-general, Lord Denman to colonial secretary, Lewis Harcourt, 19 December 1912, in Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923*. p.238

New Zealand's Defence Minister, Colonel James Allen, told Churchill in late 1912 that he was uneasy about the British security arrangements in the Pacific and displeased at the assignment of HMS *New Zealand* to the Grand Fleet. He was rebuffed by Churchill, who considered Australia and New Zealand safe, protected by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Allen continued to fight for a greater British presence but was refused repeatedly by the Admiralty. In December 1913 the New Zealand parliament passed a Naval Defence Act to establish a national naval force: a division of the Royal Navy, controlled by New Zealand in peacetime and under the control of the Admiralty in war.

In Australia, the challenge remained to deliver a naval defence capability: infrastructure had to be provided for construction and engineering services, victualling and clothing; training provided, not just of officers and ratings but for a skilled dockyard workforce; and, importantly the ships needed to be commissioned for operations. The tempo increased with the launch of the 'Town' class light cruiser, HMAS *Melbourne* on 30 May 1912 at Cammel Laird's Yard, in Britain, the transfer of HMS *Challenger* (cruiser) on 21 June and HMS *Pioneer* on 1 July to RAN and, on 29 August, the launch of HMAS *Sydney*, the second Town class light cruiser at London and Glasgow Shipbuilding, Govan Scotland. To complete the vessel acquisitions, HMAS *Tingira* was commissioned at Sydney on 25 April 1912 as a training ship with, over the next fifteen years, three thousand naval boys trained. The Defence Minister in July provided Parliament more detailed arrangements for sourcing and training personnel for the Fleet Unit. Under the Naval Agreement of 1903 there were three hundred and forty one Australians serving in the Imperial Squadron in Australia, who would soon depart for England and return amongst the crew of the new Fleet Unit, while one hundred and six Australians served on the Imperial Squadron on the China Station and a further sixty

three were in naval training establishments in England. The plan would be for three hundred and twenty of this number to transfer to the Royal Australian Navy while 'those now in Australia will be sent to England and will come out again in ships of the Fleet Unit.'⁴⁹⁴ Captain M.L'E. Silver, CBE, RN, would command HMAS *Melbourne* and Captain JCT Glossop, CB, RN, would command HMAS *Sydney*. Most of the officers and senior ratings of the ship were on loan from the Royal Navy. In addition the British 2nd Class cruiser HMS *Encounter*, with officers and nucleus crew, would be lent to the Royal Australian Navy while awaiting the arrival of the Fleet Unit. It would be under the command of Captain CB Chambers, RN, while he awaited command of the Royal Australian Naval College at Jervis Bay. In the meantime, the Naval College would be situated, temporarily, at Osborne House, Corio Bay, Geelong. By November 1912 a draft of ratings from *Encounter* were on their way to England to bring HMAS *Melbourne* to Australia. Two more 'River' Class destroyers had been laid down on 25 January 1913: the *Torrens* of 750 tons at Fairfield Shipbuilding and the *Huon* of 700 tons at Cockatoo Island Dockyard.

To command the Australian Fleet Unit a retired British officer, George Patey, was appointed Rear-Admiral Commanding Australian Fleet and knighted KCVO by King George V on the deck of his flagship, HMAS *Australia* before his departure from Portsmouth with HMAS *Sydney* in company. The Rear-Admiral Commanding (RAC) according to Naval Order 69 of 1913 was under the orders of, and reported to, the Naval Board. Following Patey's appointment there was some dispute over the provision of

⁴⁹⁴ CPP, General, Session 1912, Vol. II, *Fleet Unit: Memorandum by the Minister for Defence Relative to Arrangements for providing and training the personnel required to man the vessels*, published 19 July 1912, p.122

housing for the Rear-Admiral. Whether it was mischievously intended is difficult to know, but Creswell suggested the provision of a house in Hobart for Patey.⁴⁹⁵

Fisher's second term as Prime Minister had seen a phenomenal 113 acts passed, including legislation establishing the administration and structure of the Royal Australian Navy, Duntroon Military College and the compulsory military training for men between 18 and 25 years. Fisher was particularly proud of the naval college, rather exuberantly extolling in the Labor election policy speech in March 1913 that, 'In the Australian navy boys can begin below the deck and rise to the top. ... That is the democratic spirit of our national defence forces. It is the national feeling associated with the Australian owned, manned and controlled navy.'⁴⁹⁶ The Defence Minister echoed Fisher when he linked an Australian naval defence with democracy in an article he wrote for *Lone Hand*:

We are part of the British Empire and we have been safe from attack overseas, because the British Fleet has been stronger than the fleets of any other nation ... it is not manly that we should depend for our protection on the British taxpayer. Therefore the Labor Party has declared for an Australian Navy, which is now being created.⁴⁹⁷

It was a call to national loyalty, but also a jibe at the Liberal opposition, which campaigned against alleged defence extravagance and who relied for proof merely upon

⁴⁹⁵ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Monday 26 May 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html Rear-Admiral James Goldrick, AM, CSC, RAN, Commander of the Australian Defence College advised the author that this may have been a practical suggestion as the annual manoeuvres of the Fleet Unit occurred in the Southern Ocean; no doubt preparing RAN for the North Sea. Goldrick to author, *Creswell Oration*, Melbourne, 1 March 2011

⁴⁹⁶ Source: Edited speech compiled from *The Age* April 1, 1913, *SMH* and the *Marlborough Chronicle*

⁴⁹⁷ G.F. Pearce (Minister for Defence), 'Democracy and Defence', *Lone Hand*, Vol. XII, No.71, 1 March 1913, p.366 in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., (Eds.), p.279

the mounting defence expenditure. The Defence Minister admonished the Liberals that ‘defence should not be a party question.’⁴⁹⁸

In the election campaign of 1913, Fisher promised to continue the expansion of the navy and its infrastructure. In addition to the current building programme one battleship, three destroyers (to be built in Australia), two submarines, a supply ship (to be built in Australia) and ‘a naval aviation vessel’ would be built, while a naval ship building yard would be established at Jervis Bay. Fisher claimed for Australia that ‘we have built, manned and equipped an Australian navy with our own money, and established an effective defence force’. According to Fisher, this self-reliance would continue: ‘We build ships, make arms and ammunition, but we also open the door wide to young Australians on their merits, to command on sea and land.’ This self-reliance also translated into a security policy: ‘We shall join hands with all those who desire peace in the world, while preparing for the emergencies of which history gives warning.’ To assist this process, Fisher proposed ‘a conference of the self-governing Dominions of the Empire in Australia, New Zealand or Canada.’⁴⁹⁹ The Liberals narrowly won the General Election on 31 May 1913 with Joseph Cook as Prime Minister. Cook had replaced Deakin who retired the previous January. Leo Amery visiting Australia in 1913, called on Deakin in October and ‘found a mere shadow of his former vivid self.’⁵⁰⁰

The Commander-in-Chief Australia, Station, Vice-Admiral Sir George King-Hall, was keen to talk to the new government about Royal Navy control and the Australian Navy.

⁴⁹⁸ Pearce, p. 98

⁴⁹⁹ Edited speech compiled from *The Age* April 1, 1913, and *SMH* and *Marlborough Chronicle*.

⁵⁰⁰ Amery, p.429

King-Hall found the new prime minister, “very sound and showed him a confidential document on placing RAN under Admiralty. I sounded him as to *Australia* being sent home if necessary. He said that if she went, the Adm., under pressure from Chancellor of Exchequer, would utilise her as a substitute ship and not as an additional one.’ Prime Minister Cook appeared to indicate that he would not accept a secondary role for Australia’s capital ship – nor for the navy’s commander. At a later meeting, Cook suggested to King-Hall ‘that Admiral Creswell could take command at sea over Patey’. King-Hall noted in his diary: ‘I put him right on that score’⁵⁰¹, unimpressed with any hint of independent thinking on naval matters by the new government. King-Hall was not impressed with the new defence minister, Senator Edward Millen, when they met on 21 July. Defence Minister Millen, keen to know where the Admiralty stood on the Pacific, may have gained a similar impression of King-Hall, when the Admiral could not give him an answer. Millen intimated to King-Hall that the naval development programme had not been amicably bi-partisan; there could be future financial constraints. “Senator Millen said he did not see how politics could be kept out of Naval matters. I implored him to do so, and to stick to the Henderson programme.”⁵⁰²

In the last quarter of 1912 two retired British naval officers, both gunnery experts, accepted appointments in the Australian Navy. The appointment of Commander Walter Hugh Charles Samuel Thring to the Board in 1912 as Assistant to the First Naval Member would prove its greatest acquisition. His contribution to the Australian Navy endured beyond his own lifetime. Though Thring was to leave Australia in 1920 and the RAN in 1922, his organisation and leadership of a naval intelligence service and his

⁵⁰¹ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Tuesday 17 June, Friday 18 July 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

⁵⁰² *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Monday 21 July 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

authorship of the *Report on The Naval Defence of Australia* (1913) and *Post Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific* (1915) provided prophetic warnings for World War I and World War II regarding Japan. Creswell transferred his responsibility for naval intelligence to Thring, who had hoped there would be an exchange of intelligence information with the Royal Navy. The Admiralty rejected this favouring a lower level exchange between the Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Navy's China Station.



Australia's First Naval Board.

Back row: Staff Paymaster Eldon Manisty, RN, Engineer Commander W Clarkson, RAN.

Front row: Rear Admiral WR Creswell, RAN, Defence Minister Senator George F Pearce, Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow, RN.

The other appointment, that of Captain Constantine 'Crusty' Hughes-Onslow as Second Naval Member on 15 October 1912 was to prove the greatest threat to the viability of the Board in 1913. Hughes-Onslow challenged the administration of the Australian Navy, factionalised Board members and parliamentarians and fought a nasty rear-guard action which ended in his dismissal. Hughes-Onslow had three basic 'irritations' with the Board:

- 1) the interfering activities of HWE Manisty, the Finance and Civil Member and Naval Secretary, in the Second Naval Member's areas of responsibilities,
- 2) the dysfunction of the Board, particularly the role of the minister vis-à-vis the Board and the lack of binding on Members for Board decisions and
- 3) the rebuttal of the report, co-authored by Hughes-Onslow, on the naval defence of northern Australia.

Nicknamed 'Crusty' while in the Royal Navy, Hughes-Onslow did not abide fools – nor being treated like one: He intensely disliked Manisty, who combined the roles of Naval Secretary and Finance and Civil Member of the Board. Responsible for personnel and victualling, the Second Naval Member clashed bitterly with Manisty, whom he referred to derisively as 'a clerk'. Hughes-Onslow's argumentative behaviour finally split the Board over the proposition that proposed naval bases in the south be abandoned for a northern concentration of forces, forces that would be fewer than Henderson envisaged. It was a reasonable, logical proposition, but the Second Naval member 'savaged' any opposition.

In April 1913 Creswell asked Thring and Hughes-Onslow to investigate the future of Thursday Island as a naval base. With the Chief of General Staff Brigadier Gordon providing advice on military aspects of fortifications, the investigation evolved into a strategic defence survey of Australia. Thring presented *The Report on the Naval Defence of Australia* on 9 July, which highlighted Australia's vulnerability with three key findings: Japan was Australia's enemy; Australia could not rely on the British Fleet for its defence and would have to defend itself; and the Henderson Report was inadequate. It was the third finding that became the basis for Hughes-Onslow's dispute with certain members of the Navy Board. While critical of the Henderson Scheme, the strategic reasoning and assertions of Thring were akin to Creswell's abiding contention, as Gobert has described:

Geographically, the position of Australia with respect to Asia and the Pacific may be compared to that of England to the North of Europe ... the danger of a descent by the Japanese, in their own good time, is a very real danger, almost amounting to a certainty, unless adequate steps are taken for defence against it ... British ships ... in the case of a European war would be largely occupied with matters other than the defence of Australia.⁵⁰³

Britain's fixation with concentrating its naval forces in Northern Europe made it clear to Australia that a British Pacific Fleet would not eventuate. For Thring and Hughes-Onslow the solution was a forward defence strategy to the north of Australia and downgrading the stages of the Henderson Scheme. Surveillance from Singapore in the west, to Java, Timor, Papua, the Solomon Islands to Fiji would alert the Australian Navy of the passage and direction of the Japanese invasion fleet (estimated in the Thring Plan to be 27 battleships), troop transports (with possibly 20,000 troops) and possible points of invasion. Distance was to be used to Australia's advantage: the lines of communication from Japan to Australia would be, as the historian David Stevens has noted, 'a critical vulnerability' subject to troop convoys being harassed and on-route coaling interrupted. Located in two fortified harbours, Bynoe Harbour near Darwin and Sewa Bay on Normanby Island, South east Papua New Guinea, the Australian Navy would act as 'fleets in being'.

