Dear Sirs

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE POSTURE REVIEW 2011

Please find attached a submission from the City of Greater Geraldton, for consideration as part of the Posture Review.

The City believes that Geraldton presents a significant opportunity for the Australian Government to develop a major and sustainable joint operations base to secure Australia's future. Geraldton offers a location, in the mould of Townsville, however with unique integrated air, navy and army operations in one effective and critical location.

It is understood that the Review members propose to visit a number of locations, during the review process. The City would be pleased to host such a visit, to enable Review members to assess, first hand, the existing port; airport and support facilities available at Geraldton.

If you have any queries please contact either Bob Davis, Director Commercial Enterprises on (08) 9956 6990 or me directly on (08) 9956 6601.

Yours sincerely

Tony Brun
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Cc. The Hon Simon Crean MP. Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development & Local Government
The Hon Senator Louise Pratt, Senator for Western Australia
The Hon Barry Haase MP, Member for Durack
AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE POSTURE REVIEW 2011

SUBMISSION BY

City of Greater Geraldton
a vibrant future
## Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 2  
Strategic issues .................................................................................................................. 4  
Basing Principles ............................................................................................................... 6  
Family Friendly Basing .................................................................................................... 8  
   Realities of the North West ......................................................................................... 8  
   Value of Geraldton as a Base Location ........................................................................ 9  
Fleet Bases & Ports .......................................................................................................... 10  
   Geraldton- Patrol Vessel Potential ............................................................................ 13  
   Oakajee – A Significant Defence Opportunity ......................................................... 13  
Air Bases .......................................................................................................................... 14  
   Geraldton Airport Options for ADF .......................................................................... 16  
Army Capabilities ............................................................................................................ 18  
   Joint Operations Enablement & Support .................................................................. 18  
Appendix: Additional Information – Geraldton, Western Australia .............................. 20
Executive Summary

The City of Greater Geraldton has examined the Terms of reference of the Defence Posture Review, the 2009 Defence Whitepaper ‘Force 2030’ and a range of related publications. The City offers views in relation to strategic issues, disposition of Australian Defence Force (ADF) capabilities Western Australia (WA), its North West, and potential benefits for Defence from basing of land, sea and air capabilities in WA, including options for basing forces in the Geraldton City region.

The City strongly endorses proposals to position significant ADF capabilities in WA, with capacity to protect and defend the northern and north-western sea and air approaches, Indian Ocean sea lanes, and the globally significant oil and natural gas resources in our offshore economic zone.

Geraldton is uniquely placed for ADF purposes. It offers:

- Multi-modal transport integration for logistics – the major Northwest Coastal Highway, the northern limit of Rail connection to Perth, a functioning Sea Port with growing export trade, and an established security-designated regional Airport with regular passenger transport services.

- An existing City region population of about 40,000 residents, supported by a diverse and thriving regional economy with a high growth rate and employment opportunities, with sufficient critical mass for established health and education facilities and services, social and recreational amenities, affordable housing options, and significant stocks of quality land for housing and industry. Geraldton is within a 4 hour drive or 1 hour flight from Perth, boasting a moderate climate and coastal lifestyle, and is very Family Friendly.

- A pivotal location: a 1000km arc from Geraldton embraces (refer figure 1) – to the south - the Perth metropolitan area and south-west coast, around the capes and east beyond Esperance and – to the north – Exmouth, the North West Shelf offshore gas province, and extending north beyond Dampier.

Geraldton currently hosts the joint satellite communications base at Kojarena. Given criticality of the networked forces strategy, dependence on satellite communications and surveillance of our approaches for persistent awareness, the City assumes that Kojarena warrants defending. A high readiness Army force, with counter insurgency and ground-to-air missile capabilities may be justified. Kojarena is located within a short distance of Geraldton Airport.

The Port of Geraldton offers capabilities able to be utilised by Navy. Apart from use as a supply and lesser maintenance port, there is real potential for establishment of a Patrol vessel base. More significantly, the proposed new deep-water port at Oakajee, 20km north of Geraldton, for which the Commonwealth has committed funding for development of common user port infrastructure, offers potential for addition of purpose-designed facilities for Navy vessels.

That presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for creation of home or detachment basing capabilities for Navy, north of Perth. The commercial port will be built regardless, but purpose-designing Navy facilities into its second development stage now would optimise capital costs for Defence. An adjacent 6500HA industrial estate, in rural land, buffered from
urban encroachment, offers capacity for materiel pre-positioning/staging, as a port for LHDs. Oakajee warrants investigation as part of the Posture review.

Geraldton Airport, owned by the City, with land exceeding 500HA, offers significant land-side and air-side areas for Defence purposes. New rail marshalling yards are nearby. A 2600M Code 4E runway is in detailed design planning, and ultimate development plans future extension to a 3300M runway, offering real basing potential for both fixed and rotary winged ADF aircraft, as well as a heavy-lift logistics and fuel hub.

A Joint Services facility could be established within the Geraldton airport precinct, noting the potential for Port use for LHDs, requiring Army Helicopter basing, and desirability of an Army force for defence of nearby Kojarena.

Geraldton could support Joint Operations capabilities, within useful range of both the South West and North West of WA.
Strategic issues

The following strategic issues provide a backdrop to the considered position of the City of Greater Geraldton, Western Australia, in relation to the Defence Posture Review:

- Australia's strategic interests are largely positioned to the north, with high priority needs for capabilities to control and defend our northern and north-western air and sea approaches.

- The emergence of China and India as significant economic powers, with growing military projection capabilities, adds significant new dimensions to strategic planning and delivery of ADF capabilities.

- Potential exposures to rogue minor states and non-State hostiles, require continuing allocations of defence resources for intelligence, situation awareness, response and deployment requirements.

- The majority of ADF resources remain based in South East Australia, within the legacy World War II doctrine 'Brisbane-Adelaide Line' and isolated from our north-east, northern and north-western sea and air approaches.

- Every year, mineral resource and agricultural commodity exports worth billions of dollars and essential imports, including crucial liquid fuels from the Middle East and South East Asia, depend on the sea trade routes of the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific. A significant proportion of the nation’s oil and natural gas reserves are located in offshore basins running from the Timor Sea south around the coast of Western Australia, past the North West Shelf down as far as Dongara – with important onshore natural gas reserves in active exploration running south from Geraldton. Developer intentions to utilise massive vessels for offshore Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) processing rather than onshore plants, exacerbate the resource protection challenges. There is clear necessity to have ADF resources in place to protect the offshore oil and gas infrastructure - today - and that imperative must have escalating priority as additional natural gas reserves are discovered and exploited.

