American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote in 1908: ‘If the strategy be wrong, the skill of the general on the battlefield, the valour of the soldier, the brilliancy of the victory, however otherwise decisive, fail of their effect.’

In *Strategy and Command*, David Horner provides an important insight into the strategic decisions and military commanders who shaped Australia’s army history from the Boer War to the evolution of the command structure for the Australian Defence Force in the 2000s. He examines strategic decisions such as whether to go to war, the nature of the forces to be committed to the war, where the forces should be deployed and when to reduce the Australian commitment. The book also recounts decisions made by commanders at the highest level, which are passed on to those at the operational level, who are then required to produce their own plans to achieve the government’s aims through military operations at the tactical level.

*Strategy and Command* is a compilation of half a century of research and writing on military history by one of Australia’s pre-eminent military historians. It is a crucial read for anyone interested in Australia’s involvement in twentieth-century wars.

David Horner is an Emeritus Professor at the Australian National University, where he was Professor of Australian Defence History for fifteen years. He has an international reputation for military history and strategic analysis and is considered Australia’s premier military historian.
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Strategy and Command

Issues in Australia’s Twentieth-Century Wars

David Horner
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The Australian Army has a long and admirable record of fostering serious research and publication about its history. From the outset ‘Military History’ was part of the formal education of staff cadets at RMC Duntroon, and for a time officers’ promotion depended upon candidates being able to analyse Stonewall Jackson’s Shenandoah Valley campaign in promotion exams. An understanding of the Army’s history and traditions remains central to its *esprit de corps* in its most literal meaning, and historical study has a utility in foreseeing and fulfilling the Army’s roles in an uncertain world.

Since the 1970s (as a consequence of educating officers at university level), the Army has produced several generations of educated soldiers, several of whom became historians of note. The pioneers included John Coates, Robert O’Neill, David Horner, John Blaxland, Peter Pedersen, John Mordike and Bob Hall. Their successors include Jean Bou, Bob Stevenson, Garth Pratten and Craig Stockings (either as regulars or reservists). Several of them have written books published in the Australian Army History Series. The creation of an Australian Army History Unit in the 1990s demonstrated the Army’s commitment to encouraging and facilitating serious history within and about the Army.

One of the most impressive demonstrations of the Army’s dedication to history has been its long association with several major publishers, and notably with Cambridge University Press. This has been a productive relationship, initially brokered by Dr Roger Lee, the long-term head of the Army History Unit, and my predecessor as General Editor, Professor David Horner, the author of this book. Roger’s successor as head of the Australian Army History Unit, Tim Gellel, a former member of the Australian Intelligence Corps, is continuing and indeed extending that
relationship, giving the Army, and the nation that sustains it, history they both need.

The Cambridge Australian Army History Series brings to a professional, academic and popular readership historical work of importance across the range of the Army’s interests and across the span of its history. The series seeks to publish research and writing of the highest quality relating not only to the Army’s operational experience but also to its existence as an organisation and to its contribution to the nation.

The Australian Army History Unit has created a community of writers and readers (including soldiers in both roles), the product of whose questions, research, debate and writing informs Australia’s understanding of itself and its part in Australia’s history. It is a history to be proud of in every sense.

For more than forty years, Professor David Horner has been a vital and influential exponent of the understanding and interpretation of the historical relationship between Army and society in Australia. After serving as an infantry officer in Vietnam, he became a leading scholar of Australian military history with his books Crisis of Command: Australian Generalship and the Japanese Threat (1978) and High Command (1982), indicating the thrust of his scholarship over his long and productive career. Through such books as his biographies of Thomas Blamey and George Vasey, Professor Horner exemplifies the biographical analysis of Australian command historically, and has fostered many historians who have followed his lead, example and advice. As well as his thirty-five books (dealing with a great range of periods and approaches, including the General Editorship of the Official History of Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Post–Cold War Operations), Professor Horner has produced many papers, articles and chapters, often responding to the needs of the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force. These works, which are found in a plethora of proceedings, journals and compilations, often limited in availability, express the extent of his work, including on more recent military commitments, issues and problems. This book brings together (and revises and comments on) the thoughts and the words of one of Australia’s most profound influences on the study of strategic command, contributions based on a secure grasp of the historical experience and development of the Defence Force. It will prove useful to Australians and others
seeking to understand how the exercise of command can contribute to the Defence Force’s part in furthering Australia’s national interest, a matter of enduring and often vital importance for members of the Australian Army, and those who ultimately depend upon it for their national security.

Professor Peter Stanley, FAHA

*General Editor, Australian Army History Series*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABDA American, British, Dutch, Australian (Command)
ACOPS Assistant Chief of Defence Force (Operations)
ADC aide-de-camp
ADF Australian Defence Force
ADFA Australian Defence Force Academy
ADHQ Australian Defence Headquarters
AIF Australian Imperial Force
ANZAC Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS Australia, New Zealand and United States (Security Treaty)
AWM Australian War Memorial
BCOF British Commonwealth Occupation Force
CA Chief of Army
CAB Cabinet Office (United Kingdom)
CAF Chief of Air Force
CCOSC Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee
CDF Chief of the Defence Force
CDFS Chief of the Defence Force Staff
CGS Chief of the General Staff
CJFA Commander Joint Forces Australia
CMF Citizen Military Forces
CN Chief of Navy
CNS Chief of Naval Staff
CO Commanding Officer
COMAFV Commander Australian Force Vietnam
COMAST Commander Australian Theatre
COMFLOT Commodore Flotillas
COSC Chiefs of Staff Committee
DAFP Documents on Australian Foreign Policy
DIO Defence Intelligence Organisation
DLI Durham Light Infantry
DSO Distinguished Service Order
GHQ General Headquarters
GOC General Officer Commanding
GSO1 General Staff Officer, Grade 1
HMAS His (or Her) Majesty’s Australian Ship
HMS His (or Her) Majesty’s Ship
HQAST Headquarters Australian Theatre
HQJOC Headquarters Joint Operations Command
INTERFET International Force East Timor
MC Military Cross
MP Member of Parliament
NAA National Archives of Australia
NARA National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
NCO Non-commissioned officer
NORCOM Northern Command
NSW New South Wales
OBE Officer of the Order of the British Empire
OCMH Office of the Chief of Military History
PREM Records from Prime Minister’s Office, United Kingdom
RAAF Royal Australian Air Force
RAF Royal Air Force
RAN Royal Australian Navy
RAR Royal Australian Regiment
RF Royal Fusiliers
RN Royal Navy
ABBREVIATIONS xvii

SCA Support Command Australia
SS Steamship
SWPA South-West Pacific Area
TNA The National Archives (United Kingdom)
VCDF Vice Chief of the Defence Force