



Hawkesbury City Council

Submission to the Defence Policy Discussion Paper on "Key Questions for Defence in the 21st Century" for the DEFENCE WHITE PAPER.

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP (Rudd Federal Government), announced a new Defence White Paper to update the White Paper: *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force*. To support the process, the discussion paper canvasses defence issues and examines current/future situations for Defence and seeks input from the public.

A robust strategic plan (White Paper) must provide for the evolution of the Defence sector and be a living plan that responds to the strategic interests the community embraces as a Nation.

Hawkesbury City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide initial comment on Defence Policy directions on behalf of its community. The Hawkesbury community has had a long association with the Defence service, as RAAF Base Richmond is within its area. It contributes significantly to the operations and activities of Defence throughout Australia and is part of the local economic base and social fabric. Defence Policy in the 21st Century, a time in which Australia and the World will face challenges that are new and old; are complex and dynamic, and will require profound insight and commitment. It also needs to reflect unity-of-purpose in the public's eyes, the things that matter.

Comments on matters raised in Discussion Paper

The paper raises the full range of Defence issues that need to be addressed in the White Paper, with sound strategies/objectives, priority rankings, partners/alliances, actions, resources, funds and recommendations to the Minister. Council awaits the release of the White Paper to further comment on Defence Policy strategy, when the detail is available. That is, when the strategies are identified and the management and execution detail, to achieve the strategic directions, is known.

This submission considers principals/strategic directions that would matter to the Hawkesbury community in Defence Policy. Some things-that-matter relate to broader policy and others to the relationship of Defence in a local community in which a Defence Base is located.

Key Tasks for Defence

While Defence Policy fits within the broader National Security Policy and other agencies are involved, the role of Defence has diversified reflecting an evolution in what defence means to Australia (eg. international aid and humanitarian activities). This is a reflection of the stability and wealth of our society and to date limited attacks on security. While Defence may not always be the lead agency for a security issue, it is the "face" of National security and the back-up at all times.

The level of service that the public would expect of Defence includes the tasks (and their associated force capability) discussed in Chapter 4. They reflect key things-that-matter to the public in the 21st Century. While the paper poses questions about budgets, level of investment in forces capability (eg. personnel, equipment, facilities) and what tasks could have a higher priority; it is considered that the public would expect an appropriate level of response if and when a situation arose.

Tasks fundamental to defending Australian territory eg. *Military Support to Australian National Security Response*, must have highest priority. Other tasks priorities need to respond to issue of the

day, but not at the expense of Defence's mission. Budgets are difficult to comment on and technical expertise should guide. Indicators are needed that measure return on investment.

Detering and Defeating Attacks on Australian Sovereignty

The ADF's mission must be to continue to protect Australian sovereignty, translating into the capability to defend Australian territory (and resources within), plus citizens and infrastructure. Logic implies that Defence should have the capability to respond to conventional and unconventional threats, depending on the situation and likely capability of an opponent. The risk and consequence of being unprepared is not acceptable.

If a regional capability edge means being able to respond to a threat on Australian security, then yes where should have this edge. Specific attention must be given to Base facilities and intelligence inputs which are required for all Defence activities and capability inputs. Intelligence on the region (however defined), including likely means/ cause of threats needs to inform what type of force is required.

More information on how Defence sees the ability to deter and defeat strategic weapons or asymmetric techniques is required as the public would have strong opinion on this. Does it mean pre-emptive strikes, shields, intelligence, training or something else? What's the role of ASIO?

Fighting Terrorism

Defence's current capability in the anti-terrorism arena is supported. Without information on the role of other agencies in counter terrorism activities and the relationship they have with Defence, it is difficult to comment on any extension. As a destabilising force and not a threat to National security, other civilian agencies should be lead agencies. Terrorism also features in the following task, and is a better strategic positioning.

Military Support to Australian National Security Responses

Defence's increased capacity in the task is a high priority eg. specialist services and counter intelligence, reflecting the view presented in the task. Boarder protection is a key activity in response to potential new security challenges presented by global environmental and food issues, as a result of diminishing recourse. Public opinion also extends to economic and conservation zones (whaling and fishing in Australia's territory). The White Paper should include strategic direction on acts by other nations and groups that have no regard to Australian territory. The outcomes of the Domestic Security Review will also need addressing in the White Paper.

Managing Defence Core Business

Defence must be effective in the ways it works with industry and the community to grow Defence skills/capacity and the support of Australia over the long term. Defence can be more effective in the way it works with local communities in which a Defence Base is located, by participating more in running towns. It matters to the community. This is not unusual in other nations' defence models. Defence could have Defence Base-community alliances, which include objectives for service supply and access to appropriate Defence services/ facilities, and industry development to build profile and support.

