

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – NATIONAL DEFENCE STRATEGY

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry

Supporting: Amy Hawkins, First Assistant Secretary National Defence Strategy

Context: The 2024 National Defence Strategy set out the blueprint to deliver the significant and urgent changes required to transform Defence's capability, force posture, force structure, acquisition, recruitment and international engagement. The 2026 National Defence Strategy evolves this approach with a focus on preparedness, resilience and a sovereign industrial base. The government has committed additional funding to acquisition and sustainment of the credible capabilities the ADF needs to deliver Australia's defence strategy and build a more resilient, self-reliant ADF over time.

Key Messages

- On 17 April 2024, the Government released the 2024 National Defence Strategy and the 2024 Integrated Investment Program. It committed to a biennial National Defence Strategy cycle to ensure Defence policy, strategy, capability and planning keeps pace with the rapidly evolving strategic environment.
- On 16 April 2026, the Government released the 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy details the Government's approach to addressing Australia's most significant strategic risks, based on the concept of *National Defence*, with a Strategy of Denial as the cornerstone of Defence planning.
- The 2026 Integrated Investment Program continues a generational uplift in Defence's capabilities to transform the ADF into an integrated, focused force.
- The next National Defence Strategy is planned for delivery in 2028.

Talking Points

2026 National Defence Strategy

- There is no more important and consequential task for Government than keeping Australians safe.
- The 2023 Defence Strategic Review and 2024 National Defence Strategy identified that Australia's strategic environment was deteriorating, marked by intensifying competition between the United States and China.
- Over the last two years, the trends driving this deterioration have broadened and intensified and the coming decade will be defined more by fracture, rivalry and disorder.

- Since the release of the 2024 National Defence Strategy, Defence has delivered credible military capabilities that have strengthened our capacity to deter potential adversaries.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy builds on this foundation. It strengthens Australia's capacity to protect and defend our nation and interests in a more dangerous and unpredictable era.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy directs Defence to enhance Australia's ability to employ and sustain credible military power to defend Australia in a crisis or conflict, including when support from allies or partners may be limited. This includes:
 - substantial investment in a force more capable of the impactful projection of military power
 - building stronger, diverse international industrial partnerships that can reduce the risk of supply chain shocks and dependency on a concentrated source of supply and
 - investing in a sovereign defence industrial base that enhances our ability to produce, adapt and sustain the capabilities the ADF needs in the event of conflict.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy reaffirms the Government's commitment to work closely with our allies and partners to increase our capacity to push back on and withstand coercion and to shape a region governed by rights and rules, not fear or force.
- The 2026 NDS provides a 10-year funding model for Defence, including the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Submarine Agency and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Regulator, with total funding of \$887 billion to 2035-36.
- This includes an additional \$14 billion over the next four years to 2029-30 and an additional \$53 billion over the decade to 2035-36.
- This brings the combined additional investment across the 2024 and 2026 NDS to \$30 billion over the next four years and \$117 billion over the next decade.

National Defence

- *National Defence* is a coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach to meet the strategic challenges Australia faces, including the threat of conflict and the prospect of coercion.
- *National Defence* works alongside broader initiatives to address the deteriorating geostrategic environment facing Australia. These include national resilience; industry and supply chain resilience; innovation, science and technology; national workforce; a robust National Intelligence Community; and integrated statecraft.
- Defence makes a singular contribution to *National Defence* – its core mission is to protect and defend Australia and the national interest by generating and employing military power.

Strategy of Denial

- . The 2026 National Defence Strategy retains the Strategy of Denial which aims to deter any conflict before it begins, prevent any potential adversary from succeeding in coercing Australia through force, support regional security and prosperity, and uphold a favourable regional strategic balance.
- . The Strategy of Denial does not focus on a specific adversary.
- . It is designed to deter any potential adversary by enhancing Australia's defence capabilities and partner cooperation. This is intended to change the calculus of any potential adversary, so that no state will ever conclude that the benefits of conflict outweigh the risks.
- . To deter actions against Australia's interests, Defence will:
 - deepen collective deterrence by working with the United States and other key partners to make a credible contribution to a favourable regional balance and
 - deliver credible ADF capabilities that will complicate the calculus of any potential adversary by increasing the range and lethality of the ADF, strengthening Australia's national resilience and focusing Defence's international engagement efforts on enhancing interoperability and collective deterrence.

2026 Integrated Investment Program

- . As part of the biennial National Defence Cycle, the Government has prioritised ADF capability investments to address the most critical risks arising from the deteriorating strategic environment.
- . The 2026 Integrated Investment Program provides additional investment to increase the ADF's self-reliance and contribute to collective deterrence, this includes:
 - increasing our undersea warfare capability, including through the acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines
 - advancing the delivery of a more lethal surface combatant fleet and delivering continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment in South and Western Australia
 - expanding long-range strike capabilities, including through the acquisition of Australian manufactured weapons, produced through the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance enterprise
 - accelerated introduction of air and missile defence capabilities, including new investment in a medium-range ground based air defence system
 - expanding the fleet of autonomous and uncrewed systems across all domains, with a focus on sovereign defence industry and innovation and
 - delivering a secure multi-orbit satellite communications system.

- Since 2023, the Government has allocated approximately \$425 billion in additional funding, over the coming decade, for the capabilities set out in the 2026 Integrated Investment Program.
 - This is compared to \$330 billion in capability investment for the decade to 2033-34 in the 2024 NDS; and
 - \$270 billion for the decade to 2029-30 when the 2020 Defence Strategic Update was released.

Implementation and achievements of the 2024 National Defence Strategy

- Defence is three years into the transformation initiated by the 2023 Defence Strategic Review. The 2024 National Defence Strategy outlined an ambitious plan to transform the ADF from a balanced force capable of responding to a range of threats, to an integrated, focused force capable of specific and targeted projection of military power.
- Defence has made good progress against the Government's priorities throughout the 2024 National Defence Strategy cycle, with the Defence enterprise embracing and operationalising its objectives, in which Defence has:
 - **shaped** our strategic environment and advanced bilateral and multilateral Indo-Pacific partnerships with a focus on maintaining regional stability
 - sharpened its **deterrence** signalling through integration of Defence policy, operations and intelligence, and the conduct of ADF activities and
 - enhanced its **ability to respond** with credible military force through the acquisition of capabilities that hold an adversary at risk at sea, on land, and in the air, space and cyber domains;
- Defence has made substantive progress in its implementation of the 2024 National Defence Strategy and across the Government's six immediate priorities. This includes:
- Substantial progress towards the acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines through AUKUS to improve our deterrence capabilities, including:
 - an initial \$3.9 billion investment toward the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Construction Yard at Osborne to ensure Australia is on track to commence construction of the first SSN AUKUS by the end of the decade
 - \$12 billion as an initial commitment to establishing a Defence precinct at Henderson shipyard to support continuous naval shipbuilding
 - Submarine Rotational Force-West is on track to commence in 2027 in line with the milestones of the optimal pathway and
 - landmark reforms to trilateral export controls to operationalise the AUKUS licence-free environment.
- Rapid uplift of the ADF's ability to precisely strike targets at longer-range and manufacture munitions in Australia, including:

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- rapid expansion of long-range strike weapons stocks across all domains
 - commencing production of the first Australian-made Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System in late 2025, at a new factory in Port Wakefield, South Australia
 - commencing construction on Kongsberg Defence Australia's new manufacture and maintenance facility for Naval and Joint Strike Missiles
 - entered into a new cooperative program with the United States to co-produce, co-sustain and co-develop the Precision Strike Missile
 - successful test firing of an Australian manufactured Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System and
 - first live-fire of the Precision Strike Missile from an Australian High Mobility Artillery Rocket System at Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025 in July 2025.
- . We have improved the ADF and partners' ability to operate from northern bases, including the:
 - airfield upgrades at Cocos (Keeling) Islands and RAAF Bases Tindal and Darwin;
 - opening of the new Kuru Wharf at HMAS *Coonawarra* and completed wharf upgrades at HMAS *Cairns*
 - accelerated upgrades at RAAF Tindal to enable the operation of the MQ-4C Triton remotely piloted aircraft systems and
 - modernised ADF training areas and ranges across the Northern Territory.
- . We have dramatically improved the growth and retention of a highly skilled Defence workforce:
 - the ADF permanent force has grown to the highest levels in 20 years and force separation has fallen substantially below the ten-year average and
 - the Government has opened recruitment to permanent residents from New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Papua New Guinea.
- . Defence has lifted Australia's capacity to rapidly translate disruptive technologies into ADF capability, in partnership with Australian industry, including:
 - accelerating development and acquisition of uncrewed undersea and surface vessels (Ghost Shark and Bluebottle) and uncrewed aircraft (MQ-28 Ghost Bat Collaborative Combat Aircraft), positioning Australia as a leader of autonomous technology and
 - accelerating the acquisition of cutting-edge drone and counter drone technologies for the ADF in close partnership with Australian industry.
- . Defence has substantially deepened Australia's diplomatic and defence partnerships with key partners in the Indo-Pacific, including concluding substantial upgrades to partnerships with:

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- Papua New Guinea, through the Australia-Papua New Guinea Mutual Defence ('Pukpuk Treaty') Treaty
- Indonesia through the Australia-Indonesia Treaty on Common Security ('Jakarta Treaty') and Australia-Indonesia Defence Cooperation Agreement
- Japan through the Japan-Australia Framework for Strategic Defence Coordination and
- Singapore through the Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Security Partnership 2.0.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
16 April 2026	The Government released the 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program .
17 April 2024	The Government released the 2024 National Defence Strategy and 2024 Integrated Investment Program .
24 April 2023	The Government released the Defence Strategic Review . The independent leads proposed the Government direct Defence to produce a National Defence Strategy on a biennial basis.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 1, Defence Strategic Review and National Defence Strategy Wording, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash asked whether Defence had omitted the term 'dangerous' from the Defence Strategic Review and National Defence Strategy.	Tabled.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 234, Defence Strategic Outlook, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash asked whether Australia's strategic environment had deteriorated, or improved, since 2016.	Tabled.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 235, 2026 Integrated Investment Program and National Defence Strategy, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash requested information on the timeline to finalise the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program, and current progress to develop the 2026 Integrated Investment Program.	Tabled.

