The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard is the first critical examination of Australia’s post-Vietnam military operations. Spanning the 35 years between the election of Gough Whitlam and the defeat of John Howard, it shows how the Australian Army recovered and developed after the Vietnam War.

John Blaxland explores the ‘casualty cringe’ felt by political leaders following the war and how this influenced subsequent operations. He contends that the Australian Army’s rehabilitation involved common individual and collective training; reaffirmation of the Army’s regimental and corps identities; and the Army’s ties with allies, regional partners and Australian society. He shows how the Army regained its confidence to play leading roles in East Timor, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands, and to contribute to combat operations further afield.

At a time when the Australian Army’s future strategic role and capabilities are the subject of much debate, and as the ‘Asian Century’ gathers pace and the commitment in Afghanistan draws to an end, this work is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the modern context of Australia’s military land force.

John Blaxland is a Senior Fellow at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, School of International, Political and Strategic Studies, in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. His other publications include: Organising an Army (1989), Signals, Swift and Sure (1999), Information-era Manoeuvre (2002), Strategic Cousins (2006) and Revisiting Counterinsurgency (2006).
THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY FROM WHITLAM TO HOWARD

JOHN C. BLAXLAND
This book about the development and operations of the Australian Army in the period from the election of the Whitlam Government in 1972 to the defeat of the Howard Government in 2007 constitutes a significant contribution to Australian military history. Australia’s military history began with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 and now stretches over a period of more than two and a quarter centuries. This book deals with more than 35 years of that history.

Australia’s more recent military operations are perhaps the least understood in the nation’s military history, which has always focused heavily on the two world wars. The Australian public’s knowledge and appreciation of the sacrifice, suffering and achievements of its servicemen and women grew out of the experience of the First World War. This knowledge was based on memoirs, unit histories and particularly on Charles Bean’s ground-breaking 15-volume official history series, published in the two decades after the First World War. Many people still believe that Australia’s experience of war began with the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, completely overlooking the activities of the previous century, and Gallipoli is still the dominating episode – the iconic event – of Australia’s military history. The public’s appreciation of the experience of the Second World War built on and matched that of the First World War, with more memoirs, unit histories and Gavin Long’s 22-volume official history.

In the 1970s, however, the public began to take a broader view. The involvement of Australians (from colonies rather than the
FOREWORD

yet-to-be-formed Commonwealth) in nineteenth-century conflicts – New Zealand, Sudan, China and South Africa – came to be seen as the prelude to the First World War. The post–Second World War conflicts – Korea, the Malayan Emergency, Confrontation and Vietnam – became the postlude. The world wars still remained the central focus. There was, however, little appreciation of the fact that as the twentieth century concluded and the twenty-first century began Australia’s military history was moving into a new phase.

The task of integrating the new military operations into the broader narrative of Australia’s military history was made difficult because they did not fit the mould of earlier operations. The peacekeeping missions, which increased in number and frequency in the late 1980s, received little publicity. They were conducted by Regular soldiers rather than conscripts or civilians who had volunteered for the war; there were no major battles and few casualties. Gradually some of the missions became more ‘warlike’, with a greater likelihood of casualties, such as during the peace enforcement operations in Somalia in 1993 against bandits, and in East Timor in 1999, where there were minor engagements against anti-independence militia. When Australian special forces soldiers were deployed to Afghanistan in 2001 they became involved in the Army’s most intensive combat since the Vietnam War.

Disappointingly, the public remained largely ignorant of what the Army achieved in many of these more recent operations. Journalists were often denied access to the operational areas, while books about the Australian Army in the world wars still dominated the market. When, in 2004, the Howard Government finally approved an official history series covering peacekeeping and post–Cold War operations it specifically excluded East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, it provided no direct financial support for recording the history.

As John Blaxland has shown, between 1972 and 2007 the Australian Army conducted more than 150 operations. Admittedly most of these were small and took place within Australia; but others, such as in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, Bougainville, Iraq and Afghanistan, were substantial. Their stories demand to be told.

This book brings together the first comprehensive account of what the Australian Army has been doing since 1972. Without access to government records, which are closed to public researchers, Dr Blaxland has pieced the stories together from the few books that are available, from press reports, media releases and, most importantly, interviews and correspondence with participants. He was also able to draw on his experience.
of almost 30 years service in the Australian Army. He has therefore been able to tell the remarkable story of how, after the lean years that followed the withdrawal from Vietnam, the Army developed into a modern, flexible fighting force that the government could deploy at short notice to a multitude of tasks. Until the official histories appear Dr Blaxland’s book is likely to remain the most thorough, all-embracing account of the Army’s recent activities. It is a story of professionalism, achievement and sacrifice of which all Australians should be proud.

