


# The Canber

*To serve the National City and*

**SUNDAY**

AUGUST 3, 1986

22 Pages plus 16-Page  
Comics Table

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IN TOP GUN COMPETITION

## 15pc swing against Labor in Unsworth do

KEY: The future of Mr Barrie  
as Premier of NSW is in  
the balance today after it became clear  
that both Rockdale and  
state by-elections would go  
in favor of the Labor govern-  
ment.

although he refused to accept defeat.  
He said that in Rockdale the Liberal  
candidate, Mr Bob Gemmett, and  
Independent candidate Mr Jim  
McLean had drawn many votes on  
the basis that he, Mr Unsworth, was

Mr Greiner said Mr McLean  
agreed to give his preferences to  
Liberals, and he was confident  
party would gather up to 80 per cent  
of them.

In Bass Hill, with less than half



## OPINION

## Mapping Australia well off bearing

A LITTLE more sensible coordination of two Commonwealth agencies engaged in doing exactly the same thing — the mapping of Australia — could save the taxpayer between \$21 and \$27 million.

It could be much more if the Government would bite the bullet and dispense substantially or altogether with one of the agencies — which, on existing cost structures, would have to be the Army Survey Corps.

The average cost of producing a map in the Army Survey Corps can be up to 10 times the cost of producing exactly the same map in the National Mapping Office — or Natmap. The difference is a rather heavy price to pay for maintaining within the defence force a core capacity in the rather unlikely event of war — especially given that the resources needed, should Australia be at war, are capable of being quickly mobilised.

But even assuming that there is some role for an Army Survey Corps, and thus a need for two agencies, the story of Australian mapping services is still one of a scandalous lack of coordination and a ferocious waste of public money, and symbolises how unaccountable bureaucracies can be — and even a bit of fun in laughing about disinterfering some of the tales in how it came to be.

If anyone doubts that *Yes Minister* — a new series of which starts on the cretiniser tomorrow — accurately describes the ways bureaucracies can work, may one commend to you the as-yet-unissued review of topographic mapping services by our very own former Ombudsman, Professor Jack Richardson.

Jack Richardson, actually, could easily play himself in any *Yes Minister*. With insights garnered as Ombudsman, a drop of hyperbole and some slight megalomaniacal traits of personality, he has long had a reputation in bureaucratic circles of being able to pen the best and most stinging letters — short perhaps only of John Stone, Sir Arthur Tange and Sir Humphrey Appleby himself — seen in bureaucratic circles for years.

His most recent job — commissioned to resolve a long-running dispute between rival Commonwealth agencies soon after he stepped down — is well up to scratch.

The dispute is over who is responsible for the mapping of Australia, and how that task might be most efficiently done.

There are two key actors: the National Mapping Office — or Natmap — a civilian agency in the Department of Resources and Energy, and the Australian Army Survey Corps, which, primarily under the guise of maintaining its capacity for wartime has a major mapping function. But players include the states, which, usually in Surveyor-General's offices, maintain differing levels of mapping capacity, other Defence mapping setups, such as the Naval Hydrographers Office, and private industry, broken up into many fragments but which engages in a fair amount of contract work, at prices comparing very favourably with those in bureaucratic set-ups.

A part of the problem has been that mapping could hardly ever be said to have had much concentrated Cabinet attention. The essential framework is provided by a 1954 decision which set up the Department of the Interior as the single authority for all Commonwealth

## Waterford

topographic survey work — for both civilian and Defence needs. Natmap, now in Resources and Energy is the inheritor of that brief.

The first task set was preparing a 1:250,000 series of maps of Australia. In more recent times Natmap has been proceeding, rather slowly one should say, with a 1:100,000 program, while Defence, on a path of its own, is engaged in a 1:50,000 series, some of which is being done to 1:25,000 standards.

Natmap got Cabinet approval to do its 1:100,000 series in 1964, promising completion in 10 years, but with one thing and another, including picking up other tasks, resources problems and — Professor Richardson would suggest — not a little of the inefficiency which can arise when managerial skill is not always rated as being as important a technical ability — the program will not be completed until 1988 — 23 years.

Army got seriously into the act when it decided to do its series, beginning with mapping of northern and north-western Australia in 1981. It can neither be said to have had government permission as such to do so, nor, despite its denials to have consulted Natmap about its plans. The records certainly do not show any consultation: it was not raised at the National Mapping Council (a body representing State as well as Commonwealth interests); Defence saying that it did not think it appropriate that its priorities on mapping to be aired before the council.

