

AID26 Industry Briefing-20260710_003954UTC-Meeting Recording

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 **Kym Ridley** 34:53

Hello, everybody.

Hopefully everything is working now. Third time lucky.

Thank you all for your attendance today. We will be doing this market briefing for Army Innovation Day 2026. My name is Kym Ridley. I am the Deputy Director of Army Advanced Capabilities.

We will start off with an acknowledgement of country.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia. For us in Canberra, it is the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. As the first innovators and experimenters of this land, we recognise a continuing connection to lands and waters, and we pay our respects to their elders past and present. We celebrate their traditional knowledge, technology, culture and experience that they have and will continue to contribute to the rich diversity of the Australian innovation ecosystem. A bit of housekeeping, we have got a moderated Q&A chat on today so if you can please put your questions into the Q&A panel, we'll look at those. They'll be collated as part of an addendum. Please make sure that you're respectful and professional in all interactions. If you have the ability to change your name, please make sure that your name is displayed so we know who's asking the questions and for participation records.

This market briefing is going to be recorded and it is in progress right now.

By remaining in the session, you do consent to be being recorded as part of this session. Make sure that you silence notifications and minimise background noise if you can. Before we begin, check that you can see the presentation slides and that you also have access to the Q&A functions. I will let you know so you don't need to ask the question of is this being recorded? Yes, it is and we will be sharing this recording via an addendum through AusTender with everybody. Thank you for joining today. We look forward to engaging with you and hopefully it will be a productive session. I will hand over to the Director of Army Advanced Capabilities, Colonel Jake Penley.



COL Jake Penley 37:51

Welcome everybody. Thanks very much for taking time out of your day to come and discuss AID26. It's a new iteration of Army Innovation Day for us and really keen to have some questions, answers and discussion at the end. So just as a broad update from me, many people online would be familiar with RICO or the Robotics and Autonomous Systems Implementation and Coordination Office which this directorate has typically been within Army Headquarters for several years now. We've made a deliberate change in name to Army Advanced Capabilities, and I'm just going to touch on that for context very briefly. That is really nested under a larger sweeping set of changes to Land Capability Division, which many people would be aware of from some of the recent press releases and also from what the Minister for Defence Industry has recently announced as well, from the move from a centralised land capability in Army, land maritime capability in Navy, and air capability in RAAF to a centralised Defence Delivery Group and then Defence Delivery Agency mid next year.

Now, that's obviously a significant change for the Department as a whole, and that does impact the way that our directorate, previously RICO, feeds into that. Two key points: First up, there is now two autonomy programmes that are able to provide scale where RICO in the past has not, and people online that may be familiar with interactions with RICO through RFPs or etc. would know that sometimes it is difficult with the Commonwealth procurement rules available to rapidly innovate and scale across the force.

One of the key opportunities out of this change is the fact that, as mentioned, we have two autonomy programs. The first one is the Army Autonomy Program, which sits now in VCDF Group, that holds a number of projects underneath it, including LAND135, which some people would be familiar with. The benefit of that is once you have a programme in Army or in the Defence Force, you get paired with a delivery manager, you have access to government approved funding, and you're set up to deliver capability, manage capability, and scale that capability across the force. So that means that now when Army Advanced Capabilities does activities such as Army Innovation Day, we have a more deliberate way to integrate those technologies into service at scale than we have previously had. There is also a second programme which remains in Army Headquarters called the Land Combat and Autonomy Program. Again, another relatively significant milestone for us, it groups up a number