David Horner
Professor of Australian Defence History
Australian National University
February 2013
# Contents

Foreword by David Horner \hspace{1cm} v  
Photographs \hspace{1cm} xi  
Acknowledgements \hspace{1cm} xiv  
Abbreviations \hspace{1cm} xv  
Maps \hspace{1cm} xx  

Introduction: The origins of Australia’s Army 1  

**Part 1 From Vietnam to East Timor, 1972–99**  
1 The last years of the Cold War, 1972–89 19  
2 The post–Cold War experience to the late 1990s 72  

**Part 2 Land force operations in East Timor and Solomon Islands**  
3 East Timor, 1999–2000 143  
4 Operations with the UN in East Timor, 2000–04 169  
5 Operations in Solomon Islands from 2000 185  
6 Operation Astute in Timor-Leste, 2006 and beyond 198  

**Part 3 The Middle East area of operations**  
7 Operations in Afghanistan, 2001–02 213  
8 War in Iraq, 2003–07 218  
9 Return to Afghanistan, 2005–06 256
CONTENTS

PART 4 ASIA–PACIFIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADAPTATION AT HOME 281

10 Aid and other assistance since 2000 283

11 Operations everywhere – the Army in 2006 and 2007 310

12 Adaptation early in the twenty-first century 327

Conclusion: An adaptive army 356

Appendix: Operations, 1972–2007 366

Notes 378

Bibliography 406

Index 418
PHOTOGRAPHS

Captain Chris Wrangle 23
Alpha Company, 3 RAR, August 1987, Butterworth Barracks 46
Stand to, August 1987, Mersing, Malaysia 47
Warrant Officer Class 1 Brian Thomas Boughton, Multinational Force and Observers 57
Members of 3 ASC to UNIIMOG, Tehran, Iran, 12 April 1990 75
Members of 14th Field Troop serving with UNTAG, Oshakati, Northern Namibia, 18 June 1989 77
Australian field engineers serving with UNTAG conduct mine awareness training, Okajandja, Namibia, 18 June 1989 78
Lance Corporal James Pianta 79
Australian soldiers of the 17th Construction Squadron around a Wolf mine-protection vehicle 79
Captain A.J. ‘Boomer’ Smith and driver during Operation Salaam 82
Captain Marcus Fielding in a Soviet T-54/55 tank 82
Members of the second Australian contingent to UNMCTT – Afghanistan–Pakistan, Pakistan, c. October 1989 83
Captain M. O’Shannessy of the UNMCTT – Afghanistan–Pakistan dressed in local clothing 84
Army and RAAF personnel and politicians greet Army personnel on their return from Gulf War service 89
Corporal Ross Osborne treating refugees, northern Iraq, June 1991 91
Discussing the satellite base station, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, October 1992 97
Lance Corporal Paul Astbury calls in a radio check 99
Headquarters of the Force Communications Unit, UNTAC 99
Logistic support elements where Australian soldiers were based in Bosnia, 2000  

Major Peter Bishenden being awarded his NATO medal  

Soldiers from 1 RAR control food distribution, Somalia, January 1993  

Colonel Mellor enjoys a beer, Somalia  

Lieutenant Colonel David Hurley  

Corporal Kim Felmingham beside an ambulance, Somalia  

Australian barracks, Rwanda  

Members of A Company, 2nd/4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, on patrol, Rwanda  

A Company, 2nd/4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, helping in triage at Kigali hospital  

Typical daily scene at Kibeho  

Kibeho massacre, April 1995  

Kibeho from the air, late 1995  

Ntarama, May 1995 – the aftermath  

Successful surgery, Kigali, May 1995  

Caring for orphans at Butare, Rwanda, March 1995  

Brigadier Roger Powell with Sam Kauona and Brigadier Jerry Singirok  

Brigadier Powell conducting handover discussions with Brigadier Osborn and Colonel Bob Breen  

Brigadier Mark Evans with unit commanders  

Xanana Gusmão visiting Headquarters 3rd Brigade staff in Suai  

Brigadier Mark Evans briefing Xanana Gusmão  

Senior officials of RAMSI and local people, opening the new police post at Isuna, November 2003  

Police and military personnel arrive for the official opening of Isuna police post, November 2003  

Members of RAMSI talk with locals at Rufoki village  

Brigadier John Hutcheson with locals at ‘Beach Blue’  