- Protracted instability in the Middle East, rising demand for fossil oil fuels from emerging economies and plateauing global oil supplies, escalates the strategic criticality of Australia’s sovereign oil and natural gas resources, for export income generation, but most particularly to meet Australian domestic energy needs going forward. With natural gas as an essential transition fuel to replace coal for electricity generation, as a key strategy towards meeting Australian obligations for carbon emission reductions, security of LNG supplies is an immediate national energy security imperative.

- Major air and sea ports have developed along the WA coast, initially as enablers for rural produce exports, but (since the sixties) with expansion of capacity driven by mineral and energy resources development.

- Despite the obvious significance of national interests in the Mid-West and North-West of WA and adjacent offshore zones and the number of key air and sea entry points of...
obvious utility for any hostile force, there is minimal permanent ADF presence west of Darwin/Katherine, or north of Perth/Fremantle.

- A small number of Navy Patrol vessels, small Army Reserve units, and two RAAF 'bare bases' represent the current defence effort between Darwin and Perth, with conduct of periodic exercises to test deployment of capabilities into the north-west quadrant of the nation.

- Border protection is an increasingly significant consumer of ADF, Border Agency (Customs/Quarantine/Immigration) and AFP resources, and utilisation of civil coast-watch air surveillance capabilities - with Australia currently lacking a 'Coast Guard' type service to consolidate such capabilities and free ADF resources for higher priority Defence imperatives.

- Beyond the security issues of defending nation-critical mineral and energy resources and associated economic infrastructure, or ability to rapidly project a deterrence capability to hostiles in and beyond the northern approaches, there is no resident capacity in the north west of WA to respond quickly and effectively to contingencies such as natural disaster relief and humanitarian assistance for Indian Ocean rim or Asia Pacific nations.

- Positioning of land, sea and air defence capabilities in the north-east, north and north-west to protect nation-critical economic and energy resources, and to control and defend our northern air and sea approaches, is necessary to deter or meet most likely threats and contingencies out to and beyond 2030 – and to have capabilities readily available for practical engagement with neighbouring nations to enhance regional stability.

- Sustainable intelligence, surveillance, information management and communications capabilities are pivotal capabilities for a modern ADF, with growing dependence on satellite surveillance and communication capabilities, and consequent need to protect related resource sites.

- The alliance with the USA remains a cornerstone of national Defence policy, with ADF Posture complementing US Defence Posture in the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean. Australian interests would be best served by continuing significant US engagement in our near regions, facilitated by greater use of Australian bases and access to our training areas, and potential use of Australian facilities for pre-positioning of resources.

- **ADF Priorities**: Consistent with the above and as set out in the White paper 2009, the highest priorities for the ADF are:
  - Capacity and readiness to deploy forces rapidly.
  - Intelligence and information/communication superiority with persistent situation awareness.
  - Ability to gain/maintain control of our northern sea and air approaches, with sea control and air superiority capabilities.
  - Ability to protect essential trade routes and sea lanes.
- Force projection and strategic strike capability, to deny aggressors ability to operate without disruption from bases enabling attack on Australia, and to attack hostile forces in transit.

Given the context outlined above, the realities of geography, and the desirability for proximity to threats to enable rapid response, the City strongly advocates permanent basing of ADF land, sea and air capabilities in the north-west and mid-west regions of Western Australia.

**Basing Principles**

### ADF Strategic Basing Principles:

- **Base locations aligned with strategic operational requirements** (defend against attack; control air and sea approaches; maritime and air force projection; strategic strike against hostile bases, staging points, in transit; protection of critical trade routes; protection of energy resources; counter insurgency; intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, sustained situational awareness).
- **Dispersion of critical capabilities** for security reasons.
- **Consolidate into fewer, larger, sustainable multi-user bases** aligned with functions at Joint and Service levels and capacity to support operations.
- **Group bases near strategic infrastructure and industry** to maximise knowledge sharing, innovation and effectiveness of industry support.
- **Locate in Family-Friendly areas** for spouse employment opportunities, specialist medical care access, education for families, to reduce posting turbulence and increase ADF retention rates.
- **Maintain an urban and regional disposition** to enable continued provision of part-time capability.

The City acknowledges the strategic basing principles that have been articulated for Defence planning, but notes that there are limits to scope of the principles and tensions between the principles, requiring compromises in application of some principles in order to optimise defence and other national outcomes:

- The principles of grouping bases near strategic infrastructure and (existing) defence support industry and consolidating bases into fewer, larger multi-Service bases, for enhancement of joint operations effectiveness and pursuit of scale economies in shared base/garrison support services, have merit, but they create natural tensions with the imperatives for dispersion of critical capabilities, maintaining an urban and regional disposition and proximity to northern sea and air approaches for rapid and effective deployment.

- **Major fixed bases** are high-value target zones that (if successfully attacked) become major operations capability failure points. Major fixed-base joint operations facilities become higher-value target zones. Protection of such major bases (and other dispersed critical capabilities such as fixed satellite communications ground bases) becomes a defence imperative of itself, requiring dedicated force capabilities.
Clustering bases physically near to civil infrastructure and support industries has merit, from the perspective of capability sustainment of capital delivery platforms, but requires significant risk mitigation, adding target value to major ADF base zones. Combined with location in so-called ‘family-friendly’ (essentially capital city metropolitan) areas, collateral damage to essential economic and civil infrastructure and civilian casualties becomes inevitable in the event of hostilities. Base locations should be planned to mitigate that risk exposure. It might be argued that in the worst-case event of major hostilities, capital cities would be attacked anyway, so clustering of ADF bases in/near them adds little to the risk profile for civil infrastructure and citizens. However, it remains arguable that the imperative to minimise/mitigate civil exposures should be added to the current list of strategic basing principles.

In terms of key technology based industry support that could partner with ADF, the Geraldton region is the host of the Australian Square Kilometre Array Project and potentially the International Square Kilometre Array project which is being pursued by the Australian government. Related to these projects both the Department of Industry, Innovation Science and Research and Australia’s Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) have developed extensive partnerships with major industry groups through the Australian Square Kilometre Array Industry Consortium (ASKAIC). ASKAIC has a strong presence and understanding of the Geraldton region. Its members include Boeing, BAE Systems, HP, Cray, Cisco, IBM, Sun Microsystems and Thales, all of which have strong relationship in industry partnership status and provider status with ADF.