of projects which focus on uncrewed air systems, uncrewed ground systems, soldier combat systems, and some logistics capabilities. Again, that offers an area for us to be able to scale from, so there's two really key opportunities there. The other one is, now that we have two autonomy programs, having an office as a robotics and autonomous systems integration team is not necessarily fit for purpose anymore. Further, we need to make sure that we're not just focused on robotics and autonomous systems moving forward. It is a complete suite of Army advanced capabilities, which nests under a number of different areas for RAAF and Navy as well, to make sure that we are really drawing on all the possibilities from classified information through to academia, through to industry, through to other research partners, both think tanks and the like. That's broadly in a nutshell, the change that has made us review where we sit as a directorate. The RICO brand is very good, nobody's going to get clipped for referring to us as RICO. It's out there. It means something. It's in the latest Defence Industry documents that are released. It's certainly not the capability of RICO departing. It's simply just a name change. So, if you hear Army Advanced Capability, it is essentially interchangeable with RICO, and we do many of the same things. I'll move from that and can answer questions afterwards about how opportunities can arise for people online for the new capability delivery system. For autonomous mass and the littoral, this is no surprise to anybody the way that we're looking, as an Army, to contribute to the National Defence Strategy requires us to further enhance our ability to operate in the primary area of military interest, which is the archipelagic region to our immediate north across the Indo-Pacific. That comes with some inherent risks in terms of the littoral environment, where the land meets the sea, the sea can impact people on the land, and the people on the land can impact people on the ocean or capabilities in the sea. So, it's been a focus for the military for some time. Historically, two world wars fought in a similar area and we draw a lot of the lessons learned from that and we're overlaying those lessons with contemporary lessons from places like the Ukraine to understand how we're going to operate in modern warfare in a relatively difficult environment in comparison to some other areas of operation. It was also a key focus for AID25, and it will continue to be so for AID26.

What we're talking about really in terms of autonomous mass is, we have options and capabilities that enable robotics and autonomous systems to operate one to one, sometimes one to many on small occasions, but there's still some pretty nascent capabilities there that we're trying to turn into actual scaled capability across the land

force. When we're talking about autonomous mass, it is attritable, expendable platforms and systems that can enable the exquisite systems that we have. When I'm talking about exquisite systems, I'm referring to tanks, helicopters, anything that you put somebody in, things that come through the Integrated Investment Program (IIP), they usually take a number of years to deliver and we certainly don't want to lose those. We are looking to generate mass and standoff capability for the people that crew those systems or operate those systems through low cost, mass and uncrewed systems.

That brings us to maintaining the theme for autonomous mass in the littoral. For an Army Innovation Series concept, again, I think a number of people online would have either entered in Army Innovation Day or been involved in one in some capacity, what we're looking to do now is make a more coherent series event which links by year. Although the theme for this year in 2026 is similar to the theme that it was in 2025, what we're really looking to do is make sure that the people and industry partners that we integrate into AID26 have a clear pathway of experimentation into AID27, AID28, so on and so forth. For successful applicants, we move then into the programmes that I described before.

For AID26, that means that the intent is it's a fundamental change for what we've experienced before. Everybody's obviously aware that we've released a request for information over a request for tender or a request for proposal, and that brings with it a couple of so what's. The first one is that we're really focused on development. I am driven to make sure that the benefit that people get out of AID26 is felt in both directions. It may not be financially and monetary, but what it will be, as described in the opening letter and the information in the RFI, is it's an opportunity to partner with us directly both at Land Forces this year and also more importantly, in my opinion, in the field with our experimentation unit at the 1st Armoured Regiment, so that we can help you develop your capabilities in an operationally relevant environment. For that one, the second subpoint there on AID26, it needs to be a mutually beneficial value proposition. That for me talks to collaboration and the fact that we need your help to make this as good as it can be and we can leverage this into next year and make it bigger and better as we go on. For me, what that means is potentially successful applicants who respond to this RFI will get the ability for us to pair those successful applicants with a member, a subject matter expert in the field that your system is relevant to. So, if it's UAS, then we're going to give you a UAS capability person. If it's an uncrewed ground system, uncrewed surface vehicle,

