

Stephen Smith MP Minister for Defence

Prime Minister, Minister for Defence – Joint Media Release – Release of final Defence Force Posture Review report

3 May 2012

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Defence Stephen Smith today released the final report of the Defence Force Posture Review.

The report finds that our changing strategic environment does not require widespread changes in the location of our Defence Force bases, but that some adjustments should be made to meet future needs.

It finds that there are some weaknesses and risks associated with the capacity of Australian Defence Force (ADF) bases and training areas as well as our ability to sustain high-tempo operations in Northern Australia and our neighbourhood and region.

Release of the final report follows the Government's release of the interim report of the Review on 30 January.

The Force Posture Review addresses the range of present and emerging global, regional and national strategic and security factors which require careful consideration for the future.

These strategic and security factors include:

- the rise of the Asia-Pacific as a region of global strategic significance;
- the rise of the Indian Ocean rim as a region of global strategic significance;
- the growth of military power projection capabilities of countries in the Asia Pacific;
- the growing need for the provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief following extreme events in the Asia Pacific region; and
- energy security and security issues associated with expanding offshore resource exploitation in our North West and Northern approaches.

The Review also examined logistics support requirements, training areas for large-scale and joint training exercises, demographic and economic factors, public communications strategies, and engagement with industry, particularly the minerals and petroleum resources industries in Australia's North and West.

The Review concluded that the Australian Defence Force needs a force posture that can support operations in Australia's Northern and Western approaches, as well as operations with our partners in the wider Asia Pacific region and the Indian Ocean Rim.

This will be particularly important as the Australian Defence Force approaches a period of transition and subsequent drawdown in Afghanistan, as well as in East Timor and Solomon Islands.

The Review identifies expanding maritime capabilities as significantly influencing Australia's future force posture. Joint amphibious capability is identified as having a transformational effect on Navy, Army and the ADF generally, driving force posture considerations.

The Review examined possible basing options in the North and North West of Australia and the possibility of arrangements that enhance access to commercial ports.

While permanent Navy bases in the North West are not operationally necessary, the Review recommended that Defence examine options involving investment to enhance Broome, Darwin and Cairns as naval bases.

The Review highlights the potential for greater wharf capacity and support facilities at HMAS Stirling (Fleet Base West) to support major surface combatant capability and operations.

The Review finds that Defence should proceed with its plans to homeport the Air Warfare Destroyers and Landing Helicopter Docks at Fleet Base East in the short term but also develop additional options involving Brisbane and Fleet Base West.

The Review also found that while Air Force bases are well-located, many currently lack the capacity to fully support new platforms, and some air bases in Northern Australia face significant logistics constraints.

The Review found that Defence should upgrade bases at Edinburgh, Learmonth, Pearce, Tindal and Townsville to enable unrestricted operations by KC-30 and P-8 aircraft and that Defence should upgrade Curtin, Learmonth, Tindal and Townsville, with Scherger as a lower priority, to support future combat aircraft operations.

The Review also identifies Defence's international engagement as a significant strategic asset.

Planning for the future security of Australia and its national interest is one of the highest priorities for Government.

The force posture of the ADF is an essential element of Defence planning.

The conclusions and recommendations of the final report are in the main longer term options for consideration. No decisions have been made about individual proposals. Many of these options, including development of new facilities involve substantial additional investment.

The Force Posture Review report will now form part of the security and strategic considerations feeding into the 2013 Defence White Paper, and decisions on Force Posture Review options will be made as part of the 2013 White Paper process.

The Review was undertaken by the Department of Defence and overseen by an expert panel comprising two of Australia's leading national security experts, Dr Allan Hawke and Mr Ric Smith, both former Secretaries of the Department of Defence.

The final report is available at: <http://www.defence.gov.au/oscdf/adf-posture-review/>

(The publicly available report is unclassified but has some redactions related to sensitive and classified national security material).

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