

FUTURE SUBMARINE FORCE DISPOSITION AND BASING

CN Brief by HNC-DGSM

Cleared: 25 Mar 22

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KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The submarine force will expand from six conventionally powered submarines to at least eight nuclear-powered submarines, along with a substantial growth in the submariner workforce.
- A considerable enhancement and increase to the existing Defence Estate footprint is required to support this critical submarine capability.
- The Prime Minister announced on 7 March 22 that a future naval base will be built on the east coast of Australia to support the basing and disposition of future nuclear powered submarines. The Prime Minister also stated Fleet Base West would remain home to current and future submarines.
- This new east coast base will enhance Australia's capacity to support the submarines of partner nations, including nuclear powered submarines.
- Three locations will be reviewed to determine their feasibility: the ports of Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla. Engagement with the Queensland and New South Wales State and Local Governments and public consultations will be undertaken as part of this review process.
- The Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force is currently working with the United States and the United Kingdom to intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, workforce and force structure.

TALKING POINTS

- The Prime Minister's announcement on 7 March 2022 on the assessment of three locations for a new east coast naval base will enhance Australia's capacity to support the basing and disposition of the future nuclear powered submarines, the current Collins Class submarines and other undersea warfare capabilities.
- While the exact disposition of the future nuclear powered and existing Collins Class fleets will be determined in due course, the intention will be that both classes of submarine can, and will be, operated out of the east and west coasts.
- HMAS *Stirling* will remain home to Australia's submarine capability, supporting the operations of the Collins Class, the future nuclear powered submarine and partner navy submarines.
- The new east coast base will provide additional capacity to support and operate submarines and related capabilities, will enhance Australia's strategic deterrence and enable regular visits by United States and United Kingdom nuclear powered submarines.
- Consequential to the Prime Minister's announcement, Defence has held initial engagements with the Queensland and NSW State Governments on the feasibility of the three identified location options: the ports in Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla. Public consultations are being planned as part of this engagement.
- The three identified locations were selected based on a range of basing criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and being close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- Planning is underway to complete the feasibility study by Quarter 3 2023.
- Site feasibility will be informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force.

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- As part of his 7 March 2022 speech to the Lowy Institute the Prime Minister announced more than \$10bn had been provisioned, based on early estimates for facilities and infrastructure requirements for the transition from the Collins Class to the future nuclear powered submarines.
- Noting operating and supporting nuclear powered warships is new to Defence, the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force is currently working with the United States and the United Kingdom to intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, workforce and force structure.
- The outcomes of the NPSTF analysis will determine the full extent of additional facilities and infrastructure costs stemming from this 'nuclear overlay'.
- Planning for the first tranche of facilities and infrastructure to support the future submarine force is underway, covering the priority scope required before 2031, agnostic of east coast basing decisions. This work will occur predominantly at HMAS *Stirling*, including the working facilities to accommodate the increasing numbers of the submarine workforce.
- *Questions related to the stewardship of a nuclear powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, infrastructure, and maintenance can be referred to the CNPSTF.*
- *Questions related to basing location options, state government engagement for the new east coast base, the basis of the infrastructure budget and scope of the Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure project (SEA 1010), and previous basing studies can be referred to DEPSEC SE.*
- *Questions related to the nuclear powered warship license, processes and status of the preferred location options for the new east coast base can be referred to HNE.*
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BACKGROUND

- In 2017, as part of a deliberate review process, Head Navy Capability appointed an independent panel to conduct a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assist Navy in assessing future options given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve submarines.
- The Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition recommended that a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.
- In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan. The outcome being the establishment of SEA1000 Phase 6 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure, which supported transition from the Collins class submarines and introduction of the expanded Attack class fleet.
- As part of Force Structure Plan 2020, Government announced an investment of \$6.8 - \$10.2b in Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure.
- SEA1000 Phase 6 was merged into SEA 1010 Phase 10 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure through the October 2020 Integrated Investment Program (IIP) Biannual Update.
- On 16 September 2021, the Prime Minister of Australia announced that the Australian Government will no longer be proceeding with the Attack Class Submarine Program and will instead acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the UK and US.
- On 7 March 2022, in his speech to the Lowy Institute the Prime Minister announced a future submarine base on the east coast of Australia, together with three options for the location of the base – Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla.
- For the Brisbane option, the location would be on or around Fisherman Island in the Port of Brisbane, subject to engagement with the Queensland Government.

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- The three sites were selected as options following a Defence review which considered 19 sites.
- The 19 sites considered were Cairns, Townsville, Gladstone, Brisbane, Port Stephens, Newcastle, Broken Bay, HMAS *Penguin*, HMAS *Waterhen*, Cockatoo Island, Bays Precinct (Sydney), GIDP, Botany Bay, Port Kembla, Bass Point, Jervis bay, Towfold Bay, Western Port and Hobart.
- Site options were assessed against a range of basing criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment. Reasonably proximate to deep water is also a key consideration.
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] This was based on the assessment that was possible prior to the engagement process. The engagement process will allow for a full feasibility assessment.
- The Commonwealth will write formally to the respective state governments to seek engagement on feasibility, including formal community engagement.
- Previous studies suggested Sydney Harbour and Jervis Bay would be appropriate as a submarine base.
- The Garden Island Defence Precinct (GIDP), located in Sydney Harbour, is Navy's key operational base on the east coast. The site is constrained with limitations on berth space and shore facilities and suffers considerable encroachment. s47E(d)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
GIDP is not considered a viable long term solution for a permanent submarine base.
- Jervis Bay has been discounted as it is a gazetted marine park.

OFFICIAL**WAY FORWARD**

Endorsement of the Defence Engagement Plan will be sought from the Minister for Defence and the Prime Minister. The Engagement Plan provides a clear process through which the Department of Defence will engage stakeholders and send clear, consistent and concise messaging throughout the project.

An Interdepartmental Committee will be established and will comprise the following agencies: Defence, PM&C, Treasury, Finance, Attorney-Generals, Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Industry Science Energy and Resources; and Agriculture Water and the Environment.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Multiple media articles across multiple platforms speculating on the location and port access for the future nuclear submarines at the time of the nuclear powered submarine announcement.

