



Australia's Centre for Strategic Analysis

## *Australia 2050* Study Outlines National Options and Challenges for Coming Half-Century

CANBERRA, DECEMBER 4, 2007: A major new study, coming just as the Government of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd takes office, outlined options and challenges for Australia into the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and said that Australia would need to take greater control of its own destiny than ever before.

The study, *Australia 2050*, was released today at a brief ceremony at Parliament House, Canberra, by Perth-based Future Directions International (FDI), Australia's Centre for Strategic Analysis, a not-for-profit, accredited research institution. The report, subtitled "An Examination of Australia's Condition, Outlook, and Options for the First Half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", highlights strengths and shortcomings in Australia's current strategic situation, and discusses options for the new Australian Government, and future Australian governments at state and federal levels.

In his remarks at the launching of *Australia 2050*, FDI Director and Chairman of its Research Committee, Gregory Copley AM, said: "Australia stands at the commanding heights — perhaps the precipice — of a new age: a dramatically changing world. It is an era in which Australia as a nation will be tested in its physical and psychological self-reliance, its creativity and resourcefulness, its identity, and its values. Australians are clearly aware that everything which they hold dear is now in a state of movement."

He added: "It is a time — and it will increasingly become a time over the coming few decades — for reflection, decision, and action, in a new world in which we must take the lead in our own survival and wellbeing as a nation-state. If any evidence was needed of Australia's changing position, and the sense of Australians that we need to gird for a new age, then the elections of November 24, 2007, provided proof of the restiveness."

Mr. Copley said that Australians had never until now consciously and comprehensively outlined who they and their nation were, and where, in specific historical terms, they wished to find themselves into the indefinite future. *Australia 2050* was, he said, a landmark study of national significance which sought to provide Australia with a framework for responding to future challenges.

He added: “This is not our fathers’ or our grandfathers’ century; this is distinctly a new global structure which has built on the old, and is the result of the old. To understand this new world, we must first understand how we arrived at it. Sir Winston Churchill said that the farther we look back into history, the farther forward we can see. Thus, our study has focussed heavily on the historical underpinnings of Australia, and the world system in which we must function.”

“Modern society has, with its constant pressures and pace, become preoccupied with the immediate. We, in this modern world, tend to focus on our short-term needs to a greater extent than in the past, and, ignoring history’s lessons and the broad context of global events, we tend to react to events rather than to plan for them. *Australia 2050* attempts to create a breathing space in which we can once again evaluate ourselves and our situation, and to consciously plan for the future with the full benefit of an understanding of the past: our own past, and the past of the other national and international systems of governance and wellbeing.”

*Australia 2050* was not, FDI has said, intended to provide a definitive, or prescriptive, passage to the future, but to open areas of debate and possible options.

The study was financed by FDI and corporate, charitable, and individual supporters. FDI routinely undertakes landmark and ongoing studies on issues vital to Australia’s wellbeing. In late 2005, FDI’s study, *Australia’s Energy Options*, also launched in the Federal Parliament building, opened up debate — and, introducing terms of reference which are now part of the open and broadly-based discussion — on all of the aspects relating to Australia’s future energy needs, and how society could adapt itself and technology within the framework of a transforming set of energy, environmental, and social realities.

Mr. Copley said that a significant number of the challenges facing Australia would arise as a result of a global population which could approach 10-billion by 2050 — rising from only 2.5-billion in 1950 — with all of the attendant friction caused by the competition for survival and prosperity. Accurate forecasting of the future global condition was, he said, impossible, but it was important that attempts should be made to understand and analyse the forces which would be acting on the nation. A period of rapid change — caused by compounding technological evolution and the growth in human numbers, as well as the impact of altering climate, and growing urbanisation — would be evident during the 21st Century, almost certainly to a far greater degree than in the 20th Century.

“Australia will live in a world which will also be dominated by such factors as the stability of the People’s Republic of China and India, as well as by changes in Europe, North America, and elsewhere,” he said. “Australia will need to chart a path which

takes account of this changing global political, economic, and security environment, building new relationships and alliances, while preserving the old. Just as Australia's relationships changed during the 20th Century, so, too, will they change during the 21st, but the requirement into the immediate future will be for greater self-reliance and leadership."

He noted that Australia had been, and remained, the "lucky country" in that it has been blessed with "wealth for toil", often great toil. Indeed, it had been only Australians' belief — their optimism — in their inherent good fortune which had helped them to weather the great hardships and vicissitudes wrought by nature and by man throughout their history as a modern society. In the same way, the original inhabitants — the people who, in this study, are called "First Australians" — found an enduring life and cultures, finding harmony with nature for millennia before the arrival of European settlers.