30 September 2025	FOI	An individual made a request seeking access to all ministerial briefs and internal policy reviews addressing the recommendations from the Defence Strategic Review regarding the ADF being used as the "force of last resort" for domestic disaster response.	Decision finalised.
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Relevant Media Reporting

Australian media has reported extensively on the 2024 and 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program.

- 16 January 2026, Alex Bristow, *The Strategist* '[Japan aims to be indispensable to Trump, Australia should follow](#)'.
- 6 January 2026, Isha Desai, *The Strategist* '[An appeal for climate action in Australia's next National Defence Strategy](#)'.
- 13 December 2025, Greg Sheridan, *The Australian* '[The new US security strategy upends global order and signals big risks for Australia](#)'.
- 10 December 2025, Courtney Stewart, *The Canberra Times* '[Be clear and unambiguous: who is our biggest threat and what will we do about it?](#)'.
- 10 December 2025, the Minister for Defence Industry, the Honourable Pat Conroy, MP, *The Canberra Times* '[How we're getting the best bang for our Defence buck](#)'.
- 10 December 2025, Eleanor Campbell, *the Canberra Times* '[Warnings over defence cash-flow problems](#)'.
- 9 December 2025, Jennifer Parker, *The Sydney Morning Herald* '[Australia needs to grasp chance to reset defence expectations with the US](#)'.
- 8 December 2025, Courtney Stewart, *The Strategist* '[What Trump's National Security Strategy means for Australia](#)'.
- 8 December 2025, Malcolm Davis, *The Strategist* '[ADF autonomous warfare: go big, go fast](#)'.
- 8 December 2025, Ben Packham, *The Australian* '[Nation 'needs northern drone wall' to fight swarm attack](#)'.
- 7 December 2025, Ben Packham, *The Australian* '[US piles fresh pressure on Australia over military spending](#)'.
- 7 December 2025, Michael Koziol, *The Age*, '[US allies that don't step up 'will face consequences', Hegseth warns on eve of Ausmin](#)'.

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Division: National Defence Strategy	
PDR No: SB26-000306	
Prepared by: Nuala Bethell Assistant Secretary National Defence Strategy Implementation Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 15 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Amy Hawkins First Assistant Secretary National Defence Strategy Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 15 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group Date: 21 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & SECURITY

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy Division to support on Regional Partnerships and Security.

Context: Australia's strategic environment is deteriorating. Sharpening strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific demand strong partnerships and a concentrated effort to counter coercive actions to ensure security and stability in Australia's immediate region. This brief covers relationships with Southeast Asian, South Asian, and North Asian partners.

Key Messages

- The Government is committed to deepening regional defence partnerships across the Indo-Pacific, and working with partners to build a region that is peaceful, stable, prosperous, and respectful of sovereignty and international law.
- Australia supports a Southeast Asia region with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at its centre. We contribute to practical defence cooperation through the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus and its seven Experts' Working Groups.
- Our partnerships with Indonesia and Singapore are at a high watermark, exemplified by the signing of the Treaty on Common Security with Indonesia and the conclusion of an enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Singapore.
- Japan is an indispensable partner, and our comprehensive and growing defence relationship is underpinned by unprecedented strategic alignment and ambition.
- Australia and the Republic of Korea are comprehensive strategic partners, and our defence relationship is of vital importance to both countries.
- India is a top-tier security partner for Australia, and we are increasing the depth and complexity of our defence cooperation in support of regional peace and security.

Talking Points

- In line with the 2026 National Defence Strategy, Australia continues to strengthen our regional defence engagement to support mutual interests, build trust and deepen cooperation.
- Australia's bilateral, trilateral and multilateral defence arrangements are critical components of our international engagement.
 - Dialogues with likeminded partners remain central to our approach to building a region that is open, stable, prosperous and respectful of sovereignty.
 - Multinational dialogues provide an opportunity for ministers to meet, discuss and align on regional issues and common challenges.
- Australia's annual regional engagement activity, Indo-Pacific Endeavour, will engage with all Southeast Asian nations (except Myanmar), plus Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives during the 2026 calendar year.

- Enabled by whole-of-Government and led by Defence, Indo-Pacific Endeavour is a vehicle for Australia and our partners to work together to strengthen relationships to address shared challenges.

Southeast Asia

- Our bilateral defence partnerships with Southeast Asian nations are deep and long standing, enhanced by people-to-people links and practical cooperation.
 - Australia has a Defence Attaché or Adviser resident in every ASEAN country.
 - : Each year Defence runs around 50 exercises with Southeast Asian partners and provides offers for education and training in Australia.
 - We are expanding defence cooperation in areas including maritime security, peacekeeping, military medicine and English language training.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

- Australia wants a regional order with the ASEAN at its centre, providing an essential stabilising influence.
- At the 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus on 1 November 2025, Australia announced it was doubling the ASEAN-Australia Defence Postgraduate Scholarship Program from 2026 onwards.
- At that meeting, Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP met with his Indo-Pacific counterparts to discuss opportunities to deepen Defence and security cooperation.
- Australia co-chairs the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus Experts' Working Group on Cyber Security with Cambodia in the current co-chair cycle (2024-27).

Five Power Defence Arrangements

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy upholds Australia's ongoing commitment to invest in the Five Power Defence Arrangements.
 - The Five Power Defence Arrangements was established in 1971 between the member nations of Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom.
 - : The Five Power Defence Arrangements are the only multilateral security arrangements of their kind focusing on Southeast Asian security and is the longest-standing regional security mechanism of which Australia is a member.
- Five Power Defence Arrangements' Exercise BERSAMA SHIELD 26 included an Australian submarine, building on the success of BERSAMA LIMA which included the United Kingdom's Carrier Strike Group and Australia's F35A Lightning II fighter jets.

Indonesia

- Australia's defence relationship with Indonesia is based on mutual trust, transparency and a shared commitment to regional security.

- . Our partnership is at a high watermark, as exemplified by Prime Minister Albanese's visit to Jakarta on 6 February 2026 and signing of the Treaty on Common Security (the Jakarta Treaty).
 - Australia and Indonesia will now undertake respective treaty processes required to bring the Treaty into force.
- . The Jakarta Treaty will build on the 2006 Lombok Treaty that, among other things, reaffirmed Indonesia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- . It also builds on the Defence Cooperation Agreement signed with Indonesia in 2024.
 - Once in force, the Defence Cooperation Agreement will enable greater interoperability in our substantial exercise program, including key activities like Exercise KERIS WOOMERA.
- . From 11-12 March 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, travelled to Jakarta, Indonesia and met with Indonesian President Prabowo and Minister of Defence, His Excellency Gen (ret) Dr Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, to follow up discussions on the implementation of joint activities, including the Enhanced Junior Leaders' Forum; support for development of defence facilities in Indonesia; and establishing an embed position for a senior Indonesian officer in the ADF.

Refer further questions on the negotiation or operation of the Jakarta Treaty to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Singapore

- . On 8 October 2025, the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore, Mr Lawrence Wong, concluded the next phase of our enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- . On 7 October 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, and Singapore's Minister for Defence, Mr Chan Chun Sing, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Enhanced Defence Cooperation.
 - Under the Memorandum of Understanding, Australia and Singapore agreed to five defence initiatives:
 - : enhanced ADF access and deployments to Singapore
 - : increased Singapore Armed Forces access to training areas in Australia
 - : deepened defence science and technology cooperation
 - : strengthened cooperation in defence logistics and supply chains and
 - : expanded professional defence exchanges.
- . Singapore has trained in Australia for over 50 years, and under the Australia Singapore Military Training Initiative, it is contributing AUD\$2.25 billion [FY 2016/17] towards developing the Shoalwater Bay and Greenvale training areas in Queensland.

The Philippines

- . Our defence relationship with the Philippines makes an important contribution to the Australia-Philippines Strategic Partnership, which was signed on 8 September 2023.

- . Australia is deepening our defence cooperation through large-scale military exercises – such as Exercise ALON and Exercise BALIKATAN – to support interoperability and regional stability.
- . Australia and the Philippines, in cooperation with likeminded partners, regularly participate in Maritime Cooperative Activities in the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone.
 - These activities support the right to freedom of navigation and overflight, as well as other lawful uses of the sea and international airspace, as defined under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- . Australia welcomes increased coordinated defence cooperation with Japan, the Philippines and the United States, including through maritime cooperation, enhanced coordination, and strengthened capacity building.
- . Our cooperation on defence infrastructure development in the Philippines increases our combined collective capability, enhances interoperability, and strengthens bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation.
 - The first tranche includes eight projects at five locations and will support logistics, training and fire safety.