When Natmap became aware and asked for consultations, the then Chief of Joint Operations and Plans, Admiral Evans, replied frostily: "Natmap has no requirement or mandate for mapping in this scale. Nor do I accept that Natmap has 'an area of responsibility' in 1:50,000 scale. If we continue to exchange

source data between the various mapping agencies, I do not see how 'unnecessary duplication of effort' will result. Accordingly I do not believe that co-operative arrangements in this scale are an appropriate topic for the [interdepartmental committee]."

It was perhaps then that the problem was becoming serious. And here it is worth discussing some of the jurisdictional issues.

One of the major reasons why better mapping Australia is important is because of defence needs. These are far from the only ones, however, and, indeed, it is more than arguable that the modern need for maps for assessing mineral, and water wealth, for planning communications, and for other aspects of national development is at least as strong. The principle of civilian control over what is done is not seriously in doubt, and this is the case in most other countries as well.

Defence needs maps, and may have good reasons for saying that for its purposes the mapping of particular areas at particular levels of exactness are priorities. If there is any intrusion on to our shores, it will not only need maps, but it will need skilled surveyors, map-makers and suchlike on the ground to help in its planning — though not in preparing topographical maps. As a part of the core-force concept, it maintains a basic capacity and headquarters structure to be able to do so.

No-one strongly disagrees with that, although Professor Richardson makes quite clear his judgment that the army has more than gilded the lily in its assessment of what the minimum core force ought to be. At the moment it has 650 members. His comment was that the provision was like "placing wall-to-wall carpet in a coal mine." He would cut it by at least 69.

It is in major part the size of the core force capacity, and the natural desire to give them something to do, that has Army itself doing something which is in any event desirable — its current mapping project.

The Army is quite well equipped with high-tech capital — better so than Natmap — though it gets considerably lower productivity from it. And it has plans to expand its facilities in ways which horrified Professor Richardson.

One plan — already we understand about to be junked by Government — involves the RAAF's claim of Army Survey needs for mapping photography as the principal part of the justification for buying two \$23 million aircraft.

"Each aircraft will cost several million dollars more than any aircraft so far used in aerial photography in Australia", according to Professor Richardson. "No civilian mapping authority, whether Commonwealth or State, uses jet aircraft, or aircraft of high capital cost nor is it necessary or economic to do so. Natmap owns and operates two Cessna aircraft."

"I have no doubt that all Australian civilian mapping authorities would regard the RAAF proposal, with its attendant operational costs, as a self-indulgent exercise in extravagance."

He also described a plan to buy a digital plotting machine called Automap 3 — at a cost of \$12.7 million, a price exceeding the total capital cost of all stereoplotting equipment at both Natmap and Defence combined — as "an economic folly" — likely to put increase the cost of producing each map by about \$100,000. The equipment, he notes, would be quite useless in the field in any confrontation.

Mr Paul Dibb, in his review of defence needs, incidentally, endorsed the idea of buying Automap 3. Briefly, Professor Richardson agrees with Mr Dibb's assessment of the significance of improving Australian mapping but sees other ways of doing it.

The fact that Army sees that there is always a need for a core survey force leads it to claim that it is unfair to put a micrometer over the cost of its producing maps. Any costs, it argued, ought to be assessed at the margin only — ie, because one would be paying a massive

sum simply for having them anyway, only any extra costs of producing maps ought to be assessed.

When one chats to Army people about the issue, one is always told that the military have special needs in maps. They do need maps, but, in fact, of course, there is not the slightest difference between a topographical map of given scale drawn by a soldier and one drawn by a civilian. A hill is still a hill, whether it is a strategic prominence.

Professor Richardson was not so kind. And by his calculations — which appear rather generous to the Army given that the cost of its running a mapping school is omitted and because he is prepared to write off some "military" training etc component of its running mapping programs — one wonders whether we can afford to let them produce any maps at all.

In any event, from the time army got engaged in its programs, relations have been quite bitter between the agencies. Committees were set up in an attempt to co-ordinate things, but, according to Professor Richardson, so combative were the disputants that nothing of substance — even the minutes of the last meeting — could be agreed.