underwater uncrewed system, then we're going to draw from across Army and based on the 1st Armoured Regiment and pair a uniformed person with you as early as possible. That could be as early as late August. That means that you'll have a uniformed person that you can speak to as a point of contact. We are looking to integrate them and uplift that uniformed personnel's knowledge of your capability, what TRL you're at, how you've assessed that, the production capabilities that you have, the scalability that you have, the issues that you're trying to resolve. As part of that process, we're going to design a, and I'll let Jordan speak to this in more detail, but we are going to look to design bespoke experimentation events that we can make sure that you get that mutually beneficial value proposition when the successful applicants are invited to attend various training areas in South Australia with us. So that means that we can get you into an operationally relevant environment, we can get you with a subject matter expert, we can give you a defined report at the back end of this, and then we can start to look to further activities next year to either increase TRL further, narrow the CONEMP (Concept of Employment) for how you can be employed in capability, and give you actual meaningful on roads to the two programmes that I spoke to earlier. It is a new system; it's modelled off a number of systems that are operating quite well around the world. From my perspective and for those online that I've met before, we've spoken a fair bit about how sometimes, I think from both ends, to be quite honest, it can be frustrating with the length of time required to get people into contract at our level. So therefore, this new approach to Army Innovation Day allows us to not focus on money. It focuses on capability, the development of your systems, the development of your pathway, and the development of your way that you fit into an army land operating concept and then gives you deliberate off ramps to capability scaling. With that, I won't take questions now, but please continue to put them into the chat and I'll pass to Jordan to move through the challenge statement and then talk more detailed about how we're going to approach the experimentations event.



LTCOL Jordan Zahra 48:29

Speaking now is Jordan Zahra, my position is SO1 Trials and Exploration within the G58.

I'm going to be talking about the experimentation framework and that mutually collaborative environment that Colonel Penley just went through. Just to set the

scene, this will be run as a formal experiment, and it's important that it is like that because that's what generates the report at the end of this, which I'll speak to the value of that. The G58 is a T&E (Test & Evaluation) accountable unit under the Land T&E manual. What that means is we have a set of routine SOPs (Standard Operating Procedure) that we apply to all our tests. We gather data and we generate reports based on objective quality evidence and why that's important is because when a T&E accountable unit generates those reports, that can actually inform capability decisions and acquisitions. What we'll be doing is applying that technical rigour to this experiment and bringing in industry players with TRL (Technical Readiness Level) levels across the range to generate an experiment that is mutually beneficial to yourselves as industry and also to Army.

The third bullet point there (refer to PowerPoint slide), please think of this as a collaboration between yourselves as industry, but also as the G58 here doing the back end of designing the experiment and being that accredited unit that I talked about, but also 1 Armoured Regiment as the entity that will be executing the experiment, gathering data and in a large part generating that reporting evidence. I'd just like to go through the method of test and give you an overview of what to expect and how we envisage it unfolding. Note that with this whole process, obviously we're starting with an RFI, so we don't actually know what we're testing yet. That'll be informed by the responses that we get from that RFI, and that's actually a good thing. We have the ability to design the experiment around your needs, this is a very generic method of test, moving through where we are now, through to the reporting, noting that a lot of the meat on the bones will come in that scoping phase. If I start on the left (Refer to slide 'Method of Test'), there'll be a phase of informal liaison, and that's just us trying to understand your technology. We'll obviously be informed by the RFI responses, but there may be gaps to fill there, so we may need to get to know your technology more and also understand yourselves as an entity and what your actual needs are and what you're after in an experiment.

As you can imagine, there's going to be a diverse amount of industry stakeholders that could be applying. Some of those things may be synergistic and some of them may not. But what the Army team needs to do in that informal liaison phase is understand exactly what the breadth of experimental requirements are and go out to some of our other stakeholders across Army and determine what we can meet.

The next stage is the scoping phase, this is when we've gone into a bit more of a formal scoping stage and we're meeting with vendors that are moving through the

process. From here, we would like to assign a member of 1 Armoured Regiment to look after you and then they would be a central point of contact for this entire experimental process. It would be very beneficial if that person, potentially with G58 representatives as well, does a site visit and comes out to your facilities to really understand how you do business, how you're making your technology, where it's at, and inform some of that experimental design. In that phase, potentially at the site visit or, in a series of virtual conferences, we'll engage in co-developing a bunch of measures of effectiveness and technical performance measures, this is really important. It is co-developed, so you have full buy-in to this and it is not us designing an experiment for you to meet. It is really meeting you where you're at. So, if there's technology that is more mature than other technology, that's where the benefits of this lie, in that the MOEs (Measures of Effectiveness) and the TPMs (Technical Performance Measures) can be scalable and they can become what you need them to be in order for you to get something out of this experiment too. Then we would effectively agree to what those are so that we move forward with an experiment, and that formalises a baseline for Army to go and resource against so that we know what we need to do in the experiment itself, what exactly you need with your test.