The desire to group bases near strategic infrastructure and (essentially existing) defence support industry capabilities, particularly in the context of the population settlement and industry establishment patterns of WA, would see consolidation of ADF capabilities in or near Perth/Fremantle. That location is a long way south of the nation-critical oil and natural gas energy resources requiring sea and air protection, and even further from our north-western air and sea approaches – let alone distance from areas into which military projection may become desirable/necessary. Considerations include steaming times and fuel requirements for ships, distance and time-to-station for reconnaissance/surveillance aircraft, and interdiction distances and transit times for strike aircraft. There is clear tension between the basing principle of closeness to (existing) support industries, and the fundamental need to locate bases to maximise alignment with strategic operational requirements.

Northern ADF presence is essential for the approaches proximity imperative. Higher Defence priorities suggest need for elements of defence support industry to relocate to the proximity of major new ADF bases. The example of BAE Systems establishing permanent support facilities in Townsville illustrates the willingness of major defence industry companies to meet this need. Prime Contractor obligations to contribute to development of local support capacity, including capability development of local SMEs, warrants stronger emphasis in relation to new capital equipment introduction, when home bases are determined. As is the case with the Department of Defence and its civilian public servants, these major ADF platform support companies are confronted with the same challenges as the ADF for providing ‘family friendly’ locations for their staff and families.
Family Friendly Basing

The City notes the negative impact on ADF retention rates associated with remote ADF base locations. As a microcosm of broader Australian society, ADF families want access to metro-standard facilities, health, education, family, child support and education services, employment and career opportunities for spouses/partners and youth, and modern lifestyle social amenities. ADF families want the benefits of dual parent income streams. ADF families do not want long term isolation from extended families and friends, and they do not want the social, family, economic and career or education disruptions associated with frequent short-term postings. This is not a recent new phenomenon. A proportion of ADF families simply do not enjoy postings to remote, isolated locations and, like many Australians, they prefer to avoid harsh climate locations. That is reflected in sub-optimal re-enlistment retention rates. The conundrum confronting ADF is that there are strong tensions between the notion of family-friendly basing and the relatively remote locations where permanent presence of ADF capabilities is required going forward.

Separate from the ADF base location question, the broad questions of frequency and duration of ADF postings and some contemporary thinking about career planning for uniformed personnel with families, warrant deliberation by the ADF.

As noted above, the question of location of bases goes beyond ADF personnel and families, because the same challenges are faced by companies providing essential technical support to ships, aircraft and armoured vehicles. Beyond uniformed ADF personnel and their families, Defence has to address the same issues for their civilian public service staff, and for mission-critical Contractor employees and their families.

Currently, there is minimal permanent ADF presence, or ADF platform support capability, in the 30+% of the Australian land mass between Darwin and Perth, or the adjacent offshore economic zone running from the Timor Sea south around the WA coast.

In visible terms, there is little more than a pair of Armidale Class patrol vessels based at Dampier with crews rotated from Darwin, some relatively small Army Reserve units, some drawing members from metro Perth, the joint satellite communications facility near Geraldton, occasional visits by RAAF aircraft to their bare bases at Curtin and Learmonth, and to civil airports and programmed joint operations exercises to test capacity to deploy ADF units into the remote Pilbara/Kimberley regions. Information on broader Navy activity or presence of long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft in the Indian Ocean or Timor Sea is not available to the City, but some presence is assumed.

Realities of the North West

In the Pilbara and Kimberley regions, the mineral extraction and oil/gas exploration and exploitation industries depend on a workforce with a rapidly accelerating proportion of FIFO employees and contractors. Over half a century of iron mining, on a massive scale, has failed to deliver any significantly sized permanent population centres in the Pilbara. The nature of the resource extraction industries is that after workforce peaks during development phases of mines, production workforces are only 30-40% of the development force, and the operations are highly mechanised and capital intensive.
Centres like Port Hedland and Karratha, while growing slowly, still fall short of permanent populations of 20,000 and they simply lack the critical mass that drives the availability of utility infrastructure, or city-quality health, education and social facilities, amenities and services for families, or the local economic diversity necessary to offer employment opportunities for ADF spouses or older teenage children. In mining, families won't follow the workers into the isolated, harsh climate environs of the North West, and FIFO has consequently evolved as the dominant employment model.

In relation to where bases are currently located, or need to be located, there's little Defence can do about the issue of separation of personnel and their spouses/partners from their extended families and hometown social circles. Mobility of personnel is axiomatic to Defence needs. Such separation will be the same with any posting, whether to a Capital city, or to a remote site. Hence it resolves to an issue of maximising the other elements of family-friendliness in the context of future location of bases, including good quality and affordable housing options, access to quality health and education facilities and services, access to intrastate and interstate transport services, established social and recreation facilities/amenities and a sufficiently diverse and established local economy to offer employment opportunities to defence families.

Value of Geraldton as a Base Location
In sharp contrast with Pilbara population centres, Geraldton is an established regional city, the services and logistics hub for the Mid West region, with a population of about 40,000 residents, and a vibrant, diverse, and rapidly growing local economy. Geraldton already offers multiple hospitals and high quality health services. It has excellent private and public schools and for post-secondary education, for example the Durack Institute of Technology and the Geraldton Universities Centre, facilitating access to tertiary education. Geraldton, as a growing regional City, not a rural town, has well established cultural, entertainment and recreational facilities. It also has the benefit of a mild climate and coastal lifestyle.

Recent economic development and investability studies undertaken by the Mid-West Development Commission and the City indicate accelerating population growth, with a population forecast of 80-100,000 people within 20 years. Unlike Pilbara centres, Geraldton has a generous supply of high quality land zoned for urban development, with a good stock of urban land with subdivision approvals in place, and subdivisions in progress, ensuring a steady flow of serviced land to meet housing growth needs. Currently, some 4,200 housing lots have subdivision approval. The local building industry currently delivers over 500 new dwellings per year, with ability to ramp up capacity quickly.

The inland region is rich in iron, gold, uranium, nickel, platinum, rare earths, heavy mineral sands, coal and natural gas. Unlike Pilbara centres however, Geraldton did not start as a mining services centre and has the benefit of a long established and wealthy regional economy based from early settlement years on agriculture and fishing, but with service industries and light manufacturing growing over time. Geraldton is now the base for a growing number of companies providing services into the Pilbara, with some 40% of firms recently surveyed indicating they either already provide or will be providing services to the mining and natural gas industries in the north west.
Economic diversification is also flowing from evolution of the Mid West as a renewable energy province, with multiple major wind farms already in operation, expansions planned and a further wind farm approved for development. One solar power farm is about to commence construction, a second solar farm has funding and is approved for development. Wave energy is also being investigated. The Mid West has real potential to become a major electrical energy exporting province for the State, already making significant contributions towards reduction of State carbon emissions.