Brigadier John Hutcheson with President José Ramos-Horta  

Informal group portrait at Presidential Palace North
Protestors at Garema Place, Canberra 221
Anzac Day, US headquarters in Baghdad, 2003 222
Robert Hill, Peter Cosgrove and Maurie McNarn at Al Asad 223
An unidentified SAS member at Al Asad 224
Four SAS members at Al Asad 225
Brigadier Gerard Fogarty, Major General Mark Evans and Alexander Downer 226
Robert Hill and Peter Cosgrove at a press conference 226
Destroyed Iraqi weapons at Al Asad 227
Members of the Australian Defence Force attend morning briefing at Australian National Headquarters Baghdad 228
An Australian soldier stops in a Baghdad street 229
An ASLAV on patrol near the Swords of Qadisiyyah 230
An ASLAV and crew members of 2nd Cavalry Regiment arrive at Baghdad International Airport 231
Major General Mark Evans and Major General Jackson 234
Defence Minister Brendan Nelson’s visit to Baghdad 239
The visit of Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy to CJTF 633, 2007 240
‘The lads’: Iraqi training course graduates 246
Graduates of the AATT’s program, Iraq 247
Gunner Daniel Mahoney, Gunner Andrew McKenna and Bombardier Jamie Cornwall operate an RBS-70 Missile Launcher 251
General Peter Cosgrove, Senator Robert Hill and Prime Minister John Howard at Victoria Quay, Fremantle 253
Prime Minister Howard with Lieutenant Colonel Mick Ryan 259
John Howard with 1 RTF at Tarin Kawt 260
Corporal Garth Pregnell, C Squadron, 5th Aviation Regiment, aboard a Chinook 263
Camp Bradman, home to an Australian Army Black Hawk helicopter detachment from 5th Aviation Regiment 300
Camp Bradman, the base of an ADF medical team deployed to Pakistan 301
Camp Bradman, Pakistan, 2005 302
Acknowledgements

Many people have freely offered advice and insights in helping to prepare this work. Their contributions through correspondence, discussions and draft reviews, are listed in the bibliography, and I am grateful for the time they have taken to do so. They are too many to mention individually here, but their contributions significantly shaped the end result. They include several former chiefs of the Australian Army and a wide range of senior serving and retired military personnel and a number of Australian military historians. Their contributions are noted throughout the manuscript and in the bibliography. I also would like to acknowledge the support received from the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the ANU and in particular, the head of SDSC, Dr Brendan Taylor, and the ANU Cartographic staff, particularly Kay Dancey and Jennifer Sheehan. I am indebted to the staff at Cambridge University Press for their fine work in preparing the manuscript for publication, especially Isabella Mead and Cathryn Game. In addition, I am conscious that a work like this inevitably will have overlooked aspects that a deeper research effort may have uncovered and which remain the remit of the official history series and of specific unit histories. I trust the reader will appreciate the utility of this broad approach in view of the overarching themes that would otherwise remain unexplored. I am most indebted to my wife, Judith Steiner, who has had the grace and good humour to support me through the gestation of this work. While many people have assisted me, some may still disagree with some of my conclusions, and only I can be blamed for any errors of fact or omission that the reader may encounter.

John Blaxland
ABBREVIATIONS

4 RAR (Cdo) 4th Battalion RAR (Commando; later 2 Commando Regiment [2 Cdo])
51 FNQR 51st Far North Queensland Regiment
AACAP Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program
AATTI Australian Army Training Team – Iraq
ABCA America Britain Canada Australia Armies Standardisation Program
ACG Advance Company Group
ACM Anti-Coalition Militia
ADF Australian Defence Force
ADFA Australian Defence Force Academy
ADFWC Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre
AFP Australian Federal Police
AFS Australian Force Somalia
AGPS Australian Government Publishing Service
AMTG Al-Muthanna Task Group
ANARE Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions
ANR Australian National Representative
ANZAC Australia New Zealand Army Corps
ANZAC SOF Anzac Special Operations Force
ANZUK Australia New Zealand United Kingdom
AO Area of Operations
APC Armoured Personnel Carrier
APEC Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APIN Army Presence in the North
APS Australian Public Service
ASLAV Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
AS MSF Australian Medical Support Force
ASP90 Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s
ASP97 Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997
ATSN Army: The Soldier’s Newspaper
Abbreviations