Professor Richardson is critical of Natmap for not taking the dispute to Cabinet. Indeed, while he recognises that Natmap has the better of the economic arguments, he plainly thought little of its bureaucratic infighting capacity, general management or its record of taking 23 years to do a job it had promised to do in 10. Natmap's performance, he says, has not matched it claim to the dominant role in co-ordination — and simply to give it authority over Army Survey would produce a case of the tail wagging the dog. That view has flavoured his ultimate recommendations.

But even if Natmap might have been more adept at infighting, and might have brought the issue, and the waste of resources involved to a head more quickly, it is hard not to put the ultimate blame on Defence and the "arrogance" (Professor Richardson's word) of the sort shown by Admiral Evans.

Professor Richardson's recommendations are focused on getting some co-ordination, while, to some extent at least, leaving the past behind. He would have both a Natmap and an Army Survey Corps, (the work of each supplemented by outside contracting), but try to get some heads banged together so as to produce maps meeting the overall need at less cost, more quickly, and with less duplication of resources.

His option one would share out the duties of producing the 1:50,000 map, otherwise leave each pretty much to its own resources, and have an arbitrator to bang heads when they cannot agree. His option two would give Defence some pre-eminence with this project, though with Natmap and Army having much the same allocation of areas to map, with Natmap more or less in the position of subcontractor.

A third option, which could be incorporated in one or two would put Natmap under the control of the surveyor-General and, implicitly, give him more clout in dealings with Defence.

His third option would be to put actually

## Ombudsman's wit, wisdom

Some of Professor Richardson's gems on the mapping fiasco:

Of RAAF plans to buy two \$23 million jets, citing Army survey needs for mapping photography: "A self-indulgent exercise in extravagance".

Of Natmap's failure, 21 years on, to have completed a mapping series expected, in 1965 to take 10 years: "the scheduled time for any . . . program should not be allowed to pass merely by bureaucratic condonation".

Of the Army Survey Corps claims about how many members are needed to provide its core force: "rather liking placing wall-to-wall carpet in a coal mine".

Of Natmap's overstatement of its claim to the central co-ordinating role in mapping: "more extensive than the ambit clauses of a log of claims from the Builders' Labourers' Federation."

Natmap actually into Defence as a civilian division, with its operations and the operations of the Survey Corps, (operating as a military branch of the same division) under the control of a single Chief, either military or civilian. That person, obviously would also have the power to bang heads.

Professor Richardson prefers the last option — and, on the allocation of functions as he recommends, says that savings of the order mentioned in the first paragraph — and the completion of its project in considerably shorter time to boot — would be the result.

If Natmap participates at the level he recommends, it would cost the taxpayer about \$9.2 million, he says. The cost of Army Survey doing the same job would be a minimum \$25 million if one discounts the supposed military component or \$29 million if one doesn't. There are the extra savings from cutting the size of the Survey Corps and cutting some of its equipment ambit claims.

Speaking for myself, however, I cannot help but think that he might have spoken more strongly for the principle of civilian control and civilian accountability. The defence civilian bureaucracy, after all, has been at the least a bystander in the colossal waste going on to date.

If Natmap has some responsibility for not having its own house in order and not blowing the whistle quickly enough, it can at least point to its considerably greater cost-efficiency, and its fact that it takes non-military priorities into account. My preferred option would be to beef up Natmap's management (possibly by linking it up with the Surveyor-General) and give it some actual power over what the military can do, the resources it is allowed to deploy, and the scale to which it is allowed to develop. In any emergency, after all, those resources, like any other Australian resources, can be commandeered for military purposes, and they may as well be deployed in the meantime in the most economical and efficient way.

— JACK WATERFORD



# Bureaucrats indulge in a power play to control mapping facilities

Waterford

ONE COMMONWEALTH agency stabbing another in the back. So what's new? What about a situation where one Commonwealth agency lobbies the States to get together to force the collapse of a rival Commonwealth agency?

In an article a fortnight ago, I pointed to the *Yes, Minister* potential of the Australian mapping setup, focusing on the bitterness and massive waste caused by fighting between and duplication of services by the National Mapping Office and the Australian Army Survey Corps.

That report was based on a review of the as-yet-unreleased report by former Ombudsman Professor Jack Richardson, called in finally to act as a form of arbitrator. But some other documents leaked to me last week show that this brawl, diverting as it is, is but a part of a much wider war, going well beyond the mapping domain.

The outsider would not see as readily as the professionals inside all of the artificial distinctions which have been erected between groups such as map-makers and surveyors. If differences there are, however, they are quickly disappearing with the advent of technology which, once information about land, whether collected by surveying, satellite, aerial photograph or whatever, can be organised and arranged in a million different ways to meet a wide range of needs. The technology is expensive, but as its importance increases, all the parties in the field are more and more rivals for control over it.