Then lastly, with the scoping, there may be some overheads for approvals, which the G58 team will take on. Those things are quite standard for moving through a test such as land worthiness, air worthiness, and spectrum requests.

All of that will be scoped in the scoping phase with an initial planning conference in August, which is in the bottom box there.

Next up is Land Forces being the 6th to 8th of October 2026. You may be invited to Land Forces if that is a valuable thing for you to do as part of this AID25 event.

Post Land Forces from the 6th to 8th of October, is the final prep before the execution of the event in November. That is just getting to the test site, the logistics, the freight, access, travel, all of those normal things with other planning conferences going on in the background there. I'd envisage a final planning conference around October and a test readiness review just before starting the execution phase.

That test readiness review will be per industry vendor to make sure that everything is ready to progress to test.

That takes us to the execution phase, this will be led by 1 Armoured Regiment in the field. Again, with different experiment designs based on different technologies that are being assessed, they'll be doing the data gathering with support from the G58.

There's a potential for stretch goals there as well and I do want to emphasise flexibility in the design of the experiment that will be in the scoping phase and agreed to in the MOEs and TPMs, but also in the execution phase. We all in the G58, understand R&D very well and that sometimes, there's flexibility in unforeseen circumstances. In the execution phase, we'll have pre-agreed stretch goals and we can also address fallback options if something's not working right at the time. During the execution phase, that member of 1 Armoured Regiment that is assigned to you will be giving you daily feedback.

That all culminates in a report, which is called a Warfighter Report. That is what you should expect as a standard test report. Basically, it's just going to detail what we did. It's going to detail the scope of the test, the MOEs and the TPMs that we co-agreed on. It's going to detail the system under test, the configuration, any changes that we made during the test. It's going to detail the test sequences, it's going to detail the data, and then it's going to have insights from 1 Armoured Regiment users about the system under test and how it performed against the TPMs and MOEs.

When you receive that, nothing in there should be a surprise, that should all be very well informed, given that you've been following us through the entire process, through all the planning conferences, you were present at all the experiments and you're getting daily debriefs. Once you get that report, you will get a TRL assigned to it. That's sort of the culmination of the report and all the data in the report is a validation of the TRL that we think you're at based on the evidence of the test.

In terms of industry partners that this is applicable to, I've put up the TRL scales here and I've cut down the descriptions just for now, I know there's a lot of different TRL scales out there. This is the one we'll be using for now (TRLs one through 9),

We are targeting TRLs 4 through 6 specifically for that, and I'll just detail why. We think that TRL 1 through 3 might be a little bit immature for the tests that we're trying to run here. Those tests probably benefit most from ongoing development by industry at this point in time and probably aren't ready for putting in a field environment for the first sort of use cases with the customer. Perhaps, you know, there might be benefit from desk topping that, but not quite at the experimentation stage. The TRL 4+ is really the sweet spot, the 4 to 6 range. That's where we see benefit from pairing with 1 Armoured Regiment soldiers and being able to design tailor-made experiments to be able to generate data for you and to assist with any of those early R&D questions that you have about that technology that you may need Defence to inform. This experiment is definitely open to TRL 7, 8, and 9. There's no

reason that a TRL7, 8, and 9 can't be involved. It's just that potentially they're a bit more mature than what this is doing and we're not really simulating a TRL 7 environment being an operational environment. We think that we are simulating a relevant environment at best. It's more than likely that we will not be reporting TRL 7, 8 and 9 just because we don't have evidence to base that on.

The report is the value part of the value proposition of the experimental framework itself. So, you get a report and we've taken inspiration from several different models around the world of why a report with a TRL validation and independent validation activity is valuable. We've seen companies around the world using this as leverage to their own investors or to gain further funding. I think that it speaks to having some sort of independent validation of your TRL is quite important. That's effectively what we're providing in this report.

I'll hand it over to Kym now for the AID26 proposed timeline.