Malaysia

- . Malaysia and Australia share a strong and long-standing defence partnership, built on 70 years of bilateral relations, shared military history, deep people-to-people links and the Malaysia-Australia Joint Defence Program.
- . Australia and Malaysia also have a shared commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements, ASEAN centrality, international law, and regional peace and stability.
- . At the annual High Level Committee meeting in August 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP and Malaysian Minister of Defence, Dato' Seri Haji Mohamed Khaled bin Nordin furthered bilateral defence cooperation, including through agreement to pursue an information sharing arrangement and continued maritime domain awareness cooperation.

Partnering with mainland Southeast Asia countries

- . Australia continues to grow our longstanding defence relationships with mainland Southeast Asia countries (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam).
- . We encourage Cambodia and Thailand to honour the 27 December 2025 ceasefire agreement, abide with their obligations under international law, and work towards a lasting and peaceful resolution to their border conflict.
 - Australia is concerned about the implications for civilians on both sides of the border, particularly those who have been displaced.
- . We continue to engage bilaterally with both Cambodia and Thailand on defence issues, through our long-running Defence Cooperation Programs.

Myanmar

- . Australia suspended its bilateral defence cooperation with Myanmar in March 2021.

- . Australia remains deeply concerned by the worsening political, security and humanitarian situation in Myanmar.
- . We reiterate our strong support for the ASEAN' central role in resolving the crisis, and we continue to call for the full implementation of its Five-Point Consensus.
- . Recent regime elections were held amid ongoing violence and repression without meaningful participation from opposition parties. They did not meet the conditions needed for free, fair and inclusive elections.
 - We urge a peaceful transition of power to a civilian democratic government that reflects the will of the people.
- . *Refer questions on sanctions or developments on the ground to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.*

Japan

- . Japan is an indispensable partner to Australia. Our partnership supports regional deterrence and enhances the stability, security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.
- . On 18 April 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister and Japan's Defence Minister Koizumi Shinjiro held the third Defence Ministerial Meeting under the Framework for Strategic Defence Coordination (the Framework).
 - The Framework was established in December 2025 to support greater alignment of defence policy.
 - Previous meetings conducted under the Framework occurred in Tokyo on 8 April 2026 and 7 December 2025.
- . On 18 April 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Koizumi also announced the finalisation of contracts for the acquisition of Australia's first three general purpose frigates, and the signing of the accompanying Memorandum of Implementation and Government-to-Government Arrangement.
 - To commemorate the occasion, Ministers' signed the 'Mogami Memorandum', onboard the JS Kumano (a Mogami-class frigate) which reiterated our shared commitment to the successful delivery of future project milestones and the deepening of our defence industrial cooperation.
- . Defence is also accelerating operational cooperation with the Japan Self-Defense Forces under our Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), with more than 50 activities occurring since the RAA entered into force in August 2023.
- . On 4 May 2026, Prime Ministers Albanese and Takaichi released a leaders' statement on Enhanced Defence and Security Cooperation as one of six joint declarations marking the elevation of Australia and Japan's Special Strategic Partnership, and the 50th anniversary of the *Basic Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation*.
- . The trilateral partnership between Australia, Japan and the United States similarly remains strong and is a significant mechanism through which we contribute to stability and collective deterrence in the Indo-Pacific
- . We are committed to expanding cooperation with other regional partners in the Indo-Pacific, such as India, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea.

Republic of Korea

- Australia and the Republic of Korea are deepening strategic and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific under our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (December 2021).
- We share a strong ambition to further enhance our defence cooperation, particularly in areas of training and exercises, interoperability and defence industry.
 - Australia was pleased to welcome the Republic of Korea's significant deployment of over 800 armed forces personnel to Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025.
 - Exercising together in Australia and the region enhances our interoperability with each other and key partners.

India

- Increasing the depth, complexity and frequency of our defence cooperation with India is a priority under the 2026 National Defence Strategy.
- Indian Defence Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh's visit to Australia in October 2025 for the inaugural Defence Ministers' Dialogue was a milestone – the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister in 12 years.
 - The elevation of this meeting to an annual dialogue speaks to both governments' long term ambition for our partnership.
 - Ministers witnessed the signing of an arrangement on submarine search and rescue and established staff talks between our joint operational headquarters.
- We are focused on enhancing interoperability, improving maritime domain awareness, furthering regional cooperation and exploring opportunities to grow defence industry, science and technology connections.

Northeast Indian Ocean

- Australia is uplifting engagement with Northeast Indian Ocean partners to build resilience to strategic challenges and their capacity to contribute to our shared interests in regional stability and prosperity.
 - The Deputy Prime Minister's June 2025 visit to the Maldives, Sri Lanka and India underscored the strategic importance of our relationships in the region.
- Australia shares abiding maritime security interests with its Northeast Indian Ocean partners, as nations reliant on maritime trade and sea-lines of communication.
 - We are working closely with our partners to expand defence cooperation, including maritime domain awareness, maritime security and hydrography.
 - In April 2026, Australia handed over a Guardian-class Patrol Boat to Maldives, which will enhance Maldives' sovereign ability to contribute to regional security and stability.
 - The Deputy Prime Minister announced Australia's intent to gift the vessel during his visit to Maldives in June 2025.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
4 May 2026	At the Australia-Japan Annual Leaders Meeting, Prime Ministers Albanese and Takaichi released a statement announcing enhanced defence and security cooperation.
18 April 2026	Japan's Minister for Defence Koizumi Shinjiro , travelled to Australia for an Australia-Japan Defence Ministers' Meeting and a tour of JS <i>Kumano</i> , a Mogami class frigate of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force. Ministers' announced the finalisation of contracts for the acquisition of Australia's first three general purpose frigates and released a joint statement announcing a suite of other defence outcomes.
7 April 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, travelled to Tokyo, Japan on 7 April 2026 for ministerial meeting under the Framework for Strategic Defence Coordination, with Japan's Minister of Defense, Koizumi Shinjiro .
11 March 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, travelled to Jakarta, Indonesia on 11 March 2026 for a Defence Ministers' Meeting with Indonesian Minister of Defence, His Excellency Gen (ret) Dr Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin.
6 February 2026	The Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP and President Prabowo signed the Australia-Indonesia Treaty on Common Security.
7 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Japan's Minister for Defense, Koizumi Shinjiro, released a joint statement announcing the establishment of the Framework for Strategic Defence Coordination following a Defence Ministers' Meeting.
12 November 2025	The Prime Minister and Indonesian President announced conclusion of substantive negotiations on a new bilateral Treaty on Common Security.
1 November 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister attended the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus in Malaysia.
9 October 2025	At the inaugural Australia-India Defence Ministers' Dialogue in Canberra, ministers announced the signing of an arrangement on submarine search and rescue and established staff talks between our joint operational headquarters.
7 October 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Singapore's Minister for Defence, Chan Chun Sing, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Enhanced Defence Cooperation in Canberra, Australia.

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Date	Event
5 August 2025	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry, announced that Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' Upgraded Mogami-Class frigates had been selected as the preferred platform for the RAN's general purpose frigate program.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 20 April 2026, [Australian Defence Magazine](#), Maldives receives final Guardian-class Patrol Boat
- 18 April 2026, Multiple outlets (including [ABC](#)), Japan, Australia sign deal for first three Mogami frigate warships
- 6 February 2026, Multiple outlets (including [ABC News](#), [SBS](#), [Herald Sun](#) [syndicated], Sky News) reported that the Prime Minister and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto signed the Australia-Indonesia Treaty on Common Security in Jakarta on Friday 6 February 2026.
- 15 January 2026, ABC News, [Why Australia is investing in defence infrastructure at five military sites in the Philippines.](#)

Division: International Policy Division	
PDR No: SB26-000307	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary Southeast Asia Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 20 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Bernard Phillip First Assistant Secretary International Policy Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy Policy and Industry Group Date: 13 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: Susan Bodell PSM, First Assistant Secretary Pacific.

Context: The Pacific is vital to Australia's security and prosperity.

Key Messages

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy highlights the security of our Pacific region directly impacts Australia's national security.
- Alongside our Pacific partners, Defence aims to foster a region where sovereignty is respected and collective Pacific-led security responses are the norm.
- Defence is investing in security partnerships in the Pacific through the long-standing Defence Cooperation Program, Pacific Maritime Security Program and Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Program.

Talking Points

- Defence continues to deepen its partnerships in the Pacific, as directed in the 2026 National Defence Strategy by:
 - Building partnerships through the long-standing and highly-regarded Defence Cooperation Program, now in its 53rd year;
 - : Defence is enhancing its training, education and exercise activities with Pacific security agencies, building our collective ability to deliver security outcomes for our region.
 - : In 2026, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Tonga participated in Exercise KAKADU, the Royal Australian Navy's premier multinational maritime engagement activity.
 - : In 2025, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Tonga participated in Exercise TALISMAN SABRE for the second time and, for the first time, Papua New Guinea hosted an element of Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.
 - : In September 2024, Defence led the largest ever Operation RENDER SAFE, coordinating with international partners to conduct large-scale explosive ordnance disposal in the Solomon Islands.
 - Delivering sovereign Pacific capability that is underpinned by through-life sustainment, training and regional coordination. Through the Pacific Maritime Security Program, Australia has allocated \$5.9 billion over 30 years to Pacific partners and the Republic of Maldives.
 - : Under the Pacific Maritime Security Program, Australia has delivered 23 Guardian-class Patrol Boats and three landing craft to 12 Pacific partner nations.
 - : Australia also delivered one Guardian-class Patrol Boat to the Republic of Maldives on 17 April 2026.
 - Delivering and maintaining security-related infrastructure for our regional partners through the Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Program;

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- Advancing initiatives that enable effective Pacific-led responses to Pacific security challenges, such as the Pacific Response Group; and
- Listening to Pacific priorities, and advancing our collective security interests.