RAAF Base Richmond is a significant contributor to the local and regional economy as evidenced by Defence reports. It employs a significant number of people (about 3 000) across a range of skills and is the largest contributor to value-added of business (the wages and salaries + profit) in the region. There is potential to further strengthen the local economy around the nature of the activities the base undertakes and to undertake R&D on key national interests (including the environment). A specialist focus to the economy could be advocated to support Defence needs and in turn strengthen the community.

- ▶ Council requests that as an outcome of the White Paper that Defence commit to integration of activities into local community activities for mutually beneficial outcomes.

What Capabilities do We Want?

Defence's effective operational capability is dependant on its fundamental inputs and Defence planners will need to advise on an appropriate operational balance. The capability must be flexible and adaptive, like any other business, to meet likely security challenges. There should be a higher priority capability towards defending Australian territory, in the regional context.

Without facilities, as one of the fundamental capability inputs eg. personnel, major systems, command), Defence could not function. It is paramount that the White Paper adequately address Base facilities (location/role/number) and commit to maintaining non-discretionary Bases that are essential for *Defence Core Business* and any operation. This can be achieved by endorsing the recent Force Disposition Program report. Speculation on the future of some Bases needs resolving.

RAAF Base Richmond is considered to be a non-discretionary base facility. It is on the outskirts of Sydney, but in proximity of Sydney and supports all force operations out of Sydney. Its role is strategic support, with activities extending to civic and diplomatic. RAAF Base Richmond is home to the Air Lift Group (3 units, No.37 Squadron – Hercules), 10 other units and supporting aerospace industry contractors. It supports Sydney-based specialised units of the Tactical Assault Group East, 4th Battalion (Commando) Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR), and the Incident Response Regiment.

The Force Disposition Program showed RAAF Base Richmond was essential for Defence operations and capability. The then Minister for Defence, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson MP, announced (11/08/2007) that it was to be retained as it provides essential capability, which Council concurs with. It is of critical importance as it is the only secure point of departure in the Sydney Basin for Sydney/Melbourne/Canberra for large scale operations.

The Minister, in his then capacity as Shadow Minister for Defence, agreed that RAAF Base Richmond is essential, advising Council (26/09/2007):

"Labour has no plans to alter the status of RAAF Base Richmond, and should we be elected to government later this year Richmond will continue as a permanent operational facility".

- ▶ Council requests that as an outcome of the White Paper that the Government re-confirms RAAF Base Richmond as a fundamental facilities input in Defence capability and provide for investment in the facility as part of the regional capability edge.

Other comments on Defence Policy

Second Sydney International Airport proposition

The issue of a second international airport has been discussed at length. Council supports the retention and, in effect, expansion of the RAAF Base Richmond, but speculative reports like that in the Daily Telegraph (5/05/2008) which suggested the Government was reviewing the need for such an airport and Camden and RAAF Base Richmond airfields and Canberra airport were being considered is unhelpful. The community is a significant stakeholder in the issue.

For various reasons RAAF Base Richmond would not be a suitable site for such an airport. Even submissions to the Government's second international airport EIS for Holsworthy Army Base and Badgerys Creek (mid-90's) showed the airport would be uneconomic.

Government commercial airport policy directions should not cloud/distract from Defence Policy and its strategic and operational needs, which must include the retention of RAAF Base Richmond as a strategic Defence facility.

- ▶ Council requests that as an outcome of the White Paper that the Government ensures RAAF Base Richmond is not an option in any other policies of Government and is retained as a strategic Defence facility.

Australian Council of Local Government

The Australian Council of Local Government, a new Federal-Local Government relationship, at its first meeting (November 2008) will discuss the community infrastructure provisioning issues faced by local government. Cr Paul Bell, President of the Australian Local Government Association, said the size of the community infrastructure investment deficit was estimated by PricewaterhouseCoopers to be in the order of \$14.5 billion (2006), with an annual under spending on infrastructure maintenance of around \$1.1 billion. The Prime Minister says the Australian Council of Local Government is an opportunity to build strong ties with local government and local communities across Australia.

The White Paper could address a Defence role in Australian Council of Local Government objectives, especially in local communities in which a Defence Base is located. Local Government and Defence both make substantial invest in services and there is potential to explore closer working relationships to achieve economies of scales. "Defence-council alliances" could strengthen *Defence Core Business*, including industry/community engagement and respond to *Defence Workforce Challenges*.