With a rapidly growing and increasingly diversified regional economy, Geraldton already offers diverse employment options and opportunities and these will continue to grow.

Geraldton is the multi-modal transport hub for the region, located on primary coastal highway from Perth and being the northern-most limit of the State rail system. Geraldton has an established sea port which, in addition to mineral exports, is also the largest wheat exporting port in WA. Geraldton also hosts the region's primary airport, with full security facilities in place for jet aircraft passenger services, currently serviced by Skywest, but with QantasLink services commencing in November 2011. Skywest currently provide a service to northern ports and Bali from Geraldton. In addition to consistent 5+% annual growth in regular passenger service patrons over the past 5 years, Geraldton airport is also growing as a charter base for FIFO mine employees and contractors.

Defence presence in Geraldton is currently confined to the joint satellite communications facility at Kojarena – not far from Geraldton Airport – and a relatively small Army Reserve unit. Aircraft from RAAF Pearce use the airport on a regular basis for training exercises. Navy patrol vessels are occasional visitors to the Port of Geraldton.

The City of Greater Geraldton has been recognised in the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) international liveable communities "LivCom" Awards.

The City asserts that Geraldton offers significant strengths, in relation to the issues identified for Family Friendly location of future ADF bases. But there are also other factors that make Geraldton worthy of consideration as a base for joint operations, and these are canvassed in following sections of this submission.

**Fleet Bases & Ports**

The City is conscious of the capital intensive nature of major defence support facilities, particularly for capital ships and for deep aircraft servicing and support. In the Australian context, having regard to the relatively small scale of the ADF, co-location with major seaports and airports enables ADF to leverage relevant scale, clustering and sophistication of capabilities developed to support the commercial shipping and air transport industries.

HMAS Stirling at Garden Island is near to existing civil dry-dock and major ship building, repair and maintenance capabilities in the Fremantle and Cockburn Sound marine zone and replication of such major ship support capabilities elsewhere along the WA coast will lack economic justification into the foreseeable future.
Garden Island will logically remain the 'fleet base' for major repairs, refurbishment and maintenance for capital Navy vessels on the West coast – but logically enabling permanent vessel assignment to northern home ports, and with Navy vessels utilising other ports to the north along the WA coast as forward operating and replenishment ports.

![Figure 1 Colour-coded 500 & 1000 Kilometre Arcs from WA Coastal centres](image)

The 1000km arc (purple) from Geraldton extends beyond Dampier and other Pilbara ports to the north, and beyond Esperance port on the south coast.

Expansion of ship fuel storage is planned for Darwin and Townsville ports. Consideration is required for establishment of greater capacity for Navy ship fuel storage on the west coast, for example at Dampier and Geraldton ports.
Steaming distances from WA northern waters to Garden Island are too long for ships requiring other than major repair/maintenance and potentially requiring ocean-going tug support because of significant disability. Creation of naval ship support capabilities at north-west and mid-west ports thus requires consideration.

Establishment of ship maintenance/repair and support capabilities at Dampier as part of the proposed Dampier Marine Services Facility (DMSF) could evolve, to suitable scale, with economic justification flowing from Pilbara ports civil shipping activity. This would leverage the benefit of Dampier Port facilities being situated in sheltered waters and experiencing only slight seas with occasional northerly swell in the summer months – and only occasional cyclones - with few other developed options for deep flat-water sheltered port facilities along the more northern and cyclone-prone coast.

Dampier also offers the advantages of ability to accommodate RO/RO vessels (demonstrated through successful delivery of major prefabricated infrastructure elements for petro-industry and mining) and also has existing ramp capacity for landing barges. The proposed DMSF will offer a significant sized laydown area that could be utilized for ADF vehicle marshaling. Provided land could be acquired for the purpose, Dampier has attraction as a potential base for pre-positioning of equipment and materiel for disaster response and humanitarian missions.

These advantages suggest consideration of Dampier is warranted as a home base (or certainly a forward deployment staging base) for one or more new Landing Helicopter Dock vessels, or other heavy lift ships with RO/RO capability. That would also raise the issue of basing of Army helicopters in the near region, potentially with ADF facilities created at one of the civil airports at Karratha (closest) or Port Hedland (if immediate proximity is not crucial) for helicopter deployment on the LHD's. Home basing a LHD, with Army helicopters at Dampier, would suggest desirability of also basing a land forces capacity there. With LHD basing and/or deployment capabilities established at both Dampier and Darwin, the capacity for timely sea deployments to north-west and northern destinations would be achieved.

A limiting factor for Pilbara ports, and ports further north along the WA coast, is that logistics support must be provided by sea, air or road – with no Rail connections to the south or east. The North West Coastal Highway has become the logistics artery for Pilbara cities. Expansion of capabilities at Dampier for container and general cargo handling are being designed to take pressure off that road transport artery and (it can be assumed) to reduce transport/logistics costs.

Geraldton is currently the northern limit for Rail transport services from Perth and will remain so until such future time as an inland connection is created between the privately held Pilbara rail system and the northern rail limit of the goldfields rail system from Kalgoorlie. The PortsLink project would effectively create heavy rail network connections between the Pilbara, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie (also connecting to the East coast), Fremantle and Esperance and has been submitted to Infrastructure Australia and the Federal Government, as a key economic infrastructure initiative. PortsLink would also provide a significant capability for military logistics in the north west of the continent.

The existing Port of Geraldton offers smaller scale than Dampier and fewer facilities, but does none-the-less have well established capabilities for smaller ship repair and
maintenance and large ship provisioning. Geraldton port basin is 12.4M deep at zero tide and can accommodate vessels to 225M long. With its breakwater design and shallow western approaches requiring use of dredged shipping channels, Port of Geraldton is not a sheltered flat-water port, being subject to winter swells and storm surges, and it currently does not offer significant container handling capabilities nor dedicated berth/ramp facilities for RO/RO shipping. It does however offer significant lay-down areas able to be used for mobile machinery/vehicle marshalling areas.

**Geraldton- Patrol Vessel Potential**
Separate from considerations for large capital ships, Geraldton port also has a significant fishing fleet harbour, developed over many years for the rock lobster and fin fish industries. With decline in fishing activities, the harbour is seeing transition, attracting increasing smaller ship presence, particularly vessels supporting the offshore petro-industry. The harbour, with long established small ship building, repair and maintenance facilities – enhanced if necessary with supplementary dredging – may prove ideal for future basing of Patrol vessels, for both ADF and Border Agencies, in the current Navy Armidale and newer Customs Cape classes (both built in WA).