Defence Cooperation Funding

- The planned expenditure for Pacific Region in the 2026–27 Defence Budget is \$312 million, reflecting Defence’s ongoing commitment to regional cooperation and security.

Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea–Australia Defence Treaty

- Australia’s new Alliance with Papua New Guinea reflects our commitment to each other and to a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous.
 - It is Australia’s first new Alliance in more than 70 years, after the United States and New Zealand.
 - The Papua New Guinea – Australia Mutual Defence (Pukpuk) Treaty is a natural evolution of our close and longstanding defence relationship, and builds on the enduring bonds between our defence forces, and across all sectors.
 - On 17 April, PNG’s Foreign Minister signalled Papua New Guinea had completed the domestic processes required to bring the treaty into force.
 - Our domestic processes are expected to be complete in the middle of the year, the Pukpuk Treaty can then enter into force via an exchange of diplomatic letters.
- The core principles of the Pukpuk Treaty include:
 - a mutual defence Alliance which recognises an armed attack on Australia or Papua New Guinea would be a danger to the peace and security of both countries;
 - expansion and modernisation of our defence relationship, including by setting out our shared ambition to establish a recruitment pathway for Papua New Guinea citizens into the ADF;
 - enhancing our forces capability, interoperability and integration;
 - ensuring any activities, agreements or arrangements with third parties would not compromise the ability of either of the Parties to implement the Treaty; and
 - reaffirming both countries’ absolute respect for our neighbours’ sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.
- The Australian Government is deeply committed to implementing the Pukpuk Treaty.
 - Reflected by the significant investment announced in the Budget on the 12th May 2026.
 - This ensures we can realise the benefits of the Pukpuk Treaty in a meaningful way.
 - And demonstrates Australia’s commitment to working with our nearest neighbour to contribute to the collective security of the Indo-Pacific.

Costs associated with the Pukpuk Treaty

- The Pukpuk Treaty itself is an enabling framework and does not commit Australia financially to any specific support under the provisions of the Treaty.
- The funding announced in this Budget is about investing in initiatives to operationalise the Treaty, supporting deeper cooperation and integration between both countries’ defence forces.

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PDR No: SB26-000308

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Susan Bodell

Recruitment of Papua New Guinea citizens into the ADF

- . The Pukpuk Treaty supports the expansion and modernisation of our defence relationship.
 - Including by setting out our shared ambition to establish a recruitment pathway for Papua New Guinea citizens into the ADF.
 - Discussions between Papua New Guinea and Australia remain underway to develop a pathway for implementation.
 - The second bilateral Joint Working Group was held with Papua New Guinea in late March 2026.
- . As a first step, on 1 January 2026, eligible permanent residents living in Australia who are citizens of Papua New Guinea became eligible to apply to join the ADF.
 - 31 applications are under consideration.
- . Any recruitment pathway will maintain ADF recruitment standards.

Portfolio Budget Statement figure of \$64.6 million for PNG recruitment

- . This figure reflects Defence's initial assessment for the design of the Recruitment Pathway, delivery of the pilot, and assessment of the program.
- . Our discussions with PNG have focused on building a pathway that will support candidates to prepare for life in Australia and service in the ADF.
- . The figure reflects the holistic approach we plan to take in delivering the pilot program in PNG.

Weapons security and gifting

- . On 20 October 2025, Deputy Prime Minister Marles and Papua New Guinea Defence Minister Joseph agreed to further uplift Papua New Guinea Defence Force capability through the provision of 3,500 Australian-made combat rifles.
- . On 18 March 2026, CDF Johnston wrote to CDF Polewara, formally offering the Australian Combat Assault Rifle to Papua New Guinea, on a one-for-one basis. Arrangements for providing the replacement weapons will include measures to enhance weapons security.
- . This process is still being finalised, but we can confirm:
 - Defence has put a Request for Quote to the manufacturer (Thales Australia) to finalise costs and scope of delivery, including ancillaries, ongoing maintenance provision and disposal of Papua New Guinea's retired fleet of weapons.
 - Defence will work with Papua New Guinea to conduct any required weapons security and storage upgrades.
 - This partnership on small arms capability, as part of our decades-long Defence Cooperation Program, is implemented in full compliance with Australia's international obligations.
 - Defence applies governance and risk mitigation processes to all provisions of military equipment to foreign governments and acts in accordance with its international obligations, including those under the Arms Trade Treaty.

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Uniform gifting

- On 20 October 2025, Minister for Defence Industry and Pacific Island Affairs, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, announced the gifting of 4,500 sets of Australian-made combat uniforms to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.
 - Including, for the first time, uniforms specifically designed for women as well as maternity uniforms.
- On 31 March, the first tranche of 2,500 uniforms were handed over to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force at a gifting ceremony at Murray Barracks in Port Moresby, received by Papua New Guinea Defence Minister Joseph.

Defence support to Papua New Guinea's Investigation into Papua New Guinea Defence Force Recruitment Processes

- Australia is aware of the allegations concerning the Papua New Guinea Defence Force recruitment process, and Prime Minister Marape's announcement of an independent investigation.
 - At Prime Minister Marape's request, Australia agreed to provide support to this investigation.
 - Australian Army Brigadier Nicholas Foxall served as an independent advisor to the investigation.
- Further questions about the investigation are a matter for the Government of Papua New Guinea.

ADF assets deployed for Tropical Cyclone Maila Response in Papua New Guinea

- Defence supported the Papua New Guinea Defence Force's response to Tropical Cyclone Maila, reinforcing whole of government humanitarian responses in both Papua New Guinea and Australia.
- Support included aerial surveillance activity over Milne Bay as well as delivery of food and humanitarian supplies to the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and other communities impacted by Tropical Cyclone Maila.

Death of Fijian civilian in Republic of Fiji Military Forces custody

- Defence is aware of the death of a Fijian civilian while in the custody of Republic of Fiji Military Force personnel.
- While this incident is under investigation by Fijian authorities, it is not appropriate for Defence to comment further.

The Pacific Response Group

- The Pacific Response Group is a multi-national Pacific military unit which supports civilian-led responses to regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief crisis.
 - On 24 October 2025, South Pacific Defence Ministers endorsed the second phase of the Pacific Response Group. This included:
 - : agreeing to move to year round co-location in New Zealand from 1 July 2026, and

- : exploring options to broaden the Pacific Response Group's mandate to include stabilisation operations.
 - Broadening the Pacific Response Group's mandate to include stabilisation operations would build on what already exists.
 - : It is a natural evolution and will formalise and better prepare us for regional contingencies, drawing on the lessons we have learned through previous deployments, such as the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.
 - Ministers also tasked Chiefs and Heads of Defence to explore options to establish a Pacific Response Group-led exercise, taking into account the existing cycle of exercises and activities in the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework.
- The rapid establishment of the Pacific Response Group has been a testament to the depth and breadth of cooperation between Pacific militaries.
 - In its first year of operation, the Pacific Response Group had its first deployment in response to the earthquake in Vanuatu in December.
 - Over the 2024-25 High Risk Weather Season, members participated in nine training courses and deployed to Exercise CROIX DU SUD 2025, rehearsing multinational Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations and non-combatant evacuation operation.
- At the Pacific Islands Forum in Honiara in September 2025, Leaders declared the Blue Pacific Continent an Ocean of Peace and committed to delivering collective peace and security initiatives, supported by a flexible and responsive regional architecture that enables peace.
 - The Pacific Response Group operationalises this direction.
- The Pacific Response Group further entrenches Pacific-led security response mechanisms, enabling Pacific security to be led and provided by the Pacific.
 - The Pacific Response Group only deploys at the request of an affected state.
 - It is available to be called upon by all Pacific Islands Forum members, enabling members without militaries to benefit from specialised military Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief support, enhancing our collective resilience.
- The Pacific Response Group responds to the call from Pacific leaders in the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security to strengthen regional security cooperation and collective action.

South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting 2025

- Defence Ministers or their representatives from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga gathered in Viña del Mar for the tenth South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting from 22 to 24 October 2025.
 - They were joined by observers from Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
 - Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Mr Baron Waqa, attended as a special guest.

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- Members endorsed the second phase of the Pacific Response Group and tasked the Secretariat to commence consultations on a South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting Status of Forces Agreement and to report back in 2026.
- Members welcomed updates on initiatives including the Pacific Defence Faith Network, the Academic Cooperation Network, the Future Leaders' Summit and the Regional Operations Deployment Framework being scoped by the Joint Heads of Pacific Security.
- Members agreed that Fiji would host the next meeting in 2026.

