



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY OF WAGGA WAGGA

3 October 2008

Defence White Paper Team
Defence Establishment Fairbairn
F4-G-015
26-28 Fairbairn Avenue
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find enclosed Wagga Wagga City Council's submission to the 2008 Defence White Paper.

If you have any enquiries or would like further information, please contact the Director for Commercial and Economic Development, Ms Fiona Wilson, on 02 6926 9130 or email wilson.fiona@wagga.nsw.gov.au.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kerry Pascoe".

Cr Kerry Pascoe
Mayor

enc.

Defence White Paper

Submission from Wagga Wagga City Council

1 October 2008

Overview - Recognising the importance of the Australian Defence Force in Wagga Wagga

The City of Wagga Wagga recognises the importance of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to the City and strongly welcomes the initiative of this White Paper to invite comment on the future of the ADF.

Wagga Wagga has a long history and association with the Australian Defence Force - including the Australian Army Base Kapooka 1st Recruit Training Battalion, the RAAF Base Wagga at Forest Hill and also the Royal Australian Navy Defence Communication station, home to some of the most advanced communication technology in the world.

With over 6.5% of all NSW Defence Force employees located in Wagga Wagga¹, together with their families, these Forces are an important part of the City's community and economy.

The City of Wagga Wagga is extremely proud of this presence and the very high level of infrastructure investment by the Australian Defence Force in the City - expanded further by recent completion of a \$60 million upgrade at RAAF Base Wagga and further again by the planned commencement of the \$108 million Enhanced Land Force project at Kapooka in mid 2009. With recruit numbers at Kapooka expected to increase to over 5,000 in the next three years, and with discussions also underway over future upgrades at both RAAF Base Wagga and Kapooka, the City is positioning itself to embrace further growth in Defence Force presence.

The relationship between the ADF and the City is mutually beneficial. While the City derives a significant economic strength from local ADF activity, in turn it is proud to offer ADF families with exceptional employment, health, education, social, sport and recreation, cultural and commercial opportunities.

Logistically, Wagga Wagga is exceptionally well positioned to support further planned growth for the ADF. The City is in a prime location on major road, rail, air and telecommunication infrastructure and is supported by key institutes with a strong Defence focus, including the delivery of National Aerospace Training Centre of Excellence (NATCOE) through the TAFE NSW Riverina Institute for example.

Wagga Wagga's focus now is to strengthen support for this partnership, to strongly foster further planned growth of ADF facilities, presence and services in the City and Region, and to build on its critical mass as one of Australia's key centres for the Australian Defence Forces.

¹ Source: AEC Group 'Wagga Wagga Defence Force' September 2008

Supporting strong Australian Defence Force employment and investment

The ADF is the sixth largest employer in Wagga Wagga. The Defence Force presence in the City and the wider Riverina Region represents in total 8.7% of the total NSW defence sector, highlighting the significant contribution of the region to state defence training and activity. The Wagga Wagga economy is 9.1 times more reliant for total employment on the ADF than the NSW state average.¹

The significance of ADF employment clearly extends far beyond direct Defence Force personnel. In addition to the ADF personnel at the bases, many service providers support the ADF needs, for example the Compass and Spotless Groups, and it is estimated that the local staff and sub-contractors of associated companies take the total ADF linked personnel to over 9,000 in the Riverina.²

Supporting further planned growth in the Australian Defence presence

The City of Wagga Wagga values the high level of investment by the ADF and is well positioned to support further growth in this presence. It is essential that this growth is well planned from both a community and infrastructure perspective.

Examples of potential growth areas include:

- Wagga Wagga as an active flying base

RAAF Base Wagga is very active with recruit training; however, it is not an active flying base despite the significant infrastructure of the neighbouring Civil Airport. The Civil Airport is owned by the Commonwealth but leased to and operated by Wagga Wagga City Council (Head Lease expires 30 June 2025).

The Army conduct rotary wing training within a designated area of the Airport and ADF aircraft transit on an infrequent basis. The opportunity exists to further utilise the airport infrastructure and/or develop additional infrastructure (e.g. second sealed runway) in a shared environment. Basic pilot training located at RAAF Base Wagga would be one such opportunity.