Date	Source	Item
7 Mar 2022	Multiple media outlets and platforms	Coverage of government announcement to shortlist Wollongong, Newcastle and Brisbane for an east coast submarine base.
1 Oct 2021	Hobart Mercury / Courier Mail	Polar profits frozen by subs- don't rule out a Tassie nuclear sub base – Charles Wooley
3 Sep 2021	MSN and others	UK's nuclear weapons could move to France or America
1 Sep 2021	CCH	Labor commits to Defence Force Posture review
26 Aug 2021	Sky News	Former Defence Min wants defence review
25 Jul 2021	Sunday Telegraph	Navy Holds Garden Island
12 Feb 2021	Newcastle Herald	Newcastle still in the hunt as a sub base (streem.com.au)

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QoN #	Senator	Hearing	Topic
APH Question 477 Defence Question 141	Kitching	SBE 2019/20	Future Submarines – allowance in budget


Clearance and contacts

Clearing Officer	CDRE Gerald Christian	A/HNC	s47E(d) s22
Drafting Officer	CAPT Jason Cupples, RAN	A/DGSM	s47E(d) s22
Consultation	CAPT Mary Ganter, RAN	DNIP	s47E(d) s22
Consultation	Mrs Meredith Apps	SEG	s47E(d)
Consultation	COL Leonard Rouwhorst	NPSTF	s47E(d) s22

FUTURE EAST COAST SUBMARINE BASE

CN Brief by HNC-DGSM


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KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The Prime Minister announced on 7 March 22 that a future submarine base will be built on the east coast of Australia to support the basing and disposition of future nuclear powered submarines. He announced three locations for review to determine their feasibility: the ports in Brisbane and Newcastle, and Port Kembla.
- HMAS *Stirling*, in Western Australia, will continue to operate as the home port for the Collins Class submarines.

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OFFICIAL**Way forward**

- Defence will commence an engagement process with the State Governments of Queensland and New South Wales to establish the feasibility of the location options for the future base. Endorsement of the Defence Engagement Plan to guide this engagement and planned public consultations will be sought from the Minister for Defence and the Prime Minister. The Engagement Plan will provide a clear process through which the Department of Defence will engage stakeholders and send clear, consistent and concise messaging throughout the project.
- In addition, an Interdepartmental Committee, comprising relevant Commonwealth Agencies, will be established to support the introduction of the nuclear submarine capability. This Committee will guide the next stage of the location feasibility studies for the three preferred sites and associated consultation. It is planned for this initial feasibility work to be completed by the quarter 3 2023.
- Noting operating and supporting nuclear powered warships is new to Defence, the NPSTF is currently working with the US and UK to identify the full suite of requirements that will underpin our nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, workforce and force structure. These requirements will be fed into the feasibility studies and consultation once they are determined.

Media coverage

Date	Source	Item
7 Mar 2022	Multiple media outlets and platforms	Coverage of government announcement to shortlist Wollongong, Newcastle and Brisbane for an east coast submarine base.
09MAR2022	ASPI – Marcus Hellyer	Unpacking the (semi-) announcement of a submarine base on Australia's east coast
25 Jul 2021	Sunday Telegraph	Navy Holds Garden Island
12 Feb 2021	Newcastle Herald	Newcastle still in the hunt as a sub base (stream.com.au)

Questions on notice

QoN #	Senator	Hearing	Topic
APH Question 477 Defence Question 141	Kitching	SBE 2019/20	Future Submarines – allowance in budget

Clearance and contacts

Clearing Officer	CDRE Gerald Christian, RAN	A/HNC	s47E(d) s22
Drafting Officer	s47E(d), RAN	A/DGSM	s47E(d) s22
Consultation	s47E(d), RAN	DNIP	s47E(d) s22
Consultation	s47E(d), RAN	SEG	s47E(d) s22

EAST COAST BASING

Key Witnesses: Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group

Daniel Fankhauser, First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure

Key Facts and Figures

- On 7 March 2022, the previous Government announced a new naval base will be built on the east coast of Australia to support the basing and disposition of future nuclear-powered submarines.
- HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia will remain home to current and future conventionally powered submarines.
- The new base will enhance Australia's capacity to support the submarines of partner nations, including nuclear-powered submarines.
- Three preferred locations in Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla were identified for further feasibility assessment with the Queensland and New South Wales Governments to determine the optimal location.
- The Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce continues to work with the United States and the United Kingdom to intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship.

Talking Points

- A new east coast base will enhance Australia's capacity to support the basing and disposition of the future nuclear-powered submarines, the current Collins Class submarines and other undersea warfare capabilities.
- While the exact disposition of the future nuclear-powered and existing Collins Class fleets will be determined in due course, the intention is both classes of submarine will operate out of east and west coast bases.

- HMAS *Stirling* will remain a home to Australia's submarine capability, supporting the operations of the Collins Class, the future nuclear-powered submarine and visits by partner navy submarines.
- The new base will also enable regular visits by United States and United Kingdom nuclear-powered submarines.
- More than \$10 billion had been provisioned, based on early estimates, for facilities and infrastructure requirements for the transition from the Collins Class to a future conventional submarine.
- The first tranche of facilities and infrastructure is underway and will occur predominantly at HMAS *Stirling* to support the increasing numbers of the submarine workforce.
- Defence is working with the Queensland and New South Wales Governments on the feasibility of the three identified locations: the ports of Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla.
- The three identified locations were selected based on a range of basing criteria, including access to exercise operating areas; being close to industrial infrastructure; and
- being close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- Planning is underway to complete the feasibility assessment by Quarter 3 2023, with site feasibility informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce. Public consultations will occur as part of this engagement.
- Concurrent feasibility studies are being undertaken through the Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce on the three locations against the International Atomic Energy Agency siting criteria from a nuclear safety and security perspective and other operating considerations.
- The outcomes of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce analysis will determine the full extent of additional facilities and infrastructure costs stemming from this 'nuclear overlay'.

If asked:

- Questions relating to undersea warfare capability, including the submarine basing criteria and previous studies, can be referred to VADM Mark Hammond, the Chief of Navy.
- Questions related to the stewardship of a nuclear-powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, infrastructure, and maintenance can be referred to VADM Jonathan Mead, Chief Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce.
- Questions related to nuclear-powered warship visits to Australian ports can be referred to RADM Katherine Richards, Head Naval Engineering.

Timeline of Significant Events


Date	Action
10 March 2022	Address by the then Leader of the Opposition Leader, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP – Lowy Institute: announcement on location of new submarine base driven by election timetable rather than full analysis of overall force posture. Force Posture Review will provide reliable basis for decisions on final location.
7 March 2022	Address by the then Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP – Lowy Institute: establish a Future Submarine Base on the east coast of Australia to support basing and disposition of the future nuclear-powered submarines.