Indo-Pacific Infrastructure

- The Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Program is delivering security-related infrastructure in cooperation with partner nations.
- Defence's infrastructure partnerships contribute to a region that is economically stable, strategically secure, capable and politically sovereign.
- The Indo-Pacific Infrastructure Program includes 43 active projects and activities across the Indo-Pacific within six different sub-programs: major works, minor works, maritime infrastructure, policing infrastructure, Defence's regional estate, and maintenance and sustainment.
- During the period 1 July 2018 to 30 March 2026, Defence's infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific have contributed an estimated \$687 million to Australian companies through the procurement of goods and services, and an estimated \$349 million to Indo-Pacific small and medium enterprises.
- During 2025-26, projects contributed an estimated \$134 million to Australian companies over 2024-25 through the procurement of goods and services, and an estimated \$85 million to Indo-Pacific small and medium enterprises. Defence completed two major projects in 2025 as follows:
 - On 12 August 2025, the formal handover of HMPNGS *Tarangau*, the Lombrum Naval Base in Papua New Guinea, occurred with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP in attendance.
 - On 3 October 2025, the formal opening of the Vuvale Maritime Essential Services Centre in Suva, Fiji, occurred with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP in attendance.
- The HMPNGS *Tarangau* redevelopment project, valued at \$503 million, was Defence's largest single investment in the Defence Cooperation Program.
- Due to COVID-19 impacts, ongoing global supply chain pressures, and the Voluntary Administration of the Head Contractor in December 2022, the completion of the project was delayed and increased in budget.
- Defence is closely monitoring cost escalation risks arising from the consequences of global conflicts potentially impacting infrastructure projects across the region.

Pacific Maritime Security Program

- Since 2018, 23 Guardian-class Patrol Boats have been delivered to 12 Pacific partner nations under the Pacific Maritime Security Program.

- . On 29 January 2026, the 23rd Guardian-class Patrol Boat was delivered to the Republic of Marshall Islands.
- . On 2 June 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP announced Australia could deliver the final Guardian-class Patrol Boat to Maldives, in order to strengthen maritime security and maritime domain awareness in Maldives' exclusive economic zone and our shared northeast Indian Ocean Region.
 - On 17 April 2026, this vessel was handed over to the Maldives at HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia
- . In August 2025, Australia delivered a replacement commercially-built landing craft to Tonga, fulfilling a request made by Tonga in November 2024.
- . Defence is enhancing the fixed-wing aerial surveillance services that are provided under the Pacific Maritime Security Program.
 - The Request for Tender for these services closed on 23 June 2025. Defence has commenced the tender evaluation process, with contract award expected in quarter three 2026.
 - Defence had planned a 12-month review period for the Enhanced Aerial Surveillance Program tender, which we are still in.
 - The Tender is a complex activity as it delivers for deliver for 15 Pacific island countries and regional organisations, managed through a complex aviation regulatory environment and has included clarification response to industry and clarifications sought from Defence of the bidders.
- . Defence has released a Request for Tender for the Pacific Maritime Support Coordinator to manage maintenance and sustainment of delivered capability under the Pacific Maritime Security Program.
 - The Request for Tender was released to industry on 11 March 2026 as a Limited Tender to those who participated in the Request for Proposal in 2025. The closing date for submissions is 28 May 2026.
- . Defence recently enacted the first of three possible three-year contract extensions with TAFE Queensland, commencing from August 2026. The contract extension has a value of \$50.54 million.
- . The Government of Vanuatu's Guardian-class Patrol Boat, RVS *Takuare*, ran aground on a reef off South Epi Island on 5 October 2025.
 - There were no Australian personnel on board at the time of the grounding.
 - On 16 October 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister agreed to Vanuatu's request to support recovery operations, including stabilising and defueling the vessel, delivering recovery equipment, sea lifting and further assessments.
 - The vessel is currently in a shipyard in Cairns, there has been no advice and/or request from Government of Vanuatu on next steps.

Australia-Pacific Defence School

- Since 2022, the ADF has partnered with forces in Fiji and Timor-Leste to deliver United Nations Peace Operations training to over 100 military personnel from the region under the banner of the Australia-Pacific Defence School.
- On 8 August 2024, Government agreed to amplify the effect of the Australia-Pacific Defence School by integrating it within a Regional Training Framework.
- The concept for the Framework was endorsed at the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in October 2024.
- The online course library will reduce duplication in the training offered across the Pacific Defence community and create operational efficiencies.

Vanuatu-Australia Security Relationship

- Australia and Vanuatu are in ongoing negotiations of the Nakamal agreement; any further questions should be referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as the lead agency.

Tonga-Australia Kaume'a Ofi Agreement

- In September 2025, Australian and Tongan officials signed a Statement of Intent to elevate the bilateral relationship under a new agreement named 'Kaume'a Ofi' [kow-may-ah oh-fee], meaning 'close friendship'.

Any further questions on the agreement should be referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Australia-Fiji Treaty Negotiations

- On 5-7 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong and Minister for Pacific Island Affairs, the Hon Pat Conroy MP visited Fiji to finalise negotiations to establish a Vuvale Union.
 - Taking forward the agreement of our Prime Ministers in September 2025 to elevate our partnership.
- The Vuvale Union will be a transformative, enduring agreement to strengthen security, economic and people to people links between Fiji and Australia.

Any further questions should be referred to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

ANZMIN 2026 and Australia-New Zealand Operationalising the Alliance Statement

- Building on the work to date to strengthen our defence relationship, Australia and New Zealand recently announced our intent to operationalise our Alliance.
- It means our defence forces will be increasingly prepared, exercised and rehearsed to be able to operate seamlessly as an Anzac force.
 - We will achieve this through a sharper focus on force posture activities, combined operations and exercises, defence industry integration, preparedness, resilience, and an increasingly integrated approach to Pacific security.
- Deputy Prime Minister Marles and New Zealand's new Minister of Defence the Hon Chris Penk MP attended the ANZAC commemorations in Sydney on 24 April 2026.

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PDR No: S826-000308

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Susan Bodell

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
17 April 2026	Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko signalled Papua New Guinea had completed the domestic processes required to bring the Pukpuk Treaty into force.
12 April 2026	The Minister for Pacific Island Affairs and Minister for Defence Industry the Hon Pat Conroy MP announced Australia would provide \$2.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea to support their responses to Tropical Cyclone Maila.
31 March 2026	First tranche of 2,500 uniforms were handed over to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force at a gifting ceremony in Port Moresby, received by Papua New Guinea Defence Minister Joseph.
17 March 2026	On 17 March 2026, the third Australia-New Zealand Ministerial Consultations (ANZMIN 2+2) were held in Canberra. Defence Ministers signed the Operationalising the Australia-New Zealand Alliance: Anzac 2035 Closer Defence Relations Statement .
29 January 2026	On 29 January 2026, the 23 rd Guardian-class Patrol Boat to be delivered under the Pacific Maritime Security Program was handed over to the Republic of the Marshall Islands during a handover ceremony at HMAS Stirling, Western Australia.
22 – 24 October 2025	10th South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting in Chile (attended by Defence Ministers or their representatives from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga).
20 October 2025	The 31 st Australia-Papua New Guinea Ministerial Forum was held in Canberra and announced six avenues for initial investment and cooperation.
15 October 2025	The Assistant Minister for Defence the Hon Peter Khalil MP, attended the commissioning ceremony of VOA Late. His Majesty King Tupou VI of Tonga formally commissioned the landing craft, delivered under Australia's Pacific Maritime Security Program, in Nuku'alofa, Tonga.
6 October 2025	Prime Ministers Albanese and Marape signed the Papua New Guinea – Australia Mutual Defence Treaty (Pukpuk Treaty)
3 October 2025	Formal handover ceremony for the Vuvale Maritime Essential Services Centre, Suva, Fiji.
2 October 2025	A decommissioning ceremony was held in Brisbane, Queensland for the Republic of the Marshall Islands' Pacific Patrol Boat RMIS Lomor 03 (<i>pronounced 'Loh-mor'</i>), the last operational vessel from the original Pacific Patrol Boat Program.

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Date	Event
16 September 2025	Prime Minister Albanese, Deputy Prime Minister Marles and Minister Conroy attended the 50 th Anniversary of Independence Celebrations in Papua New Guinea.
12 August 2025	Formal handover ceremony for the Lombrum Naval Base Redevelopment Project, Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. The total Defence investment in the project was \$503 million.
2 June 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Maldives Minister for Defence, Mohamed Ghassan Maumoon issued a joint media release announcing Australia will gift an Australian-built Guardian-class Patrol Boat to the Maldives.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
20 October 2025	Media request	The ABC (Steven Dziedzic) sought information on RVS <i>Takuare</i> 's grounding.	Request finalised.
11 June 2025	Media request	Reuters sought details on the Request for Tender for fixed-wing aerial surveillance services under the Pacific Maritime Security Program. Defence provided limited information as the tender was ongoing.	Request finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 21 April 2026, [ABC News](#) reported that Vanuatu was on the verge of signing a security agreement with China, which threatened the progress of the Nakamal Agreement.
- On 1 April 2026, [the National \(Papua New Guinea\)](#) reported on the gifting of the first tranche (2500/4500) of Australian-made uniforms to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force.
- On 7 March 2026, [ABC News](#) reported on Papua New Guinea Chief of Defence Force Rear Admiral Polewara's comments that the Papua New Guinea Defence Force does not have adequate facilities to safely store the 3,500 rifles being gifted by Australia.
- On 17 February 2026, the [Vanuatu Post](#) reported that a Commission of Inquiry had been appointed into matters relating to the grounding of RVS *Takuare* in October 2025.
- On 29 December 2025, the [Australian Financial Review](#) reported that China plied Vanuatu with gifts to foil the Australian security deal.
- On 28 October 2025, [ABC News](#) reported, in relation to the Pacific Response Group, that SPDMM ministers 'want to transform a military disaster response group into a taskforce that could also conduct Pacific "stabilisation" missions'.
- On 21 October 2025, [the Australian](#) reported that Deputy Prime Minister Marles signals green light for a \$500m+ loan to Papua New Guinea, on top of new rifles, barracks and pilot training. Says 10,000 recruits is a 'statement of intent' rather than a plan.
- On 18 September 2025, [the Australian Financial Review](#) reported that China loomed large over Prime Minister Albanese's embarrassing set-back.