The Naval Board agreed at its 17 July meeting that the armed threat to Australia would come from the north and that the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would mark the beginning of maximum vigilance by Australia. Having considered this prospect, partnership with other dominions was important, particularly in contributing to a regional fleet with a size equal to 70% of the strength of the strongest regional naval

⁵⁰³ Gobert, W., Lieutenant Commander, *The Evolution of Service Strategic Intelligence, 1901-1941*, in *Australian Defence Force Journal*, No.92, January/ February 1992, p.56

power. The Board deferred consideration of the Thring/Hughes-Onslow proposed bases but agreed that all the matters considered by the Board at this meeting should be part of the discussions at the next Imperial Conference.

Creswell was receptive to the 'Thring Plan'. However for Creswell and Manisty the Henderson Scheme need not be deferred or abandoned. As a Fisher-Henderson acolyte, Manisty was in key Board roles to ensure adherence, while Creswell found the proposed bases were cost prohibitive. Australia's centres of commerce were south of the Tropic of Capricorn, particularly Sydney and Melbourne as the principal population as well as commercial centres. The greatest danger to Australia, Creswell reasoned, was the threat to trade routes by enemy cruisers (Creswell's *bette noir*); the naval bases needed to be in proximity to the commercial sea lanes. Hughes-Onslow was supported by Clarkson, Third Naval Member, who continued to complain about the inadequate engineering facilities in Australia. Both criticised the Board's lack of leadership and action in responding to the Thring Plan; but Creswell was not for changing.⁵⁰⁴

From mid-1913 there were not one but two stories being played out: one became known as the 'Hughes-Onslow Scandal' and the other was the public speculation about Creswell retiring. What was intriguing in this 'affair' was the role – accepted by all parties – that the British Naval Commander-in-Chief, Vice-Admiral Sir George King-Hall played in these proceedings. King-Hall's agenda appeared to be that this contretemps was not to affect the Admiralty's influence within the Board or Australia's war obligations to the British Navy. Two matters would influence the resolution. Firstly,

⁵⁰⁴ Dr David Stevens provides an overview in *Defend the north: Commander Thring, Captain Hughes-Onslow and the beginnings of Australian naval strategic thought*, in Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *Southern Trident: Strategy, history and the rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001, Pp. 225-241

the opportunity to remove Creswell could not be ignored: he had and, if left in command, would continue to champion an autonomous local navy, much to Churchill's annoyance. Secondly, as to the recalcitrant RN Board member: Hughes-Onslow needed to be a team player, drop his independent ideas, and return to a 'One Flag, One Fleet' posture – again easing Churchill's and the Admiralty's concerns. King-Hall, who wrote in his diary about the course of both events, seemed to view it as his mission to not only mediate between the disputing parties but also counsel and hasten Creswell's retirement. In the earliest diary reference, 26 May, King-Hall met Creswell to discuss a number of matters, including the strategic importance of the oil fields in Papua. Without any preamble King-Hall noted, "we both fear Hughes-Onslow as 2nd Naval Member having trouble with Patey, as H-O is so erratic and excitable." In a later reference, King-Hall wrote that in the opinion of the former Defence Minister, George Pearce, 'everyone ... was disappointed with Hughes-Onslow, as he is so badly balanced, which is the case.'⁵⁰⁵ Hughes-Onslow became increasingly acrimonious, his argumentative, stubborn and erratic behaviour compounding ill-will amongst Board members. Thring did not openly challenge Creswell or support Hughes-Onslow, but at a Board level and in parliament⁵⁰⁶ factions formed over the dispute. The Board was in danger of irreversibly imploding.

Overall, in King-Hall's view, the situation would be best resolved by having a good British flag officer as First Naval Member. Early on 9 August King-Hall raised with Creswell the matter of a successor to the First Naval Member "and suggested that a billet should be found him, for he has no pension. He is not looking well, poor fellow,

⁵⁰⁵ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Monday 26 May, Sunday 3 August 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

⁵⁰⁶ CPD, 5th Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 71, 12 November – 8 December, 1913, p.1806, p.1809

and I am afraid is much worried over matters at Navy Board.” Later that day King-Hall “lunched with Creswell, and he told me he had been thinking over what I had said, and thought it a good idea.”⁵⁰⁷ Creswell’s melancholy was being ‘worked on’ and by 19 August, King-Hall ‘had a long talk with Creswell and Manisty - great disorganisation and chaos through Onslow’s fighting and excitability. He should be sent home, and a good man got out to take his place and succeed Creswell in six months time – that is what I suggested.’ A month later Defence Minister Millen sought King-Hall’s advice on reconstructing the Board.

The current First Naval Member’s resilience had been sorely tested for the past six months, not only on the professional front, as he had been mourning the death of his daughter.⁵⁰⁸ On 5 April 1913, Creswell’s daughter, Margaret, committed suicide and the results of the inquest held on Monday 7 April, the day of the funeral, were not made public at the request of the Admiral.⁵⁰⁹ For generations the family did not speak of this matter. At the time it may have influenced Creswell’s intentions to continue in public service. In October, the day before the entry into Sydney of the long desired navy, King-Hall had a confidential meeting with Creswell and Manisty: “the former would like to leave; he is finding it too much.”⁵¹⁰ It was not the office that had burdened Creswell but the destructive force of Hughes-Onslow, his supporters (Clarkson and sections of the press, parliament) and Creswell’s vulnerability to the entreaties of King-Hall. With Creswell’s despairing acknowledgement, it remained only to progress the re-

⁵⁰⁷ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Saturday 9 August 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

⁵⁰⁸ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Tuesday 19th August, Monday 16 June 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

⁵⁰⁹ *Adelaide Advertiser*, Tuesday, 8 April 1913, p.9 in <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article5391862>

⁵¹⁰ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Thursday 27 September and Friday 3 October 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

organisation of the Board and deal with Hughes-Onslow, whom the Minister suspended from the Board on 3 October 1913.

Support for Millen's re-constituted Board came from King-Hall, former Defence Minister Pearce and Rear-Admiral Patey. King-Hall's diary entries appear conclusive: Creswell would resign and Rear-Admiral Patey, the Defence Minister and King-Hall agreed that a 'first class' British naval officers be found for membership of the new Board. King-Hall made one last –but failed – attempt to mediate with Hughes-Onslow on 23 October 1913. Creswell advised the Commander-in-Chief that Manisty would resign rather than serve with Hughes-Onslow on the Navy Board, a decision confirmed to King-Hall by Manisty on 24 October. Defence Minister Millen was disturbed by this development and King-Hall advised the minister that if it came to a choice between Manisty and Hughes-Onslow, it was certainly the latter who should depart.

A month later Defence Minister Millen made his decision about Captain Hughes-Onslow known to the parliament. In his long awaited statement on 20 November 1913 Millen acknowledged the flaw in the Henderson scheme of Australian naval administration: although members of the Navy Board were given seniority as First Member, Second Member and Third Member, "not one of them has greater executive power than another. The recommendations of any or all of them are subject only to the decision of the Minister."⁵¹¹ Thus each member in a practical sense was equal to another and, for the Board to function, goodwill, a good understanding and respect of each others talents and responsibilities and civility needed to exist between them. Creswell and Clarkson had a professional relationship of almost thirty years. Manisty and Thring,

⁵¹¹ CPD, 5th Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 72, 12 November-18 December 1913, p.3334

though at least nominally from opposite Royal Navy factions (Jacky Fisher and Lord Beresford respectively), fitted in well to the Board. The problem was Hughes-Onslow, who took his case outside the appropriate forums and, as well, made the argument personal.

Millen, on taking office in May 1913, found disharmony within the Navy Board: friction to the point of hostility. This could not stand with the impending arrival of the new Australian Fleet Unit. Millen informed the Senate that he had spoken individually to each of the Board members and gained assurances from them that they would end the squabbling; that is, all but Captain Hughes-Onslow. ‘Captain Hughes-Onslow’s attitude regarding the Board, his method of expressing himself towards certain of his colleagues, and my personal observation of his demeanour, gradually compelled me to the conclusion that he was primarily responsible for the unfortunate state of affairs’ Millen told the Senate ‘which was rapidly reducing the Board to a state of paralysis, and seriously jeopardising the administration of the Department.’

According to Millen, Hughes-Onslow was only prepared to work under certain conditions, and the Minister was not prepared to give into his demands. Hughes-Onslow complained about Manisty, but the Defence Minister had found Manisty ‘punctilious’, always placing before him all the details needed to make a decision – even on matters with which Manisty disagreed. Millen told the Senate that the suspended Second Naval Member “re-affirmed his inability to act upon the Board as at present constituted” but also declined to resign. Millen felt he had no alternative to terminating his appointment. Finally there was one last matter Senator Millen felt he needed to address: there was no

“inability of Australian officers to work with British officers ... as the division among the members of the Board has been on quite different lines.”⁵¹²

The Governor-General’s report to the British government endorsed the ‘official’ position:

I am convinced that Senator Millen was amply justified in terminating Captain Hughes-Onslow’s appointment. ... I should have been glad to have found any excuses for Captain Hughes-Onslow but it seems to me that it is his own temperament which has been the cause of the difficulties in which he has been involved.⁵¹³

The careful explanation by the Defence Minister of the dispute, leading to the termination of Captain Hughes-Onslow’s appointment by an Order in Council, was necessary for domestic politics but was also necessary should the Admiralty or British government seek to intervene. Australia may have declared that it had a navy of its own, but it was ‘underwritten’ with British service personnel and vessels. Manisty, Thring and Hughes-Onslow were prominent examples of the 763 British naval personnel on direct loan from the Royal Navy with 461 from other imperial services amongst the 2244 officers and men of the RAN in 1913. *The Times* of London referred to Captain Hughes-Onslow’s attempt ‘to dictate to the Minister the details of the reconstruction of the Naval Board, and later had refused either to resign or return to duty.’ Rather quaintly *The Times* remarked that, ‘his retirement was consequently inevitable.’⁵¹⁴ Hughes-Onslow was dismissed for refusal of duty.

⁵¹² CPD, 5th Parliament, 1st Session, Vol. 72, 12 November-18 December 1913, Pp.3334-3335.

⁵¹³ Cited in Cowman, Dr. I. *Captain Constantine Hughes-Onslow etc* Letter Denman to Harcourt, G.G. to Colonial Secretary, 11 March 1914. C.O. 18/122

⁵¹⁴ *The Times*, November 28, 1913, ‘Captain Hughes-Onslow Retirement’

Manisty returned to the Royal Navy in Britain in March 1914 and was not replaced. However in late 1914 Pearce, the Defence Minister, appointed Labor parliamentarian Jens Jensen as Assistant Minister with responsibility as the Board's Finance and Civil Member. He was later appointed Navy Minister. Captain A.G. Smith R.N. was appointed Second Naval Member on 28 January 1914, but departed with the troop transports in November 1914, while Honorary Paymaster George Macandie was appointed Naval Secretary to the Naval Board on 10 May 1914.

While Clarkson, the Third Naval Member, differed with Creswell on the priorities for the Board, it was not an impediment to his appointment as Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in 1913. The award was recognition for his work in investigating and establishing a small arms factory at Lithgow as well as for his contribution in delivering an Australian Navy. It had been a long working relationship between the blunt Yorkshire-man and the equally forthright admiral and the demands upon both made their commentary forceful. During early 1914 Creswell reminded 'the Minister the official statements made in various dockets by the Third Naval Member sweepingly condemning the manner in which this work under my control was carried out and charging me with 'injudicious expenditure'.' Clarkson claimed that he was not attacking the administration of the First Naval Member as 'the Board control demands that individual members must be free to state their opinions and I claim that I have never at any time overstepped my legitimate right in that direction.'⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Hyslop, p.47 and Coulthard-Clark, p.49

By 18 June 1914 the Defence Minister was telling the Senate, “I have not heard an angry word at the Board meetings since a certain change.”⁵¹⁶ Senator Millen was somewhat surprised when a senator then enquired had it been the intention to retire Rear-Admiral Creswell and appoint him Commandant of the Naval College the previous year. Senator George Pearce joined Senator Millen in refuting any such attempt by the present Liberal or past Labor government to do so. Speculation about Creswell’s resignation – and the re-organisation of the Board – faded, then ceased in 1914 for a number of reasons. Firstly, the removal of Hughes-Onslow negated Creswell’s own consideration about resignation. Secondly, Australian governments had no success in the past in obtaining senior, seasoned, active service British naval officers for key roles, nor in 1914 and nor throughout the war. Thirdly, Clarkson’s stimulus for criticism was modified by Hughes-Onslow’s removal and the threatening prospect that re-organisation would lead to his own demise. Fourthly, initially the Liberal, then Labor, government did not display any enthusiasm in maintaining the Board’s full complement following ‘the scandal’.