At the same time, many of the actors — in government, federal state and local, and in private industry are increasingly working themselves out of jobs unless new work is found. Natmap and the Army Survey Corps (or the bureaucratic survivor as a result of the Richardson report) would find it very difficult to justify existing staffing levels once their present programs are completed.

The Australian Survey Office has already played its major role in areas such as the development of Canberra. So what is to be the new role? The new in-thing is the development of "land information systems" — in effect computer data bases collecting together from all of the sources all of the information known about land. At one level it can simply be mapping and

survey information: a collection, on computer tape of "digitised" data about land forms, boundaries and so forth.

At the state level in particular the development of such systems has a primary focus on land law: collecting and recording on computer all of the information about land ownership (including historical material), valuation, and all of the data found in a land title document — mortgages, easements, conditions on title and so forth.

And one can extend the idea to put into the data base economic, social and political information — material, for example, from the Bureau of Statistics, information about oils, minerals and natural resources from a range of sources, information on social security systems and so on.

A well-organised land information bank could be a vital tool in planning. And, given that departments and agencies often have to go out and re-collect information already held by other agencies (which, to make things more complicated, might be a state or local government body) a systematic approach to it could also involve big savings.

The prime candidates in the field are the states, whose land tax base and general constitutional control over land title and transfer gives them a considerable incentive for doing so. South Australia is probably the most advanced — one can now get land survey and title information at the press of a computer key in Adelaide. NSW is probably furthest behind. Western Australia is said to have recovered in one year its investment in computers by discovering unpaid or unknown land-tax liabilities which had eluded it when everything was on a card.

But some of the systems being developed are not compatible with each other, some of the lessons learned at cost in some states are being remade in other states and there is obviously a vital interest in developing common standards and sharing experiences.

At the same time the Commonwealth itself has much information it is quite willing to share and wants ready access to data held by the states. Hence the development of the Australian Land Information Council as a clearing house.

And preliminary research by the Commonwealth of its own pitch

has already set out to discover just what sort of information is held by each Commonwealth agency and how it might be put together. The Commonwealth Surveyor-General, Mr J. W. Sleep, has the Prime Minister's very general brief in the matter.

Now because I might be thought, by implication, to be a little critical of Mr Sleep, I must confess my view that I think the idea of a land information bank a terrific idea, and give him due credit for his energy in developing it.

At the basic level it could substantially reduce the costs of conveyancing. It could considerably assist in land planning by drawing the massive range of information together. It could save the government and private industry, and the individual, a lot of money, first by avoiding duplication of collection costs — say a minimum of \$100 million a year at Commonwealth level — and secondly by improved and cheaper access. And, finally, it could provide the basis for a wealth-tax system in Australia — certainly a land-tax system.

But one must be cynical and also see it as a source of personal and political power. Who controls this is going to build up a big empire. And that empire will grow at the expense of the other ornaments in the lands-systems tree.

Mr Sleep, the Surveyor-General, controls it, and is not only busily working about the idea but is also in the business, not to put too fine a point on it, of quelling the potential rivals at Commonwealth level, and even Commonwealth-states coordinating levels.

One such rival in the latter field is the National Mapping Council, or NMC, establishing aegis ago by agreement between the prime minister and the premiers to coordinate resources going into mapping and developing uniform standards. He has been slightly assisted by this in that the land bank coordinating committee — the Australian Land Information Council — is a more heavyweight body than the NMC and its membership, primarily of heads of Lands Departments in the states, are in-

volved at local level in some of the same battles.

In any event, in March, the ALIC formed a view that the NMC was increasingly ineffective — chiefly because proper Commonwealth participation was frustrated by the sorts of jurisdictional brawls and waste as between Army and Natmap described a fortnight ago — and that it ought to become simply a subcommittee of ALIC. The NMC, incidentally, reports to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Evans. The Surveyor-General is a member of the NMC but belongs to the Department of Local Government and Administrative Services.

In May, Mr Sleep wrote to the chairman of ALIC, Mr Don Alexander (who is head of the South Australian Lands Department), proposing a "strategy" for wiping the NMC out. His letter is a classic of the art — it even included a draft letter for Mr Alexander to send around the states.