- On 18 September 2025, [the Australian](#) reported on the delay of the Papua New Guinea Defence Treaty with Australia, instead sending its Defence Minister to Beijing, raising concerns over Chinese influence.
- On 17 September 2025, [ABC News](#) reported on the delay of the Australia-Papua New Guinea Defence Treaty due to Papua New Guinea cabinet approval issues, with both nations signing a communique outlining the agreed terms of a future military alliance.
- On 16 September 2025, [the ABC](#) reported it had seen a copy of the treaty, alongside a Papua New Guinea Cabinet submission.
- On 15 September 2025, [the Australian](#) reported critics had warned the Australia-Papua New Guinea defence treaty poses a 'sovereignty threat'.
- On 15 August 2025, [the Australian](#) reported on a plan to recruit Papua New Guinea citizens into the ADF as part of the Papua New Guinea-Australia Defence Treaty. It reports the recruitment pathway would have 'stringent requirements; include a requirement for citizenship; and would fill 'skilled tradespeople, drivers and logistics roles'.
- On 12 August 2025, [ABC News](#) reported on Deputy Prime Minister Marles' visit to Manus Province to open the Lombrum Joint Initiative. Stephen Dziedzic and Marian Faa reported that the cost of the redevelopment 'more than doubled from the original \$175 million price tag'.
- On 4 August 2025, [The National Tribune](#) published an article covering the completion of Exercise TALISMAN SABRE in Papua New Guinea.

Division: Pacific Division	
PDR No: SB26-000308	
Prepared by: Lisa Chadderton Acting First Assistant Secretary Pacific Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Lisa Chadderton Acting First Assistant Secretary Pacific Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 8 April 2026
Cleared by DFG: Nevin Gamal Assistant Secretary Specialist Groups	Date: XX April 2026 [DFG consult to be finalised in next update to align with Budget release]
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group	Date: 14 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - UNITED STATES UPDATE

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy to support on the United States defence relationship and force posture policy and infrastructure investments.
Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate to support on AUKUS and force posture related infrastructure and security issues.

Context: Under the second Trump Administration, the United States has adopted an 'America First' approach to foreign affairs and defence issues. There has been a significant increase in media and political commentary on the Alliance, the Trump Administration's domestic and foreign policy priorities, and the implications for Australia.

Australia's force posture cooperation with the United States has drawn commentary regarding Australia's sovereignty and potential implications in the event of regional conflict.

Key Messages

- The Alliance between Australia and the United States has never been more important, given the challenging strategic environment.
- Our Alliance is underpinned by history, mutual respect for sovereignty and national interest.
- The United States has requested that its allies and partners increase defence spending.
- Australia agrees that challenging strategic circumstances demand unprecedented investments, which is why Australia has engaged in the single biggest peace time increase in defence expenditure in Australia's history.
- Counterparts in the United States have welcomed Government's announcement of an additional \$14 billion over the next four years to deliver the 2026 National Defence Strategy.
- Australia is working at pace with the United States to progress the priorities agreed at the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations held in 2025, including the delivery of the AUKUS program, the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Enterprise, and force posture initiatives.
- Force posture cooperation with the United States helps maintain a peaceful, stable and prosperous region, strengthens interoperability with Australia's ally, and provides a platform for regional engagement.
- Interoperability with the United States and other partners improves Australia's ability to respond to regional crises.

Talking Points

Strategic Circumstances

- The United States is our principal strategic partner.
 - We are bound by a history of bipartisan cooperation.

- Our cooperation is vital to one another's defence, security and economic prosperity, and that of the region.
 - 2026 marks the 75th anniversary of our Alliance.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy makes clear that a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific is reliant on a committed and enduring United States presence in the region.
 - A stable balance of power is a necessary pre-condition to ensure that no country attempts to achieve its goals by force.
- In a tougher strategic environment, the United States Alliance is of increasing importance to Australia.
 - The Alliance, including AUKUS, fundamentally expands Australia's sovereignty by increasing Australia's ability to protect its interests by providing access to world-leading defence capability and technology, training and combined exercises, and vital intelligence capabilities.
- Our force posture cooperation with the United States helps maintain a peaceful, stable and prosperous region, strengthens interoperability with our ally; and provides a platform for regional engagement.
 - We achieve this by enhancing logistics interoperability, pre-positioning stores, generating new capability, conducting training and exercises, and increasing people-to-people links.
- Our regular engagements with the Trump Administration have reaffirmed the importance of the Alliance and force posture cooperation.

Australia's priorities for the Alliance with the United States

- We are pleased with the outcomes from Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations 2025 [8 December 2025].
- Consistent with commitments at the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations 2025, Australia's priorities for engagement with the United States include:
 - enhancing and maintaining the capability to make greater contributions to collective deterrence;
 - advancing key priorities across an ambitious range of force posture cooperation, taking tangible steps to operationalise the Alliance;
 - advancing implementation of the Optimal Pathway under AUKUS to deliver at pace and ensure the long-term success of the AUKUS partnership;
 - deepening cooperation through streamlining bilateral defence trade and bolstering our defence capability and industrial base collaboration;
 - accelerating collaboration on a shared pathway for the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Enterprise; and
 - investing in Indo-Pacific partnerships with the United States to contribute to regional stability and resilience.

Australian sovereignty

- . On 9 February 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister made a statement to Parliament on 'Securing Australia's Sovereignty' which outlined:
 - our extensive cooperation; and
 - the robust policy frameworks and principles that maintain and protect our sovereignty.
- . In this statement the Deputy Prime Minister said our alliance with the United States "fundamentally strengthens, rather than diminishes, our sovereignty."
 - It "affords Australia capability, technology and intelligence advantages we simply could not acquire or develop on our own."
 - It "expands [Australia's] strategic options, makes us less vulnerable to coercive action, and enables Australia to pursue our national security interests far beyond what we could achieve alone."
- . Australia-United States force posture initiatives are governed by the treaty-level 2014 Force Posture Agreement, under which United States' access to, and use of, Australian facilities and areas is on a rotational basis, mutually determined, and at Australia's invitation, with full respect for Australian sovereignty.
 - The treaty is published on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website.
- . Force posture cooperation in, from and through Australian territory is subject to our longstanding, bipartisan Government policies of full knowledge and concurrence, and of not hosting foreign military bases.

United States Review of AUKUS

Handling note: Refer programmatic questions regarding AUKUS to the Australian Submarine Agency.

- . Our officials are working closely with counterparts in the United States and the United Kingdom on the Review's outcomes.
 - The Review reaffirmed President Trump's clear and unambiguous support for AUKUS during his meeting with the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP in Washington [21 October 2025].
- . At the December AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting in Washington D.C., the three AUKUS defence ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to the AUKUS partnership [10 December 2025].
 - The three ministers committed to finding opportunities to strengthen AUKUS, and enhance the pace and focus on delivery to ensure the long-term success of the AUKUS partnership.
- . Our engagements with the Trump Administration have shown clear and consistent support for AUKUS.

- The Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP [11 February 2025, 5 May 2025, 21 October 2025], the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, [7 February 2025, 30 May 2025, 26 August 2025, 8 December 2025] and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Penny Wong [21 January 2025, 1 July 2025, 8 December 2025] have discussed AUKUS with their counterparts.
- The AUKUS partnership is a great deal for all three countries, which is why it continues to enjoy strong bipartisan support in the United States and United Kingdom.

The United States calls for an increase in Australia's defence spending

Handling Note: Refer questions on the United States calls for increased defence spending to Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group, Hugh Jeffrey. Refer questions on more detailed Defence spending information to Chief Financial Officer, Steven Groves.

- Australia and the United States have a shared view of challenges facing the Indo-Pacific, and we take seriously our role as a trusted and capable ally.
- The United States has requested allies and partners around the world increase their defence spending, from Europe to the Indo-Pacific. This is not unique to Australia.
- We agree that challenging strategic circumstances demand unprecedented investments.
 - Over the next decade, the Government's investment of \$887 billion includes an additional \$117 billion that has been injected since the 2024 National Defence Strategy was released.
- Australia's defence funding is aligned to our two year National Defence Strategy cycle to ensure alignment of strategy, capabilities and required funding.
- Through the 2026 National Defence Strategy, the Government committed to a generational reinvestment in the ADF posture, capability and structure.
- This will deliver \$425 billion across the decade to 2035-36 to increase the range and lethality of the ADF, strengthen Australia's national resilience, and focus our international engagement on enhancing interoperability and collective deterrence.
 - Following the Government's commitment of \$14 billion over the next four years and \$53 billion over the next decade, Defence funding is now projected to rise to approximately 3.0 per cent of GDP by 2033-34, using the common methodology adopted by NATO allies.
 - The NATO methodology captures additional defence and security expenditure, such as infrastructure investments, defence housing, pensions for defence personnel, and elements of the Australian Border Force and Australian Intelligence Community.