The Hughes-Onslow Scandal seemed to dominate naval matters in Australia in 1913. However other events threatened the viability and purpose of the Royal Australian Navy as a ‘fleet unit’ of an Imperial Eastern or Pacific Fleet. The increasing naval strength of Germany compelled Britain to concentrate its capital ships and most modern squadrons in the North Sea. A Pacific Fleet within an Imperial naval strategy was less likely with the 1909 agreement with Britain unfulfilled. It did not augur well for Creswell’s sense of national identity and his often expressed desire for Australia to have a naval role in the security of the Pacific. The campaign had moved on from acquiring a navy to

⁵¹⁶ CPD, 5th Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 74, 21May-26 June, 1914, p.2262

defining and asserting its purpose and for this Creswell was no longer Robinson Crusoe, as he once described his lonely campaign to Lord Tennyson. When C.E.W Bean wrote in 1913 that 'Australia is the sea continent', it was not a mere refinement to Edmund Barton's 1893 statement of an obvious geographic feature. 'If Australia ever wants to make her influence felt, or, as is more likely, to prevent others from making their influence felt, ... she can only do it by sea.' The fear of Australians, like Bean, who favoured an Australian and not just a British navy, was that if Australia had left its naval defence solely to others or abandoned any attempt to provide for itself, the sea would have been open to its enemy to cross it, to disrupt trade and to transport an invading force, which it could also replenish with troops and supplies. An invading force, which could land anywhere on the Australian coast, would have an advantage that a defending land force could not match. By 1913 Bean had come to realise the blessing and challenge that 'we in Australia have four thousand miles of sea separating us from our nearest probable enemy.'⁵¹⁷ If the battle that would save Australia, according to British naval strategists, would be fought in the North Sea, how then could the 'One Flag, One Fleet' protect Australia against the Imperial German East Asiatic Squadron, the largest European naval presence in the Pacific?

Unable or unwilling to provide ships for a Pacific Fleet, Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed in March 1913 that a squadron, comprising the *New Zealand*, *Malaya* and the three Canadian battleships, based in Gibraltar, twenty-eight steaming days from Sydney and thirty-two from New Zealand, could be despatched. The *Sydney Morning Herald* criticised Churchill's strategy for defending the outposts of the Empire: 'The need of a fleet in the Pacific is greater than ever and so is the importance to

⁵¹⁷ Bean, *Flagships Three*, Pp.217-218.

Australia of possessing a navy of their own which they may see in their own waters.’⁵¹⁸

In a series of articles on Japan during June and July 1913 the *Herald* indicated that the enemy was closer to Australia than Europe. In campaigning for a local navy over the past thirty years, Creswell had often raised the prospect that the enemy would be local as well.

Maritime self-defence was critical for this sea continent. For some Australian politicians, partnership with the other significant ‘white’ seapower in the Pacific would be beneficial to Australia’s economy, defence and ‘White Australia’ policy. King O’Malley, Labor’s Home Affairs Minister, wanted Andrew Fisher to secure better relations in trade, investment and migration with the United States for the purpose of fostering a common kinship. He called for Australia to join with the United States ‘in keeping the Pacific for the Anglo Saxons.’⁵¹⁹ The resident Commander-in-Chief, King-Hall, wanted Australia to continue to commit to the Royal Navy for the defence of the Empire and its own protection:

my policy had been, to sympathise, and identify oneself with their aspirations, and then influence their policy (Naval) once in touch with them, heart to heart. Capture the movement and make them lean on Great Britain, and thus prevent eyes being turned across the Pacific to the United States for Naval protection.⁵²⁰

The British admiral may have been ‘rattled’ by the appearance two days earlier of Keith Murdoch’s article ‘The Home Coming of the Fleet Unit’ in the journal, *Lone Hand*, which promoted a co-ordinated defence with the United States to maximise naval

⁵¹⁸ *SMH*, 15 July 1913

⁵¹⁹ O’Malley to Fisher, 4 December 1912, *Fisher Papers*, MS 2919/6/55-58, NLA

⁵²⁰ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, Wednesday 3 September 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

protection in the Pacific. Murdoch wrote that Britain need not be supreme in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic, for an 'Outer Empire Navy' may suffice to contain an enemy until the Royal Navy arrives. However:

The white man's interests in the Pacific are in danger whilst circumstances may make it impossible for the Royal Navy to leave the Atlantic, It may be that four or five American Dreadnoughts to be stationed in the Pacific after the opening of the Panama Canal can be counted in the "white man's" navy ...⁵²¹

Murdoch promoted the view that the United States should be brought into a co-ordinated Pacific Defence Policy as a 'navy of a rival race is paramount in the Pacific'. Six months later Churchill conceded that if the Royal Navy was defeated, then Australia should look to the United States for naval protection.

The official homecoming of the Australian Fleet Unit, which included the destroyers *Parramatta*, *Yarra* and *Warrego*, occurred on Saturday morning 4 October 1913 (hereafter celebrated each year as *Navy Day*) when the ships came through Sydney Heads. The Melbourne *Argus* reported that 'as the flagship passed the *Kubu*, a wooden screw steamer built in 1912 for the Sydney Ferries Company, the ensign was dipped as a compliment to Vice-Admiral Creswell, the first member of the Naval Board, who was on deck.' Anchored in Farm Cove were two ships of the Australia Station: HMS *Cambrian* and HMS *Psyche* and, as the Australian Fleet came abreast of them, salutes were fired and answered.

⁵²¹ *The Lone Hand*, "The Home Coming of the Fleet Unit" by Keith Murdoch, 1 September 1913, Pp. 423-424

To the end, the Admiralty reminded Australia that these ships were part of ‘one great Imperial Fleet’. On board HMS *Cambrian*, Vice-Admiral Sir George King-Hall, signalled the Australian Fleet commander, Rear-Admiral Sir George Patey: ‘Best wishes to our comrades in our sister Service the Royal Australian Navy, which with the Royal Navy forms one great Imperial Fleet for the defence of Empire, which Providence has entrusted to our care.’⁵²² It was not required: Liberal Prime Minister, Joseph Cook, was relaxed and comfortable about Australian ships within an Imperial Fleet. ‘May I stress for one moment the words “His Majesty’s Australian Ships”,’ he said. ‘The ships are none the less Australian because they are His Majesty’s ships because they are Australian ships.’⁵²³ *The Times* of London reported the Opposition Leader Andrew Fisher acknowledging that, ‘“the Imperial authorities are ready to trust us fully and we are ready to accept the responsibility, nor will we ever betray our trust.”’ He added that the Australian ships would be ready for the work of the British Empire in every sea in the world if necessary.’⁵²⁴ In reasoning, in instinct and in fact the transference of the Australian Fleet to British Admiralty control by the Governor-General 12 months later was done without protest. It had all been worked out at the 1911 Imperial Conference years before.

King-Hall departed Australia on 24 October and an official party, including Admiral Creswell and Manisty, farewelled the former Commander-in-Chief as he went on board a steamer for the journey to England. From the gangway “I bade farewell to Creswell in a loud voice” King-Hall wrote in his diary, “so the whole crowd heard me say, I hope the country will never forget all it owes you, or all that you have done for her during the

⁵²² *The Argus*, Melbourne 6 Oct 1913 in Johnstone, T., *The Cross of ANZAC*, p. 25

⁵²³ Souter, p. 179

⁵²⁴ *The Times*, Oct 06, 1913; p.6; Issue 40335; Col F

last 28 years.” The former C-in-C informed King George V at an audience on 20 December 1913 that “Australia was a virile nation, felt their nationhood, most loyal to his person and to the Empire, but this did not mean to the British Government ” and that the “Navy would be a great bond of union if people at home handled the question properly, and Admiralty should let officers understand that service in RAN would be considered good service for the Empire. He concurred.”⁵²⁵ King-Hall explained to his sovereign that the Royal Australian Navy needed to be nurtured, partly because, if Britain did not, Australia would look to the United States, and partly to secure the Commonwealth against an Asian threat as ‘the Australians had 800,000,000 dark races round them to the north and the Japanese.’ As to the navy, the King was informed that the Australian government ‘wanted us to send an Admiral out as 1 Naval Member and a Captain as 2 Member. He said that was good, and asked if they were to be retired. I said “No”. He also asked me about Hughes-Onslow affair’. King-Hall was still pursuing a British naval officer to replace Creswell a month later. ‘Saw De Chair, Naval Secretary to 1st Sea Lord. Impressed on him the necessity of the right man being sent out as 1st Naval Member of the Board in Australia.’⁵²⁶

Collectively, at the turn of the century, the senior colonial naval officers set down their vision of a naval defence for Australia; one of those officers made it his life’s work to accomplish it. Historically the Royal Australian Navy was the creation of the people: by the constitution, through governments and with the consent of parliament. Politicians were prominent in the Navy’s genesis, coming to the arena from different parties and

⁵²⁵ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia*, 20 October 1913, http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

⁵²⁶ *The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander- in-Chief Australia*, 20 December 1913, 20 January 1914

backgrounds and bringing different skills and attitudes to achieving naval defence. It was in fact from the ranks of the first Commonwealth parliament that Australia had the seven prime ministers and ten defence ministers up to 1923. These politicians collectively shaped Australia's defence and external affairs with the values, principles and mores they had honed through their belief in the supremacy of British Empire and its navy, and their adherence to a 'Pacific Monroe Doctrine' and 'White Australia'. It was these tenets of national policy thinking that shaped Australia beyond the last of them to serve in government together in 1923. Through it all the one constant man in the arena since 1885 had been William Rooke Creswell and at the zenith of his naval achievement: the acquisition of the Australian Fleet Unit, Creswell could have retired of his own volition from the arena in 1913. Yet there was an absence to his vision of a naval defence. When the colonial naval officers in conference in 1899 declared Australia the 'New Power in the Pacific' it was 'twinned' with 'the recognition of the primary importance of Naval Defence for Australia.'⁵²⁷ To assert that Creswell's campaign ended with either the fleet unit agreement of 1909, the re-organisation in 1911 or the arrival of the fleet unit through Sydney Heads in 1913 falls short of the achievement of his vision. A naval defence was (and is) more than an armed force afloat. Warships, engineering and repair infrastructure, organisation, skilled personnel in sufficient numbers and training were vital, but there were other elements, beyond advocacy, to complete the characterization of a naval defence. To be identifiably Australian, as a capable naval force, it needed experience, particularly operations experience, and professionalism. The naval events of the Great War were more than the natural outcome of an operational RAN. In the four months between the declaration of

⁵²⁷ Macandie, p.74

war and the arrival of Australian warships in the Northern Hemisphere in January 1915, Creswell's 'frontiersmen' achieved his vision.

Chapter VII

Australia at War: 'To sail to a foreign country, and fight for England's name.'⁵²⁸

Creswell's long campaign for a naval defence exposed a vulnerability in the security of the Empire and contributed to the deliberation Australians gave to their own security in the decade before 1914. Having achieved a great Empire, Britain had the responsibility and the necessity to firstly protect sea commerce, which brought 'Home' wealth, natural resources and food; and secondly to protect and defend its 'provider' territorial possessions. Britain would be vulnerable to starvation of its people and of its manufacturing industries if it did not. If Britain were conquered, there was little value of an empire; the Empire existed for Britain, not Britain for the Empire. From 1904, First Sea Lord Sir Jacky Fisher redeployed modern capital ships of the Royal Navy to 'Home' waters maximising the defence of Britain and the security of its maritime approaches. As the *Trafalgar Century* ended, prompted by animosity from Germany and the escalation of the Anglo-German naval arms race, Britain met the potential vulnerabilities to its security in a rational and necessary way. Diplomatic arrangements were made with other naval powers to protect British interests in regions where it no longer had complete mastery of the seas: Japan, through a renewable alliance (1902, 1907, 1911), watched over the Pacific and East Asia and the Entente Cordiale (1904) improved relations between France and Britain. The Anglo-French Naval Agreement of February 1913 formalised a decade-old arrangement whereby the Royal Navy covered the French Atlantic and Channel, while the French transferred its squadron stationed at Brest to Toulon to support Britain in the Mediterranean. An informal understanding

⁵²⁸ From *The Recruits* by Henry Lawson in Cronin, L. (Ed.) *Henry Lawson Complete Works 1901 – 1922: A Fantasy of Man*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1984, p.618

with the United States allowed certain British capital ships to withdraw without loss of influence in the Americas.

Vulnerability was not Britain's alone. Over the previous decade Creswell had provided various scenarios which exposed Australia's vulnerability: from the enemy commerce raider in his 1901 Report to his repeated assertions of the distance Britain would need to traverse to aid Australia if attacked. What if the battle which would save the Commonwealth was on the seas around the Australian continent? Successive British governments provided re-assurances that the Royal Navy, not a local navy, would protect Australia. In 1909, First Sea Lord Fisher gratefully accepted the offers of New Zealand, Australia and Malaya to fund construction of dreadnoughts for the Royal Navy, albeit that he would envelope them in fleet units for a supposed Pacific fleet. Britain insisted that the warships be built to British design and construction with Australian naval personnel adhering to British naval discipline.

