ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY
NAVY HEADQUARTERS

R1-4-C005, RUSSELL OFFICES, CANBERRA, ACT 2600

I am writing to you because I understand you have a keen interest in the Navy and its future. On that basis, I wish to inform you about significant reforms the Navy is implementing to the Submarine Force in response to a number of challenges that have emerged, not least ongoing challenges with recruiting and retaining the right numbers of submariners. These reforms, which are part of the New Generation Navy strategy, will put the Submarine Force back onto an even keel and ensure the submarine workforce is sustainable into the future.

In 2007-08 the Navy commissioned three studies to understand a range of challenges that were becoming apparent with our submarine workforce:

- Project Klaxon, an internal attitude survey, resulted in key insights that led to several early workplace reforms.

- The Profile of Unit Leadership, Satisfaction and Effectiveness (PULSE) – a psychological survey - confirmed high fatigue and stress levels, overwork and low morale amongst our submariners.

- The Submarine Sustainability Review built on the previous two studies and provided a broad framework for understanding the existing challenges and how they should be addressed. It pulled no punches in describing a range of serious issues and recommending urgent reforms to the way Navy manages its submariners and its submarines.

The Submarine Sustainability Review made 29 recommendations to develop a sustainable submarine workforce, all of which I have agreed to implement. An unclassified, condensed version of the report was made available on Wednesday 8 April 2009 at http://www.navy.gov.au.

A number of immediate actions from this report have been implemented already, including:

- Increasing the submarine crew size from 46 to 58 personnel, in order to ease the workload on seagoing crew members to enable more sustainable work routines at sea and in port.
- Establishment of a new Submarine Support Group to take over some of the workload from crew members and allow them to take a well earned break when they return from seagoing operations.
- Improvements to the selection, training and qualification system for submariners. The current system is too slow and inefficient, resulting in many trainees losing motivation and electing to leave the Submarine Service early.
- Fitting of a new computer local area network to submarine to provide crew members with access to the Defence intranet when in port. This responds to a long-standing issue impacting morale by giving submariners access to email and web services while alongside.
- Relocation of the Submarine Communications Centre from the east coast to HMAS STIRLING, providing 12 new shore jobs where the submarines are based. This will provide submarine communications sailors and their families with greater geographical posting stability and thus greater incentives to stay in the Submarine Force.

Navy's Submarine Sustainability Strategy aims to grow the submarine workforce to enable a fourth sustainable seagoing crew to be formed by the end of 2011. This will provide a sustainable foundation for the Navy to deliver optimal submarine capability into the future.

There remains much work ahead to complete the actions from the Submarine Sustainability Review. There is a great team in place to do it, and this, combined with energy and resolve, will ensure we develop a sustainable submarine force; a force so important to our national security

Regards,

Original Signed

D.R. THOMAS Rear Admiral, RAN Deputy Chief of Navy