Dear Minister

We are pleased to provide you with the Final Report of the Australian Defence Force Posture Review in accordance with your Terms of Reference and the media release of 22 June 2011.

In essence, the Review was tasked with assessing whether the ADF is correctly geographically positioned to meet Australia's modern and future strategic and security challenges.

We have consulted with the senior leadership of Defence and broadened our consultation to include former Service Chiefs as well as relevant analysts and commentators. We have also received 38 submissions from State and Territory Governments, local governments, industry groups, independent think tanks and members of the public.

The Final Report confirms the overall judgement we made in our Progress Report, namely, that while most of the ADF's current force posture remains appropriate, significant investments will be required, particularly in Northern Australia, to ensure that the ADF is adequately positioned geographically to meet its operational needs and Australia's long term strategic interests.

As we noted in the covering letter to the Progress Report, we have taken the view that 'force posture' is a multifaceted concept, embracing bases (in their various manifestations such as home ports, forward operating bases and mounting bases) as well as operational activities such as port visits, training and exercises, familiarisation visits and other forms of engagement which enable and demonstrate the ADF's capacity to meet the strategic tasks required of it by the Government.

Some of the recommendations vary a little from those in the Progress Report; in this sense the work has benefited from consideration of the responses to the Progress Report.
We understand that you intend this Report to contribute to the development of the next White Paper. It seems clear that the scale of investments that would follow acceptance of some of the recommendations outlined in the Report would be considerable. In our view, the White Paper provides an appropriate process to cost the recommendations and prioritise them in the context of other possible investments. We recognise that not all of the recommendations are of equal importance or urgency.

The Report's recommendations could be considered in terms of those that can be implemented relatively quickly and broadly within Defence's current resources; upgrades required to enable the potential capabilities of Force 2030; and new initiatives arising from this Review. It is those in the latter two categories that will need to be considered in the White Paper process.

We wish to extend our thanks to the wide range of senior officers and officials who assisted us in our work. In particular, we thank Mr Ben Coleman and his diligent staff who assisted us through the Review. The conclusions and recommendations are of course our responsibility, as are any errors or oversights.

Yours sincerely,

Allan Hawke

30 March 2012