To facilitate integration and re-enforce Australia's subservient relationship with Britain, there would be one flag, one fleet and one control. Beyond these core elements, Britain was not interested in developing an Australian naval defence. When the Canadian parliament rejected funding three capital ships for the Royal Navy in 1911, Churchill became more insistent on the re-distribution of the Empire's naval forces and that the fleet unit commitments of the 1909 Imperial Conference were not binding. The charade of an Imperial Pacific Fleet ended in March 1914 when Churchill, speaking on British naval estimates in the House of Commons, looked to Britain's alliance with Japan, due to expire in 1921:

as the true and effective protection for the safety of Australia and New Zealand and this bond depends on the maintenance of British naval supremacy. ... If the power of Great Britain were shattered on the sea, the only course of the five millions of white men in the Pacific would be to seek the protection of the United States.⁵²⁹

Churchill had the temerity, in the view of the Commonwealth's Defence Minister, Senator Edward Millen, to say in respect of HMAS *Australia*, 'that a battle cruiser is not a necessary part of a Fleet Unit provided by the Dominions and that the presence of such vessels in the Pacific is not necessary to British interests.' Australia's reaction was swift: Millen regarded Churchill's stance as representing 'so startling a change from the opinion and policy with which Australia' had aligned its naval defence policy and naval defence scheme. Australia's effort since 1909 was focussed on the creation of a fleet unit based on Lord Fisher's suggested one armoured cruiser, three unarmoured cruisers, six destroyers, three submarines and the necessary auxiliaries. This had been integrated and expanded under the Henderson Scheme of 1911. Now, Millen contended, "Mr Churchill in effect destroys the idea of a joint Imperial Fleet, of which the Royal Australian Navy is a part ... and renders the Royal Australian Navy an isolated force.'⁵³⁰

Churchill's pronouncements starkly exposed Britain pursuing the only interests it had in Empire – its own. HMAS *Australia* would 'strengthen the British Navy at a decisive point', Churchill claimed, 'according to the best principles of naval strategy.' Two or three dreadnoughts in the North Sea may,⁵³¹ said Churchill, 'make victory not merely

⁵²⁹ Extract from a speech on Naval Estimates by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. Winston S. Churchill) in the House of Commons, H. of C. Deb., Vol. LIX, 1914, coll. 1932-1934 in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., p.209

⁵³⁰ CPP – General – Vol2, 1914, *Naval Defence: Memorandum by the Minister for Defence Dated 13 April 1914; together with Speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty as reported in Australia*, printed 16 April 1914, Pp.205/207.

⁵³¹ Extract from a speech on Naval Estimates by the First Lord of the Admiralty. in

certain but complete.’ Dismissively he said, ‘The same two or three ‘Dreadnoughts’ in Australian waters would be useless the day after the defeat of the British Navy in Home waters. Their existence would only serve to prolong the agony ... Their effectiveness would have been destroyed by events which had taken place on the other side of the globe.’⁵³²

HMAS *Australia* was not at the core of Britain’s naval defence according to Millen.

His rendition of Australian Naval Policy was that the Australian Fleet Unit was:

an Australian section of the Imperial Fleet – a section built by Australia, manned by Australians, interchangeable with, and capable of being harmoniously merged in, the Royal Navy, yet which, in normal times and until its Government otherwise decided be based upon Australian ports and consequently more responsible for British interests in Australian waters.

Churchill abandoned this in favour of ‘Australian ships being detailed for duty in Home waters,’ Millen claimed, ‘or form part of an Imperial Squadron, presumably for service anywhere.’⁵³³

Churchill’s arguments were as old as Creswell’s rebuttals, dating back as far as 1901, when the Rear-Admiral asserted the need for an armoured cruiser which would prevent Australian wool bales burning off Sydney’s Heads. ‘What would von Spee have done if he had had [against him] only the old *Powerful* and ‘P’ class cruisers Winston Churchill

Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., p.209

⁵³² Extract from a speech on Naval Estimates by the First Lord of the Admiralty in Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., p.209

⁵³³ CPP – General – Vol2, 1914, *Naval Defence: Memorandum by the Minister for Defence Dated 13 April 1914; together with Speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty as reported in Australia*, printed 16 April 1914, p.207

deemed ample for Australia?’, Creswell would later question. ‘He would have had fun frightfulling Australia, skinned up everything afloat, and shattered everything within gun range of deep water.’⁵³⁴ As to Churchill’s faith in Japan, the *Melbourne Punch* commented that ‘to offer us Japanese protection is very like telling Mary’s little lamb: “Have no fear, small and tender sheep, you are excellently provided for. We have set the wolf to watch over you!”’⁵³⁵ It was too late to complain about the arrangements: within five months Britain’s representative in Australia would sign the Commonwealth Naval Forces over to the British Admiralty.

On the afternoon of 30 July 1914, the Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson was warned by telegram from the British government that war was imminent. Commonwealth parliamentarians were dispersed to their electorates campaigning in a just announced general election, and the one minister available to the Governor-General, Defence Minister Millen seemed not to comprehend the relevance of the British warning at all. Creswell did. On leave in Brisbane, Creswell, departed immediately for Sydney following receipt of the British warning from his assistant, Commander Thring. By 10.30 pm on 30 July the Navy Office was placed on alert. The Defence Minister telegraphed ‘that after coaling at Sydney, *Australia* proceeds to West Australia (stop) Minister of Defence has approved, as this, while still keeping *Australia* under control of Commonwealth of Australia, will place *Australia* much nearer probable scene action should it later be decided to place *Australia* under Admiralty orders.’⁵³⁶ In a telegram to Patey aboard his flagship HMAS *Australia* on 1 August,

⁵³⁴ Letter to Vice-Admiral Bertram Chambers, RN, quoted in *Naval Review*, Vol. XXI, 1933, p.543 in Hyslop, p.188

⁵³⁵ ‘A Startling Change of Policy’, *Melbourne Punch*, 2 April, 1914 in Crowley, p.212

⁵³⁶ Navy Office to RAC, 31 July 1914, *Signal Log of His Majesty’s A Ship Australia from 30 July 1914 to 1 September 1914*, AWM: 35, 2/10 The ‘A’ had been handwritten between the printed ‘Majesty’s’ and ‘Ship’. The stationery may have been British but the ship was ‘Australian!’

Rear-Admiral Creswell advised that they should meet when he arrived in Sydney; the Minister of Defence made the same request for himself and the Governor-General.

Patey was alerted by Navy Office to possible German armoured cruisers off New Guinea and on 3 August he sought approval to enact Paragraph 4 of the War Orders, which had only been amended by Naval Board letter 14/ 0110 of 21 April 1914:

First duty of *Australia* after outbreak of hostilities will be to bring to action any hostile armoured ship that may happen to be in Australian or neighbouring waters. Subsequent to accomplishment of this duty and in event of *Australia* being then required, join C-in-C China, she should proceed by quickest safe route.⁵³⁷

Creswell later told New Zealand Defence Minister James Allen in February 1915:

that arrangements had been concluded with the Admiralty early in 1913, all being in readiness shortly after the Fleet arrived here, whereby War Orders for the Fleet were issued by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, signed by their Secretary, and kept locked up in each vessel's safe ready to be acted on when the Fleet should be transferred to Admiralty control.⁵³⁸

Patey suggested assembling his naval forces (*Australia*, *Sydney*, *Encounter* and destroyers) off Port Moresby and if necessary transfer his flag to HMAS *Encounter* if *Australia* was to transfer to China Squadron. He was keen for action and Navy Office advised Patey that orders had been received to detain German colliers.

Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August, while in Australia, the Governor-General would transfer control of the Commonwealth Naval Forces to the King's Naval

⁵³⁷ RAC to Navy Office, 3 August 1914, *Signal Log of His Majesty's A Ship Australia from 30 July 1914 to 1 September 1914*, AWM: 35, 2/10

⁵³⁸ Creswell to Allen, 5 February 1915, Allen Papers, Box 1 M1/ 14 Ministerial Papers, Archives New Zealand, Wellington – accessed 20 February 2007

Forces on 10 August 1914. On the morning of 5 August Captain Thring asked the Defence Department whether 'you wish the Naval Board to prepare a scheme for taking up transports? If so from what ports and to carry what numbers? What arms and horses?'⁵³⁹ By 17 August a seven member transport committee under Third Naval Member, Engineer Captain Clarkson, was established to register, organise and deploy appropriate commercial vessels to convey the troop contingent to the Northern Hemisphere. In the initial contingent 21,500 troops and 800 horses were to be transported. The Royal Australian Navy was not only at sea acting and reacting to operational orders of the British Admiralty, but taking the initiative to fulfil Australia's war commitment.

A War Room was expeditiously established within the Navy Office in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne and Creswell appointed Commander Walter Thring Director of War Plans, which included responsibility for naval intelligence and censorship. On 3 August all wireless stations were placed under the control of the Navy Board, with wireless censorship imposed the same day and a wireless interception capability established at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne with Frederick William Wheatley, a fluent German speaker, in charge.⁵⁴⁰ The interception of enemy messages was, for Army Captain Arthur Jose of Naval Intelligence, who later wrote the official history of the navy in the war, 'the most important and most widely useful'⁵⁴¹ of its tasks. Naval intelligence and analysis was essential to the protection and security of the country and, in anticipation, the Naval Intelligence Branch had been established on 25 June 1914, with the

⁵³⁹ *Sea Transport of the AIF*, prepared by Grenville Tregarthen, Australian War Memorial, R 940 3994, T 7 865, p.4

⁵⁴⁰ A graduate of Oxford and Adelaide universities, Wheatley had been appointed Senior Naval Instructor at the RAN College, Geelong in January 1914.

⁵⁴¹ Jose, A., *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918* Volume IX: *The Royal Australian Navy*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987, p.439.

Admiralty loaning Major Percy Molloy, Royal Marines, to co-ordinate the Branch's activities. Molloy, who had spent some years in intelligence on the China Station, headed the Branch from 1 July 1914 to 30 June 1915. He was followed in the post by Jose and later, John Latham, who also engaged in domestic political surveillance, whilst in the position.

The Australian Navy's first success came on 11 August when the Black German Line merchant ship, *Hobart*, was seized in Melbourne by the District Naval Officer, Captain J.T. Richardson, RAN, who took possession of the German code book, the *Handelsverkehrsbuch* (HVB), the code for use between warships and merchant vessels and it included its first wartime key. The Naval Board advised the Admiralty on 9 September of what it had in its possession and at the end of October the code books, delivered by fast steamer, were in the Admiralty's hands. Wheatley broke the HVB code on 3 November 1914. 'Although Room 40 [the British Admiralty's World War I code breaking organisation] was established within ten days of the outbreak of warthere was no plan, no experience, no expertise to deal with the situation.'⁵⁴² By comparison, the value of placing wireless/telegraph operators on each Australian warship by Creswell had an immediate effect for with the captured codes and wireless telegraphy capability the Navy Office was not only able to listen in on von Spee's transmissions but provide intelligence to Patey and the Admiralty on the German Squadrons movements and intentions.

On 1 November 1914 Australian and New Zealand soldiers boarded 36 troop transports and with their escorts HMS *Minotaur*, HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Sydney* departed

⁵⁴² Beesly, P., *Room 40 British Naval Intelligence 1914-18*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1982, p.3

Albany for Europe, though the troops would eventually disembark at Egypt. IJN *Ibuki* and two transports joined the convoy from Fremantle on the 3 November. Major-General Bridges, commanding the First Australian Imperial Force, was on board the convoy flagship, SS *Orvieto*. Peter Bastian erroneously asserted that General Bridges ‘by the end of October had managed to organise enough ships to assemble in Western Australia at Albany.’⁵⁴³ In denying a navy for Australia in 1905, one wonders if Bridges contemplated that to fight the enemies of the Empire in a foreign land he would need to traverse the seas; thus he was in receipt of that ultimate of naval barbs: the army was the projectile of the navy! It was Navy Office which initiated the logistical operation. Creswell would have never allowed Bridges to ‘manage to organise’ any naval transports!

HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Sydney* were not to return to Australia until 1919, assigned blockading duties off the east coast of North America to prevent German merchant vessels from leaving the U.S. Enroute to Europe on 9 November a report was received of an enemy ship off the Cocos Island and HMAS *Sydney* was deployed to investigate. It was the German raider, *Emden*, detached from the Imperial German Asiatic Squadron to create havoc in the Indian Ocean while the rest of the squadron escaped east across the Pacific Ocean and Atlantic Ocean in the hope of reaching Germany. The *Emden* engaged the *Sydney* at 0940 hours on 9 November, ran aground at 1115 hours and was bombarded into submission by the superior firepower of the *Sydney*.