Background

- In 2017, Navy appointed an independent panel to conduct a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assist in assessing future options given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve submarines.
- The Review recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.

- In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan.
- Project SEA1000 Phase 6 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure was established to support transition from the Collins class submarines and introduction of the expanded Attack class fleet.
- As part of Force Structure Plan 2020, Government announced an investment of \$6.8 - \$10.2 billion in Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure.
- SEA1000 Phase 6 was merged into SEA 1010 Phase 10 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure through the October 2020 Integrated Investment Program Biannual Update.
- On 16 September 2021, the previous Government announced cancellation of the Attack Class Submarine Program and the intention to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States of America.
- On 7 March 2022, the former Prime Minister announced a future east coast base along with three options for the final location of the base:
 - Port of Newcastle,
 - Brisbane (on or around Fisherman Island) and;
 - Port Kembla.
- The three sites were selected as options following a Defence review which considered 19 sites against a range of basing criteria. s47E(d)

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- The basing criteria used for assessing the sites included access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
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- This was based on a desktop assessment only. The engagement process will allow for a full feasibility assessment of all sites.
- Previous studies suggested Sydney Harbour and Jervis Bay would be appropriate as a submarine base.
 - Jervis Bay was discounted as it is a gazetted marine park.
- The Garden Island Defence Precinct, located in Sydney Harbour, is Navy's key operational base on the east coast.
 - Construction of dedicated submarine facilities at Garden Island Defence Precinct would limit future expansion options for the major surface fleet and therefore is not considered a viable solution for a permanent submarine base.
- To assist in developing a Commonwealth position for negotiating with the states, it is proposed to establish an Interdepartmental Committee comprising the following agencies: Defence; Prime Minister & Cabinet; Treasury; Finance; Attorney-General's; Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; Industry, Science and Resources; Education, Skills and Employment; and Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.
- Defence will be engaging across Government Departments and Agencies to ensure consideration of a comprehensive approach to the sensitivities associated with a nuclear capable base, including through an Interdepartmental Committee. The Interdepartmental Committee will likely comprise the following agencies: Defence, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury, Finance, Attorney-General's, Infrastructure, Transport, Regional

Development and Communications, Industry Science Energy and Resources; and Agriculture Water and the Environment.

Media Coverage

- Multiple media articles across multiple platforms speculating on the location and port access for the future nuclear submarines at the time of the nuclear-powered submarine announcement.

Date	Source	Item
6 March 2022	Australian Financial Review	Coverage of government announcement to shortlist Wollongong, Newcastle and Brisbane for an east coast submarine base.

Media Enquiries

Enquiry date	Source	Response provided
18 March 2022	Illawarra Mercury	18 March 2022
14 March 2022	CQ Today	14 March 2022
10 March 2022	The Guardian	10 March 2022

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
16 August 2022	Marles	Australia is a two-ocean national and we need to ensure the ability to operate right around the nation. Defence Strategic Review will consider the east coast base option for nuclear powered submarines.

Questions on Notice (QoNs)

Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
SBE	29 November 2019	Kitching – QoN# 477	Future Submarines – allowance in budget

Contact and Clearance Officer

Clearing Officer	Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group	Security and Estate Group	P: s47E(d) M: s22
Cleared on	31 August 2022		
Consultation	RADM Peter Quinn, Head Navy Capability	Navy	P: s47E(d) M: s22
Consultation	RADM Matt Buckley, Head Nuclear Powered Submarine Capability	Navy	P: s47E(d) M: s22
Drafting Officer	Dan Fankhauser, First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure	Security and Estate Group	P: s47E(d) M: s22

FUTURE SUBMARINE DISPOSITION AND BASING

Key Witness: CN

Key Facts and Figures

- Navy currently has six conventionally powered submarines.
- The plan is to grow to at least eight nuclear-powered submarines.
- This will require a substantial growth in the submariner workforce.
- Studies have shown basing submarines on both coasts will support this growth.
- Rationale for an east coast base include:
 - Recruiting and retention of trained staff
 - Access to training areas and assets
 - Resilience and redundancy
 - Access to greater pool of industry partners
- Prime Minister Morrison announced a future east coast naval base on 7 March 22
- The identified locations were Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla
- The same announcement clarified Fleet Base West would remain home to current and future submarines.
- An east coast base will enhance Australia's capacity to support the submarines of partner nations.


Talking Points

- To achieve government directed operational outcomes and deliver a regionally superior, sovereign and lethal undersea warfare capability, the submarine force will expand from six conventionally powered submarines to at least eight nuclear-powered submarines
- To support the increase in platform numbers and capability an increased workforce will be required
- The nuclear powered submarines will require significant new infrastructure.

- As part of his 7 March 2022 speech to the Lowy Institute Prime Minister Morrison announced more than \$10bn had been provisioned, based on early estimates for facilities and infrastructure requirements for the transition from the Collins Class to a diesel powered submarine.
- Navy has long identified that basing submarines on the east coast would support the planned growth of the submarine capability.
- Developing a two ocean basing strategy would:
 - Improve the recruiting and retention of trained staff seeking to live elsewhere than Western Australia (2008 Moffit Review)
 - Provide ready access Eastern Australian training areas and assets
 - Develop a more resilient capability with redundancy of locations
 - Ensure access to a greater pool of industry partners
 - Present greater opportunities to support the submarines of partner nations (both non-nuclear and nuclear powered)
- While the exact disposition of the future nuclear powered and existing Collins Class fleets will be determined in due course, the intention will be that both classes of submarine can, and will be, operated out of the east and west coasts.
- Consequential to the Prime Minister Morrison's announcement, Defence has engaged with the Queensland and NSW State Governments on the feasibility of the three identified location options: the ports in Brisbane (Fisherman's Island), Newcastle (Mayfield site) and Port Kembla (Outer Harbour).
- The three identified locations were selected based on a range of basing criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and being close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- Planning is underway to complete the feasibility study by Quarter 3 2023.
- Site feasibility will be informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force.

- Noting operating and supporting nuclear powered warships is new to Defence, the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force (NPSTF) is currently working with the United States and the United Kingdom to intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, workforce and force structure.
- The outcomes of the NPSTF analysis will determine the full extent of additional facilities and infrastructure costs stemming from this 'nuclear overlay'.
- Planning for the first tranche of facilities and infrastructure to support the future submarine force is underway, covering the priority scope required before 2031, agnostic of east coast basing decisions. This work will occur predominantly at HMAS *Stirling*, including the working facilities to accommodate the increasing numbers of the submarine workforce.