Kym Ridley 59:24

The proposed timeline for the process and activities is that the RFI was released at the start of this month. Obviously, today we're holding a market briefing. The RFI submissions will close at 10am on the 27th of July. Our aim is to have an invitation to register to go out to potential successful companies that we would like to maybe invite to the next stage by mid-August, which will then inform you on the process of the Land Forces and November activities. This is where you'll receive additional information of what Jordan was just saying in regards to the draft plans and all those kinds of things. Because of all of the technical difficulties today, we are looking at holding a second market briefing to allow the opportunity for more people to get on to our GovTeams link. Unfortunately, today has not worked out the best in that regard. Aaron has enabled the chat function as the Q&A was not working. So if you have any questions in regards to what any of us have spoken about today, please start putting your questions in and we can start addressing some of those questions for you.

Aaron Crocker 1:01:02

Thanks, Kym. I'll start with the first one we just had raised in the Q&A function from Jeffrey. The question is: will the experimentation events look to access littoral environments in Australia's northern approach, including personnel with experience

operating in coastal environments, in surf, tides, croc-infested waters, humidity?
Or should RFI responses target experimentation on land in South Australia?

COL Jake Penley 1:01:28

I can take that one. In this iteration of AID, we will not have access to training areas in the northern parts of Australia. However, exactly as you described are all the points of friction for us operating in the littoral. What we're looking to do and as part of the development of the experimentation events as per Jordan's part of the brief, if you submit a response to the RFI and it's based on an uncrewed surface vessel, then we will look for access to the water and the ability to test that in a littoral-like environment at a TRO appropriate testing venue in South Australia. There's a number of options we can look to for that. There is potential for options like Port Wakefield. There's Osborne Shipbuilding Yard, which is a defence facility with access to the water. There are non-defence training areas, which we can look to lease from local councils and governments to have access to the water. Keeping in mind the TRL level we're aiming at, we don't need to have everything represented in the tactical environment in terms of crocodiles, saltwater, etc. We just need to be able to see how the platform or system operates in a coastal-like area or a littoral-like area, and then we can extrapolate further information data from that. What we will certainly be looking to for AID27, as I spoke to at the start about this being a series, is getting access to a training area in the northern parts of Australia, which will provide all those things as a more certain and a more fulsome capability next year.

AC Aaron Crocker 1:03:10

Thanks Jake. Next question we have is from David. How well resourced is the G58 for AID26? If you get 100+ submissions, what is the down selection process? How many projects are likely to go forward?

COL Jake Penley 1:03:29

We will take forward as many people as we possibly can. I can't give a firm number at the moment because there's going to be some back and forth. It really depends on the volume that we receive, the number of people that choose to come to Land Forces and the number of people that can be available for the experimentation event. In a perfect world, we would be looking to take more than 10 Industry partners to Land Forces and then also the same team to the experimentation event in

November. In reality, it's going to come down to the size and volume of responses, the types of systems and platforms that are in those responses, our capacity, the whole 1st Armoured Regiment is available to support this in terms of subject matter expertise, given the points of contact that Jordan and I have spoken about, etc. The financial resources are not so much of a concern and I'm confident that we have enough to support more than 10, if we're that successful. If not, and depending on the down select and what we're looking for, it might be less. So in terms of selection criteria, if it can contribute to any way into generating mass in the littoral through sense, strike, EW, power generation, collaborative swarming, human on the loop functions, then those are the big-ticket items that we'll be looking at. I've got a pretty broad scope at the moment because I'm very keen to get as many responses as possible so that we can make sure that, as we start to talk about the Army operating system within the littoral environment, we need to be able to cross all of those domains and we need to be able to sustain people across all the domains and we need to be able to connect people across domains and we need someone on the land to be able to control things in the water and under the water and vice versa. I'm sort of hesitant to go down the checklist so much, but if you think your platform or system contributes to that challenge statement, then please throw it in there. By design, this RFI is specifically aimed at being low-cost, because I'm aware of the the financial outlay that some industry partners will go to for a response to an RFI. You've seen the forms and the response templates. It's very similar. I'm not looking for an expensive response, I'm looking for the low-cost option for you to provide just the information on your platform so that we can get in contact with you and have a discussion about it and then move forward in a mutually beneficial, low-cost, collaborative environment.

 **LTCOL Jordan Zahra** 1:06:22

If I may just add to that as well, it's really important to note that it's not necessarily the highest TRL that we're after here. We're trying to look at a bunch of novel technologies. And this experiment, as opposed to other avenues, for instance, an RFT, this experiment is more about breadth than it is about depth. The actual conduct of the experiment might be quite short.