FDI said that the study attempted to understand the shape which the world of the coming half century would take, and how Australia could best fit within it, preserving its identity, languages, culture, prosperity, and security. *Australia 2050* was an attempt, the institute said, to prepare the nation for the great global transformations of the future. Australia could not ignore, or escape from, this change. It would need to cope with change more than ever as a truly independent nation, navigating carefully between the often differing interests of its great trading and security partners.

The study is broadly-based and interlocking. It deals with national identity and national objectives; with the "self-reliance" century which Australia must face; with issues concerning stability of governance, and therefore the way in which governance can adapt to emerging realities. It deals with national security priorities in the broadest as well as the narrow senses. It addresses infrastructure questions in the knowledge that the infrastructure Australia is building today is, to a great extent, the infrastructure with which Australians must live and work in 2050.

The study looks at the question of a necessary renewed commitment to productivity and excellence, which may ultimately, the study said, be what is necessary to separate Australia from its competitors and partners, and to give Australians the opportunity to shape their own destiny. *Australia 2050* looks especially again at Australia's energy options; at the role of the media; at Australia's food and agricultural needs; and how Australia could exploit and consolidate its fortunate, but strategically vulnerable, position as a "resource economy".

The study looks at Australia's transforming geo-spatial needs; not just at its terrestrial footprint, and the requirement to look with some urgency at, for example, Australia's Antarctic responsibilities and imperatives, at the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, and the

vital sea lanes of Australia's security and wellbeing, as well as at Australia's growing dependence on outer space for our communications and security.

*Australia 2050* goes into some depth on the current circumstances of the First Australian communities and their significant role in Australia's past and future. The study looks, too, at the new global economic framework which is emerging. And, given that the underlying proposition of *Australia 2050* is driven by the massive global change in population numbers and dispersal, at Australia's population requirements, and how Australia's population numbers will, or may, play out before the global human population levels themselves peak, and begin — as the study anticipates they will — to decline. Within this context, the study looks at the factors required for considering a national population strategy, so that Australia could move from an *ad hoc, de facto* strategy to one which is considered, and accords with national needs.

The study addresses language, and the role it will play in determining Australian identity and values in the future. It dwells on the reality of the earth's history that climate changes occur constantly and cyclically, and how Australians must address the current and anticipated transforming climate reality which challenges productivity and the nature of survival now, and into the future.

Achieving the goal of self-reliance, security, prosperity, and the retention of Australia's social attributes will require the evolution of appropriate governance structures, bearing in mind the almost unparalleled history of success and stability which has attended the constitutional framework of Australia since Federation. Mr. Copley said in his remarks at the launching that achieving the kind of nation which would continue to inspire creativity, productivity, and harmony would demand an investment in the social dimensions of identity and social cohesion, a continual evolution of the national agricultural base, an ability to add value to the nation's immense resource base through innovative and efficient research and manufacturing, through excellence in education, and through an active media framework.

He said: "Australia was among the first modern economies to abandon tariffs and protectionism, and this, along with advances in labour practices, pushed Australian innovation and productivity into a position of greater excellence. This process of free trade, innovative and flexible labour and management, and the creative use of capital, will need to continue to be the hallmark of the Australian example."

And yet, he said: "This does not mean that Australia should forsake the development and retention of its national security industrial base. A free market, anti-protectionist economy does not preclude a measure of prudence in the retained ability to ensure delivery of national security systems to our Armed Forces. If defence and national

security were a free market situation, then why not merely hire cheaper foreign mercenaries to replace highly-trained and expensive Australian troops? In the same light, a measure of commitment to a retained scientific and industrial base — to provide the critical tools for defence — is equally important for national security.”

The FDI study concludes that Australia can indeed shape a future which is as promising and bright as its first century of independent growth, and the preceding century of colonial construction. But it could not do so without planning or introspection. This study was, FDI said, a step along that path to introspection and global situational awareness, and it outlined areas of fundamental concern and essential consideration.

FDI Chief Executive Craig Lawrence AM confirmed that *Australia 2050* represented a series of valid and serious opening points in a debate which should energise the entire nation and the newly-elected generation of national leaders and their policy advisors. But he reaffirmed that the study was only a starting point for debate, not a finite or prescriptive list of conclusions.

FDI worked with a national book publisher, Sid Harta Publishers, to ensure that the study was available in bookstores throughout Australia, so that it was accessible to all Australians.

*Australia 2050* essentially concluded that the outlook for Australia was bright, despite the reality that the challenges of the coming half-century would be titanic and testing. “Australians are equal to the task, strengthened by sagas of the great stamina and stoicism of their pioneering forebears over the past centuries. But now is the time that we must think upon this future we face, and how best we can master it,” Mr. Copley said.

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