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- The Garden Island Defence Precinct (GIDP), located in Sydney Harbour, is Navy's key operational base on the east coast. The site is constrained with limitations on berth space and shore facilities and suffers considerable encroachment. s47E(d)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] GIDP is not considered a viable long term solution for a permanent submarine base.

- HMAS *Waterhen* was determined to be too space constrained to support the full suite of operational and maintenance requirements.
- Cockatoo Island was discounted as it is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage site and space constrained
- Jervis Bay was discounted, as it is a gazetted marine park.

Approach and Harbour Depths

- Initial studies indicate the draft of the future submarine capability will not be constrained by the controlling depths for the entry into the three locations. These matters will be further reviewed during the feasibility assessment process.
- Depending on the exact siting of the base within each of the ports, some dredging may be required from existing navigation channels to the chosen site.
- Most ports undertake an enduring dredging program to maintain controlling depths for entry and navigation within the port.
- By a combination of existing maintenance dredging and natural geography, the port approaches and applicable channels have the following minimum depths:

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[REDACTED]

If asked:


- Questions related to the stewardship of a nuclear powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, infrastructure, and maintenance can be referred to the Chief Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force.
- Questions related to basing location options, state government engagement for the new east coast base, the scope of the Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure project (SEA 1010), can be referred to Deputy Secretary Security and Estate.
- Questions related to the nuclear powered warship visits to Australian ports can be referred to Head Naval Engineering.

Background

- In 2017, Head Navy Capability appointed an independent panel to conduct a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assist Navy in assessing future options given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve submarines.
- The Review recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.
- In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan. The outcome being the establishment of SEA1000 Phase 6 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure, which supported transition from the Collins class submarines and introduction of the expanded Attack class fleet.
- As part of Force Structure Plan 2020, Government announced an investment of \$6.8 - \$10.2b in Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure.
- SEA1000 Phase 6 was merged into SEA 1010 Phase 1 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure through the October 2020 Integrated Investment Program (IIP) Biannual Update.

- On 16 September 2021, Prime Minister Morrison announced that the Australian Government will no longer be proceeding with the Attack Class Submarine Program and will instead acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States.
- On 7 March 2022, in his speech to the Lowy Institute Prime Minister Morrison announced a future east coast base with three options for the final location of the base
 - Port of Brisbane:
 - Port of Newcastle: and
 - Port Kembla.
- The three sites were selected as options following a Defence review which considered 19 sites against a range of basing criteria. s47E(d)

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- Site options were assessed against a range of basing criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment. Proximity to deep water is also a key consideration.
- The Commonwealth will write formally to the respective state governments to seek engagement on feasibility, including formal community engagement.
- Previous studies suggested Sydney Harbour and Jervis Bay would be appropriate as a submarine base.

Way Forward

- Navy will continue to support the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force and Security and Estate Group
- Defence will be engaging across Government Departments and Agencies to ensure consideration of a comprehensive approach to the sensitivities associated with a nuclear capable base, including through an Interdepartmental Committee. The Interdepartmental Committee will likely comprise the following agencies: Defence, PM&C, Treasury, Finance, Attorney-Generals, Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Industry Science Energy and Resources; and Agriculture Water and the Environment.

Media Coverage

Date	Source	Item
22 Aug 22	Newcastle Herald	<u>Security concerns over port control</u>
16 Aug 22	Various News Ltd	<u>Nuclear sub plan for east coast – includes Submarine Institute Exec Dir prefers Gladstone</u>
16 Aug 22	Triple M	<u>Jervis and Westernport Bays also considered as sites</u>
11 May 22	South Coast Register	<u>Prime Minister rules out Jervis Bay</u>
09 Mar 22	ASPI – Marcus Hellyer	<u>Unpacking the (semi-) announcement of a submarine base on Australia's east coast</u>
07 Mar 22	Illawarra Mercury	<u>Wollongong reacts to prospect of nuclear subs base on our doorstep</u>
25 Jul 21	Sunday Telegraph	<u>Navy Holds Garden Island</u>

Date	Source	Item
12 Feb 21	Newcastle Herald	Newcastle still in the hunt as a sub base (streem.com.au)

Relevant Ministerial Comments

Date	Minister	Details
07 Mar 22	Prime Minister Morrison	Address to Lowy Institute

Estimates QoNs

Estimates Hearing	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Supplementary Estiamtes	05 Nov 21	KITCHING - QON SQ21-000968	HMAS Stirling Update
Budget Estimates	09 Nov 20	KITCHING - QON SQ20-000795	Plans for Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure

Other QoNs

Committee Inquiry	Date	Senator - Question #	Broad topic
Senate	01 Apr 22	STEEL JOHN - QON SQ22-000149	Histroical Exampels of Designated Anchorages

Contact and Clearance Officer

Clearing Officer	RADM Peter Quinn, RAN Head Navy Capability	Navy Capability	P: s47E(d)
Cleared on	14 Sep 2022		M: s22

Consultation	s47E(d) [REDACTED] Director Navy Infrastructure Projects	Navy	p: s47E(d) M: s22 [REDACTED]
Consultation	s47E(d) [REDACTED] Director NPS Infrastructure & Logistics	NPSTF	p: s47E(d) M: s22 [REDACTED]
Consultation	s47E(d) [REDACTED] A/Director Estate Planning Strategic Projects	SEG	p: s47E(d) [REDACTED]
Drafting Officer	CDRE Tom Phillips DG Submarines	Navy Capability	p: s47E(d) M: s22 [REDACTED]
Last updated	9 Sep 22		

Supplementary Estimates: February 2023

Last updated: 16 January 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Handling Note:

- Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond to lead on nuclear powered warship visits to Australian ports and requirements associated with broader undersea warfare capabilities.
- Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group, Ms Celia Perkins to lead on new east coast base location options, state government engagement for the new east coast base, delivery of the Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure project (SEA 1010-1).
- Chief Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce, Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead to lead on the stewardship of a nuclear powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, security, and maintenance.

Key Messages

- To achieve government directed operational outcomes and deliver a regionally superior, sovereign and lethal undersea warfare capability, the submarine force will expand from six conventionally powered submarines to at least eight nuclear powered submarines.
- This will require a substantial growth in the submariner workforce and enhancements to supporting facilities.
- A new east coast base will enhance Australia's capacity to support undersea warfare capabilities, recruit and retain the submariner workforce and support the submarines of partner nations.

