

§ 2. Naval Defence.

1. **Historical Outline.**—(i.) *States' Naval Forces.* The naval forces of Australasia prior to Federation derived their character and organisation from the local conditions of the colonies in which they were raised.

(ii.) *New South Wales.* New South Wales, being the base of the Imperial Navy, was fairly well assured as regards naval protection. Mainly with the view of reinforcing the vessels of the Royal Navy on the station, a Naval Brigade of seamen was raised, a large proportion being made up from time-expired petty officers and men of the Royal Navy. It was designed not only to serve as a reinforcement for the navy, but also to make up casualties and man any auxiliary ships, or take part in any expedition in which additional naval personnel would be of great service. To continue its naval character the *Wolverine*, an old composite or wooden corvette, late the flagship on the station, was made over to the New South Wales Government for exercise and training of the Naval Brigade, but this vessel was never fully equipped or commissioned. The officer commanding the naval forces was not an officer of the regular forces, but of the Civil Service, and the *Wolverine* was manned only on holidays and at Christmas or Easter time, and was rarely under way. Beyond the grant of the *Wolverine* and after that period—particularly after the arrival of the auxiliary squadron under the agreement—there was no recognition of this force by the Royal Naval authorities to the extent of its inclusion in any scheme of naval work or operations. In 1885 two torpedo boats were built in Sydney, and manned by the naval force, permanent officers and men being appointed for instruction and command and care of vessels and machinery. The *Wolverine* was sold for breaking up in 1889, but no other vessel was provided to take her place. The Naval Brigade, however, steadily increased in strength, and several companies of Naval Artillery Volunteers were added to it prior to Federation. The officer commanding the Naval Artillery Volunteers was in command of the torpedo boats. The strength of the New South Wales naval force stood at 614 at date of Federation, though, for lack of vessels in which to serve and exercise, this force had lost much of its sea character, and some sections had been merged in the land defence.

(iii.) *Victoria.* The Victorian force dates from the sixties. Local conditions dictated the character of this force. There was practically no permanent stationing of Royal Navy vessels in Victorian waters. The Heads were not fortified, and the large expanse of Port Phillip and Hobson's Bay open to foreign cruisers called for a service thoroughly naval in character for its defence. In June, 1885, the following vessels belonged to the Victorian Government, viz.:—*Nelson*, wooden frigate; *Cerberus*, ironclad; *Victoria* and *Albert*, gunboats; *Childers*, *Nepean*, and *Lonsdale*, torpedo boats; and there were also five auxiliary armed steamers. In 1892 the *Countess of Hopetoun*, first-class torpedo boat, was obtained. This force was considerably reduced in 1893. The gunboats were withdrawn then, and thus the best vessels for sea training were disposed of. This force was maintained at an annual cost of £27,000 up to 1900. Soon after Federation it was reduced to an annual expenditure of £19,000.

iv.) *Queensland.* The Queensland naval forces were established about 1884 on the advice of the Imperial authorities. Gunboats were built for the defence of all bays, rivers, or roadsteads against the "merchant cruiser" of the volunteer fleet order, then deemed the most probable enemy. Two gunboats, each of 360 tons, and armed each with one 8-inch and one 6-inch B.L. gun, with four light Q.F. or machine guns, the *Gayundah* and the *Paluma*, were commissioned. The *Gayundah* was maintained in commission with a full complement by the Queensland Government, the *Paluma* by the Admiralty for surveying service. There were also obtained for defence one second-class torpedo boat and one picket boat, and in addition there were guns for service in river defence, mounted on steam barges belonging to the Marine Department. Queensland, in addition to providing gunboats, had followed the example of New South Wales.

and organised companies of a Naval Brigade at the main ports, and, as in New South Wales, there was an excess of men over facilities for training, and the force was reduced in 1893. The gunboats were put out of commission, and the whole naval force reduced. Expansion followed on improved prosperity, and in 1899 and 1900 the Queensland naval forces were raised to a total of 784. The retrenchment following upon Federation reduced the force to practically its present strength.

