



## THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

### AIR FORCE ALL SET FOR ADVANCED AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING & CONTROL AIRCRAFT

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.

The Government today announced that the new Defence White Paper has reaffirmed the requirement for the acquisition of advanced new Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) aircraft for the Royal Australian Air Force.

"The Wedgetail AEW&C aircraft will transform our air combat capability when it enters service from 2011, by providing vastly improved situational awareness and an ability to control and coordinate aircraft to enhance mission success," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"As a result of the White Paper, the Government will investigate upgrading the AEW&C aircraft with Cooperative Engagement Capability to enable it to more effectively cue weapons systems and perform other functions in an air warfare information 'grid'," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

If selected this upgrade would enable more effective integration between the Navy's new Air Warfare Destroyer and the AEW&C.

The AEW&C is a critical component of Australia's air combat capability and provides a key strategic option for support of coalition operations.

The advanced nature of the leading edge technology being employed has presented a number of technical challenges that are being actively addressed. The Wedgetail AEW&C will ultimately deliver the centrepiece of the fully networked Air Force of the future.

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

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