Talking Points

- Navy has long identified that basing submarines on the east coast would support the planned growth of the submarine capability.
- Developing a two ocean basing strategy for submarines and wider undersea warfare capabilities would:
 - Improve the recruiting and retention of trained staff seeking to live elsewhere other than Western Australia (2008 Moffitt Review)
 - Provide ready access to the eastern Australian training areas and assets

Prepared By:

Name: Commodore Tom Phillips
Position: Director General Submarines
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Cleared By:

Name: Rear Admiral Stephen Hughes
Position: Head Navy Capability
Group/Service: Navy
Phone: s22 /s47E(d)

Supplementary Estimates: February 2023

PDR No: SB23-000126

Last updated: 16 January 2023

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

- Develop more resilient capability through redundancy of locations
 - Ensure access to a greater pool of industry partners
 - Present greater opportunities to support the submarines of partner nations (both non-nuclear and nuclear powered)
- While the future disposition of the nuclear powered submarine and existing Collins Class fleets will be determined in due course, the intention is that both classes of submarine can, and will be, operated out of the east and west coasts.
- Defence is engaging with the Queensland and NSW State Governments on the feasibility of the three preferred locations for a new east coast base: the ports in Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla.
- The three preferred locations were selected based on a range of criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, proximity to industrial infrastructure, and proximity to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- The east coast base feasibility assessment is proposed to be completed by Quarter 3 2023 and will consider a range of criteria including economic, social, and environmental impacts. Naval mission specific criteria such as hydrography and port operations, and criteria specific to safe operation of the future nuclear powered submarine will also be considered.
- Site feasibility will be informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force.
- Noting operating and supporting nuclear powered warships is new to Defence, the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce (NPSTF) is working with the United States and the United Kingdom to intensively examine the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, security, safety, workforce and force structure.
- The outcomes of the NPSTF analysis will inform the full extent of additional facilities and infrastructure requirements stemming from a 'nuclear overlay'.
- Planning for the first tranche of facilities and infrastructure to support the future submarine force is underway, covering the priority scope required before 2031, agnostic of east coast basing decisions. This work will occur predominantly at HMAS *Stirling* and includes enhanced working facilities to accommodate the increasing numbers of the submarine workforce.

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Division: Navy Capability

Phone: s47E(d) / s22

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Name: Rear Admiral Stephen Hughes

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Group/Service: Navy

Phone: s22 / s47E(d)

Supplementary Estimates: February 2023

Last updated: 16 January 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Approach and Harbour Depths

- Initial studies indicate the draft of the future submarine capability will not be constrained by the controlling depths for the entry into the three locations. These matters will be further reviewed during the feasibility assessment process.
- Depending on the exact siting of the base within each of the ports, some dredging may be required from existing navigation channels to the chosen site.
- Most ports undertake an enduring dredging program to maintain controlling depths for entry and navigation within the port.
- By a combination of existing maintenance dredging and natural geography, the port approaches and applicable channels have the following minimum depths:

s47E(d)

Background

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- The Garden Island Defence Precinct (GIDP), located in Sydney Harbour, is Navy's key operational base on the east coast. GIDP is not considered a viable long term solution for a permanent submarine base.
- HMAS *Waterhen* was determined to be too space constrained to support the full suite of operational and maintenance requirements.
- Cockatoo Island was discounted as it is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage site and space constrained
- Jervis Bay was discounted, as it is a gazetted marine park.

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2017 Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition

- In 2017, Navy appointed an independent panel to conduct a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assist Navy in assessing future options given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve submarines.
- The Review recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.

Project Planning and Announcements

In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan. The outcome being the establishment of SEA1000 Phase 6 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure, which supported transition from the Collins class submarines and introduction of the expanded Attack class fleet.

- As part of Force Structure Plan 2020, Government announced an investment of \$6.8 - \$10.2b in Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure.
- SEA1000 Phase 6 was merged into SEA 1010 Phase 1 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure through the October 2020 Integrated Investment Program (IIP) Biannual Update.
- On 16 Sep 21, the former Prime Minister announced that the Government would no longer be proceeding with the Attack Class Submarine Program and would instead acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States.
- On 7 Mar 22, in his speech to the Lowy Institute, the former Prime Minister announced a future east coast base with three sites, subject to further feasibility assessments, for the final location of the base as follows:
 - Port of Brisbane:
 - Port of Newcastle: and
 - Port Kembla.
- The assessment was informed by previous Defence reviews into east coast basing which had assessed alternative east coast locations for the surface fleet, explosive ordnance loading and storage facilities and submarine basing. These prior reviews considered 19 east coast sites and concluded there were limited viable options for a new east coast naval base.
- Defence reconsidered all 19 sites s47E(d), including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and close to

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Supplementary Estimates: February 2023

PDR No: SB23-000126

Last updated: 16 January 2023

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment. Proximity to deep water is also a key consideration.

s47E(d)

- Following this assessment, Defence recommended that Port Kembla and the ports of Newcastle and Brisbane best met Navy's requirements.

Way Forward

- Navy will continue to support the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force and Security and Estate Group (SEG).
- The Commonwealth (SEG) has written to respective state governments to seek engagement in the feasibility assessments of the preferred east coast base locations. Defence and state government officials conducted two rounds of consultation in 2022 and exchanged information to inform the feasibility activity.
- Detailed planning and community engagement will be informed by the feasibility assessment, which is to be completed by Quarter 3 2023.
- Defence intend to engage across Commonwealth Government Departments and Agencies to ensure comprehensive consideration of the sensitivities associated with acquiring and developing a nuclear-powered submarine capable base, including through establishment of an Interdepartmental Committee.

Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- None.

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Supplementary Estimates: February 2023

Last updated: 16 January 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

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Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Recent Ministerial Comments

- [On 7 March 2022, the former Prime Minister made an address to the Lowy Institute and mentioned the trilateral security partnership, working together with the United States and United Kingdom.](#)

Relevant Media Reporting

- Australian media has reported extensively on East Coast basing.

Division: Navy Capability	
PDR No: SB23-000126	
Prepared by: Commodore Tom Phillips, Director General Submarines, Submarines Branch Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 16 January 2022	Cleared by Division Head: Rear Admiral Stephen Hughes, Head Navy Capability Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 16 January 2023
Consultation: Security Estate Group Mr Pat Sowry, Assistant Secretary – Estate Planning	Date: 16 January 2023 Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d)
Cleared by CFO: Ms Leonie Neiberding, Assistant Secretary Finance – Navy s47E(d), Director Finance Navy Acquisition – Submarines & Navy Aviation, NSSG	

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Handling Note:

- Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond to lead on Visiting Ship Panel (Nuclear) and requirements associated with broader undersea warfare capabilities.
- Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group, Ms Celia Perkins to lead on new east coast base location options, state government engagement for the new east coast base, delivery of the Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure project (SEA 1010-1).
- Chief Nuclear-Powered Submarine Taskforce, Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead to lead on the stewardship of a nuclear-powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, security, and maintenance.