The strategy was, in Mr Sleep's words, for Mr Alexander to write to ALIC members recounting the view of the March meeting and "suggesting to them that they each write to their respective premiers ... advising of a withdrawal of support [Mr Sleep's emphasis] for the NMC."

His draft letter said that "there has been growing Australia-wide dissatisfaction with the NMC and this has led to a decline in support by some members. The general feeling is:

"The main purpose for which the NMC was established, to coordinate the massive mapping program which was then required, no longer exists."

What coordination is now required usually happens between agencies on a one-to-one basis.

The important task carried out by the NMC's technical advisory committee — standards and specifications, technology transfer and so on — needs to continue. (In other words, a distinction is made between the council itself and its advisory committee).

The NMC is not "fully representative of the industry in that it does not include private-sector or academic members."

The estimated cost to the taxpayer of the NMC as a whole may exceed \$1 million. A significant proportion of this money is absorbed by the bureaucratic overheads of the NMC itself."

The letter suggested that the NMC be allowed to "collapse" and that its technical committee be reconstituted as an independent advisory committee.

Alas for Mr Sleep, while many of the states are dissatisfied with the NMC and in particular with the Commonwealth's contribution to it, some can recognise a power play when they see it. A Tasmanian Department of Lands internal minute I have seen, for example, counselled against going along with Mr Sleep, commenting that "Tasmania could unwittingly become a pawn in the federal supremacy struggle presently being waged by the four major federal mapping agencies represented by the Commonwealth Surveyor-General, Mr John Sleep (who is also the prime mover behind the formation of ALIC), the Director of the Division of National Mapping (and also chairman of the NMC), the Director of Survey, Army, and the Hydrographer, Royal Australian Navy".

That minute also suggested that the dump-the-NMC motion at ALIC had been introduced "in a clandestine way ... not even listing this important topic as an agenda item ... It [ALIC] has still not contacted the chairman, NMC, either formally or informally. I contend this is a breach of professional protocol and ethics".

Just what the reaction of the Department of Resources and Energy has been to the comradely behaviour of the Department of Local Government and Administrative Services (and the extent to which the respective ministers are or were originally briefed) is not yet known. It is understood that there has been some interdepartmental correspondence, but its flavour has not yet surfaced.

The current state of the Richardson review [Professor Richardson, incidentally, was restricted by his terms of reference and was not able to survey the whole show — even the NMC] is that government opinion appears to favour

Professor Richardson's fourth option — of an integration of Natmap in the department of Defence, operating as a civilian division with a considerably reduced Army Survey military division. And decisions should be made in the next three weeks.

It is plain, however, that such a decision could be too quick. If decisions are made now, these could be set in concrete for decades. What is needed is a look at the whole field, not only embracing the functions of the Surveyor-General (and the Hydrographer) at Commonwealth level, but also the whole field of state cooperation, the role of private industry — which has a massive, but still largely unrealised export and technology development potential — and the directions in which land information systems are working.

One comment, as a response to my article a week ago, was from the Association of Consulting Surveyors in Queensland, which said that the Richardson report, if accurately quoted by me, showed only the tip of the iceberg of waste and duplication.

"The cost effectiveness of only two organisations has been examined. In our view, the inefficiencies discovered extend to all federal survey and mapping agencies," the association said.

The "machinations" between the federal agencies were frustrating the development of an industry viewpoint to Government, the Army's free services to foreign government (in the name of our own defence needs) was undermining the export efforts of private industry, and the Richardson recommendations about amalgamation of Natmap and Army Survey would not stop the power struggles going on.

"The private sector believes that the only permanent solution is to close down all the federal organisations involved in the supply of these services ... and start again with a single, properly constituted organisation which recognises constitutional responsibilities, is a co-ordinating organisation meeting the needs of all federal agencies, makes maximum use of the private sector ... integrates defence and civilian needs within Australia and will focus maximum attention on the thrust for export of high-technology services by the Australian survey and mapping industry."

"When the new organisation is

designed, preference might be given to incumbents in the closed organisations. However, it is likely that more than half of the existing manpower could be redundant," it says.

Private industry, of course, has its own barrow to push. But the Richardson review demonstrated that it was more than competitive with the public sector, and that more use ought to be made of it.

The petty politics and the bickering, of the sort so trenchantly described by Professor Richardson, or revealed in this article, is extremely wasteful — in terms

of duplicated resources and activities, capital equipping programs working at odds with others' and in terms of the drain on officers' time.

