



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

GOVERNMENT TO RECONSTITUTE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE WARSTOCKS

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP today announced the Government's plans to improve Defence's holdings of explosive ordnance war stocks and to invest in modernising munitions storage and weapons handling facilities.

"Over many years the benign strategic environment and previous Government's lack of funding resulted in Defence drawing down on reserve stocks in order to meet training needs. However the more recent increased operational tempo has placed additional pressures on the integrity of these reserve stockholdings," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"In order to have the capacity to meet the full range of short and medium term contingency operations, Defence needs to increase its explosive ordnance stock holdings," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"Defence will progressively replenish war stocks back up to the prescribed levels. Some of this explosive ordnance will be used to increase preparedness by addressing shortfalls in allowances for live firings," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Further funding will be provided to modernise and strengthen explosive ordnance storage facilities and weapons handling equipment.

Some of these facilities have been neglected for many years and are therefore now in urgent need of upgrades to ensure they meet the Commonwealth's security and occupational health and safety guidelines covering the storage of explosive ordnance.

"The Government's focus in remediating these shortcomings will ensure the ADF is better prepared to respond to any future contingencies while also extending the lifespan of our explosive ordnance holdings by ensuring they are stored in purpose built and compliant facilities," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"It is concerning that the former Government took such a lax approach to managing this important issue at a time when the ADF is facing its highest operational tempo since Vietnam".

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The Rudd Government will not take risks when it comes to the management of explosive ordnance and is determined to ensure that this vital capability receives the attention that it deserves.

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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