

3. Composition of Sea-going Dominion Navies (in Peace).

Light Cruisers are the smallest sea-going ships which can play a part in protecting our ocean trade routes in war or threatening the enemy's sea communications, and which can provide the necessary sea-going training in peace. To obtain and maintain full efficiency a light cruiser squadron should consist of not less than four ships in full commission.

Submarines are particularly suitable for offensive action or scouting in the face of superior enemy forces, and for this reason would be invaluable before the arrival of the Main Fleet.

The true rôle of a submarine is not coast defence. Stationed for the defence of a port, it is unlikely that one or two could prevent a transitory raid or bombardment. If of the right type, however, they would be effective against any prolonged operation.

To obtain and maintain full efficiency a flotilla of submarines should consist of not less than six boats.

Destroyers are essentially a fleet weapon and are uneconomical for local defence or escort duties.

Those which Australia now possesses might well be retained temporarily, used for the peace training of officers and men, and for local defence, but it is not recommended that any more be acquired.

4. Air-Power.

The control in war of sea communications can only be maintained by Naval forces. Close investigation has shown that though aeroplanes and seaplanes based on the shore will have to be taken into account in narrow waters, such as the Channel and Mediterranean, the time is not yet in sight when they can take part in the control of ocean communications. Naval forces can, however, make good use of seaborne aircraft as one of their arms.

Airships, if developed and found reliable, can, if used for reconnaissance purposes, and worked in co-operation with surface vessels, assist in keeping open our sea communications.

5. Scale of Naval Forces Recommended.

The outline recommendations which follow are based on the Naval Defence requirements of Australia, as far as can be foreseen for the next few years.

In framing these recommendations, the expected completion of the Japanese Light Cruisers' Building Programme in 1928 as well as the financial and economic position of Australia have been borne in mind.

Nevertheless, each Dominion cannot be considered without reference to the Empire as a whole. The Naval situation of one Dominion is profoundly affected by the Naval effort made by other Dominions and by the Mother Country.

It follows that continuity of Naval Policy is vital if the Empire is to remain secure. An unforeseen reduction of its Naval forces by one part of the Empire cannot be counterbalanced at short notice by a corresponding increase elsewhere, even if finance and popular opinion permit.

6. Naval Co-operation.

Continuity of Naval Policy can only be obtained if the various Governments concerned are kept at all times fully advised as to the Naval needs of the Empire. The question of whether the present arrangements are adequate for ensuring this will be raised at the Imperial Conference.

AUSTRALIA: OUTLINE RECOMMENDATIONS.

	Page
I.—War plans	3
II.—Ships	3
III.—Repair ports and fuelling ports...	5
IV.—Trade	6
V.—Personnel	6
VI.—Communications	7
VII.—Stores	7
VIII.—Local defence	8
IX.—Air co-operation	8

I.—War Plans.

Adequacy of existing R.A.N. War Plans.

The existing arrangements for the disposition of the R.A.N. Light Cruisers, in the event of the squadron being placed at Admiralty disposal in war, are very satisfactory and cannot well be improved upon.

II.—Ships.

- (1.) Existing R.A.N. Squadron and their life.
- (2.) Types of Ships recommended for R.A.N.
- (3.) Suggested Building Programme.

(1.) Existing R.A.N. Ships and their Life.

Battle Cruiser "Australia."

By the provisions of the Washington Agreement this vessel must be rendered incapable of further warlike service within six months of the ratification of the Treaty.

So far as can be foreseen the ratification will be completed at an early date; it is recommended that the Australian Government take steps for the disposal of this ship without waiting for the final ratification, in order to allow as much time as possible for her economical disposal. Although the inclusion of this Dominion unit among the ships to be retained was not practicable, and her normal life was thereby somewhat curtailed, it is considered that the vital need for vessels of this type during the war fully repaid the Commonwealth for the outlay incurred on this unit, and that the money could not have been better expended.

Light Cruisers.

Post-war Light Cruisers are assessed to last fifteen years, and those which took part in the war are assessed to last twelve years, but owing to the financial stringency it is considered this must be increased to the normal of fifteen years.

Applying these rules to Australian Light Cruisers they are considered to reach the replacement age as shown hereunder:—

Ship.	Date of Completion.	Estimated Life.	Year due for replacement.
Melbourne	1913	15 years	1928
Sydney	1913	15 "	1928
Brisbane	1916	15 "	1931
Adelaide	1922	15 "	1937

Destroyers.

The useful life of Destroyers is estimated at eight and twelve years, according to whether they took part in the war or not.

As in the case of Light Cruisers it is considered that for financial reasons a life of not less than fifteen years must be accepted for all.

This life may even have to be extended in the case of Destroyers retained for local defence purposes.

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B 2