AusAID  Australian Agency for International Development
AUSBATT  Australian Battalion
AWM  Australian War Memorial
BAOR  British Army on the Rhine
BASB  Brigade Administrative Support Battalion
BPC  Border Protection Command
CABW  Combined Arms Battle Wing
CAL  Centre for Army Lessons
CATA  Combined Arms Training Activity
CATDC  Combined Arms Training and Development Centre
CDF  Chief of Defence Force
CER  Combat Engineer Regiment
CFC-A  Coalition Forces Command – Afghanistan
CGS  Chief of the General Staff
CHOGM  Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings
CJIATF  Combined Joint Inter-Agency Task Force
CJSOTF  Coalition Joint Special Operations Task Force
CJTF  Combined Joint Task Force
CJTF-7  Coalition Joint Task Force – 7
CMAC  Cambodian Mine Action Centre
CMF  1. Citizen Military Forces (Army Reserve antecedent)
     2. Commonwealth Monitoring Force
     (Zimbabwe-Rhodesia)
CO  Commanding Officer
CSSB  Combat Services Support Battalion
CTC  Combat Training Centre
CTEX  Counter-Terrorism Exercise
CTF  Combined Task Force
DCP  Defence Cooperation Program
DFAT  Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DGFLW  Director General of Future Land Warfare
DIGO  Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation
DJFHQ  Deployable Joint Force Headquarters
DP  Displaced Persons
DSTO  Defence Science and Technology Organisation
EEZ  Exclusive Economic Zone
ELF  Enhanced Land Force
EOD  Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FALINTIL  National Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FANC</td>
<td>Forces Armées de la Nouvelle-Calédonie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-FDTL</td>
<td>East Timor Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORCOMD</td>
<td>Forces Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPDA</td>
<td>Five Power Defence Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMAS</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Australian Ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNA</td>
<td>Hardened and Networked Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ JOC</td>
<td>Headquarters Joint Operations Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMINT</td>
<td>Human Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMV/PMV</td>
<td>Infantry Mobility Vehicle/Protected Mobility Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERFET</td>
<td>International Force in East Timor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRR</td>
<td>Incident Response Regiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISF</td>
<td>International Security Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISTAR</td>
<td>Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIRSG</td>
<td>Japanese Iraqi Reconstruction Support Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOPC</td>
<td>Joint Offshore Protection Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTF</td>
<td>Joint Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFOR</td>
<td>Kosovo Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIS</td>
<td>Live Instrumentation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWDC</td>
<td>Land Warfare Development Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LWSC</td>
<td>Land Warfare Studies Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAO</td>
<td>Middle East Area of Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFO</td>
<td>Multinational Force and Observers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINURSO</td>
<td>United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLE</td>
<td>Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRE</td>
<td>Mission Rehearsal Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUAV</td>
<td>Miniature Unmanned Aerial Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCE</td>
<td>National Command Element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Non-Commissioned Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORCOM</td>
<td>Northern Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norforce</td>
<td>North-West Mobile Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZDF</td>
<td>New Zealand Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBG(W)</td>
<td>Overwatch Battle Group (West)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OC  Officer Commanding
OECD  Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OP  Observation Post
OSS  Operational Support Squadron
PMG  Peace Monitoring Group
PNG  Papua New Guinea
PNGDF  Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PPCLI  Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry
RAA  Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF  Royal Australian Air Force
RAEME  Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RAMSI  Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RAN  Royal Australian Navy
RAR  Royal Australian Regiment
RCG  Ready Company Group
RFMF  Royal/Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RFSU  Regional Force Surveillance Unit
RMA  Revolution in Military Affairs
RNZIR  Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
RPA  Rwandan Patriotic Army
RQR  Royal Queensland Regiment
RTA  Restructuring the Army
SASR  Special Air Service Regiment
SEATO  South East Asian Treaty Organisation
SECDET  Security Detachment
SDSC  Strategic and Defence Studies Centre
SF  Special Forces
SFOR  Stabilisation Force
SFTC  Special Forces Training Centre
SIEV  suspected illegal or irregular entry vessel
SOCCE  Special Operations Command and Control Element
SOLS  Special Operations Logistics Squadron
SOTG  Special Operations Task Group
SPPKF  South Pacific Peace Keeping Force
STA  Surveillance and Target Acquisition
TAAIP  The Australian Army In Profile
TCL  Tactical Coordination Line
TFU  Task Force Uruzgan (Oruzgan)
TMG  Truce Monitoring Group
TNI  Tentara Nasional Indonesia
TTP  Tactics, Techniques and Procedures
UAV  Unmanned/Unattended Aerial Vehicle
UNAMET  United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor
UNAMIC  United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia
UNAMIR  United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNGOC  United Nations Good Offices Commission in Indonesia
UNIMOG  United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group
UNITAF  United Nations Mine Clearance Training Team
UNMISET  United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor
UNMO  United Nations Military Observer
UNMOGIP  United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOCHA  United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid
UNOSOM  United Nations Office in Somalia
UNPOL  United Nations Police
UNTAC  United Nations Transitional Authority Cambodia
UNTAET  United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNTAG  United Nations Transition Assistance Group
UNTSO  United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation
VBIED  Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
WHAM  Winning Hearts and Minds
Maps

Map 1 South-East Asia

xx
Map 2 Timor-Leste

Map 3 Indonesia
Map 6 Africa
Map 7 Pacific Islands
Map 8 Australia
Map 9 Pakistan and Afghanistan
Map 10 Iraq
Map 11 Middle East