

Peter Jennings

Australia's leading defence and strategy thinker

Peter Jennings is the ultimate Canberra insider. He is Australia's leading defence and strategy thinker. Since the early 1990s Peter has advised Prime Ministers, Defence Ministers and national security leaders on the most challenging strategic problems Australia has faced, from East Timor's tumultuous rise to independence, to war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the rise of an assertive China.



Peter led the Australian Strategic Policy Institute for a decade, standing down as Executive Director in April 2022. He made ASPI the largest and most successful think tank in Australia and Peter has been shaping the public debate on crucial defence and security matters.

Peter has shown himself to be a fearless advocate for Australia's national security interests, calling out Beijing's attempts to covertly interfere in Australian democracy.

Peter is a talented public speaker and seasoned media performer, commenting on security issues ranging from the war in Ukraine, to stability in the Pacific and cyber security. With an amazing depth of knowledge over vast geo-political agendas, Peter is very comfortable fielding Q and A questions from his audiences.

Peter writes with clarity and deep insight for the *Australian* newspaper and other outlets on defence and international issues.

Over a twenty-year career in the Public Service, Peter rose to be the Deputy Secretary for Strategy in the Australian Defence Department. Among his achievements he negotiated the 'enhanced cooperation' agreement bringing detachments of the United States Marine Corps to Northern Australia and setting the plan for growing United States Navy and Air Force cooperation with the Australian Defence Force.

In 2011 Peter negotiated an agreement with the United States on cyber security, ensuring "that in the event of a cyber-attack Australia and the US would consider it together and determine appropriate options to address the threat, reflecting the mutual obligation in Article III of the ANZUS Treaty."

In the Defence Department, Peter was intimately involved in shaping policy for Australia's military operations in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan, for which he was awarded the Public Service

Medal in 2013.

Peter was Senior Advisor for Strategic Policy to Prime Minister John Howard in 2002-03, helping to shape a strategic plan across all policy areas. He was Chief of Staff to Defence Minister Ian MacLachlan in the first term of the Howard Government.

While at ASPI, Peter advised the Government on the 2016 Defence White Paper as head of the project's External Advisory Panel. He sat on DFAT's Advisory Group on Australia-Africa Relations, developing a strategy in 2016 for Australia's engagement with Africa. In 2014 Peter joined the Australia-Germany Advisory Group led by then Finance Minister Mathias Cormann, developing a plan to enhance cooperation between the two countries.

Not surprisingly Peter has deep insights into the sometimes murky world of Canberra politics and policy-making, based on personnel connections built across the Parliament, Public Service, the Australian Defence Force, the Diplomatic Corps and the Press Gallery.

Over his career Peter has developed a global network of contacts in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and North America which allows him to tap into deep sources of expertise about current strategic developments.

In 2015 he received the French award of Knight of the Legion of Honour, and in 2021 received a Commendation from the Foreign Minister of Japan for his work in promoting closer bilateral relations.

Born in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), Peter was educated at Chevalier College in Bowral, New South Wales. He has a deep love of history and has an Honours Degree in European history from the University of Tasmania, a Master of Arts in international relations from the ANU and a Master of Science in Management from London Business School. Peter has also been a Fulbright Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Peter Jennings speaks about:

Peter speaks with clarity, authority and good humour on issues relating to defence, security and politics, including:

- Global security and the war in Ukraine- how does it impact in Australia?
- Prospects for war and peace in the Indo-Pacific – an Australian Strategist's perspective.
- China's rise and future trajectory -what are the implications for Australia's corporations?
- How to strengthen Australia's defence- is there a role for Australian Businesses?
- The emerging landscape of cyber security – are you ready?
- How Canberra decision-making works and how to shape policy outcomes – can you make it work for you?

Client testimonials

“ ASPI went from strength to strength under Mr Jennings over the past decade, becoming a leading global voice on the threat posed by Xi Jinping’s China.

- Foreign Affairs and Defence Correspondent

“ Peter Jennings will retire as executive director of ASPI early in 2022. He has been an extraordinary contributor as a writer and commentator on Australian national security. Hopefully, ASPI Washington DC will be an important part of his legacy.

- Former Labor senator for NSW and national ALP president

“ Peter Jennings brought an immense wealth of knowledge as former Deputy Secretary for Strategy in the Defence Department and during his tenure he cemented the ASPI as a pre-eminent leader in insights and analysis into Australia’s national security.

- Senator

“ Peter Jennings PSM ... led ASPI for a decade. Peter Jennings’ significant tenure enriched the defence and national security narrative in Australia and expanded ASPI’s presence to the US. His contributions and leadership have deepened strategic policy discussions in this country, especially at a time when frank appraisals of our strategic circumstances have been needed the most. I sincerely thank Peter for his work and wish him well.

- Minister for Defence

“ Whether it be at symposiums, dialogues, during television or net-streamed interviews, or in newspaper and journal articles, Peter has consistently and resolutely backed the Japan-Australia relationship and highlighted its strengths and the need for greater levels of cooperation between both countries.

- Ambassador of Japan

“ It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be with you today to present you the insignia of Chevalier of the Legion of Honour. Today France honors an eminent specialist in Defence matters, someone that has done so much for the strategic relations that unite our two countries as well as a friend of France which I wish to recognise, one of our true supporters here in Australia. ... Your freedom of thought and frankness of your analysis, always well argued and pertinent, allow us to better measure the major challenges Australia faces.

- Then Defence Minister of France

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