It depends on the needs of industry, depending for what the experiment length is. It could be a day, it could be a week or two weeks. We're trying to look at a broad spectrum of technologies as opposed to looking at a few technologies in depth.

KR**Kym Ridley** 1:07:06

And from a procurement process point of view, the reason why it's designed as an RFI process versus an RFP is the fact that this is the first time that we are designing a process like this. We're trying to make it as simple and as streamlined as possible. So that, in the future, we can scale it to a point where potential contracts could be tied to an activity like this. We want to get the process right first and want to make it as valuable as possible for industry, which means just going back to basics of planning what the exercise is, rather than making it too complicated and getting money, commercial functions, all of these things involved when we just want to get the simple process and the basics right and then make it scalable. This goes back to the reason as to why we've set it up as the RFI, to look at what's out there, and then we'll invite people to the next stage. I know industry understands this process. ASCA have done this; their sovereign UAS challenge is probably the best example of how that was done, where an RFI was put out and then companies were invited to the ASCA fly-off challenge. That kind of model of a RFI and then a second activity is where we're going just as a simple process to then scale in the future.

AC**Aaron Crocker** 1:08:40

Thanks, everyone. There are a couple of questions coming through at the moment, but the next one I'll ask is: can a company submit multiple proposals?

KR**Kym Ridley** 1:08:51

I'll take this one. Yes, companies can submit multiple proposals. You'll just need to make sure that all the documentation is duplicated. For instance, if you were doing multiple proposals, you'll still need to submit both forms for each proposal. If you don't submit both forms for each proposal, then the very basics of down selecting it means that we can't really look at or consider both proposals to move forward because it would be deemed as non-compliant. Please also make sure that you fill out the respondent information form, so Annex A and attach to both proposals. You only need to fill that one out once, copy it, and attach it to each submission.

AC**Aaron Crocker** 1:09:39

Thanks, Kym. Next one I've got is, is DISP required to submit? For those online who don't know what DISP is, that is the Defence Industry Security Program. Kym or I can answer that one.

KR

Kym Ridley 1:09:52

I'm happy to take it. For this activity, DISP isn't something that is required because we are looking at what novel technologies are out there and what industry can provide us.

We don't want to put that challenge [of acquiring DISP] in front of any partner that we may go with for an activity like this. The juice is not worth the squeeze in that instance, because we just want to see what you have and be able to engage with you, especially if you are a younger or less mature company and have a less mature product that's around the TRL four to six mark. The likelihood of where you are in your business is that you may have only just started your DISP requirements for level one for personnel. So, DISP isn't something that we're looking for in this activity.

AC

Aaron Crocker 1:10:56

Thanks, Kym. We've got a question from Carl asking: will there be opportunities for new entries to be submitted next year, or is this a one-off opportunity?

COL

Jake Penley 1:11:06

Yeah, I can take that one. So yeah, absolutely. Although we don't know exactly what next year looks like, and it's going to be really predicated on the success of this year, noting it's a brand-new model, and what we really want to do is expand it into the next year as much as possible. For an example, similar experimentation activities in other partner nations are getting 70 plus applicants and 70 plus applicants in the field with a experimentation team like 1st Armoured Regiment. We may not be able to support a scale that large, but certainly I spoke about some numbers going through this year before. We want to get as much volume as possible.

The real thing is to enable spiral development, meaningful spiral development with companies so they can come back multiple years in a row as required. And then we're looking at other ways and means that we can offer the same capabilities or the same opportunities for people at higher TRL, which might be looking at a separate event annually as well. There's more information to come on that one early next year and as mentioned it's going to be predicated on the success of this year. So, just because you apply this year doesn't mean we wouldn't accept you back in the field to test something at the end of next year in AID27. This means we can give you the Warfighter Report at the end of this AID and say, "hey, look, what we'd like to see is

this and this type of development over the next 12 months," and then you'll come back and we'll try and get you back in the field with the 1st Armoured Regiment and an assessment team to see how we've gone and if you have a place in the programme that I spoke about at the start of the brief. Thanks.

AC Aaron Crocker 1:12:47

Thanks, Jake. Thanks for the question as well, Carl. Next one we've got is, why is Army interested in autonomous mass in littoral warfare? And this one's for you, Jake.