But it is also a symptom of profound change going on in the industry — a change so far only partly addressed by the politicians and decision-makers. It would be better, right now, to look at some of these movements and address them as a whole, rather than making piecemeal changes to paper over some of the cracks which have emerged.

— JACK WATERFORD



## Waste in mapping

Received August 4

Sir, — Being a man with 30 years' mapping experience in the military, civilian and academic environment, I read with interest Jack Waterford's article on Sunday. I think that the Ombudsman's option of unifying the two principal Australian mapping agencies into one administered by Defence is a sensible and logical one. Almost all countries I know, or whose maps I know, use exactly this arrangement; ie, a unique organisation with mixed personnel, largely civilian in peacetime, but reasonable to be militarised practically overnight in case of emergency. Problems of coordination, duplication and waste simply do not arise. I worked for a long time with mixed field teams, and had a desk side by side with colleagues wearing white collars (mine was khaki).

The reasons for the wasteful situation of Australia are well known to the interested persons, and are due to circumstances that do not bring shame to anybody. Such reasons are now superseded as, for instance, the subdivision of re-

sponsibility on the basis of scale. Modern technologies make the mapping task largely independent of scale until the very final stage of production: therefore military and civilian requirements seldom can be in conflict.

About the involvement of the Surveyor-Generals' offices, most of them state authorities with responsibility mainly on cadastral, engineering and land-titling activities, I see none. Geodetic data and technological advancements have always been shared between the two main branches of the survey profession, but organisation, administration and conduct of their respective duties are quite different.

S. U. NASCA, MIS, MAIC  
Latham

## Gold for ABC

Received August 1

Sir, — No matter what the tally of gold medals for Australia at the Commonwealth Games, one more should be added — for the ABC.

CLINTON WHITE  
Duffy

## Mapping services

Received August 5

Sir, — In his critique of Professor Jack Richardson's review of Australia's mapping services, Jack Waterford (CT, August 3) places the beginnings of the present division of mapping responsibilities in 1954, with the establishment of the Department of the Interior as the authority responsible for all of Australia's topographic survey work.

Had Jack Waterford gone farther back into the history of this affair, he would have discovered that the first haywire decision, on economic grounds, was made in 1953 when, in its normal budgetary bidding, the Royal Australian Air Force asked for £160,000 to run its photographic reconnaissance squadron. The bid was refused, and 87 Squadron (of which I was a member) was disbanded.

In hindsight, that can now be seen as one of the costliest penny-pinching decisions ever taken by an Australian Government. The 1954 decision was based on the premise that the RAAF had no air-photography capability.

Not knowing that, your columnist can be excused for concluding — on economic grounds — that Natmap should be given greater responsibility for military mapping decisions. On economic grounds that is one of the more rational options.

But the 1953 was decision made on economic grounds — defence spending was being cut — and that decision proved during the New Guinea border crossings of the 1960s and the period of confrontation with Indonesia to be economically expensive and politically damaging.

In his *The Search for New Guinea's Boundaries* of 1966, Paul van der Veur documents how the RAAF returned from Papua New Guinea, its survey of the areas adjacent the West New Guinea border incomplete. Australia went into the ensuing difficult years "blind", its intelligence services wearing an expensive blindfold, and we wear today the consequences of that ignorance.

Jack Waterford suggests that civilian facilities can be commandeered for military purposes in an emergency. Well, we tried that in 1939. I doubt that the RAAF of 1986 would want to go into battle poking amateur cameras from the cockpits of Wirraways. Sure, that training eventually produced some marvellous photographers, but there never are sufficient civilian resources to support an intensive defence effort.

All the weapons of war are useless if we don't know where the enemy is, or what he's got, or how to get at him. Which means our primary weapons are the information we collect and the maps we draw.

Weapons management is the business of warriors, which is why we need a fully operational full-time services-manned photographic reconnaissance and mapping unit, as well as the civilian authorities.

BRIAN McNAMARA  
Turner

## Privacy not guaranteed

Received August 7

Sir, — For the past 40 months I have had a silent telephone number, because I was being harassed.

Three weeks ago I received a call from someone I had not heard of for almost eight years. I asked if he got my number from mutual friends, he answered, "No". Later when I was speaking to his wife she said, "Bob's got friends in high places".

I don't mind them having my number, but what irks me is that I pay for privacy, but even that's

## Letters to the Editor

### Mapping and Defence

Received August 14

Sir, — I refer to Mr Waterford's article on mapping (CT, August 3).