Meanwhile HMAS *Australia* steamed eastward across the Pacific in a fruitless search for the German Squadron. The Admiralty ordered Patey, in *Australia*, to take command

⁵⁴³ Bastian, P., *Andrew Fisher: An underestimated man*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009, p.273

of an allied force off Mexico to prevent the German Squadron from returning to the Pacific. The German Squadron was destroyed off the Falklands Islands on 8 December by the Royal Navy. With this threat removed HMAS Australia made its way to Britain, arriving at Rosyth, Scotland, on 17 February 1915. Australia was made the flagship of the Second Battle cruiser Squadron of Vice-Admiral Beatty's Battle cruiser Fleet. After 1915 the Australian Navy's seagoing fleet would be scattered to the North Sea, the Americas and Caribbean, Sarawak and later Italy.

The Great War was a first time experience for the Commonwealth of Australia – for its people, government, armed forces and press – a nation which was fourteen years old, whilst Britain had structures, traditions and a long heritage of war and managing conflicts. When Australia went to war there was one minister for the armed services, a tyranny of distance and communications (not just in wireless telegraphy, but in real time communication of events or overseas/ imperial requests and comprehending their real meaning) and, in the case of the RAN, a Board of Administration without sea assets to administer. Defence Minister Pearce could not cope with the massive requirements of large land forces fighting overseas and passed the small responsibility of the navy to another minister, Jens Jensen, who gave no guidance, support or encouragement and set no direction or goals; when Cook became navy minister in the Hughes National Government, he was as frequent an absentee at Naval Board meetings as his predecessor.⁵⁴⁴

Despite the long genesis of the Australian navy, time was still needed to develop an array of Australian seamen with leadership, operational and coaching skills in command

⁵⁴⁴ Ministerial attendance at Navy Board meetings had been poor since 1905: from 1905 to 1910 there was an average of fourteen meetings per year; the defence minister attended less than half. The relevant ministers attended even less meetings in the period from 1914 to 1918 when an average of thirty-three meetings were held. Source: Hyslop, p.39

and control, engineering and administration. No sooner had Australia acquired a fleet unit than it would be dispersed as vessels under British command in the Mediterranean, North Sea, West Indies and America during the Great War. There had been no time to develop the substantive chain of command from commanding an individual vessel to the Naval Board and no widespread evolution of Australian officers in command roles. There were simply not enough officers at the command level, for instance, to bring the Fleet and some of the individual vessels home. Australia had a navy that still was not its own; nor would it be for some time as officers commissioned in Australia were standardised with further training in Britain, British officers were installed as First Naval Members and Officers Commanding the Australian Fleet, and successive Australian governments aligned themselves with the maritime doctrine of Britain.

For generations, according to McMinn, the popular view – the myth – has been ‘that Australia became a nation on the beaches of Gallipoli. But the influence of the Great War on the development of the *national idea* in Australia is too complex to be accurately summed up in such an aphorism: powerful as the Anzac legend became ...’⁵⁴⁵ it benefited from the writing and encouragement of Charles Bean, the official war historian. Gallipoli and the other theatres of the Great War in which Australian forces participated seemed to exemplify ‘One Flag, One Command’ (army and navy): Australia was in a subservient relationship, no matter what the cost or sanity of the operation. The multi-faceted question of the ‘national idea’ is not entered into here, except to assert Creswell’s continual association of the nation’s identity and destiny with the identity and destiny of a national navy. The naval historian David Stevens has

⁵⁴⁵ McMinn, W., *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994, p. 217

rightly noted that in comparison with the Australian army, ‘particularly in the war’s early months, the navy was the more influential instrument of national power ...Australian sailors managed to forge their own unique naval and national identities.’⁵⁴⁶

The destiny of Australians was that war would dramatically, deeply change their lives: personally, socially, economically and politically. The Commonwealth government would exercise greater power at home (censorship, control of industry, domestic surveillance) and many of the men sent away to war would not come back. Courage, patriotism and individual heroism by land forces, as well as enormous casualties, would change Australia’s identity and status – momentarily – entitling it to separate representation at the Peace Conference in 1919. In March 1915 an article in the Round Table, written in December 1914, attempted to define Australia at war:

Nations, like men, have often to face great crisis’ before the secret of their being becomes revealed to the world and to themselves, and it was not until the outbreak of the war, which has jeopardised the very existence of the British Empire, that Australia began fully to realise that empire’s meaning, and the high and responsible part she has been called to play in it. During the last few years her sense of Imperial responsibility has been deepened and quickened by two things – the creation of her national navy, and the acquisition of possessions in the Pacific.⁵⁴⁷

The enthusiasm for its creation was surpassed in 1914 by the enthusiasm by many Australians for this war: And all with a common aim: To sail to a foreign country
And fight for England’s name.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Stevens, D., *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume III: The Royal Australian Navy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p.30

⁵⁴⁷ *Australia and the War* (former prime minister, Chris Watson is presumed to be the author) in Robson, L.L. (Ed.), p39

⁵⁴⁸ From *The Recruits* by Henry Lawson in Cronin, p.618

Initially the Commonwealth's entry to war was about protecting the Mother Country though, in reality, it was about securing Australia: directly seizing the German possessions of New Guinea, indirectly Samoa and the fortuitous sinking of the *Emden*. For Australians, the 'secret of their being' revealed itself on the battlefields of Gallipoli, France and Palestine, where determination, mateship, valour, the loss of innocence and the display of the larrikin view of life was exhibited in individuals and battalions of Diggers. At Rabaul, the site of Australia's first war-time operation, the first deaths and the first honours are barely recalled with the loss of the submarine *AEI* with its complement of 35 personnel and three naval personnel from the land contingent in the capture of the German possessions of New Guinea. One could be dismissive: it was too small an action, too few died and honours were neither numerous or highly significant; besides the action was largely naval. The devastation of a long drawn-out land war in the Northern Hemisphere with the sacrifice of so many Australian lives would soon overwhelm every community at home. Protecting the Mother Country cost Australia 60,000 dead and 167,000 wounded. The Australian Navy would appear as minor references on the pages of the history texts on the Great War, only delayed by HMAS *Sydney*'s action against the *Emden*. The Royal Australian Navy lost 15 officers and 156 sailors killed during the Great War; of these 6 officers and 57 sailors had been on loan from the Royal Navy.

The success of RAN since the declaration of war: giving clarity to the identity and status of the nation as a naval power encouraged Creswell and his prime minister to return to their stance that as an autonomous state, the Commonwealth may in the future make decisions in their interests, not Britain's. In late 1914, Prime Minister Fisher promoted the concept of a trans-Tasman joint naval fleet for Pacific sea defence,

affirming ‘that the strength and unity of the British Empire will be increased by a wider distribution of armed forces on the sea, with greater autonomy. If this increase of autonomy is granted freely and cheerfully by the Mother Country, the striking force of the Navy will be increased’ acknowledging the view ‘that while unity of command is necessary, there must be a larger delegation of executive power if we are to make the best of our Naval Forces.’⁵⁴⁹ To the New Zealand Defence Minister, Colonel Allen, Fisher asserted his long-held view that ‘the Commonwealth would have to decide, after all, whether the Fleet is to be handed over or not, in case Britain enters in war.’ Allen reported that ‘He led me to think that there were some wars which Great Britain might enter into for which the Commonwealth would not hand over her ships. In my judgement this is a serious blow to Empire. I did look forward to the controlling authority in the days to come being some other than the British Government, the Admiralty, and the War Office.’ In Creswell’s view automatic transfer of the Australian Navy to Britain on every occasion ‘depends on reasoned will and the spirit of the State’. Yet Creswell resolved that in reality when Britain declared war ‘we have had a fairly convincing example ... GET THE FLEET – GET THE MEN and all else will come right. This is the true line of action.’⁵⁵⁰ Creswell could be satisfied with his thirty years of advocacy to establish, develop and resource an Australian Navy.

By 1915, devoid of fleet responsibility - a fleet, which he fought long and hard to establish – Creswell did not claim ‘age’ to retire to the farm. This war was a new challenge; it was a shared risk with fellow Australians. Rear-Admiral Creswell, RAN, would need to trust the Admiralty with Australian naval assets and servicemen – his

⁵⁴⁹ CPD, Vol. LXXV, 11 November 1914, p.468

⁵⁵⁰ Creswell to Allen, 5 February 1915, *Allen Papers*, Box 1 M1/ 14 Ministerial Papers, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.

‘frontiersmen’ - whilst he was about to embark on a new frontier: Australia at war. There was also a specific reason why Creswell was still in the arena at war’s end. On 10 December 1917, the Admiral delivered the farewell speech to the cadet-midshipmen from the Naval College, Jervis Bay. In concluding his remarks Creswell said ‘I have not ventured to advise you as to your conduct and bearing when joining your ships in the Grand Fleet’ and then revealed something of his own character, whilst being instructional to the young officers’ development:

However, after fifty odd years’ experience, and drawing near the exit from the stage you are about to take your places on, I should like to mention two things that are important. The first is – Absolute Straightforwardness in everything. There is the greatest confidence in an officer known to be straightforward in statement and action. The second is – Never leave a job of work, or any duty, big or small until it is absolutely completed. Be the last to leave it. Only leave when it is done.⁵⁵¹

It at once affirmed his persistent, forthright, long advocacy for a naval defence for Australia and why, from Creswell’s standpoint, he did not resign in 1914: never leave a duty until it is absolutely completed. It had only been twelve months since the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, with the First Member of the Australian Navy Board in company, addressed the first graduating class of cadet midshipmen from the Royal Australian Naval College in 1916 with words that left Australians in no doubt they had a navy that was not their own. ‘You, who are of the same blood, have been trained here in the traditions of a race which for 300 years and more has never lost its hold on the sea.’ The Governor-General said:

We may confidently expect that you are qualified to exhibit that character and personality which, from Nelson downwards, has ever distinguished the British

⁵⁵¹ Admiral Creswell’s Speech on the occasion of the departure of the cadet-midshipmen from the Naval College on passing out at the end of their course, 10 December 1917, Report of the Royal Australian Naval College for 1917, *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers* – General – Volume 4, 1917-18-19, p.164 (p.24 of the Report)

sea officer. ... after the first few months you will soon cease to discriminate between Australian and English born, and you will remember only that you belong to the greatest of all British Services – that of the sea.⁵⁵²

That ‘motive that is quintessentially selfish and integral to nationalism and status: the desire for identity and status’, which Hirst attests drove the colonies to federate, seemed lost in imperial propaganda. As Australia was to find at the Washington Naval Conference six years later, where Britain represented itself and the Empire, it had ‘no voice, no rights, no membership in the brotherhood of nations.’⁵⁵³

The Royal Australian Navy lacking much of its sea-going assets, however, could still contribute significant work through the Naval Intelligence team for the Australian Naval Board and, in turn, the government. Walter Thring, the versatile member of Creswell’s team, co-authored with Captain AW Jose the Navy Board’s *Post Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific*, which identified that, ‘The British Empire has interests in and around the Pacific Ocean, the defence of which is a problem separable from – though of course intimately connected with – other British defence problems.’ In an obvious reference to Japan, the draft policy counselled:

The essence of this problem lies in the recent appearance in the north-western Pacific of a great naval Power. Imperial policy with regard to that Power consists in the maintenance of the friendliest possible relations with it, although its known aspirations to the leadership of Oriental races must be carefully watched.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵² CPP – General – Report of the Royal Australian Naval College, 1916

⁵⁵³ Hirst, p. 26

⁵⁵⁴ *Post Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific*, Papers of William Morris Hughes, NLA MS 1538/19.Pp 5-.6.

Jose and Thring ominously warned ‘Australian policy with regard to that Power involves certain action, which is known to be regarded by the Power as unfriendly.’

The policy of the dominions in the Pacific had recognized the real threat, but the British government had acknowledged, for the present, Japan as ‘friend’ rather than a potential ‘foe’. ‘It cannot, therefore, be safely assumed that relations with the Power in question will remain permanently on a friendly footing; and there is need of concerted precautions against its possible enmity on the part of all British Dominions.’ The Board’s proposal was full of foreboding concerning this nation, which the Board seemed reticent to name, as ‘the rise of a new Power of different race, eager both for more territory and for dominance in the ocean, which washes its shores.’⁵⁵⁵

Twelve months after the end of the Great War, Creswell retired as the First Member of the Naval Board on 14 August 1919, transferring to the Retired List on 27 November 1919, and withdrew from public life. In the euphoria of victory in November 1918 and the later scramble for reparations and spoils at Versailles, how it all began for the Australian Navy seemed forgotten. Creswell received a further Imperial honour, a KBE in 1919, to add to his CMG awarded in 1897 and KCMG in 1911. The Admiralty were requested and gave – through the Governor-General – acknowledgement of his naval service. It read as perfunctory, insincere and insensitive as well as tactless in not acknowledging him as the one whose consistent advocacy and leadership had brought about the Royal Australian Navy. There was begrudging help with his pension. Creswell thought that, at least, he should advance one rank - on the retired list - by promotion to Vice-Admiral. That came beyond the time when accolade and service

⁵⁵⁵ *Post Bellum Naval Policy for the Pacific*, Papers of William Morris Hughes, NLA MS 1538/19.Pp 5-.6.

were linked. His departure from the navy showed the ill feeling of politicians and of the members of the Naval Board. The Naval Board had initially denied Creswell's promotion; Vice-Admiral Grant, Creswell's successor as First Naval Member, justifying the denial by saying that Creswell never qualified for flag officer rank from command or service at sea. Grant may have been ignorant of Creswell's place in Australian naval history, (though Munro Ferguson and Clarkson may have influenced his stance) but it seemed plain ungrateful and mean-spirited. A few months after Creswell's promotion on the retired list, Clarkson retired as vice-admiral on 1 September 1922 with no such impediment to promotion.