With clear intentions for the LNG industry to continue exploration activities south from the North West Shelf, following offshore from the reef chains that effectively run beyond Shark Bay to the Abrolhos Islands and further south, and with significant onshore gas fields already identified in the Dongara/Eneabba hinterland, the future may inevitably see offshore energy infrastructure west of Geraldton. Between Broome and Fremantle, Dampier and Geraldton offer best locations for basing Patrol vessels.

**Oakajee – A Significant Defence Opportunity**
The proposed new deep water port at Oakajee, some 20km north of Geraldton, offers Defence a unique opportunity for creation of new Navy support infrastructure.

The first stage of development of Oakajee port will see creation of a substantial breakwater creating the southern and western boundaries of the port, with berths and loading facilities aimed initially at mineral commodity exports.

The second stage of Oakajee development will see a northern breakwater and land-backed wharves added, creating a flat-water port, and, as currently envisaged, adding container shipping and general cargo capabilities. The Commonwealth and State Governments have already committed substantial funding for development of common-user port facilities.

In addition to the port itself, the State Government holds adjacent land for a 6500HA industrial estate, with a significant buffer zone established to prevent future urban encroachment. To the south of the port precinct, a river creates a natural barrier to urban encroachment from Geraldton and the land to the east and north is primarily rural or coastal reserve.

The Oakajee port will be connected initially to the southern Rail network, and is located close to the North West Coastal Highway, currently the primary heavy logistics connection to the Pilbara. Establishment of heavy rail connections to northern mines in the Mid-West will create the ability for future connection of Oakajee port to the proposed PortsLink rail network.
Development of a major new ocean shipping port is a once-in-generation initiative. Its significance to the future economy of Western Australia is well understood. Located south of the tropical cyclone zone, its potential utility as a Navy port requires consideration. The Commonwealth has clear opportunity to engage with the State prior to the detailed design process for Stage 2 development, to enable inclusion of purpose-designed ADF infrastructure, matched to the posture Navy requires off the Mid-West coast, and to take a greater and active stake in the development of the new Oakajee port.

Air Bases

In considering the issue of Air capability basing, the City considers the following to be key issues:

- Strike aircraft basing, north of Perth and west of Katherine/Darwin, for proximity to north-west air and sea approaches.
- Positioning of airborne early warning and control aircraft to support strike aircraft operations.
- Positioning of long range reconnaissance and anti-submarine aircraft to support naval operations in the Indian Ocean and Timor Sea.
- Positioning of long range high altitude unmanned surveillance aircraft for offshore and coastal surveillance.
- Positioning of air tankers to support extended aircraft operations.
- Capacity of primarily civil aviation airports (in addition to existing bare bases) to support ADF operations – for forward air strike operations, AEW&C hosting, air-to-air tanker replenishment, helicopter operations, and air lift logistics for support of RAAF, Navy and Army operations.

Darwin and the RAAF bare-base facilities at Curtin (Derby) and Learmonth (Exmouth), as originally envisaged, would logically remain the forward operating bases for strike aircraft, deployed as required from other home bases for north-west defence. For the immediate term, north-west air defence will continue to rely on initial deployment of strike aircraft from the current 75Sqn home base at Tindal (Katherine NT), since all other F/A-18 strike aircraft assets are located at Williamtown (Newcastle) on the NSW coast, and with the new Super Hornet squadron to replace retired F-I capabilities at Amberley.

The City assumes that permanent deployment of a fighter squadron into WA would see permanent deployment of at least one KC-30 tanker away from Amberley, along with mobile hydrant dispenser support facilities to be utilised at its deployment bases to enable rapid operational turnaround. It is understood that purpose-built hosting facilities for AEW&C Wedgetail aircraft have already been completed at Tindal.

The City understands that consideration is being given to basing of new JSF F-35 aircraft at RAAF Pearce, a short distance north of Perth. To defend Navy resources at Garden Island, the sea and air entry points, clustered defence support industry, and the State capital, that has strategic merit. What that approach lacks however is location capacity to support joint operations or rapid air superiority operations or force projection, to and into the tropical far north, other than via JSF deployment staging through Learmonth and Curtin if necessary.
This model places heavy reliance on constant surveillance of the northern and north-west approaches, for very early warning, high readiness of the Tindal squadron for first response, and makes defence of capabilities such as Jindalee and the satellite communications facilities at Geraldton and other places a critical imperative. The latter would require permanent presence of an appropriate land force, able to defend against a land based insurgency and against air attack – presumably requiring ground to air missiles.

The continued permanent basing of all Orion (or their anticipated replacement) long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft at Edinburgh in South Australia needs to be challenged. Even with faster jet aircraft (such as the B737-based Poseidon) able to reduce time-to-station and having ability for air-to-air refuelling to extend time on station, it is illogical to home-base long range reconnaissance aircraft for Australia’s north-eastern, northern and north-western approaches in the deep-south.

Elements should be retained at Edinburgh, for Southern Ocean approaches, because responsiveness requires proximity. However - the concept of Edinburgh needs to change to the equivalent of a ‘fleet base’, with its elements semi-permanently detached to home bases in proximity to the sea and air approaches that require highest priority reconnaissance and surveillance, and most probable use of their anti-submarine and future stand-off surface strike missile capabilities. These capabilities are needed permanently in the north-east, north and north-west.

In a period of hostilities, in addition to its own bases, ADF would be expected to utilise civil airports as and when necessary. In the context of maximising the utility of scarce Defence dollars by avoiding major new capital investments, where existing airport infrastructures might be leveraged - the question arises as to potential for enhancement of infrastructure and facilities sufficient for:

- existing civil airports currently without an ADF presence, to be utilised on an interim or continuing basis to home-base ADF aircraft; and/or
- existing civil airports to be designated ADF bare bases, ready to receive deployments.

The City notes that there is a separate review underway on the subject of Joint Use airports. RAAF is encountering difficulties with its bases at current Commonwealth-owned Joint-Use Airports at Williamtown, Townsville and Darwin, because of air and ground contention with civil air traffic movements and ADF desire for military operations to always take precedence over civil aircraft movements, whether scheduled or not. The City notes in that context that, in any period of hostilities, or in the event of any other type of national emergency, RAAF would take absolute precedence over civil aircraft for ground and air movements.