(v.) *South Australia.* South Australia initiated a system of naval defence in 1884 with the advice of the Imperial authorities. The recommendations of Sir W. Jervois, then Governor of South Australia, an expert in defence and military engineering, took shape in the provision of the *Protector*, a small but heavily-armed cruiser, specially designed for service in the territorial waters of South Australia. This vessel was permanently commissioned with a three-fifths complement, and exercised in every way as a ship of war of the Royal Navy. At the time of her arrival (as was also the case with the Victorian and Queensland gunboats) her armament was in advance of any carried by the vessels of the Royal Navy on the station, which were all still armed with M.L. guns of short range. The naval force of South Australia also included a reserve of from 100 in 1886 to 200 in 1900 for raising the complement of the *Protector* and all subsidiary war services. In 1893 the *Protector* was placed in commission in reserve, and the permanent crew and officers, excepting only a commander, chief engineer, and instructional staff, were retrenched.

(vi.) *Western Australia and Tasmania.* Tasmania had no naval force or vessel other than a second-class torpedo boat, laid up for many years, and finally transferred to South Australia. Western Australia has had no naval force whatever.

2. **The Naval Agreement with the British Government.**—(i). *The Original Compact.* The naval defence of Australasia and its trade is entrusted primarily to ships of the Imperial Navy, maintained under an agreement entered into between the British Government and the Governments of the Commonwealth and New Zealand, and at their joint charge. This agreement was embodied in Acts passed by the several Legislatures some ten years prior to Australian federation. According to its terms, a naval force, additional to the vessels of the Australian Naval Station, which were to be maintained at their normal strength, was to act as an auxiliary squadron. It consisted of five fast third-class cruisers and two torpedo gunboats, and its special function was the protection of the floating trade in Australasian waters. The agreement was made for ten years, and was then, or at the end of any subsequent year, to be terminable only upon two years' notice being given. On its termination, the vessels were to remain the property of the Imperial Government. Three cruisers and one gunboat were to be kept continuously in commission, and the remainder in reserve in Australasian ports, but ready for commission whenever occasion might arise. The vessels were to remain within the limits of the Australasian station, and were to be employed, in times of peace or war, within such limits, in the same way as the Sovereign's ships of war, or employed beyond those limits only with the consent of the Colonial Governments.¹ The first cost of the vessels was paid out of Imperial funds, but the Colonial Governments paid interest on the prime cost at 5 per cent. (up to a maximum of £35,000 per annum), and a sum not exceeding £91,000 for annual maintenance of the vessels, or a total annual contribution of £126,000. In times of emergency or actual war, the cost of commissioning and maintaining the three vessels kept in reserve during peace, was to be borne by the Imperial

1. The boundaries of the Australasian station were thus defined:—North—On the north from the meridian of 95° east, by the parallel of the 10th degree of south latitude to 130° east longitude; thence northward on that meridian to the parallel of 2° north latitude; and thence on that parallel to the meridian of 136° east longitude; thence north to 12° north latitude and along that parallel to 160° west longitude. West—On the west by the meridian of 95° east longitude. South—On the south by the Antarctic circle. East—On the east by the meridian of 160° of west longitude.

Nothing in the agreement was to affect the purely local naval forces which had been, or might be, established in the colonies for harbour and coast defence. Such local forces were to continue to be paid for entirely by the colony, and to be solely under its control.

Government, and, in every respect, the vessels were on the same status as the ships of war of the Sovereign, whether in commission or not. The officers and men of those in commission were subject to a triennial change. The tenth annual contribution, which was payable in advance on 1st March, 1900, apportioned on a population basis, was as follows:—New South Wales, £37,973; Victoria, £32,749; New Zealand, £21,304; Queensland, £13,585; South Australia, £10,439; Western Australia, £4816; Tasmania, £4776.

(ii.) *The Agreement of 1903.* The agreement was not dissolved by the union of six of the contracting colonies, but its renewal, with some alterations, was embodied in the Naval Agreement Act of 1903, the Parliament of New Zealand also assenting. The present agreement provides that the force shall be made up of one first-class armoured cruiser, two second-class cruisers, four third-class cruisers, four sloops, and a Royal Naval Reserve of 25 officers and 700 seamen and stokers. One of the ships is to be kept in reserve, three are to be partly manned for drill purposes for training the Royal Naval Reserve, and the remainder are to be kept in commission and fully manned. Australians are, as far as possible, to man the three drill ships and one other vessel, but they are to be officered by Royal Navy and R.N. Reserve officers. Eight nominations for cadet-ships are to be given annually in the Commonwealth and two in New Zealand. One half of the annual cost of maintenance is to be borne by the colonies—five-sixths of the half (but not exceeding £200,000) by Australia, and one-sixth (but not exceeding £40,000) by New Zealand. The agreement, like the earlier one, is for ten years. By a subsequent arrangement the strength of the squadron was established at one first-class armoured cruiser, three second-class cruisers, and five third-class cruisers. Three sloops were recalled as having no war value, but usually one is on the station surveying.