Time and circumstance had robbed Creswell of seagoing command, yet he fought and planned for the instruments of naval warfare. His was a destiny beyond command at sea, a naval battle or a war. His vision enunciated in schemes and parliamentary reports were specific, tangible and always subscribed to an Australian navy within an Imperial navy; however, he increasingly called for an unfettered start to that local naval defence. 'in my view Vice-Admiral Creswell deserves the title 'Father of the Australian Navy'.

Vice-Admiral Tripovich has said:

His passion, forethought, approach to joint operations, and development of a capability plan based on strategic requirements were modern even by today's standards. He spoke and wrote passionately about Australia's needs for an independent, indigenous naval capability, and pressed his case with successive Governments until his views were accepted. Without doubt he set the scene for the Navy, and indeed the ADF, of today. Many of the issues he dealt with remain relevant, and many of the processes he put in place remain today, albeit with different titles. The concepts of the sea-air gap, the philosophy of the Defence of Australia, the principles of self-reliance and an indigenous industry capability to support the Defence Force all have a familiar ring. Indeed, today's capability development processes follow a similar path. Admiral Creswell's arguments were based on clinical assessments of Australia's circumstances.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁶ Tripovich, Creswell Oration: Navy Foundation Day, 1 March 2008

Conclusion

In July 1903, Australia's first prime minister, Sir Edmund Barton told parliament: 'Let us call ourselves Britons ... we have not forfeited by our emigration, or by that of our fathers, any of the rights of Britishers at home, or any of our share of the glory or the material prosperity of the Empire. We are Britons of the Empire.'⁵⁵⁷ It was the fulfilment of the call John Ruskin had made thirty years before and set in context the campaign for a naval defence for Australia.. Yet it was – and still is – the sea that has defined Australia; it is the land that has sustained us. For a century and a half since white settlement: the imagery, the geography, the economy and the society has been dominated by the land. Yet it was the sea which kept the continent 'incognito' for centuries, while later it seemed to be the natural barrier to preserve the white race. It was the Mahanian 'highway' of inter-colonial trade and transport. It defined not only how commerce could be practiced with Britain or any foreign country, but that it could only be done by sea. For Creswell there was 'so little sympathy in Australia' for a local navy. Looking back, Creswell noted that 'from the Admiralty, indeed, we who had the cause of a self-reliant colonial naval service at heart could not only not look for support, but had active opposition to fear.'⁵⁵⁸ At the birth of this new maritime state, Australians would have readily accepted the adage that 'people live on the land not the sea' and Britain encouraged them not to think beyond it.

⁵⁵⁷ *CPD*, Vol. XIV, 7 July 1903., Pp. 1797/ 1801

⁵⁵⁸ Thompson, p.199

A navy gives mobility: it is quicker to respond than an army and its smallest fighting unit is more effective than the army's smallest unit (an individual soldier or platoon). A navy is more than an armed force afloat: it is the distinctive symbol of a sovereign maritime state. The extent to which it commands the sea and is an instrument of foreign policy, sea commerce protection and national defence is far reaching. A navy defines a maritime state's influence, authority and potency in the world, enhancing the nation's sovereignty.

Creswell learned this from his career in the British Navy. In the late 1880's, responding to the vulnerability of Australia - that it could only be attacked by sea - a view not generally held in Australia or Britain at the time, a young Lieutenant Creswell was one who asked key questions: 'What needs to be done?' 'What can or should I do to make a difference?' From this time onward, Creswell's trajectory towards the achievement of a naval defence was steady and purposeful. His writings reveal, as evidenced in this thesis, that he was conversant with and understood the naval strategic thinking of his day and the implications of foreign power manoeuvrings in the Pacific. At Federation, Captain Creswell laid before the nation his naval manifesto: *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports* Report of 1901. It was a clear, visionary, but practical proposal for a naval defence for Australia; it was also his commitment as an Australian. 'Australia has inherited her due share of the nation's genius for sea enterprise, either for war or commerce' He declared 'I ask whether it would not be in the true interests of Australia and the Empire, even at

considerable cost, to develop locally those qualities of race and that sea profession which gave us, and has since held for us, the land we live in.⁵⁵⁹

By heritage and not geography, Britain and Australia were not islands. They were interconnected, woven into one community. The British Empire was a relational cluster connected to 'Home'. This relationship was the context through which members of the Empire viewed the world. This relationship was challenged when Britain withdrew its modern warships and reduced its naval squadrons from the Pacific, relying on an alliance with Japan to protect British interests. This prompted Australia and New Zealand to seriously consider their own naval security.

Creswell had been active in enabling Australians to think about their security with detailed proposals for the development of a naval capability. Speaking in the Senate on 3 November 1910 Senator Chataway, who had been a stockman with Creswell in Queensland, noted that 'only a few years ago, the idea was prevalent that all that Australia need do was to protect her own coasts' by paying 'tribute' to the Imperial Government. Too little attention was being given to naval defence and this thesis endorses the judgement of Senator Chataway said that this 'idea is spreading amongst Australians today ... a great deal - or nearly the whole - of the alteration in the opinion of the people of Australia on this subject has been brought about, not by the speeches of politicians, nor by statements made by experts in the Old Country, but by the present Naval Director of the Commonwealth, Captain Creswell.'⁵⁶⁰ Creswell was the catalyst

⁵⁵⁹ *The Best Method of Employing Australian Seamen in the Defence of Commerce and Ports*
Report p. 156

⁵⁶⁰ CPD, Vol. LIX, 3 November 1910, p. 5576

who first explained to the Australian public and parliamentarians as to why Australia needed a naval defence.

In the first decade of the Commonwealth, apart from British self-interest and intransigence, there were three abiding elements which seemed to mitigate against the establishment of any local naval defence: limited Commonwealth revenues, Australia's small population and the lack of a consistent, proactive Australian naval defence policy. In Britain's view, Australia was unable to constitute a navy – certainly not a credible naval force – and these elements enhanced that argument. Britain had been undeviating in its naval policy of 'One Flag, One Fleet', opposed to local navies in favour of one Imperial navy to which all dominions should contribute. As this thesis has shown, the Fisher Labor governments (1908-1909, 1910-1913 and 1914-1915) cut the 'Gordian Knot'. However, when war came, Andrew Fisher echoed the sentiments of his contemporaries to defend 'Home' to the last man and the last shilling. Creswell would have liked a larger and more independent Australian navy in 1914 but knew that what had been achieved was substantial, given such an unpromising and difficult start.

There were elements which combined to shape and develop an Australian naval defence. Warships appropriate to Australian conditions and requirements; entry, officer and specialist training; skilled local construction and maintenance engineering facilities; a naval intelligence service and wireless telegraphy were required for a capable and well-equipped naval force. Significantly, there were elements which could be neither bought nor recruited: experience, particularly operations experience, and professionalism. Time and circumstance may bring both, as Creswell, Deakin and the

British Admiralty would acknowledge, but only interchangeability with the Royal Navy would bring it sooner. Like many of his contemporaries, Creswell was conscious of Britain's role in the naval security of Australia – he was a realist rather than a dreamer. Creswell was aware, as the young Commonwealth's leading navalist, that he was in a position to affect such a change to public opinion and government thinking by which an Australian navy could be established, which would be valuable, in its own right, to the defence of Australia.

Vice-Admiral Creswell died on 20 April 1933, reported by *The Times* obituary as having 'had a career of unusual interest.'⁵⁶¹ On the eve of the unveiling of a memorial plaque to the Vice-Admiral at Sydney's Garden Island Naval Dockyard in July 1938, Rear-Admiral H. J. Feakes, RAN (retired), recounted Creswell's life, noting that 'in years of thankless pioneering he prepared the way.':

It must have been a proud day for Creswell to have finally controlled a force whose vessels flew the White Ensign at the Ensign Staff and the Southern Cross at the Jack Staff – the White Ensign under which he had been born and bred, and the Southern Cross, symbol of the country in which he completed his life's work.⁵⁶²

Not long before he died, writing to Alfred Deakin's son-in-law, Herbert Brookes, Creswell said:

In the great fight – the long tough unrelenting battle for our Navy – for me from the early 90's till 1909 – my fight was against the professional front – The Navy, i.e. the Admiralty and all the 'High Authority' – They condemned the Australian Naval idea as bad strategy – false or *no* strategy – This I battled against – I knew I was right – this was *my* front.⁵⁶³

⁵⁶¹ *The Times*, Apr 21, 1933; p. 17

⁵⁶² *SMH*, Saturday, 2 July 1938

⁵⁶³ Creswell to Brookes, 19 November 1932. *Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes*, MS 1924, NLA

In doing so William Rooke Creswell fulfilled the call of John Ruskin: he made something of himself and did something for his country. Creswell played a conspicuous role in establishing the Australian navy and in determining the capability, the strategic purpose and the character of that navy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Selected Letters of WR Creswell to his son Peter, 1928-1932, with permission of the Creswell Family,

Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, Government Printer, Canberra, 1974

Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates

Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers

Report of the Director of the Naval Forces on his Visit to England in 1906 to Inquire into the Latest Naval Developments (author's copy: No. 82 of 900 printed), The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 21 September, 1906

Naval Defence - Report of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, GCB, OM, GCVO, on Naval Mission to the Commonwealth of Australia, (May-August, 1919) (author's copy No. 177 of 925 printed) The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 21 October, 1919

Department of Defence (Navy), *An Outline of Australian Naval History*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976

Department of Defence, *Compendium of Speeches by the Hon. Kim C. Beazley, MP, Minister for Defence 1985-1989*, Directorate of Departmental Publications, Canberra, 1989

Department of Defence, *Australian Maritime Doctrine*, RAN Doctrine 1, 2000, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra 2000

Department of Defence, *The Navy Contribution to Australian Maritime Operations*, RAN Doctrine 2, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra 2005

An Outline of American History, The United States Information Services, undated

National Archives of Australia
Governor General's Office – Correspondence

National Library of Australia:

The Papers of Andrew Barton, MS 51
The Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, MS 1924
The Papers of Alfred Deakin, MS 1540
The Papers of Lord Denman MS 769
The Papers of Andrew Fisher: MS 2919
The Papers of William Morris Hughes, MS 1538
The Papers of Richard Jebb, MS 813
The Papers of Sir John Latham, MS 1009

The Papers of Lord Tennyson, MS 479

The State Library of South Australia
P.M. Maguire Maritime Collection

The State Library of Victoria

The Fisher Library, University of Sydney

Birt Library, University of Wollongong

Archives New Zealand, Wellington
Allen Papers, Box 1 M1/ 14 Ministerial Papers

Fisher, Dr. Walter, J.P. Government Medical Officer at Cessnock, NSW. *Coastal Defence of Australia and British Fleet Contrasted with Foreign Fleets*. Copy of extract from 'Maitland Mercury' June 2, 1906 of a lecture given to Officers and Members of the Australian Light Horse and 4th Infantry Regiment sighted at the National Library of New Zealand. 24.2.2007. Ref. No: PAM A 1909 Fish/23671.

Speeches:

Commodore Ray Griggs CSC AO RAN, the Deputy Fleet Commander, 106th Australian Navy Foundation Day Creswell Oration, 1 March 2007

Vice-Admiral Matt Tripovich, AM CSC RAN, Chief of Capability Development, Australian Defence Force, 107th Australian Navy Foundation Day Creswell Oration: *Navy Capability – From Creswell to Tomorrow*, 1 March 2008

Newspapers:

The Age (Melbourne)
The Argus (Melbourne)
Brisbane Courier
The Call
The Daily Telegraph (Sydney)
The Lone Hand
The West Australian (Perth)
Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney)
Register (Adelaide)
Illawarra Mercury (Wollongong, NSW)
South Coast Times (Wollongong, NSW)
The Times (London)

Journals:

American Heritage, winter 2008, Vol 58, No.3, Pp.14-17

International Journal of Naval History April 2007 Volume 6 No. 1,

http://www.ijnhonline.org/index_april07.htm

Naval Historical Review, *The Journal of Australia's Naval Historical Society*, Vol. 26 No. 2, June 2005

Brundson Fletcher, C., 'Australia and the Pacific, 1788 – 1885', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal of Proceedings*, Vol. 28, Part 3, 1942, pp. 157-183

Gobert, W., Lieutenant Commander, 'The Evolution of Service Strategic Intelligence, 1901-1941', in *Australian Defence Force Journal*, No.92, January/ February 1992

Gordon, D.C., The Admiralty and Dominion Navies, 1902-1914 in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Dec.,1961.

