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Submission: Australia faces a significant build up of military capacity within its region as well as the increasing need for peacekeeping interventions. Australia needs to invest in infrastructure, skills, partnerships and innovation to maintain a technological edge in capability as well as encouraging civil-military cooperation.

Defence expenditure is largely represented as being on weapons and weapons platforms. Defence is alternatively described as "armed forces". Capability is often represented as weapon systems. Whilst accurate these descriptions do not represent the full range of activities undertaken by Defence and the industries and skills that support Defence. Defence needs to highlight the breadth of its work and its contributing partners in maintaining the security of Australia's borders (with Fisheries and Customs), in intelligence, in surveillance, in reconnaissance, in peacekeeping, in humanitarian missions, in innovation and through protecting key economic infrastructure such as the North West Shelf. Defence expenditure should be maintained at around 2% of GDP for this wide variety of security, border protection and defence tasks.

Defence must be a partner with education institutions in building Australia's capability in engineering, software development, communications and science. Defence should identify key technologies in which Australian capability is essential and invest in broad development of capacity in those technologies. For instance a Centre of Excellence in Oceanic Signal Processing should be established in the South West Corridor in partnership with Murdoch, University of Western Australia and Curtin University.

There will be an increasingly blurred line between uniformed and civilian activity and Defence needs to be structured to allow for task flexibility between these two groups. Facilities constructed adjacent to Defence Bases should be developed to allow for secure use by either civilian or uniformed staff and provide for civil-military cooperation. For instance a purpose built Defence Precinct at Rockingham could be designed to meet the needs for secure defence projects, Defence Industry support activity or use by Defence to support the adjacent Stirling Naval Base. Such a facility should be supported through the Building Australia Fund through a PPP process.

There is a significant skills shortage in the Defence Industries where the need for security clearances exacerbates the impact of churn. It is in the interests of Defence that there are well developed recruitment, training and retention strategies in the civilian Defence Industry rather than poaching from Defence.

The Skilling Australia's Defence Industries Program (SADI) needs to be broadened to allow for groups such as the Australian Industry and Defence Network or regional development bodies to gather together a cluster of SMEs and coordinate an application in partnership with a regional education institution.

SADI should also support skills development in areas of skills shortage for the Australian Defence Industry without necessarily being linked to a particular business. For instance, TAFE Western Australia is proposing the establishment of an aviation mechanic training facility at Jandakot Airport. There should be flexibility within the SADI Program to support equipment purchase and module development that directly links to the Defence aviation maintenance program at Pearce Air Force Base.

It is important that there be equivalence in Defence training but the focus on single national training facilities for recruits and trades disadvantages Western Australia. It is understood that 352 Reservists from Western Australia have been waiting for up six months to be processed due to limitations on the capacity at Kapooka. Increasing

training capacity in Western Australia and streamlining the induction process should assist with a more professional response from Defence in this state.

The Western Australian Government has established the Defence Industries Skills Unit (DISU) to improve skills development and strengthen the partnership between industry and education providers. Defence should provide project support to DISU for initiatives to improve the supply of skills into the Defence Sector.

The South West Group would have appreciated being involved in the companion reviews on infrastructure, workforce, industry and information technology. Future reviews should consider a Green Paper approach to these key companion reviews.

I agree to my submission being published on the Defence website

I agree to my submission being quoted in the Community Consultation Report