It has been my past experience that the inclusion of examples of "wit and wisdom" similar to those quoted by Mr Waterford has usually been done for the purpose of covering up inadequacies.

It would appear that, after nine months' effort, Professor Richardson and his team reached an untenable conclusion — scarcely a basis from which to be critical of others for bureaucratic dithering and lack of managerial efficiency.

May I be permitted to comment on specific matters dealt with in the report:

First, the failure of Natmap to complete the 1:100,000 program in 10 years as originally planned — a great number of your readers will know that an initial governmental commitment to a 10-year program is not necessarily binding on succeeding governments and that once these start introducing cumulative staff and expenditure cuts the original time frame goes by the board.  
Second, what technologically Nat-

map is not as well advanced as it might be — in fact, consistent with fund allocations, it has been well to the fore in usefully applying appropriate technology.

Third, that Natmap overstated its claim to central coordination — it is hard to see how the tabling of a mutually accepted inter-departmental agreement can be interpreted in this fashion — particularly when the agreement is based on a long-standing and unchallenged Cabinet decision.

Fourth, there is a committee of senior departmental officers charged with overseeing the application of this agreement — when Defence claimed this committee had no responsibility with respect to their 1:50,000 mapping, Resources and Energy took the matter to Cabinet, which in turn set up the current inquiry.

In a nutshell, the whole topographic mapping had proceeded satisfactorily until 1981, when the Department of Defence went back on the inter-departmental agreement.

This has created an impossible situation that can only be satisfactorily solved by their withdrawal and reduction to a core strength

compatible on a percentage basis with, say, that which the Army Corps of Engineers maintains in relation to the overall engineering activity in Australia.

BRUCE LAMBERT  
Forrest

## Ombudsman to the rescue

Received August 14

Sir, — The letter from Mrs Harris, of Rivett, (CT, August 5) about the stove in her flat prompts me to seek this opportunity to remind your readers of the existence of my office.

It has been a long time since we have been able to afford paid advertising of our work but I would like the public of the ACT to know that they can lodge complaints with us for investigation when they think a Commonwealth agency has done something administratively wrong. For the record, we investigated 601 complaints about local ACT matters in 1985-86.

The office of the Ombudsman is located in the Prudential Building, corner of London Circuit and Uni-

the past week at Sofala had themselves suffered loss, yet they pitched in none the less. To say that the community effort was commendable is a weak understatement. Visiting federal politicians (including the Minister for Tourism, John Brown) were impressed by the community's effort (let's hope the promised government aid will be as forthcoming, as were these men's compliments). I've been going to Sofala for nearly 20 years, yet during the past few days I got to know the local men and women much better than I've ever known them before.

This Canberra resident simply says, well done. Sofala and Wattle Flat. And thank you.

MATTHEW HIGGINS,  
Kaleen

## Wasteful mapping

*Received August 15*

Sir, — As Jack Waterford reports (CT, August 3), Australian mapping is well and truly off course. We have known that for some years, but it has taken the yet to be publicly released *Review of Topographic Mapping Services* (Richardson report) to finally bring the problem out in the open. But until the Richardson report is made public, we will have to rely on hearsay and the Waterford article.

The surveying and mapping functions of government have been the scene of shameful waste for many years. Unfortunately, the Richardson report was required to address only two of these areas — the Division of National Mapping and the Army Survey Corps. There are two other government surveying and mapping agencies — the Australian Survey Office and the Royal Australian Navy Hydrographics Service — which should have been included in the review

undertaken by Professor Richardson.

In view of the waste and non-accountability identified by Richardson in his review, and given the desire of the Canberra Government to drastically reduce costs, we suggest that a quick look at those other two offices will reveal the same type of waste, duplication and mismanagement.

Meetings of the Australian Surveying and Mapping Industry Conference — ASMIC 1 and ASMIC 2 — were held in May and November, 1985. During both of those conferences, senior representatives of government, private and education sectors discussed the future of the industry and arrived at the same conclusion — the need to combine the four major

Federal government surveying and mapping organisations, namely National Mapping, Australian Survey Office, Army Survey Corps and RAN Hydrographic Office, into one organisation under one minister.

If the Federal Government is serious about putting Australian mapping back on course, and sav-

ing many millions of dollars, it will take the industry advice and combine its mapping and surveying organisation, and it will take Professor Richardson's advice and introduce firm, effective, accountable management.

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