3. **The Naval Defence of Federated Australia.**—(i.) *Proposals for an Australian Navy.* The question of the complete assumption, by federated Australia, of every branch of defence for the continent has been mooted. It has been felt that Australia should consider the question of taking full responsibility for the defence of her ports and dock-yards, and the protection of coastal trade. The floating trade of the Commonwealth amounts to £170,000,000 per annum, and obviously its protection is vitally necessary. It has also been suggested that the only way in which attack can be met with advantage is on the seas surrounding our coasts. Fortress artillery would render no such adequate protection, for beyond the range of its batteries, ports could be sealed to traffic by the most insignificant enemy, while a fleet of any considerable dimensions could cause the sea trade to be annihilated.

These considerations have been controverted by the Imperial Defence Committee, whose views have been summarised as follows:—

- (i.) The British fleets guarantee Australia against invasion in force.
- (ii.) They guarantee against attack by any considerable squadron of armoured vessels.
- (iii.) The exigencies of war may require the withdrawal of the Australian Imperial Squadron.
- (iv.) Australia cannot be guaranteed against attack by unarmoured commerce raiders up to four in number, but the losses they would inflict would not be of more than secondary importance.

The two latter elements, viz., possible withdrawals, and the absence of guarantee of protection under certain conditions, have raised the question whether, even though the damage inflicted by a small fleet would have little or no effect on the ultimate issue, and be but of secondary importance, such damage would not be of serious consequence to Australia. This has led to a discussion whether Australia should possess her own navy, or at least such naval war material as would ensure the principal lines of sea communication being kept open; or if not, ensure her ports being fully defended.

The Commonwealth Government has now determined to start the building of an Australian navy, and in March, 1908, contracted with Messrs. Denny Brothers and Fairfield for the construction of two torpedo boat destroyers, to cost £81,500 each; one vessel to be delivered in fourteen months, the other in fifteen months from the date of signing the contract. A vessel of the same kind, to be ready for shipment in twelve months, is also to be delivered in Australia in sections, at a cost of £72,500, for local completion.

In connection with the construction of these vessels, it is proposed to send from twelve to twenty selected Australian workmen, to be trained in the yards of the successful tenderers.

(ii.) *The Naval Forces under the Federation.* Prior to 1905 a naval officer commanding administered the naval forces. On 12th January of that year the Council of Defence was established to deal with all questions of policy, and the Naval Board, then first constituted, took over the administration of the Commonwealth naval forces. Continuity of policy and administration are thereby believed to be ensured; whilst efficiency and uniformity are provided for in the scheme of inspection and report by an officer who, as Director of Naval Forces, is appointed to deal with the training of the *personnel*, and the condition of the *materiel*, of naval forces and works.

The following table shews the strength of Commonwealth naval forces on 30th June, 1908:—

STRENGTH OF COMMONWEALTH NAVAL FORCES, 1908.

Branch of Service.	New South Wales.	Victoria.	Queensland.	South Australia.	Total.
Permanently Employed ...	4	115	52	37	208
Partially-paid ...	305	232	342	118	997
Total ...	309	347	394	155	1,205

In addition to the above there were naval volunteer cadets numbering 200 in New South Wales, 201 in Victoria, 126 in Queensland, and 64 in South Australia—a total of 591.

(iii.) *Harbour Defences.* The vessels for harbour defence obtained by the several colonies prior to federation, and now remaining, are:—

COMMONWEALTH NAVAL FORCES, VESSELS, 1908.

Description.	Name.	State.
Iron armour-plated turret ship ...	<i>Cerberus</i> ...	Victoria
Steel cruiser ...	<i>Protector</i> ...	South Australia
Steel gun vessel ...	<i>Gayundah</i> ...	Queensland
" " ...	<i>Paluma</i> ...	"
First-class torpedo boat ...	<i>Countess of Hopetoun</i> ...	Victoria
" " ...	<i>Childers</i> ...	"
Second-class torpedo boat ...	<i>Nepean</i> ...	"
" " ...	<i>Lonsdale</i> ...	"
" " ...	<i>Mosquito</i> ...	Queensland
" "	South Australia
Torpedo launch ...	<i>Gordon</i> ...	Victoria
" " ...	<i>Midge</i> ...	Queensland

The *Gayundah* and *Protector* are utilised for the sea-training of the Naval Militia.