



## **THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence**

Saturday, 2 May 2009

### **WHAT THE WHITE PAPER MEANS FOR THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE**

The 2009 Defence White Paper, released today, delivers an Air Force for the 21st century that will be better equipped, fully networked and better prepared to meet Australia's air power requirements.

"A potent and flexible air combat capability is a cornerstone of Australia's defence posture. Control of the air over our territory and maritime approaches is critical to all other operations in the defence of Australia," said the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP.

"The White Paper will ensure Air Force maintains its regional air superiority through the acquisition of around 100 F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters, along with the Super Hornets as a part of the bridging air combat capability. These aircraft will significantly enhance Australia's deterrence, and provide a robust offensive capability should circumstances necessitate," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Through the combination of highly skilled people, multirole combat fighters and assets such as Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft, advanced weapons, air-to-air refuelling aircraft and command, control and surveillance capabilities, the Air Force will continue to offer the Government air superiority, maritime strike, long-range strategic strike, offensive air support and close air support capability options.

Australia's future Air Force will include a balance of conventional and uninhabited aerial platforms that will enhance the future anti-submarine warfare capability of Air Force and significantly enhance Australia's maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance coverage. The White Paper also strengthens and rebalances the Air Force's strategic (inter-theatre) and operational (intra-theatre) air-lift capability through the acquisition of new aircraft.

The 2009 Defence White Paper outlines the following key capability priorities for the Air Force:

- Around 100 fifth-generation F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and associated weapons systems;

#### **A Defence Force for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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- Half of Australia's F/A-18F Block II Super Hornet fleet will be configured on the production line to enable them to be converted to the EA-18G 'Growler' electronic attack variant should later strategic circumstances dictate;
- Delivery of five KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport for air-to-air refuelling, that will increase the range and endurance of combat and surveillance aircraft;
- Six new Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) aircraft to provide surveillance, command and control functions to other networked Australian Defence Force platforms;
- Eight new Maritime Patrol Aircraft, which will provide advanced anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare capabilities as well as sophisticated maritime search capabilities;
- Approximately seven new high-altitude, long-endurance Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), to compliment the new Maritime Patrol Aircraft and replace the current AP-3C Orion fleet with a more comprehensive and advanced maritime surveillance capability;
- Enhanced air transport capability options through the acquisition of a further two additional C-130J Hercules to bring the total fleet number to 14 aircraft;
- Up to 10 new tactical battlefield airlifters with a significantly greater range, speed, payload and protection measures than the retiring Caribou;
- New and upgraded systems to collect and fuse air surveillance information from multiple sources, in order to create a Recognised Air Picture of the Australian Defence Forces' primary operational environment;
- Improved military air traffic control, navigation and communications systems that will permit closer alignment of the national systems for both military and civilian air traffic management;
- The use of modern technology to deliver improved training outcomes through the application of high fidelity simulation and mission rehearsal systems.

"The Royal Australian Air Force is entering a period of significant change. The Air Force is actively positioning and preparing its workforce to address these demands through organisational restructuring and modest growth in key capability areas," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"The end result will be a far more versatile and far more capable Air Force, with a wider range of advanced surveillance, transport and air combat options than ever before in our nation's history" Mr Fitzgibbon added.

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The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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