Community considerations would clearly be essential with any planned growth of RAAF Wagga Wagga as an active flying base.

² Wagga Wagga City Council is currently undertaking economic modelling to identify the full value that the ADF bases bring to the local economy.

- **Wagga Wagga Airport Master Planning**

Master Planning for the Wagga Wagga Civil Airport and surrounds is currently commencing and the ADF will be a key stakeholder in this process, in respect to both key considerations and also in the identification of opportunities. One specific opportunity for joint consideration would be the installation of an Instrument Landing System (ILS) which would benefit both the ADF activity and civil use of the airport.

- **Improved Head Lease Arrangements – Forest Hill Airport**

Infrastructure at Forest Hill includes the Commonwealth owned airport which is leased to and operated by Wagga Wagga City Council. This infrastructure and the growing commercial aviation precinct deliver a capacity to provide the ADF with further aviation related services and opportunities now and into the future.

The current Head Lease of the Civil Airport however is somewhat restrictive to economic development. While the airport is a major gateway to the region, development and commercial negotiations can only proceed with ADF approval and this is currently extremely slow. It is requested that the process for approval of development and commercial negotiations is reviewed and streamlined to achieve a commercial speed of response.

Integration with the community and collaboration over community facilities and infrastructure

This submission highlights the essential importance of and opportunity to be gained from good planning for growth, in community and infrastructure terms.

As highlighted above, the interdependence between the ADF and the City is highly significant. Defence personnel and their families contribute significantly to the local economy via their household spend. Defence activity relies heavily on the services of local trades and service providers. Defence spouses bring skills and qualifications into the community which may otherwise be lacking.

The Defence Force Organisation is essential to the process of integrating families into the local community. Any growth in the Defence presence should reflect in the ongoing funding by the ADF of this activity.

It is recommended that consideration is given by Defence to having clear conversations with State Government about any plans to extend facilities to enable the State Government to plan for the human services to be equipped to respond to additional population growth. Key areas for consideration are health services, including general practice and allied health, and education. As has been identified there may also be opportunities around key human service areas for some joint planning and provision. An example of this would be around *hospital provision*, recognising the importance of improved hospital facilities within the general Wagga Wagga community and considering a

potential need to improve the hospital facilities at both Kapooka and RAAF Base Wagga. The synergy of planning and developing a joint facility, rationalising and capitalising facilities, cannot be overstated.

From Council's perspective it is important to note that the ADF currently pay for employer sponsored places in the Council auspiced Wagga Wagga Regional Family Day Care (FDC) which allows defence families priority on the waiting list. This means when families move into the area it is often easier for them to find childcare with FDC because they have priority. Without this funding we would not be able to give priority to these families and this is very important to them when they register for care. In general terms these types of agreements with local service providers are good as they ensure access for the Defence families who tend to transfer en mass and often on the cusp of the summer break, but also provide some certainty to the providers in terms of service delivery planning. Wagga Wagga City Council would welcome other opportunities for discussions around these types of arrangements.

The housing market is clearly also an important consideration within growth. The impact of additional Defence personnel and their families moving into Wagga also impacts the local Housing market, making it more competitive, if provision is not adequate. This can impact down the line to the most disadvantaged who have least ability to meet the market. This includes our University students as well as our socio-economically disadvantaged.

In Education, the partnership with TAFE is extremely valuable to both the ADF and to TAFE NSW Riverina Institute and the ADF is encouraged to develop opportunities for other such partnerships.

In the area of public transport, opportunity is identified to improve public transport provision to Kapooka and Forest Hill.

Conclusion

Wagga Wagga City places high value on the strong role the ADF plays in the City's community and economy. The ADF is encouraged to continue to focus on growing Wagga Wagga as a key centre for Defence. Planning for this growth is essential from both a community and infrastructure perspective and the ADF is encouraged to consider opportunities for collaboration in the development of community facilities and services in areas such as health, housing, education and public transport. The ADF is also encouraged to work in partnership with the City in the development and growth of services and facilities at the Wagga Wagga Civil Airport. To support this planning and collaboration, the ADF is encouraged and invited to partner with the City Council in quarterly liaison meetings at both a strategic and operational level, to enable issues and opportunities across a range of areas to be identified and addressed in a proactive way.