

SPEECH FOR ACTING HMSP-A TO HUMAN PERFORMANCE RESEARCH NETWORK LAUNCH

I would first like to welcome you all here and thank you for coming to this significant occasion. In particular I'd like to welcome:

Dr Nick Beagley and your team from the Defence Science and Technology Group

Professor Hussein Abbass and your team from the University of New South Wales here at ADFA, thank you for the use of your facilities

Dr Richard Keegan and the team from the University of Canberra and the Australian Institute of Sport

Associate Professor Daniel Gucciardi and your colleagues from Curtin University, the University of Western Australia and McQuarrie University

Professor Mark Billingham and your associates from the University of South Australia

Associate Professor Paul Gastin and your team from Deakin University

Professor David Bishop and your colleagues from Victoria University

Associate Professor Troy Visser and your team from the University of Western Australia

Thank you all for coming, and welcome to lovely Canberra. I hope you enjoy our weather as most of you have come from places where it's quite a lot hotter! Actually it's rather hard to find anywhere in Australia colder than here so – again welcome!

I congratulate you all on being selected as the founding members of the Australian Army's first ever research network. Army likes to benefit from research and in the past, particularly during wartime, Army has benefited greatly from research carried out by Australia's scientists and academics.

The relationship between academia and the military has been an incredibly fruitful one, particularly in the last hundred or so years. The fluttering efforts of early fliers went ahead in leaps and bounds as their developments were called into action over the battlefields of both world wars. Where would we be today without the computers developed to break codes in World War 2? The sharing of knowledge that we are here to launch today would not be possible without the military developments of the internet.

Defence has long been aware that research is vital to the ongoing development of a capability edge and for this reason, the Defence Science and Technology Group was established and plays a crucial role in keeping Defence at the forefront of scientific development. But the work that DSTG does can be greatly enhanced by connecting with the wider scientific community and engaging with like minded people who can add immense value through the additional knowledge they bring to the issues.

Previously if Army wanted something researched, we asked DSTG to do it for us. Never before has the Australian Army actively engaged on a large scale with both DSTG and Australian universities, as the sponsor of a research network.

The research that Army has benefited from in the past is generally in the area of technology. Soldiers are big fans of the latest gadgets and the greatest equipment, and as technology advances we like to think we are at the cutting edge in our use of innovative weaponry and equipment.

But today we are here to launch an initiative which is less about technology and more about developing the asset which armies for far too long have taken very much for granted. Our human assets – our soldiers – are the platforms on which our capability is based. We want to be an army in which our soldiers use technology and equipment as tools to carry out their tasks, not one where weapons or equipment are the priority and are simply manned by soldiers.

Army is beginning work in developing human performance with the establishment of Human Performance Centre pilots in Townsville and Perth. But Army doesn't do research. Army trains, Army fights, Army learns lessons so we can train and fight better, but we do not actively conduct research into how we can improve our training and fighting abilities. Our Human Performance Centres are focused on quality assurance – improving our soldiers' performance through training and education. Therefore the conduct of research into human performance and the development of humans is a gap that Army recognises and an area that is vital to the future development of Army.

In our previous wars, it was usually enough to train soldiers to ride, drive, march, run, jump and shoot. Australia's physically fit and able soldiers have been able to do well on operations for more than 100 years because of their mainly physical training.

But today, we require our soldiers to be more than just physically fit and able to shoot straight. Our soldiers must be able to out-think as well as out-fight the enemy; they must be

able to defend themselves, and Australia, from adaptable enemies who will use cyber and psychological attacks among many other types of unconventional warfare. Our soldiers must be more adaptable than our enemies and able to react well in every situation in which they might find themselves. To be able to achieve this, our soldiers must be the most developed humans that Australia can produce.

Many of you here have worked on the development of high performance athletes who represent Australia in sporting competitions against the rest of the world. But by your success in becoming part of the Army's Human Performance Research Network you have the opportunity to work with, and assist to develop Australians who may potentially be called upon to represent their nation in the ultimate competition – warfare, where it's not just gold medals and premierships at stake, but their lives may depend on some of the work you do in the next four years.

I am sure that you don't need me to encourage you in your research, as reading your proposals has shown me that you are all highly qualified scholars and professionals who are wonderfully dedicated to your various scientific fields. But I do want to impress on you, that Army is a practical organisation which likes to see tangible results for any money it spends. So, while we like a good research paper as much as anyone; what we like better and what we are expecting, are results that lead to actual physical improvements in what we do.

I will enjoy reading the papers you produce – but if in years to come I can see soldiers performing better, physically, cognitively, morally and ethically, because of your research, and if I can see tools being used in our training that are leading to individuals performing better, with better performing teams and an overall better Army, I will feel that Army has achieved the result we wanted from our funding of the Human Performance Research Network.

Enjoy the next two days as you get to know each other and discuss the details of the various initiatives you will be researching. The sharing of knowledge among all the fabulous minds in this room today, should, over the next four years, result in some tremendous outcomes for Army. I trust that, as you hear what your colleagues have planned, that you will be as excited as I am at the opportunities for growth and development of soldiers which are inherent in all your proposals.

I am therefore honoured to be able to publicly congratulate you on your selection in this important initiative and on behalf of the Chief of Army, and in conjunction with the Defence

Science and Technology Group, I hereby officially launch the Australian Army Human Performance Research Network.