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## **AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE SUBMARINE CAPABILITY**

In a paper released yesterday the Australian Strategic Policy Institute urged the Government to get serious about its submarine capability if it hopes to be able to effectively defend the nation in the Asia-Pacific century.

The findings of the ASPI 'Mind the Gap – Getting Serious About Submarines' paper are supported by the Submarine Institute of Australia (SIA).

SIA's Executive Director, Commodore Steve Davies, comments, "The paper is a well-balanced analysis of this vital area of defence policy - the SIA agrees that Government needs to get serious about its investment in the capability."

"Submarines will be the key national defence capability in our very different strategic circumstances in the middle of this century, and it's vital we get the capability right. A clear understanding of the long-term importance of submarines is vital."

The SIA strongly believes that Australia cannot afford a capability gap, given our experience in the 1990s when the gap from Oberon to Collins classes left Australia with virtually no submarine capability for a number of years. It was fortunate, however, that Australia's strategic circumstances were benign at that time. That may not be the case in the 2030s.

Davies adds, "Doubling the submarine force in the 2030 timescale, with all the capabilities described in the White Paper, was not possible in 2009 and is even less possible now due to Government indecision since then.

"But having a stronger and bigger submarine force as we approach the middle of this century, when our strategic circumstances need it, is still possible provided the right investments are made now."

The SIA believes that building and maintaining a sovereign submarine capability is a long-term endeavour requiring long-term commitment of both money and effort.

"Whatever submarines we build or buy in the 2020s or 2030s will need to serve our country through the middle of this century, so we need to take a long-term view and build the force the nation needs.

"And that force is much more than the submarine platforms themselves, it's the people, the industry and the management structure that enable the force to be effective."

"Whichever option is chosen by Government it seems that some form of life extension for Collins will be prudent so investment in this should be made quickly," said Davies.

To summarise, SIA agrees with the broad recommendations of the ASPI paper:

- that Government needs to give serious consideration to what it wants out of its submarine capability in the long-term;
- that it increase the priority and resources allocated to the capability from today; and
- that all options to build the strong submarine force needed in the future should be quickly analysed and decided upon.

"The nation's future security depends on it," said Davies.

For more information or interviews with SIA Executive Director Commodore Steve Davies please contact:

Jenny Coyle  
(08) 9226 2222

c/- Devahasdin

Submarine Institute of Australia Inc  
[jenny@devahasdinpr.com.au](mailto:jenny@devahasdinpr.com.au)

**About the Submarine Institute of Australia**

Established in 1999, the SIA is a not-for-profit body that has as its objective: 'To promote informed discussion and research in the fields of submarine operations, engineering, history and commercial sub-sea engineering - otherwise known as submarine matters.' With a global membership in military and industry sectors, the Institute has a number of projects that support its objective. It aims to provide an independent input into considerations underpinning Australia's future submarine capability.