Key Messages

- To achieve government directed operational outcomes and deliver a regionally superior, sovereign and lethal undersea warfare capability, the submarine force will expand from six conventionally powered submarines to at least eight nuclear-powered submarines.
- This will require a substantial growth in the submariner workforce and enhancements to supporting facilities with HMAS *Stirling* the immediate focus to achieve sovereign ready.
- A new east coast base will enhance Australia's capacity to support undersea warfare capabilities, recruit and retain the submariner workforce and support the submarines of partner nations.
- Navy has long identified that basing submarines on the east coast would support the planned growth of the submarine capability.

Talking Points

- Developing a two ocean basing strategy for submarines and wider undersea warfare capabilities would:
 - Improve the recruiting and retention of trained staff seeking to live elsewhere other than Western Australia (2008 Moffitt Review)
 - Provide ready access to the eastern Australian training areas and assets
 - Develop more resilient capability through redundancy of locations
 - Ensure access to a greater pool of industry partners

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

PDR No: SB23-000126

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

- Present greater opportunities to support the submarines of partner nations (both non-nuclear and nuclear powered)
- While the future disposition of the nuclear powered submarine and existing Collins Class fleets will be determined in due course, the intention is that both classes of submarine can, and will be, operated out of the east and west coasts.
- Defence is engaging with the Queensland and New South Wales State Governments on the feasibility of the three preferred locations for a new east coast naval base: the ports in Brisbane, Newcastle and Port Kembla.
- The three preferred locations were selected based on a range of criteria, including access to exercise operating areas, proximity to industrial infrastructure, and proximity to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- The east coast base feasibility will consider a range of criteria including economic, social, and environmental impacts. Naval mission specific criteria such as hydrography and port operations, and criteria specific to safe operation of the future nuclear powered submarine will also be considered.
- Site feasibility will be informed by the ongoing work of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Task Force, which has been examining the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, security, safety, workforce and force structure.
- The optimal pathway to a sovereign nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) capability announced by Government included US and UK submarines operating from HMAS *Stirling* on a rotational basis from as early as 2027, referred to as Submarine Rotational Force – West. This will require significant upgrades to the existing facilities and infrastructure at *Stirling* to support the safe and secure operation of SSN.
- The planning of facilities and infrastructure to support the future nuclear-powered submarine force is underway and covers the priority works required at HMAS *Stirling* to support the Submarine Rotational Force – West and subsequent works to support a full operating base for the initial sovereign SSN squadron. This work includes enhanced operational, safety and working facilities to accommodate the increasing numbers of the submarine workforce.
- **Approach and Harbour Depths**
- Initial studies indicate the draft of the future submarine capability will not be constrained by the controlling depths for the entry into the three locations. These matters will be further reviewed during the feasibility assessment process.
- Depending on the exact siting of the base within each of the ports, some dredging may be required from existing navigation channels to the chosen site.

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

- Most ports undertake an enduring dredging program to maintain controlling depths for entry and navigation within the port.
- By a combination of existing maintenance dredging and natural geography, the port approaches and applicable channels have the following minimum depths:

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Background

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- The Garden Island Defence Precinct (GIDP), located in Sydney Harbour, is Navy's key operational base on the east coast. GIDP is not considered a viable long term solution for a permanent submarine base.
- Port Kembla was excluded at the time due to advice there was no space available for development of a fleet base.
- HMAS *Waterhen* was determined to be too space constrained to support the full suite of operational and maintenance requirements.
- Cockatoo Island was discounted as it is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage site and space constrained
- Jervis Bay was discounted, as it is a gazetted marine park.

2017 Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition

- In 2017, Navy appointed an independent panel to conduct a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assist Navy in assessing future options given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve submarines.

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

- The Review recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.

Project Planning and Announcements

In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan. The outcome being the establishment of SEA1000 Phase 6 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure, which supported transition from the Collins class submarines and introduction of the expanded Attack class fleet.

- As part of Force Structure Plan 2020, Government announced an investment of \$6.8 - \$10.2b in Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure.
- SEA1000 Phase 6 was merged into SEA 1010 Phase 1 Undersea Warfare Support Facilities and Infrastructure through the October 2020 Integrated Investment Program (IIP) Biannual Update.
- On 16 Sep 21, the former Prime Minister announced that the Government would no longer be proceeding with the Attack Class Submarine Program and would instead acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States.
- On 7 Mar 22, in his speech to the Lowy Institute, the former Prime Minister announced a future east coast base with three sites, subject to further feasibility assessments:
 - Port of Brisbane;
 - Port of Newcastle; and
 - Port Kembla.
- The assessment was informed by previous Defence reviews into east coast basing which had assessed alternative east coast locations for the surface fleet, explosive ordnance loading and storage facilities and submarine basing. These prior reviews considered 19 east coast sites and concluded there were limited viable options for a new east coast naval base.
- Defence reconsidered all 19 sites s47E(d) including access to exercise operating areas, being close to industrial infrastructure, and close to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment. Proximity to deep water is also a key consideration.
- The sites considered were:
 - Queensland - Cairns, Townsville, Gladstone, Brisbane;

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

PDR No: SB23-000126

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

- New South Wales - Port Stephens, Newcastle, Broken Bay, HMAS *Penguin*, HMAS *Waterhen*, Cockatoo Island, Bays Precinct, Garden Island Defence Precinct, Botany Bay, Port Kembla, Bass Point, Jervis Bay, Twofold Bay;
- Victoria - Western Port; and
- Tasmania - Hobart.

s47E(d)

- On 14 Mar 23, the Government with AUKUS partners announced the Optimal Pathway that agrees to a phased approach that achieves the construction and delivery of SSN-AUKUS as an enduring nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia. This approach includes US and UK submarines operating from HMAS *Stirling* on a rotational basis from as early as 2027, referred to as Submarine Rotational Force – West. This will require significant upgrades to the existing facilities and infrastructure at *Stirling* to support the safe and secure operation of SSN, including:
 - wharf upgrades; operational maintenance, logistics and training facilities; radiologically controlled workspaces; emergency preparedness and response facilities; and a physical security uplift to the base.
- At the forefront of the Optimal Pathway is HMAS *Stirling* which will be expanded to support the scale of infrastructure required for nuclear-powered submarines – both for visiting and rotational submarines and for Australia’s own nuclear-powered submarines. This will include wharf upgrades; operational maintenance, logistics and training facilities.