Release of the United States National Defense Strategy

Handling note: Questions about the specific design and contents of the US National Defense Strategy should be directed to the US Government.

- . We welcome the National Defense Strategy's reiteration of the United States' commitment to a peaceful and open Indo-Pacific, and the role that allies and partners play in collective security.
 - Just as Australia's recent 2026 National Defence Strategy recognised the continued importance of a strong and active United States military presence to our region's stability and prosperity.

Australia's support for future United States military operations

- . The Government has been clear on their commitment in making sovereign, independent decisions with regard to how Defence capabilities are employed.
 - Any decision to commit Australian forces to a conflict will be made by the Government of the day.
- . We work closely with the United States to advance our shared interests in peace and security in the Indo-Pacific.

US military actions in Iran

- . As the Prime Minister has stated, Australia supports the United States acting to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and from continuing to threaten international peace and security.
- . Australia joins partners in calling on all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law.

Was the E-7A Wedgetail aircraft deployment at the request of the United States?

- . The request Australia responded to was from the United Arab Emirates.
 - A number of other countries, including the United States, have made requests which are centred on helping to provide for the defence of the Gulf countries.

United States sinking of Iranian frigate

- . As the Prime Minister stated [6 March 2026], three Australian personnel were on board the submarine that sank the Iranian frigate.
- . As the Prime Minister also stated [6 March 2026], no Australian personnel participated in offensive action against Iran.

Use of Joint Facilities

- . Defence will not comment on operational or intelligence matters.

United States Military Aircraft in Australia as a safety requirement

- . United States aircraft have been visiting Australia for decades, undertaking a range of activities and tasks.
 - This is a longstanding feature of Australia's cooperation with the United States, in accordance with well understood policies and procedures, and with full respect of Australia's sovereignty.
- . As a matter of routine, it is not appropriate to discuss the details of operational security discussions with allies and partners.

Force Posture Cooperation

- . In 2025-26, the United States force posture activities included:
 - March 2025 to October 2025 and March 2026 to present: several exercises involving United States marines and sailors of the 14th and 15th iterations of the Marine Rotational Force in Darwin;
 - July to August 2024 and late 2025: United States Army watercraft rotations;
 - February 2025: port visit by USS Minnesota to Darwin;
 - March 2025: rotations of United States maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft;
 - progressing delivery of key infrastructure upgrades at RAAF Bases Darwin and Tindal; and
 - prepositioning United States' materiel under the Combined Logistics, Sustainment, and Maintenance Enterprise.

Does full knowledge and concurrence require Australia to provide explicit approval for the United States' activities from Australia?

- . Full knowledge and concurrence means that United States force posture initiatives are undertaken with the approval of the Australian Government of the day.
- . At the invitation of Australia, all United States force posture initiatives are mutually determined, and conducted with full respect for Australian sovereignty.
- . Force posture cooperation is governed by robust consultation frameworks that ensure activities are conducted in accordance with Australia's policy of full knowledge and concurrence.

Australian Government transparency regarding force posture activities

- . Force posture cooperation with the United States is conducted transparently and in line with Australian Government direction.
 - Joint Statements from annual Australia-United States Ministers' meetings provide updates on force posture activities. These statements are published on the Defence and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade websites.
 - The Defence website also contains information on all six force posture initiatives, as well as links to recent and relevant public announcements.

All United States funded projects for construction opportunities are released via SAM.gov (the United States equivalent to AusTender). Engagement with the Indo-Pacific region on United States force posture cooperation

- . Australia and the United States have been transparent and open with regard to our strategic intent and the nature of our cooperation to ensure a favourable regional strategic balance.
- . Force posture cooperation helps maintain a secure and resilient region, strengthens interoperability with the United States, contributes to effective deterrence and provides a platform for regional engagement.

- In 2025, Australia's force posture cooperation with the United States contributed to collaboration with regional countries, including Japan, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines.
- Australia-United States force posture cooperation is not aimed at any one country. It is a longstanding bilateral program, first announced in November 2011.

Number of United States defence personnel in Australia

- The tempo of our exchanges, engagements, exercises and rotations means the number of United States defence personnel in Australia varies day to day.
- Australia and the United States exchange personnel and have liaison staff at various levels within our respective defence organisations to promote information and skills exchanges and people-to-people links.
- United States military personnel in Australia are here at the invitation of Australia conducting activities that have been mutually determined. For example:
 - Approximately 400 United States military personnel are currently on long-term postings to Australia. This includes personnel in diplomatic roles, exchange personnel, liaison staff and defence program support staff.
 - Around 2,500 United States Marines rotate through Northern Australia between March and October as part of the annual Marine Rotational Force – Darwin.
 - Building up to 1,100 predominantly United States (and also United Kingdom) personnel for Submarine Rotational Force-West by 2030.
 - A significant number also deploy for short exercise periods. For example, approximately 14,000 United States defense personnel deployed to Australia earlier this year during Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 25.
 - Posted and temporary visits and exchanges are governed by the Status of Forces Agreement and, where applicable, the Force Posture Agreement.

Location of United States defence personnel

- Under the Force Posture Agreement access to, and use of, Australian facilities and areas by the United States is on a rotational basis, mutually determined, and at Australia's invitation.
- As announced at successive Australia-United States Ministerial consultations, current and potential future force posture cooperation occurs across Australia, including:
 - in the Darwin region and Northern Australia (including training areas);
 - at RAAF Bases Amberley, Curtin, Darwin, Learmonth, and Tindal;
 - at HMAS *Stirling*; and
 - at Bandiana, located in Albury-Wodonga.

United States investment at Albury-Wodonga Military Area

- The United States and Australia have prepositioned United States Army equipment and materiel at Albury-Wodonga (Bandiana) under the Combined Logistics, Sustainment, and Maintenance Enterprise.
- In August 2025, the United States system sought expressions of interest under the Unspecified Minor Military Construction program for a project to refurbish several

warehouses in North Bandiana in Australia's Albury-Wodonga Military Area, as part of the United States Pacific Deterrence Initiative.

- The Australian Government agreed to the warehouse refurbishment project under the Force Posture Agreement with the United States, and the project was announced at Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations 2024.
- A contract for refurbishment of up to four warehouses at North Bandiana to store United States Marine Corps Forces, Pacific and United States Army Pacific material was awarded on 26 January 2026.
- The project will support the Combined Logistics, Sustainment and Maintenance Enterprise, which is one of six United States Force Posture Initiatives.

United States investments at Cocos (Keeling) Island

- There is currently no United States investments planned for Cocos (Keeling) Island.

Infrastructure investment and Australia's northern bases

- Australia is committed to improving the ADF's ability to operate from Australia's northern bases, including through our force posture cooperation with the United States.
- United States investment in infrastructure in Australia's northern bases complements Australia's \$13–\$16 billion investment (through to 2035-36) under the 2026 Integrated Investment Program to ensure Defence has a logistically connected and resilient set of bases, ports and barracks across Australia's north.
 - These investments are pivotal to enhance force projection and improve Defence's resilience and ability to sustain operations through a crisis or conflict.

Handling note: Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy, and Industry will speak to Australia's infrastructure investment as it relates to Australia-United States force posture cooperation. The Chief Finance Officer will speak to Australia's infrastructure investment as it relates to Defence spending.

- When completed, facilities funded and constructed by the United States become the property of Australia and are approved for use by United States forces until no longer required.
 - Where facilities are used by both Australia and the United States, the parties will share the operation and maintenance costs based on proportionate use of the facilities.
- There are two Australian-funded projects completed – and three in construction – that will deliver upgrades to northern bases.
- There are currently 13 United States-funded projects delivering upgrades to northern bases under the Force Posture Agreement – four completed, eight under construction and one in design.
 - Australian businesses and joint ventures have been awarded United States-funded contracts for force posture infrastructure projects.

Status of the Submarine Rotational Force-West

- . In line with the Optimal Pathway announced by the Government on 14 March 2023, the establishment of Submarine Rotational Force-West from 2027 at HMAS *Stirling* will support Australia's acquisition of United States Virginia Class SSNs as well as the construction and delivery of SSN-AUKUS as an enduring nuclear-powered submarine capability for Australia.
 - As part of that support, United States personnel will rotate through Western Australia, some accompanied by families.
 - There is no United States base being established as part of Submarine Rotational Force-West.
 - The Australian Government has a longstanding bipartisan policy of no foreign bases.
- . United States families will participate in the local community, just as Australian posted personnel and their families do in the United States.

Nuclear armaments on United States strategic assets rotating through Australia

- . Visits by United States strategic assets are consistent with our treaty obligations.
- . Successive Australian Governments have understood and respected the longstanding United States policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence of nuclear weapons on particular platforms.
- . Australia will continue to comply with our international obligations, and the United States understands and respects our obligations regarding nuclear weapons.
 - The United States does not station nuclear weapons in Australia. Stationing of nuclear weapons in Australia is prohibited by the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Rarotonga), to which Australia remains committed.
 - There is no impediment under the Treaty of Rarotonga or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the visit of dual-capable foreign platforms to Australia's territory or transiting Australia's airspace or waters.

Handling note: refer questions on management of radioactive waste generated as part of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Program to the Australian Submarine Agency.