For airports not purpose-designed and constructed for high frequency aircraft movements, (with full length taxiways, multiple runway entry/exit points, and segregated aprons for different aviation purposes, no requirement for backtracking, possible parallel runways, and similar features) this will be a problem for a joint-use airport anywhere with high numbers of scheduled civil passenger service aircraft movements, at any capital city or large second tier cities - regardless of whether or not the RAAF controls ground movements and air traffic.
To the extent that available airport land area, current extent of urban encroachment and terrain in the airport vicinity or built environment air space obstacles limit the development of new runway, taxiway and apron assets, the problems being encountered by RAAF at current Joint Use bases will persist and can be expected to worsen as civil aircraft movements increase. Airline lobbying for their commercial purposes and civil demand for growth in RPT services, are unlikely to diminish.

The City supports the view that, unless private sector investment is offered to cover necessary capital infrastructure costs, to enhance runway, taxiway and apron capacity and support capabilities, to enable civil airlines to utilise existing ADF bases without causing ground-space or air-space contention issues for RAAF and with RAAF maintaining explicit control over aircraft movements - then opening of any military airports as alternative/second airports for civil airline use should be opposed.

Defence should not suffer operational impairment from civil airline operations at its bases, and the costs of enhancing ADF airports to properly accommodate civil airline operations should not come from the Defence budget, nor from the public purse. If private air transport cannot fully pay its way (through full cost reflective user-pays fares, without subsidy) to utilise an ADF asset, then it ought not to have access to the asset.

Consistent with that position, the City believes that Defence funding of capital costs that would enable effective ADF operations, at what otherwise would be a dedicated civil airport, can be justified where the airport is strategically positioned and such investment would avoid the costs of infrastructure of a green-field dedicated military air base. Given long lead times for site selection, land acquisition, design and creation of whole airports, such an approach would bring forward, by some years, the desired level of airbase capability for military needs in WA.

How the Commonwealth might approach the matter of joint use agreements on other than Commonwealth-owned airports requires some deliberation, but it is likely that many airport owners would welcome the opportunity to host ADF capabilities.

**Geraldton Airport Options for ADF**

Geraldton Airport has capacity, and is likely to continue to have capacity, for significant ADF use, looking out past 2030. With the Master Plan update currently in process, Defence has an opportunity to include this Airport in its future air capability disposition planning and operations support planning. Having regard to its close proximity to an existing seaport, rail marshalling yards (at the northern most reach of west coast rail) and major highways, the airport offers clear benefits as a logistics and replenishment hub for ADF purposes.

Geraldton Airport is wholly owned and operated by the City, acquired following wind up of the Federal Local Aerodrome Ownership Program. The current airside configuration was largely developed for the RAAF in WW2, with subsequent runway and taxiway enhancements. The City has been proactive, acquiring additional land to ensure ability to extend its main runway and to accommodate aviation-related activities both air-side and land-side.
With a current population of about 40,000 residents, total passenger movements in 2010-11 were 105,000 arrivals and departures, with around 4,300 aircraft movements in total – including GA, charter and RPT movements. In the past 5 years, aircraft movement’s growth has averaged 2.4%. With QantasLink commencing 12 new Q400 weekly services between Perth and Geraldton in November 2011, adding to the existing F100 and F50 scheduled services of Skywest, the growth rate in aircraft movements will increase in 2011-12.

Within 20 years passenger movements’ forecasts indicate 220,000 per year, doubling current levels, but, even on highest-case growth estimates, by 2030 Geraldton Airport activity levels are unlikely to exceed those of current levels of larger ports such as Port Hedland or Karratha. There is obvious capacity for an ADF presence at Geraldton as an interim strategy and, with some purpose-designed capability enhancement, capacity for Geraldton to host ADF aircraft on an ongoing basis.

The airport currently has a 1980 metre main runway. It is currently developed to Code 3C standard but with 45 metres runway width, is able to handle code 4C aircraft such as B737-800 and A320-200 under particular conditions.

The City has recently adopted the concept design for a new 2600M main runway to be developed to Code 4E standard (with B787 as the designated design aircraft, accommodating needs of B787 and A330), as part of the Airport Master Plan review and update process and is in the process of commissioning detailed construction design to get the development of the new 2600M main runway to ‘shovel-ready’ state. The existing runway
will be extended and will become the main taxiway, parallel to the new strip. A 2600M runway is optimal for comfortable range from Geraldton to Singapore and Bali for B737-800 and A320-200 aircraft, and accommodates Code 4E aircraft.

Army Capabilities

Geraldton currently hosts a small Army Reserve unit. The City believes a strengthened permanent army capability is required, for defence of the Kojarena joint satellite communications base located near the City, but also for protection of the Geraldton sea port and airport as key points of entry for an enemy force (noting key rail and highway connections to Perth), to stage/support attacks to the south.

With potential for use of Geraldton and Oakajee ports by LHDs, Army strength could logically be boosted in Geraldton by Army helicopter basing, providing rapid mobility for ground force elements.

The current Army Reserve base in Geraldton is located within the City CBD area, a legacy from past years and that land has more appropriate City uses. In the context of potential sites identified elsewhere in this submission for creation of a joint services facility within the City-owned airport precinct, the City is able to entertain exchange of that land, for appropriate freehold land within the airport precinct. Such an exchange would be mutually beneficial and avoid impact on the Defence budget from need to acquire land for an ADF establishment in Geraldton.

Joint Operations Enablement & Support

Geraldton is already the logistics hub of the Mid West region. Importantly, it is the northern limit of existing Rail services in WA, with connection to Perth and thence to the East Coast. It is located on the North West Coastal Highway. It has an established export Sea Port, and Airport, with road, rail, seaport and airport in close proximity, connected via a transport and infrastructure corridor. For fuel supply, Geraldton can be replenished via rail, road or sea. For materiel and personnel logistics, heavy air lift adds to the equation.

With the joint satellite communications facility located at nearby Kojarena and assumed to play an increasingly crucial role in surveillance, communication and networked force roles, the City presumption is that Kojarena will require protection. That suggests a need for a high readiness Army contingent, with strengths in ground defence and counter insurgency operations and possibly equipped with ground-to-air missiles to counter airborne attack in the absence or failure if strike fighter defence.

There is real potential for the new Oakajee Port to have LHD facilities designed into Stage 2 development of the port, taking advantage of the adjacent 6500HA industrial estate as a site
for pre-positioning materiel and vehicles and perhaps ordnance at a suitably located site within sensible distance.