COL Jake Penley 1:12:58

If you look at the National Defence Strategy 2026, and then we look at the recent released Army's contribution to National Defence Strategy, it really focuses on a strategy of denial by deterrence or by actual denial.

A strategy is only a strategy if you can actually do that thing. So, we need to understand as an Army how we can - with the lessons drawn from modern conflict - enhance our capability to fight in an archipelagic region to our north. We've had two world wars there, we've had a number of other conflicts in Southeast Asian nations. The Australian Army operating from our home base in the littoral is nothing new and it will continue to be a way that we look to defend the nation and contribute to the National Defence Strategy. So that really gets us down to how do we do it. I spoke earlier about some of the exquisite systems. A couple of key ones there. Long range fires and littoral craft.

Long-range fires need to be projected into the archipelagic region to our north to defend Australia as part of a national defence strategy. If we take a long-range fire capability and place it on an island, we need to be able to protect it, we need to be able to conduct combat operations and manoeuvre around it to make sure that we can hold that location with a partner nation. And we need to make sure that we can sustain the forces that are out there with that long range fires asset. To do this, and in drawing lessons from modern warfare, we understand that robotics and autonomous systems are the key things that are going to enable a relatively small middle power in terms of military strength, like Australia, to generate the mass that we might need to produce to deter a near peer enemy. We very much recognise the vision for the Australian Army in future warfare is to use robotics, autonomous systems, attritable systems, and one-way effectors to be able to degrade, deny or neutralise an enemy so that when the time comes that our men and women are

having to fight an enemy in a more traditional sense, they are doing so from an advantage. If we have not set ourselves up, if we find ourselves in a fair fight, then we have not planned correctly. And as some of the commanders in 3rd Brigade refer to it, if we don't have the ability to see as far out as possible, to be able to strike with one-way loitering ammunitions as far as possible, to be able to generate low-cost affordable mass as much as possible, we start to generate a position where we find ourselves in a bar fight in the dark. We don't know who's coming, we don't know where they are, and we don't have the mass to be able to protect ourselves against them. Sustaining forces, projecting forces into an archipelagic region, like there is to our north, requires us now to start focusing on how robotics and autonomous systems can enable manoeuvre, the logistics and the sustainment. I hope that wasn't too long, but that's really the crux of Army's contribution to the National Defence Strategy and how robotics and autonomous systems fit into it. Thanks.

AC **Aaron Crocker** 1:15:59

Thanks, Jake.

The next question is, why are we changing the AID model?

COL Jake Penley 1:16:10

I'll take that one as well. What we've seen in the past is that AID has served a great purpose. Army Innovation Day has come a long way in the last 10 to 15 years. It started at an embryonic stage, as a way to look inwards and get our soldiers to produce innovative solutions to problems that they had firsthand.

Over time, it has grown to what it is now, which many people have seen, where we've gone out for requests, RFTs or RFPs, and we've got responses back, and then that sort of kickstarts this 18-month, two-year process of tenders, engaging with Army Minor Capability Acquisition Program, signing contracts, and so on. And this served a purpose, but didn't provide a silver bullet for anybody. It placed us often in a position where we must allocate significant staff resources to contractual arrangements and negotiating them, hiring contractors, expending resources and taxpayers money, just to get a contract off the ground. And for a company, the feedback that I've received over the last 18 months is that you might get a small injection, a resource injection of 100 grand or 1.2 million, and that's going to last you to a point. It's going to certainly get you through evolutions of development for your platform or system, but it's certainly not going to sustain your company or your

