



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP
Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

**DELIVERING A MORE POTENT HELICOPTER FLEET
FOR THE ARMY**

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Mr Fitzgibbon MP, today announced that the Government will replace the current fleet of six CH-47D Chinook helicopters with a new fleet of seven CH-47F aircraft, as part of the 2009 Defence White Paper.

“With a lift capacity of about three times that of a Blackhawk, the Chinook is a critical component of the Army Aviation fleet, providing support ranging from tactical and intra-theatre battlefield lift for our soldiers to regional humanitarian assistance” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

“Operations in our region will require the rapid movement of land combat forces across dispersed operational areas, which will continue to place a heavy demand on our medium lift helicopter capability, particularly in areas of rugged or high terrain, heavy vegetation and challenging roads and airfields.”

Australia will be operating the same aircraft configuration as the US Army, which has a fleet of around 500 aircraft.

These aircraft will have improved Electronic Warfare Self-Protection systems and maintenance arrangements which will increase their operational effectiveness and employability across the battlefield. In addition, keeping them at the US standard allows Australia to take advantage of the most cost effective development, engineering, training, and spares support systems by leveraging off the US Army systems.

“The Government is also continuing with the acquisition of the MRH-90 helicopters. The Army will operate 40 MRH-90 helicopters that will replace its Blackhawk troop lift aircraft, of which seven helicopters will be used for common flight training with the Navy. “This larger and more capable new helicopter will enter service with the Army in 2011,” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

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

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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Media contact:

Christian Taubenschlag (Joel Fitzgibbon): 02 6277 7800 or 0438 595 567

Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664

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