Whether using Geraldton or Oakajee ports as home or staging ports, the concept of LHDs requires helicopter basing facilities. Geraldton Airport has both land-side and air-side land areas available to develop such facilities. With development of its new 2600M Code 4E runway and new taxiways and aprons, the airport becomes capable of handling existing RAAF heavy lift aircraft, Wedgetail AEW&C aircraft, A330 based tankers, and long range maritime surveillance aircraft – again, for either home or operational basing. Development of Geraldton Airport as a bare base certainly appears to warrant consideration, but the City view is that a permanent ADF presence would be viable and can be accommodated.

Leveraging the multi-modal transport advantages of Geraldton, creation of a materiel and equipment pre-positioning and storage facility, not just for Army, but also for RAAF and Navy, would make sense, in the event of development of a joint operations facility.

With the particular benefits of family-friendliness for ADF families, and useful distance south from the harsh-climate cyclone belt, Geraldton has much to offer in terms of suitability for location of a joint operations facility. This could be developed beyond the Townsville model because of the seaport capability. The next nearest port with likely utility for the ADF is Dampier, in the harsh-climate north-west zone, lacking the family-friendly benefits of Geraldton.
Durack Institute has proposed the development of a new training facility for the mining industry and the City has agreed to provide the land for that purpose, in the Namgulu industrial area near the airport.

In anticipation of the free trade agreement with India, for which negotiations are progressing between the two Governments, Geraldton has already emerged as a centre of interest for Indian entities, keen to study growth in export of lupins and chick peas and new exports of both fresh and processed foods through Geraldton. Also, Chinese interests are showing growing interest in Geraldton as an export hub for food commodities.

Downstream processing of mineral ores is emerging as the basis for industrial development in the City region. Beneficiation of magnetite is anticipated to evolve to production of merchant pig iron, as costs of shipping fuel increasingly inhibit the traditional approach of export of raw iron ore with a high proportion of waste material. Also, the unique and rich ore deposits in the Weld Range, containing the key elements for production of stainless steel, and able to be exploited by sharing infrastructure with adjacent magnetite miners, give real prospect for development of a stainless steel ingot production capability, most likely at Oakajee industrial estate. The City region sees new industries emerging and further diversification of employment opportunities.

Transport Infrastructure

Geraldton sits on the Brand Highway and is the hub for road transport for the Mid West region, and a key transit point for road freight and road passenger transport for the Gascoyne, North West and Pilbara regions. Geraldton has daily coach services to and from Perth, providing affordable transport connections. At this stage, there are no passenger rail services between Perth and Geraldton, so private or hire vehicle, coach or air transport are the available passenger transport options.

Geraldton is served by good rail links to Perth and the south and into the eastern hinterland, with new marshalling facilities currently under construction and Westnet Rail currently upgrading its existing hinterland rail assets. Queensland Rail has been chosen to build the dual gauge rail infrastructure for the proposed Oakajee port. Sea port and Airport capabilities are outlined below.

Sea Port Capacity

As an import/export sea port (with trade worth in excess of $1 billion dollars and now exceeding 9 million tonnes per year) and with Geraldton as a popular west coast stopping point for international Cruise Ships, Geraldton Port already has permanent presence of Federal gateway agencies (ACS/AQIS).

Geraldton Port has two operational areas, the small vessel/fishing fleet harbour and the main shipping port. The Port currently exports bulk commodities, iron ore and wheat being the largest export commodities by volume. Imports include fertilisers, fuel, and general cargo.

Geraldton Port capabilities:

- Basin depth at zero tide 12.4 metres
- One small ship berth #1 (50m LOA/8.7m depth alongside)
- Multi-purpose berth #2 (225m/9.1m)
- Grain berth #3 (225m/12.3m)
- Minerals/fertilisers berth #4 (225m/11.7m)
- Iron ore berth #5 (225m/12.3m)
- General berth #6 – livestock, fertilisers, minerals, fuel (190m/12.4m)
- Draught guidance 11.6m +/- 10% by cargo weight in most swell conditions
- Capacity for all Handymax vessels 35-50,000 tonnes 180-210m LOA.
- Capacity for some Panamax vessels 210-225m LOA but load constrained to 60-65,000 tonnes depending on vessel characteristics.

You will be aware of the commitments of the Federal and WA State Governments for provision of funds towards common user infrastructure associated with the proposed new Port to be located at Oakajee, some 20km to the north of the existing Geraldton port. In addition to the port itself, that project involves creation of rail infrastructure to open up the mining hinterland and the creation of a major new industrial estate. The bankable feasibility study for the port and rail project is due to be presented to the State Government shortly. Completion of the port and rail infrastructure looks likely to be pushed out to 2015 but, along with the State Government, the City is confident that this once-in-a-generation port infrastructure project will proceed, whether with the existing syndicate, or with additional funding partners from the local and foreign mining and logistics industries. Stage 2 development of the port will see it become a significant flat-water port, with facilities for container shipping.

With an existing export port, Geraldton has already established pilot services, ship provisioning, supply capability and significant facilities for fuel storage and ship refuelling. Geraldton port also has small ship engineering and maintenance capabilities, already serving as a small ship maintenance centre for craft servicing the offshore North West Shelf natural gas industry.

When Oakajee Port is constructed and operational, it is anticipated that a proportion of iron ore volumes currently exporting via Port of Geraldton will be diverted to Oakajee. The State Government has imposed an iron exports tonnage limit on Geraldton Port, to ensure that foundation export volumes through Oakajee align with the feasibility modelling for start-up years for the new port. Development of new ore handling capacity and berths at the Port of Geraldton has been constrained accordingly.

When exports divert through Oakajee, capacity may exist at Geraldton Port for home basing, or certainly for forward staging and fuelling/provisioning for new Air Warfare Destroyers – closer to the North West Shelf oil/gas assets than Fremantle.

Navy already uses Geraldton Port from time to time as a stop-over and provisioning/fuelling port for its 57 metre/270 tones Armidale class Patrol vessels.

For Destroyer or Patrol vessel home ports, flat water port conditions will be a consideration. Key objectives of constructing Oakajee Port include ability to handle larger Cape Class vessels than are able to be managed within the limits of the Geraldton turning basin, berth and access channel depths, and overcoming the deep-winter and occasional storm event problems encountered by ships in Geraldton Port when very heavy swells persist and ships break mooring lines.
Oakajee Port Stage 2, with the proposed northern breakwater addition, reclaimed land area, berths development and container and general cargo facilities, aims to make Oakajee a flat water port.

Forward planning by Navy might usefully include their engagement with the State Government and Geraldton Port Authority (which will also manage Oakajee Port) with the view to ensuring Navy needs are accommodated in the planning of Oakajee Port Stage 2 development.