business long term. What we're trying to do now is shorten that innovation cycle. We're trying to provide immediate user feedback that you can take and actually adapt your system and do it in a relevant operationally and contemporary environment. Not only that, but we are looking to give back to you with a formal Army Warfighter Report that has my signature on it or my boss's signature on it, the Army logo, and it says the Army thinks that your platform or system fits into a future operating concept. It says that Army likes it, thinks it's this TRL, and that we agree with you. This is where we'd like to see it go in the future. And the feedback that I've received from industry leads is that that is an extremely powerful tool for people to be able to take to VC, take to investments, take to other boards external to Defence and start diversifying the way that your company is supported financially. That then allowed some diversification, some independence on your side. It stops us from having to drag you or industry partners through this really long contract negotiation back and forth, which then extrapolates to a long innovation cycle. And then if we get to the end of an RFI at the end of this year, we're like, hey, you know, this platform or system is an absolute golden unicorn. We need to get it into a programme like I spoke about at the start. We've got two programs which have capability managers and delivery managers through the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, which we can land these into in a quicker turn than an Army Minor Capability Acquisition Program contract would have previously allowed. We are going out of a bit of a limb here. It is a new approach for an Army Innovation Series. I think it's going to be successful. I'm very, very keen for the successful applicants to this RFI to provide us feedback and help us make this as good as it possibly can be. Because the only way that we can generate actual sustainable national power is by being closer between uniform and industry to make sure that we're getting the right things at the right time. Thank you.

AC Aaron Crocker 1:19:29

Thanks, Jake. I do have one question for probably Jordan to handle. It does tie a little bit to your response now, Jake, but basically, if there is no procurement outcome, why should industry participate?

LTCOL Jordan Zahra 1:19:43

Yeah, so Jordan here. So, like we talked about in the brief, we're targeting TRLs 4 to 6. A lot of those cases will mean that your technology is relatively new and hasn't

been broadcast to a wide community. This is an opportunity to broadcast that and to make your technology and your company more known.

That's one benefit. Another benefit is the Warfighter Report. I've gone through the Warfighter Report and Colonel Penley has just talked about what the benefits are. If I can mirror that, it seems like the Warfighter Report has a lot of value from what we've seen with our international partners. The next one is R&D value to you. I spoke to co-agreeing to a set of measures of effectiveness and technical performance measures. You get to agree to those. What we're doing is developing an experimental serial around exactly what you want. The value proposition to you is you're getting data on your system, and you can have access to resources that you may not have previously had access to. You're getting benefits like access to soldiers, access to vehicles, feedback from soldiers and officers about how the technology is performing, and access to ranges (if you need particular environments set up like littoral environments, like particular electromagnetic environments, that is something that we can do.) That all feeds to the R&D value for you. Another benefit is Land Forces 2026. You will potentially be invited to come to Land Forces. And there'll potentially be further VIP events that are tied to either AID 26 or the AID series moving forward. In terms of the procurement, yes, there is no direct line through procurement, but, as Colonel Penley said, there is an indirect line through making sure that your technology is known.

AC Aaron Crocker 1:21:38

Thank you, Jordan. We're now at the end of our allocated time. Were there any final questions from industry online that we'd like to address or any closing remarks from yourself, Jake?

COL Jake Penley 1:21:54

Thanks, Aaron. Final remarks from me. As mentioned throughout this brief, the only way forward to really generate a capability that can allow Army to contribute to the National Defence Strategy in a meaningful manner with a focus on robotics and autonomous systems, is to approach AID as a team event.

This new model for an Army Innovation series enables that team focus. It enables greater integration between a warfighter and an industry partner. It enables greater understanding of the concepts about how we think we're going to fight at various classifications. And it allows more direct spiral development from industry's

perspective. What Army is doing is taking a risk by looking to people who are generating sovereign capability and also the capabilities of partner nations to contribute in a meaningful way to be able to fit into the Army capability development cycle in its new form.

I really appreciate everybody's time. I request that if you're on the fence and you're not sure if there's value for you, hit us with further RFIs. Everybody should have the Army Innovation Day e-mail. We are going to push as far as we can to make this a meaningful outcome for industry. And to do that, as Australians and as people focused on our sovereign defence, we need to be able to approach this from a team perspective. And that's exactly what this is all about, trying to bring us in tighter, move away from immediate contracts, focus on development of your capability so it's meaningful and has longevity. And then we can start to look at where it sits within one of the programs. Thank you very much. I very much appreciate your time this morning. Apologies again for the tech issues. We'll look for expressions of interest to hold a second industry brief, and we'll obviously be pushing this link out for everybody to see the recording. Thanks, Aaron.

AC **Aaron Crocker** 1:23:58

Thanks, Jake. If there's no further questions from industry, we can look to wrap it there. Thank you everyone for the time, and again, apologies for the tech issues.