Way Forward

- Navy will continue to support the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force and Security and Estate Group (SEG).
- The Commonwealth (SEG) is engaging with the New South Wales and Queensland Governments on the feasibility assessments of the preferred east coast base locations. Defence and state government officials conducted two rounds of consultation in 2022 and exchanged information to inform the feasibility activity.
- Detailed planning and community engagement will be informed by the feasibility assessment.

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

PDR No: SB23-000126

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked.

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- In January 2023, an individual request was made under FOI to access documentation relating to Defence's Estimates briefing folder used at the November 2022 Senate Estimates hearings. **The Brief related to East Coast Basing was released without redaction.**
- In January 2022, the Guardian sought access under FOI to documentation relating to the selection of the three locations for a new east case naval base. **An exemption was applied and documents were not released.**

Recent Ministerial Comments

- A range of media covered A/MINDEF's comments to Illawarra-Shoalhaven Defence Industry Conference on 5 April indicating the Albanese Government will take its time to consider all feasible options for an east coast base.

Relevant Media Reporting

- Australian media has reported extensively on east coast basing, including an in depth article in [the SMH on 19 March 23](#)
- A range of reports in March 23 covered speculation that that no decision would be made before the next election.

Division: Navy Capability	
PDR No: SB23-000126	
Prepared by: Commodore Tom Phillips, Director General Submarines, Navy Capability Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 26 April 2023	Cleared by Division Head: Rear Admiral Stephen Hughes, Head Navy Capability Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 30 April 2023
Consultation: Infrastructure Division, SEG Mr Pat Sowry, Assistant Secretary Estate Planning	Date: 26 April 2023 Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d)

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Budget Estimates: May 2023

PDR No: SB23-000126

Last updated: 19 Apr 2023

Future Submarine Disposition and Basing

Key witness: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Celia Perkins,

Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead

Consultation: Nuclear Powered Submarine
Task Force

Date: 26 April 2023

Mob: s22

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Air Commodore Jacqueline Churchill,
Director General Nuclear Powered
Submarine Capability Support

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East Coast Basing

Handling Note:

- Deputy Secretary Security and Estate, Celia Perkins, to lead on questions relating to the establishment of an east coast facility to support nuclear-powered submarines.
- Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, to lead on maritime capability requirements including broader undersea warfare capabilities.
- Director-General Australian Submarine Agency, Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead, to lead on questions relating to the stewardship of a nuclear-powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, infrastructure and maintenance.

Key Messages

- Government has agreed in-principle to the Defence Strategic Review recommendation that an east coast facility be established for Australia's future submarine capability, s47E(d)

Talking Points

- A new east coast facility will enhance Australia's capacity to support the current, future, and partner nation nuclear-powered submarines, and other undersea warfare capabilities.
- A new facility would provide redundancy and dispersal and increase speed of transit to key east coast operational areas.
- Feasibility assessments are needed to support the identification of an east coast facility. These assessments will consider the social, economic and environmental impacts, and any planned commercial or state government activities.
- The initial priority under the Optimal Pathway to a sovereign nuclear-powered submarine capability is to upgrade HMAS *Stirling* in WA, to enable establishment of the Submarine Rotational Force – West, a rotational presence of United Kingdom Astute and United States of America Virginia class submarines from as early as 2027.
- Navy has a view that basing submarines on the east coast would support the planned growth and retention of personnel for the submarine capability.

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A/Executive Director Maritime Infrastructure

Infrastructure Division

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Acting First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure

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Background

- In 2017, Navy conducted a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition to assess future options, given the submarine force was planned to expand from six to twelve conventional submarines.
- The Review recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the larger submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.
- In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan.
- On 16 September 2021, the former Government announced cancellation of the Attack class submarine program and the intention to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States of America.
- On 7 March 2022, the former Prime Minister announced a future east coast base, along with three preferred options for its location:
 - Port of Newcastle;
 - Port of Brisbane (on or around Fisherman Island); and
 - Port Kembla.
- The three sites were selected as preferred options following a Defence desktop review which considered 19 sites s47E(d)

s47E(d)



- The basing criteria used for assessing the sites included access to exercise operating areas, proximity to industrial infrastructure, and proximity to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- Formal engagement occurred in 2022 with the Queensland and the New South Wales governments.
- Site feasibility will be informed by the ongoing work of the Australian Submarine Agency, which has been examining the full suite of requirements that underpin nuclear stewardship including, but not limited to, installations and infrastructure, security, safety, workforce and force structure.
- In response to the Defence Strategic Review, the Government has committed to making a decision on the location of the future east coast facility late in this decade.

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- Implementation of the Surface Fleet Capability Review will increase the pressure on Navy's berthing capacity and likely strengthen the requirement for an east coast base.
- HMAS *Stirling* remains home to Australia's submarine capability, supporting the operation of the Collins class and visits by partner navy nuclear-powered submarines.
- Over the next decade and a half, the Australian Government will invest up to \$8 billion to upgrade HMAS *Stirling* to be an operating base for the initial sovereign nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) Squadron, based on the Virginia class submarines.

Supporting Information

Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- In July 2023, a media organisation sought access under Freedom of Information to documentation relating to correspondence between Defence and the Wollongong City Council regarding an east coast submarine base. **The documents are yet to be released.**
- In July 2023, a media organisation sought access under Freedom of Information to documentation relating to any talking points prepared for the Minister or senior officers on an East Coast submarine base. **The documents are yet to be released.**
- In January 2023, a media organisation sought access under Freedom of Information to documentation relating to Defence's November 2022 Senate Estimates briefing documents for a new east coast base. **The documents were released without redaction.**
- In January 2022, a media organisation sought access under Freedom of Information to documentation relating to the selection of the three locations for a new east coast base. **An exemption was applied and documents were not released.**

Recent Ministerial Comments

- On 2 December 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister attended a press conference in San Francisco and advised that a decision on an east coast location will be made in the late 2020s (<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/transcripts/2023-12-02/press-conference-san-francisco>)
- On 5 April 2023, the **then** Assistant Defence Minister addressed the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Defence Industry Conference and advised that a decision has not been made on an east coast base location and the Government will take the time required to consider all feasible options.