Geraldton Airport

Geraldton Airport, now wholly owned and operated by the City, is already utilised on an occasional basis by the RAAF for pilot training out of Pearce. The Airport has a rich military heritage, its current main landing strip originally constructed for RAAF bomber training during World War II.

An outcome of the recent State Government intra-state air services review was opening of Geraldton Airport to competition between Airlines for Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) services. Geraldton is currently serviced by Skywest for RPT services on both the Perth and northern port routes. Skywest has in the main operated F50 turbo-prop aircraft for these services, but since completion of new security screening facilities by the City, has recently commenced utilising F100 jet aircraft for RPT services on the Perth route. Skywest has announced commencement of Geraldton-Bali services, with return services via Port Hedland, to utilise their secure international lounge and Federal gateway agency services for inbound passengers.

Skywest has advised intention to introduce Geraldton-Kalgoorlie services connecting to Melbourne services, so that Mid West passengers do not need to fly via Perth to continue on to East Coast destinations.

Qantas, already introducing Perth-Exmouth services in competition with Skywest, is to commence Perth-Geraldton RPT services, initially utilising new 75 seat Q400 turbo-prop aircraft. These services are scheduled to commence in November 2011.

In addition to RPT airline services, Geraldton Airport is utilised by charter operators, primarily providing FIFO employee transport services for inland Mid West and Pilbara mines. The airport is the base for a number of General Aviation operators providing FIFO charter services, tourist flight services, and agricultural services.

The Geraldton airport already has capacity for A320 and similar Class 4C jet passenger aircraft and the City recently completed upgrading its security facilities for full baggage and passenger screening, to the latest Federal standards. The City is currently updating the Master Plan for the airport, with preliminary planning for construction of a new landing strip of at least 2600 metres parallel to and east of the existing strip, with new taxiways and aprons. The B787 has been adopted as the designated design aircraft for master planning purposes, with design to Class 4E standard.

The State Government has very recently approved a funding grant from its Regional Airports Development Scheme for the City to now undertake detailed construction design,
documentation and full cost estimation for the new main airstrip and ancillary infrastructure assets, to get that project to a 'shovel-ready' state.

In recent years, the City has purchased additional land surrounding the airport approaches. For future-proofing, to defend the airport asset from residential or industrial development encroachment, the airport strategic design envisages a 3500 metre main landing strip, with airfreight terminal and aprons to the east of the new main strip, and with obstacle height limitation and noise buffers (at A380 or contemporary equivalent design level) assessed and mapped accordingly, for City Planning Scheme purposes. Staged development over time is envisaged for growth from a new 2600m main strip to 3500m, but with design of taxiways and shoulders to accommodate the future AQ380 class design aircraft requirements.

For apron services, aircraft refuelling is currently provided by a tanker truck. New apron design envisages fuel reticulation from new storage facilities and hydrant refuelling services on the apron.

It is timely to inform the Commonwealth of these planning and development intentions for the Geraldton Airport, to alert Defence or other interested agencies to the opportunity to engage in the near term with the City, should any agencies have known or likely future needs that the City could be informed of, for inclusion in both current strategic design and impending detailed airport design processes.

Within the Airport land precinct, which is freehold-owned by the City, both air-side and land-side, land areas are available that would be suitable for Defence establishments. Within the land-side area to the west of the terminal, the City has been planning the development of a technology park, with detailed design of road works and infrastructure services currently underway.

**Current Defence Presence**

Greater Geraldton currently hosts:

- A joint defence intelligence establishment – Australian Defence Satellite Communications Station – managed under the umbrella of Defence Signals Directorate – 30kms east of Geraldton

- An Army Reserve unit, with aged barracks and parade grounds located off Cathedral Avenue, near the Geraldton CBD

In the particular case of the current Army Reserve unit site, the City has previously sought to investigate with the Commonwealth the potential for a land swap arrangement. Approaches to date have resulted in dialogue being deferred, pending a review of Defence property holdings. Such a review will no doubt be influenced by this ADF posture review. In relation to the site currently utilised for the Army Reserve unit, its current use, and the age and nature of its buildings have been identified as being incompatible with CBD revitalisation objectives. While its use may have been appropriate in past times, the City has evolved and developed around the site since World War II and that site now requires more appropriate use and re-development, compatible with a growing CBD. The City remains keen to discuss the potential to swap that site for land of equivalent value, allowing Defence to create a new establishment on a more appropriate site and freeing the current site for development.
compatible with its CBD location. Swap for City owned land in the airport precinct would be a mutually beneficial option for consideration.

Potential Army Location

As a case study, relocation of Army contingents to Townsville in recent years has some relevance to Geraldton circumstances. As the services, facilities and multi-modal transport hub for the Mid West region, Geraldton is on a growth trajectory similar to Townsville a decade ago. However, the rate of growth of Geraldton is anticipated to exceed that of Townsville, because of the richness of the natural resource base of the Mid West and the rate at which international companies are investing with local companies to exploit that wealth.

The majority of regional centres in the WA North West and Kimberley lack social infrastructures, health facilities, tertiary education institutions and other human services and suffer severe housing shortages, making the centres unattractive to families. In sharp contrast, Geraldton has the necessary institutions, facilities and social amenities, affordable housing options, a milder climate and a coastal lifestyle, as well as a rapidly growing local economy for employment choices. For ADF families, these are important issues. As a future base for Army contingents, Geraldton offers advantages that warrant serious examination during the ADF Posture review.

Defence Personnel Housing Opportunities

In addition to large tracts of privately held land approved for both residential and mixed purposes sub-division and with some significant private land sub-divisions in progress within 20 minutes of the CBD, the City itself has freehold ownership of a number of land holdings suitable for major residential developments. Also, under some unique provisions in WA legislation, the City is able to acquire unallocated Crown land reserves from the State for a modest percentage of market valuation and is able to convert them to freehold for development and disposal purposes. Other reserves vested in the City under Management Orders issued by the State are able to have their vesting purposes changed to suit the mutual interests of the State and the City.

This mix of land holding circumstances gives rise to a range of opportunities worthy of pursuit, for joint ventures between the Commonwealth and the City, for development of housing for Defence personnel. Collaboration across Federal Ministries might also be explored, to access funding from affordable housing and energy efficiency programs, to create good quality accommodation for Defence personnel. The City has demonstrated capacity to plan and manage housing sub-division projects, including projects utilising private sector partners. While the City seeks, in the interests of its ratepayers, to gain a reasonable return from its land assets, a Commonwealth-City joint venture, with the City providing land, may hold potential for cost-beneficial delivery of defence personnel housing, in Geraldton.