Hayne, M., 'The Impact of the Battle of Tsushima on Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1905-1909', in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol 72, Part 4, April 1987

Rankine, W., 'Rear Admiral Frederick Tickell, RAN, CMG', 6, *Journal of the Military Historical Society of Australia*, Vol XXXIX – No.3, September 1998

Tate M., 'The Australasian Monroe Doctrine', in *Political Science Quarterly*, June 1961. p. 264 – 284

Walton, R.D., 'Feeling for the Jugular: Japanese Espionage at Newcastle, 1919-1926', in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 1986, Volume 32, No.1

Wellington R., 'Australian Attitudes to the Spanish-American War', in *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol.56, Part 2, June 1970. p. 111-120

Electronic Publications:

Australian Dictionary of Biography Online

<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>

The Diaries of George King-Hall, Commander-in-Chief Australia,

http://www.kinghallconnections.com/index_george.html

Curran, J., *A crisis of national meaning: Prime ministers and the dilemma of Australian nationalism*, John Curtin Ministerial Library Visiting Scholar Public Lecture, 19 April 2004, Curtin University of Technology, Perth. Cited at <http://john.curtin.edu.au/events/speeches/curran.html>.

Miller, G., *The Milestone, Volume III: British Naval Policy in the Mediterranean 1900-14, the Commitment to France and British Intervention in the War*,

<http://www.manorhouse.clara.net/book3/toc.htm>

Nelson, H., *Fighting for Her Gates and Waterways: Changing Perceptions of New Guinea in Australian Defence*, Discussion Paper 2005/3 *State Society and Governance in Melanesia Discussion Paper Series*, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, rspas.anu.edu.au/papers/Melanesia/discussion_paper/05_03_dp_nelson.pdf
Accessed 30/04/07

Nish, I., *Historical Significance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance* Studies in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923), <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/is/I5443.pdf>.

Nish, I., The First Anglo-Japanese Alliance Treaty. Anglo-Japanese Alliance <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/is/I5432.pdf>.

Penrose Kennedy, C.C., *From Sail to Steam Naval Recollections 1878-1905*, http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~pbttyc/From_Sail_to_Steam/FP.html

Preston, A. and Major, J., *Send A Gunboat: The Victorian Navy and Supremacy at Sea, 1854-1904*, Longmans, London, 1967
http://books.google.com.au/books?id=80KN6I_JPYC&printsec=frontcover&dq=send+a+gunboat#PPP1,M1

Rawson, G., *Life of Admiral Sir Harry Rawson*, Edward Arnold, London, 1914, <http://www.archive.org/stream/lifeofadmiralsir00raws>

Skelton, O.D., *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, Volume II, SB Gundy, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1921, <http://www.archive.org/stream/lifelettersofsir02skel>

Books

A

Adkins, R. & L., *The War for All the Oceans*, Abacus, London, 2006

Amery, L., *My Political Life*, Vol One: *England before The Storm 1896-1914*, Hutchinson, London, 1953

Andrews, E., *A History of Australian Foreign Policy*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1988, (2nd Edition)

B

Baer, G., *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1993

Bannon, J., *Supreme Federalist: the political life of Sir John Downer*, Wakefield Press, Kent Town, South Australia, 2009

Barrett, J., *Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription' 1911-1915*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979

Bartlett, N., *1776-1976 Australia and America through 200 Years*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1976

Bastian, P., *Andrew Fisher: An underestimated man*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009

Bean, C.E.W., *Flagships Three*, Alston Rivers, London, 1913

Bean, C.E.W., *Two Men I Knew: William Bridges and Brudenell White: Founders of the A.I.F.*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957.

Beaumont, J. (Ed.), *Australia's War 1939-45*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996

Beesly, P., *Room 40 British Naval Intelligence 1914-18*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1982

Bennett, G., *Naval Battles of The First World War*, Penguin Books, London, 1974

Birrell, B., *Federation: The Secret Story*, Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 2001

Black, J., *The British Seaborne Empire*, Yale University Press, London, 2004

Bolton, G., *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2000

Booker, M., *The Great Professional: A Study of W.M. Hughes*, McGraw Hill, Sydney, 1980

Brenchley, F. and E., *Stoker's Submarine*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2003

Bromby, R., *German Raiders of the South Seas*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1985

Broeze, F., *Island Nation: A History of Australians and the Sea*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998

Butler, D., *Distant Victory: The Battle of Jutland and the Allied Triumph in the First World War*, Praeger Security International, Westport Conct. 2006

C

Cain, F., *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*, Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1983, Sydney

Campbell, R. and Harvie, P., (Compiled), *Singer of the Bush A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson Complete Works 1885-1900*, Ure Smith Press, Willoughby, 1983

Carlyon, L., *Gallipoli*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2001

Carlyon, L., *The Great War*, Macmillan, Sydney, 2006

Clark, M., *A Short History of Australia*, Mentor, New York, 1969

Cohen, E., *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime*, Free Press(Simon & Schuster), Sydney, 2003

Coulthard-Clark, C., *A Heritage of Spirit: A biography of Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges, K.C.B., C.M.G.*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1979

Coulthard-Clark, C., *Without Peer: Sir William Clarkson KBE, CMG (1859-1934). Engineer Vice-Admiral. Royal Australian Navy*, The Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering, Sydney University, Sydney, 2002

Crankshaw, E., *Bismarck*, Macmillan, London, 1981

Cronin, L., (Ed.), *Henry Lawson Complete Works 1885-1900: A Campfire Yarn*, Lansdowne Press, 1984

Cronin, L. (Ed.) *Henry Lawson Complete Works 1901 – 1922: A Fantasy of Man*, Lansdowne Press, Sydney, 1984

Crowley, F., *Big John Forrest 1847-1918: A Founding Father of the Commonwealth of Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, W.A., 2000

Crowley, F. (Ed.), *Modern Australia in Documents Volume 1: 1901-1939*, Wren, Melbourne, 1973

Crowley, F. (Ed.), *A New History of Australia*, Heinemann Educational Australia, Port Melbourne, 1990

Cunneen, C., *Kings' Men: Australia's Governors-General from Hopetoun to Issacs*, George Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1983

Cunningham, I.J., RAN. *Work Hard, Play Hard. The Royal Australian Naval College 1913-1988*. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988

D

Dalton, K., *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*, Vintage, New York, 2004

Day, D., *Andrew Fisher Prime Minister of Australia*, Harper Collins (Fourth Estate), Sydney, 2008

Deakin, A., *The Federal Story*, Robertson and Mullens, Melbourne, 1944

Deakin, A., *And Be One People*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1995

Dingman, R., *Power in the Pacific: The Origins of Naval Arms Limitation 1914-1922*, The University of Chicago, Chicago, 1976

Drew, Lt., H.T.B. (ed.), *The War Effort of New Zealand: A Popular History of (a) Minor Campaigns in Which New Zealand took part (b) Services not fully dealt with in the Campaign Volumes (c) The work at the Bases*, Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd., Wellington N.Z. 1923

E

Edwards, P.G., *Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy 1901-1949*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1983

Eggleston, F.W., *Reflections on Australian Foreign Policy*, F.E. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1957

Evans, A., *A Navy for Australia*, ABC Enterprises, Sydney, 1986

Evans, R., Moore, C., Saunders, K. and Jamison, B., *1901 Our Future's Past*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1997

F

Falk, E.A., *Togo and the Rise of Japanese Sea Power*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1936

Farmer Whyte, W. *William Morris Hughes: His Life and Times*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957

Feakes, H., *White Ensign-Southern Cross: A Story of the King's Ships of Australia's Navy*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1951

Ferguson, N., *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, Penguin Books, London, 2004

Firkins, P., *Of Nautilus and Eagles: History of the Royal Australian Navy*, Hutchinson of Australia, Richmond, 1983

Fitzhardinge, L.F., *William Morris Hughes A Political Biography: That Fiery Particle 1862-1914 Vol.1*, Angus and Robertson Publishers, Sydney, 1964.

Fitzhardinge, L.F., *The Little Digger 1914-1952. William Morris Hughes A Political Biography, Vol. 2*, Angus and Robertson Publishers, Sydney 1979

Fleming, T., *The Illusion of Victory: America in World War I*, Basic Books (Perseus Books Group), New York, 2003

Forbes, A. and Lovi, M. (Eds.), *Australian Maritime Issues 2006 SPC-A Annual*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No.19, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2007

Foster, L., *High Hopes: The men and Motives of the Australian Round Table*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1986

Frame, T., *The Garden Island*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1990

Frame, T., *Pacific Partners: A History of Australian-American Naval Relations*, Hodder & Stoughton, Sydney, 1992

Frame, T. *The Shores of Gallipoli: Naval Dimensions of the Anzac Campaign*, Hale & Iremonger, Alexandria, N.S.W. 2000

Frame, T., *No Pleasure Cruise: The Story of the Royal Australian Navy*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2004

Frame, T., Goldrick, J. and Jones, P. (Eds.), *Reflections on The Australian Navy*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1991

Frame, T. and Swinden, G., *First In, Last Out: The Navy at Gallipoli*, Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1990

Friedberg, A., *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988

Freudenberg, G., *Churchill and Australia*, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2008

Fullilove, Michael. *'Men and Women of Australia' Our Greatest Modern Speeches*, Vintage, Sydney, 2005

G

Gabay, A., *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992

George, J., *History of Warships: From Ancient Times to the Twenty First Century*, Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 1998

Gilbert, G. and Davitt, R. (Eds.), *Australian Maritime Issues 2005 SPC-A Annual*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No.16, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2005

Gilbert, G. (Ed.), *Australian Naval Personalities: Lives from the Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No. 17, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2006

Gillett, R., *Australia's Colonial Navies*, The Naval Historical Society of Australia, Garden Island, 1982

Goldrick, J. and Hattendorf, J. (Eds.), *Mahan is not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond*, Naval War College Press, Newport, 1993

Gordon, A., *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, John Murray, London, 2005

Gordon, Donald C., *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870-1914*. The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1965

Gough, Barry M., *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America 1810-1914*. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, 1971

Grassby, A. and Ordonez, S., *John Watson*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2001

Gratton, C., *The Southwest Pacific Since 1900*, University of Michigan, 1963

Gratton, M. (Ed.), *Australian Prime Ministers*, New Holland Pub., Sydney, 2000

Gray, C., *The Leverage of Sea Power: The Strategic Advantage of Navies in War*, Free Press, New York, 1992

Greenwood, G., (Ed.), *Australia: A Social and Political History*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1955

Greenwood, G., and Grimshaw, C., (Eds.), *Documents on Australian International Affairs 1901-1918*, Nelson, London, 1977

Grey, J., *A Military History of Australia*, (3rd Edition), Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2008

Grimshaw, P., Lake, M., McGrath, A. and Quartly, M., *Creating A Nation*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1994

Guilliatt, R. and Hohne, P., *The Wolf*, William Heinemann, Sydney, 2009

Guttridge, L., *Mutiny: A History of Naval Insurrection*, Berkley Books, New York, 1992

H

Hall, W. and Davis, W., *The Course of Europe Since Waterloo*, 4th Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1957

Halpern, P., *A Naval History of World War I*. UCL Press, London, 1994.

Hanson, V., *Why the West Has Won*, Faber and Faber, London, 2002

Harper, N., (Ed.) *Australia and the United States. Documents and Readings in Australian History*. Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1971

Harper, N., *A Great and Powerful Friend. A Study of Australian American Relations between 1900 and 1978*, University of Queensland Press. St Lucia, Qld., 1987

Harrison-Ford, C., (Selected), *Fighting Words*, Lothian Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1986

Hattendorf, J. (Ed.), *Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1991

Herman, A., *To Rule the Waves. How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 2004.

Henderson, P., *Tennyson: Poet and Prophet*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1978

Heydon, P., *Quiet Decision: A Study of George Foster Pearce*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1965

Hill, R., *War at Sea in the Ironclad Age*, Cassell, London, 2000

Hirst, J., *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2000

Hoehling, A.A., *The Great War at Sea. A History of Naval Action 1914-18*. Greenwood Press, Westport Conect, 1956.

Honan, W. (Ed.), *Great Naval Battles of the Twentieth Century*, Robson Books, London, 2004

Hore, RN, Captain P. (Ed.), *Seapower Ashore: 200 Years of Royal Navy Operations on Land*, Chatham Publishing in association with the National Maritime Museum, London, 2002

Hore, Captain P., *The Habit of Victory: The Story of the Royal Navy 1545 to 1945*, Sidgwick & Jackson, National Maritime Museum, London, 2005

Horne, D., *Billy Hughes*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2000

Horne, D., *The Little Digger: A Biography of Billy Hughes*, The Macmillan Co. of Australia, Melbourne, 1979 (Paperback edition: 1983)

Horner, D.M. (ed.), *The Commanders. Australian Military Leadership in the Twentieth Century*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

Hough, R. *Admiral of the Fleet: The Life of John Fisher*, The Millennium Company, New York, 1969.