Relevant Media Reporting

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- On 24 July 2024, The Australian published an article by Marcus Hellyer titled [Naval Shipbuilding will test industry](#), mentions potential East Coast Basing locations while discussing the broader AUKUS related industry demands.
- On 18 July 2024, WIN Wollongong aired a story about [AUKUS offering opportunities for the Illawarra Shoalhaven’s Defence Industry](#), discussing the possibility for an East Coast marine centre for testing undersea capabilities.
- On 23 May 2024, ABC Radio Adelaide’s David Bevan interviewed [Michael Shoebridge \(Director, Strategic Analysis Australia\)](#), discussing AUKUS and the decision timeline for an East Coast Base

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Division: Infrastructure Division	
PDR No: SB24-000886	
Prepared by: s47E(d) A/Executive Director Maritime Infrastructure Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 18 September 2024	Cleared by Division Head: Pat Sowry First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: D Month YYYY Date: D Month YYYY
Consultation:	
Cleared by CFO / DPG / DSR: Date: D Month YYYY	

Supplementary Estimates November 2024
Last updated: 19 September 2024
Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Vice Admiral Hammond, Vice Admiral Mead.

Name
Position
Cleared by Deputy Secretary (or equivalent Band 3/3*): Celia Perkins Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group Date: D Month YYYY
<input type="checkbox"/> I confirm that all information in this brief is suitable for public release <input type="checkbox"/> I confirm this brief follows the template guidance and checklist

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SEG Brief - East Coast Basing

Official Leading: Deputy Secretary Security and Estate, Ms Celia Perkins, to lead on questions relating to the establishment of an east coast facility to support nuclear-powered submarines.

Official/s Supporting: Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, to lead on maritime capability requirements including broader undersea warfare capabilities.

Director-General Australian Submarine Agency, Vice Admiral Jonathan Mead, to lead on questions relating to the stewardship of a nuclear-powered submarine, including requirements associated with facilities, infrastructure and maintenance.

Context

The Defence Strategic review highlighted that the current strategic circumstances dictated a need to establish an east coast nuclear-powered submarine facility. The facility would provide redundancy and dispersal as well as increase the speed of transit to key east coast operational areas. This type of facility would enhance the operational capabilities of the existing Collins class fleet of submarines on the eastern seaboard of Australia and the Pacific.

Key Message

- Government has agreed in-principle to the Defence Strategic Review recommendation that an east coast facility be established for Australia's future submarine capability, but has deferred a decision until later in the decade.

Talking Points

- The first priority under the Optimal Pathway to a sovereign conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability is to upgrade HMAS *Stirling* in WA, to enable Submarine Rotational Force – West.
- The Government agreed in-principle to the Defence Strategic Review recommendation that an east coast facility be established for Australia's future submarine capability.
- A decision has been deferred until later in the decade to focus our efforts on establishing the initial capability in the west under the Optimal Pathway.

Background

- In 2017, Navy conducted a Strategic Review of Submarine Force Disposition and recommended a two-ocean basing concept be further considered to ensure the future submarine force would continue to meet Government needs in a sustainable and safe manner.
- In 2018, a submarine facilities scoping study considered basing options, including two-ocean basing, which informed the Submarine Capability Transition Plan.
- On 16 September 2021, the former Government announced cancellation of the Attack class submarine program and the intention to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United Kingdom and United States of America.

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Additional Estimates February 2025

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- On 7 March 2022, the former Prime Minister announced a future east coast base, along with three preferred options for its location:
 - Port of Newcastle;
 - Port of Brisbane (on or around Fisherman Island); and
 - Port Kembla.
- The basing criteria used for assessing the sites included:
 - access to exercise operating areas;
 - proximity to industrial infrastructure; and
 - proximity to significant population centres to support personnel and recruitment.
- In response to the Defence Strategic Review, the Government committed to making a decision on the location of the future east coast facility late in this decade.
- Implementation of the Surface Fleet Capability Review outcomes will increase the pressure on Navy's berthing capacity **in its key operating bases**, and likely strengthen the requirement for additional east coast facilities.
- Feasibility assessments are needed to support the identification of an east coast facility. These assessments will consider the social, economic and environmental impacts, and any planned commercial or state government activities.
- HMAS *Stirling* remains home to Australia's submarine capability, supporting the operation of the Collins class and visits by partner navy nuclear-powered submarines.
- Over the next decade and a half, the Australian Government will invest up to \$8 billion to upgrade HMAS *Stirling* to be an operating base for the initial sovereign nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) Squadron, based on the Virginia class submarines.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
2 December 2023	The Deputy Prime Minister attended a press conference in San Francisco and advised that a decision on an east coast location will be made in the late 2020s
5 April 2023	The then Assistant Minister for Defence addressed the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Defence Industry Conference advising that a decision has not been made on an east coast base location and the Government will take the time required to consider all feasible options.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
3 January 2025	FOI	An individual sought access to documentation relating to any research/memos/studies/briefs that relate to a location for an East Coast nuclear submarine base.	Decision pending

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July 2023	FOI	A media organisation sought access to documentation relating to correspondence between Defence and the Wollongong City Council regarding an east coast submarine base.	18 August 2023 Request refused. No documents held by Defence on this topic.
15 July 2023	FOI	A media organisation sought access to documentation relating to any talking points prepared for the Minister or senior officers on an East Coast submarine base.	15 Sept 2023 Partial release
January 2023	FOI	A media organisation sought access to documentation relating to Defence's November 2022 Senate Estimates briefing documents for a new east coast base.	1 March 2023
January 2022	FOI	A media organisation sought access to documentation relating to the selection of the three locations for a new east coast base.	Documents not released - Exemption under the FOI act applied

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 24 October 2024, the [Illawarra Mercury's](#) Janine Graham reported comments from Green's Senator David Shoebridge on Port Kembla as a preferred East Coast location and the Government's lack of community consultation. The Member for Cunningham responded with the Government's intent to consult and that the location of an East Coast submarine base has not been decided.
- On 23 May 2024, Sky News Australia interviewed [Michael Shoebridge \(Director, Strategic Analysis Australia\)](#), discussing AUKUS, submarine training programs, the decision timeline for an East Coast Base, and the geo-political landscape.

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Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 22 December 2024	Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: January 2025
Consultation: Nil	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Pat Sowry A/ Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Date: January 2025	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I confirm that all information in this brief is suitable for public release <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I confirm this brief follows the template guidance and checklist	

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