Hough, R., *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918*, Oxford University Press Oxford, 1983

Hough, R., *The Fleet That Had To Die*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2000

Howard, G., *Portrait of the Royal New Zealand Navy A Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration*, Grantham House, Wellington, 1991

Howarth, D., *A Brief History of British Sea Power: How Britain Became Sovereign of the Seas*, Robinson, London, 2003

Hoyt, E., *The Last Cruise of the Emden*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1967

Hoyt, E., *Pacific Destiny: The Story of America in the Western Sea from the early 1800s to the 1980s*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1981

Hughes, M. and Philpott, W., *Modern Military History*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2006

Hughes, W.M., *The Price of Peace*. William Brooks and Co. Ltd., Sydney, 1934

Hyam, R., *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office 1905-1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth*, Macmillan, London, 1968

Hyatt, A. (Ed.), *Dreadnought to Polaris: Maritime Strategy since Mahan*, The Copp Clark Publishing Company, Toronto, 1973

Hyslop, R., *Australian Naval Administration 1900-1939*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1973

I

Ireland, B., *War at Sea 1914-45*, Cassell, London, 2002

J

Jane, F., *The Imperial Japanese Navy*, Conway Maritime Press, London, 1984

Jebb, R., *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1905

Johnstone, T., *The Cross Of Anzac: Australian Catholic Service Chaplains*, Church Archivists' Press, Virginia, 2001

Jordan, G., (ed.) *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century 1900-1945: Essays in Honour of Arthur Marder*, Croom Helm, London, 1977.

Jose, A., *Builders and Pioneers of Australia*, J. W. Dent and Sons, London, 1928

Jose, A., *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 Volume IX: The Royal Australian Navy*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1987. (Also edition published by Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1940)

K

Keith, A.B. (Ed.), *Speeches and Documents on International Affairs 1918-1937* Volume I, Oxford University Press, London, 1938

Keegan, J., *The Price of Admiralty: War at Sea from Man of War to Submarine*, Hutchinson, London, 1988

Kennedy, P., *War Plans of the Great Powers 1880-1914*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1979.

Kennedy, P., *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983.

Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Vintage Books, New York, 1989

Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, Penguin Books, London, (first published 1976), 2001

Kent, D., *From Trench and Troopship: The Experience of the Australian Imperial Force, 1914-1919*. Hale & Iremonger, Alexandria NSW, 1999

Kraft, B.H., *Theodore Roosevelt: Champion of the American Spirit*, Clarion Books, New York, 2003

L

LaFeber, W., *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations throughout History*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1998

Laidler, R. and White, S., *Australia 1900-1950: Light on the Hill*, Edward Arnold, Melbourne, 1991

Lambert, A., *Admirals*, faber and faber, London, 2008

Lambert, N., 'Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-1914', in Neilson, K., and Kennedy, G., (Eds.), *Far Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Schurman*, Frank Cass & Co., London, 1997, p.70

Lambert, N., *Australia's Naval Inheritance: Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station 1880-1909*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No. 6, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 1998

La Nauze, J. (Ed.), *Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post 1900-1910*, Melbourne University Press, Carlyon, 1968

La Nauze, J., *Alfred Deakin: A Biography*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1979

Lissington, M., *New Zealand and Japan*, Government Printer, Wellington, 1972

M

- Macandie, G., *The Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1949
- MacDonogh, G., *The Last Kaiser: William The Impetuous*, Phoenix Press, London, 2001
- MacMillan, M., *Peacemakers*, John Murray, London, 2001
- Mackay, R., *Fisher of Kilverstone*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973
- McCarthy, J. *Australia and Imperial Defence 1918-1939: A Study in Air and Sea Power*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia Qld. 1976
- McCullough, D., *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870-1914*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 1977
- McGuire, F., *The Royal Australian Navy: Its Origin, Development and Organisation*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1948
- McGuire, P., *The Price of Admiralty*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1944
- McKernan, M., *Padre: Australian Chaplains in Gallipoli and France*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986
- McMinn, G.E., *George Reid*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1989
- McMinn, W., *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1994
- McMullin, R., *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991
- McMullin, R., *So Monstrous A Travesty: Chris Watson and the world's first national labour government*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2004
- McNair, J. and Poole, T. (Eds.), *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian-Australian Relations*, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, 1992
- McQuilton, J., *Rural Australia and the Great War*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2001
- Mahan, A.T., *The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future*, Port Washington, Kennikat Press, 1897 (Reissued 1970)

Marder, AJ, *Fear God Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Volume II Years of Power 1904-1914, Jonathon Cape, London, 1956

Marder, A. J., *Fear God and Dread Nought, Volume III Restoration, Abdication, and Last Years, 1914-1920*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1959

Marder, A. J., *The Anatomy of British Sea Power. A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre Dreadnought Era 1880-1905*, Octagon Books, New York, 1976

Marsden, S. and Russell, R., *Our First Six: Guide to Archives of Australia's Prime Ministers*, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 2002

Marsh, P., *Joseph Chamberlain Entrepreneur in Politics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994

Massie, R., *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1992

Massie, R., *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany and the Winning of the Great War at Sea*, Pimlico, London, 2003

Meaney, N.K., *Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870's to the 1970's*. Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1985.

Meaney, N.K., *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-1923: Volume 1: The Search for Security in the Pacific 1901-1914*, Sydney University Press, University of Sydney, 1976

Mein Smith, P., *A Concise History of New Zealand*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005

Melville, H., *White-Jacket*, edited by A. Humphreys, Oxford University Press, London, 1966

Millar, T., *Australia in Peace and War*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1978

Miller, M. (compiled) *Enduring Words for the Leader*. The Five Mile Press, Rowville Vic., 2006

Miller, S., *"Benevolent Assimilation": The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982

Milner, M., *Canada's Navy: The First Century*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999

Morris, E., *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, Modern Library Paperback, New York, 2001

Morris, E., *Theodore Rex*, Harper Collins, London, 2002

Morris, J., *Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire*, Faber & Faber, London, 1968

Muraviev, A., *The Russian Pacific Fleet: From the Crimean War to Perestroika*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No.20, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2007

Murdoch, J., *A Million to One Against: A Portrait of Andrew Fisher*, Minerva Press, London, 1998

Murdoch, W., *Alfred Deakin*, Bookman, Melbourne, 1999

N

Neilson, K., and Kennedy, G., (Eds.), *Far Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Schurman*, Frank Cass & Co., London, 1997

Nicholls, B., *Bluejackets & Boxers Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1986

Nicholls, B., *The Colonial Volunteers. The Defence Forces of the Australian Colonies 1836-1901*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

Nish, I, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations 1908-23*, The Athlone Press, London, 1972

Noye, L., *O'Malley MHR*, Neptune Press, Geelong, 1985

O

O'Brien, P and Vaughan, B (Eds.) *Amongst Friends: Australia and New Zealand Voices from America*, University of Otago Press, 2005, Dunedin (NZ)

O'Connor, R., *Pacific Destiny, An Informal History of the U.S. in the Far East:1776-1968*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1969

P

Pack, S., *Britannia at Dartmouth*, Alvin Redman, London, 1966

Padfield, P., *The Great Naval Race: Anglo-German Naval Rivalry 1900-1914*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 1974

Padfield, P., *Battleship*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2000

Pearce, G., *Carpenter to Cabinet*, Hutchinson, London, 1951

Penn, G., *Fisher, Churchill and the Dardanelles*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, 1999

Perrett, P., *Gunboat! Small Ships at War*, Cassell, London, 2000

Pilpel, R., *To The Honor of the Fleet*, Atheneum, New York, 1979

Pollock, J., *Kitchener*, Robinson, London, 2002

Q

R

Rappaport, A. (Ed.), *The Monroe Doctrine*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1964

Reckner, J., *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet*, United States Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 1988

Reeve, J. and Stevens D., *The Face of Naval Battle: The human experience of modern war at sea*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003

Reynolds, J., *Edmund Barton*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1948.

Rickards, J., *A Family Romance: The Deakins at Home*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1996

Roberts, B., *Cecil Rhodes: Flawed Colossus*, WW Norton & Company, New York, 1988

Robinson, R.N., Commander C., *The British Fleet*, George Bell and Sons, London, 1896

Robson, L.L., *Australia and the Great War 1914-1918*, Macmillan of Australia, Melbourne, 1969

Robson, L. (Ed.), *Australian Commentaries: Selected Articles from the Round Table 1911-1942*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1976

Rodger, N., *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*, Penguin Books in association with the National Maritime Museum, London, 2006

Roosevelt, T., *The Rough Riders An Autobiography*, Literary Classics of the United States Inc., New York 2004 (*The Rough Riders* written by T. Roosevelt in 1899. *An Autobiography* written by T. Roosevelt in 1913. Both works combined in this 2004 reprint.)

Roosevelt, T., *A Strenuous Life*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1900

Roosevelt, T., *The Naval War of 1812*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1999

Rose, K., *King George V*, Phoenix Press, London, 1983

Rose, L., *Power at Sea, Volume I: The Age of Navalism 1890-1918*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2007

Roskill, S., *Hankey: Man of Secrets, Volume I 1877-1918*, Collins, London, 1970

Rudenno, V., *Gallipoli: Attack from the Sea*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2008

Russell, R. and Chubb, P., *One Destiny! The Federation Story – How Australia Became A Nation*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1998

S

Sims, M. (Ed.), *1901: The Forgotten Election*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001

Sinclair, K., (ed.) *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia 1788-1988*. Auckland University Press, Auckland (N.Z.), 1987

Skelton, O., *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfred Laurier*, Volume II, Oxford University Press, London, 1922

Souter, G., *Lion and Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2001

Sparatalis, P., *The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983

Sprout, H. and M., *Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American naval policy and the world scene, 1918-1922*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1969

Steel, N. and Hart, P., *Jutland 1916*, Cassell, London, 2004

Stevens, D., *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume III: The Royal Australian Navy*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001

Stevens, D., *A Critical Vulnerability: The impact of the submarine threat on Australia's maritime defence 1915-1954*, Papers in Maritime Affairs No.15, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2005

Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *Southern Trident: Strategy, history and the rise of Australian Naval Power*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2001

Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *The Navy and the Nation: The influence of the Navy on modern Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005

Stevens, D. and Reeve, J. (Eds.), *Sea Power Ashore and in the Air*, Halstead, Ultimo, 2007

Strachan, H. (Selected by), *Military Lives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002

Strachey, J., *The End of Empire*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1959

Syrett, H. (Ed.), *American Historical Documents*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1970

T

Tarrant, V.E., *Jutland The German Perspective: A New View of the Great Battle, 31 May 1916*. Arms and Armour Press, London, 1995

Thomas, A., *Rhodes: The Race for Africa*, BBC Books, London, 1996

Thompson, A., *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932*, Longman-Pearson Education, Harlow (England), 2000

Thompson, J., *The Imperial War Museum Book of The War at Sea 1914-1918*, Pan Books in association with The Imperial War Museum, London, 2006

Thompson, P. (ed.), *Close to the Wind. The Early Memoirs (1866-1879) of Admiral Sir William Creswell, KCMG, KBE*, Heinemann, London, 1965

Thompson, R., *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era 1820-1920*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1980.

Till, G., (Ed.), *Seapower Theory and Practice*, Frank Cass & Co Ltd, Ilford, 1994

Till, G., (Ed.), *Seapower at the Millennium*, Sutton Publishing in association with Royal Naval Museum Publication, Stroud, 2001

Trainor, L., *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994

Turner, H., *The First Decade of the Australian Commonwealth. A Chronicle of Contemporary Politics 1901-1910*. Mason, Firth McCutcheon, Melbourne, 1911. (Facsimile edition published by Heritage Publications, Melbourne, date unknown)

U

V

van der Vat, D., *The Grand Scuttle: the sinking of the German fleet at Scapa Flow in 1919*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1982

van der Vat, D., *The Atlantic Campaign*, Birlinn, Edinburgh, 2001

van der Vat, D., *Standard of Power: The Royal Navy in the Twentieth Century*, Pimlico, London, 2001

von Clausewitz, C., *On War*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, London 1968

W

Walker, D., *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1999

Weller, P. (Ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party*, Volume 1 1901-1917, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1975

Westcott, A. (Ed.), *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, Dover Publications, Mineola, 1999

Willmott, H., *The Last Century of Sea Power*, Volume 1: *From Port Arthur to Chanak, 1894-1922*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (USA), 2009

Wills, G., *Certain Trumpets: The Call of Leaders*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, p.13

Wilson, T., *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War 1914-1918*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1986.