- . The Government is committed to the highest standard of nuclear stewardship, including the safe and secure disposal of radioactive waste as a result of Australia's Nuclear Powered Submarine Program.
- . Routine nuclear powered submarine operations and maintenance activities undertaken at HMAS *Stirling* by United States and United Kingdom nuclear-powered submarines as part of Submarine Rotational Force-West will result in the generation of low-level radioactive waste.
- . This low-level radioactive waste will be managed in a manner that prioritises safety and security at a licensed and regulated facility, before it is transported for longer-term storage and permanent disposal.
- . All radioactive waste will be managed in line with international best practice and in accordance with Australia's international and domestic legal obligations and

commitments, including the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga).

Testing in Woomera

- Australia and the United States have a long history of cooperation on the testing, development and experimentation of new and advanced capabilities.
- International cooperation on activities at the Woomera test range is done in accordance with Australia's laws and international obligations, and with full respect for Australian sovereignty.

America First Arms Transfer Strategy

- We are aware President Trump signed an Executive Order establishing the America First Arms Transfer Strategy on 6 February 2026.
- We welcome the strong efforts under this administration to significantly boost defence industrial capacity.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
15 May 2026	The 15th rotation of the United States Marine Rotational Force – Darwin arrived in the Northern Territory.
28 February 2026	The United States and Israel commence military strikes against Iran under Operation Epic Fury.
6 February 2026	President Donald Trump signed Executive Order 14383, establishing the America First Arms Transfer Strategy.
10 December 2025	AUKUS Defence Ministers' Meeting : the Hon Pete Hegseth, United States Secretary of War, hosted the Australian Deputy Prime Minister the Hon Richard Marles MP and the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon John Healey MP, at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.
8 December 2025	United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the Secretary of War hosted the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Penny Wong and the Deputy Prime Minister on December 8 in Washington, D.C., for the Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN 2025).
1 November 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister met with the Secretary of the United States Department of War in the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus in Kuala Lumpur.
29 October 2025	The Australian Submarine Agency announced the arrival of a US Virginia-class submarine (USS Vermont) at HMAS <i>Stirling</i> to conduct a larger and more complex package of maintenance work.
21 October 2025	The Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, travelled to Washington to meet with President Donald Trump.

13 – 17 October 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, travelled to Washington to meet senior officials from the Trump Administration, members of Congress, and key defence industry leaders.
14 September 2025	The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced \$12 billion additional funding to deliver the Henderson Defence Precinct.
11 September 2025	The Australian Government approved Storage and maintenance of United States Marine Corps (USMC) MV-22 Osprey aircraft in Australia
10 September 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the \$1.7 billion investment to acquire Ghost Shark for the Royal Australian Navy.
26 August 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister met with senior Administration officials, including the Secretary of the United States Department of War, Vice President JD Vance and the Secretary of State in Washington DC.
20 August 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister confirmed Australia was providing a formal submission to the United States AUKUS review, at the Submarine Institute of Australia Conference in Perth, Western Australia.
30 July 2025	The then United States Department of Defense formally announced the then Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's directive to the then Department of Defense to undertake a review of the AUKUS initiative through its official Twitter/X account.
6 June 2025	Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Precision Strike Missiles production, sustainment and follow-on development with the United States.
31 May 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister met with the then Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth in the margins of the 2025 Shangri-La Dialogue.
24 March 2025	Announcement of the delivery of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems launcher vehicles from the United States.
21 March 2025	Announcement of Long Range Anti-Ship Missile operational use following the successful operational test by the Royal Australian Air Force off the coast of California.
17 March 2025	The 14th rotation of the United States Marine Rotational Force - Darwin, arrived in the Northern Territory.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
9 October 2025	PQoN	No. 37 from Senator Henderson, relating to details of AUKUS review advice given to Government.	Answered.

9 October 2025	PQoN	No. 42 from Senator Henderson, regarding briefing support provided by Defence for the Prime Minister's travel to the US.	Answered.
9 October 2025	PQoN	No. 36 from Senator Henderson, regarding AUKUS-related engagements by the Prime Minister and Defence portfolio ministers and US counterparts.	Answered.
9 October 2025	PQoN	No. 237 from Senator Cash, relating to the US review of AUKUS.	Answered.
25 July 2025	PQoN	No. 99 from Senator Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) relating to the Pentagon's AUKUS Review.	Answered.
23 July 2025	PQoN	No. 98 from Senator Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) relating to the Pentagon's AUKUS Review and the AUKUS agreements.	Answered.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 29 April, Andrew Tillett, *Australian Financial Review*, [‘AUKUS is in trouble, warns British probe’](#).
- 28 April, Stephen Johnson, *The Nightly*, [‘David Brat: Who is Donald Trump’s nominee to be US ambassador to Australia? Everything we know.’](#)
- 24 April, Joe Kelly, *The Australian*, [‘US could run sub squadron ‘tomorrow’](#).
- 24 April, Andrew Greene, *The Nightly*, [‘US Navy boss sacking won’t rattle AUKUS’](#).
- 21 April, Cameron Miller, *West Australian*, [‘Changing face of conflict exposes folly of outdated AUKUS.’](#)
- 20 April, Matthew Knot, *The Age*, [‘Australia’s plea to Iran, US as Strait of Hormuz closes again’](#).
- 17 April, Peter Jennings, *The Australian*, [‘It’s too little and much too late’](#).
- 17 April, Matthew Knot, *Sydney Morning Herald*, [‘Trump still looms over our defence spending’](#).
- 16 April, Tom McIlroy, *The Guardian*, [‘Labor to boost defence spending by \\$53bn over next decade – but plan still short of Donald Trump’s demands’](#).
- 13 April, Jessica Gardner, *Australian Financial Review*, [‘GOP voters put off alliance by Trump attacks’](#).
- 9 April, Michael Read, *Australian Financial Review*, [‘Growing concerns over the value of \\$368b AUKUS submarine deal’](#).

- 9 April, Dan Jervis-Bardy, *The Guardian*, ['Albanese's tactic with Trump has always been don't buy-in and don't bite back. Why has that changed?'](#)
- 8 April, Geraldine Brooks, *The Age*, ['Trump exceeds worst expectations'](#).
- 8 April, Michael Read, *Australian Financial Review*, ['US alliance 'paralysed' as Trump lashes out'](#).
- 3 April, Tess Ikononou, *Canberra Times*, ['No clear case for longer Iran war with goals won: PM'](#).
- 3 April, Andrew Greene, *The Nightly*, ['President forces NATO into dangerous waters'](#).
- 1 April, Michael Kozoll, *Sydney Morning Herald*, ['US puts world on notice that it could exit Iran with Strait of Hormuz still closed'](#).
- 30 March, Allan Behm, *The Guardian*, ['Trump is impotently railing against the US's allies. Albanese is right to avoid the president's global catastrophe'](#).
- 30 March, Tom Lowrey and Paul Johnson, *ABC News*, ['Anthony Albanese calls for 'more certainty' on US objectives in Iran war'](#).
- 30 March, Patricia Karvelas, *ABC News*, ['Australian fears about Iran war, fuel shortages run deeper than an anti-Trump attitude'](#).
- 30 March, Joe Kelly, *The Australian*, ['Despite controversial start, Rudd leaves post with US alliance in good shape'](#).
- 29 March, Holly Tregenza, *ABC News*, ['Andrew Hastie says Iran war a 'huge miscalculation' by Donald Trump'](#).
- 27 March, Phoebe Hosier, *ABC News*, ['Trump singles out Australia as he criticises allies on Iran war support'](#).
- 27 March, Ben Doherty, *The Guardian*, ['Australia will be left with no submarines if it abandons Aukus, senior defence official warns'](#).
- 26 March, Shaun Carney, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, ['This madness has gone on for too long. Australia can no longer rely on Trump's America'](#).
- 26 March, Dominic Giannini, *The Canberra Times*, ['Aussies 'may be abandoned' by US'](#).
- 25 March, Peter Jennings, *Sky News*, ['No appetite': Why Australia under Labor is incapable of offering meaningful military support to the US in the Middle East'](#).
- 24 March, Alex Barwick and Elsie Lange, *ABC News*, ['Alice Springs residents conflicted over Pine Gap's role in US strikes in Middle East'](#).
- 24 March, Andrew Greene, *The Nightly*, ['Woomera Range Complex: United States testing new Hypersonic Attack Cruise Missile on Australian soil'](#).
- 22 March, Nathan Schmidt, *The Australian*, ['Australia joins UK, Japan pledging 'appropriate efforts' in Strait of Hormuz'](#).
- 11 March, Caitlyn Rintoul, *The West Australian*, ['Defence Minister Richard Marles confirms Trump administration have made requests to Australia in Iran War'](#).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000310

Last updated: 22 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Celia Perkins

- 11 March, Michael Shoebridge, *Sky News* '[PM's Iran claim 'sure to raise eyebrows' in Washington as Labor equivocates endlessly on the crisis in the Middle East](#)'.
- 11 March, Andrew Greene, *The West Australian* '[Aussie sailors sent to their rooms during deadly sub strike](#)'.
- 10 March, Oscar Godsell, *Sky News* '[Leading defence experts reveal Australia's role in the US-Israeli Iran war after Albanese government confirms request for military assistance](#)'.
- 9 March, Aaron Patrick and Andrew Greene, *The West Australian* '[Iran war: Australian Army's 1st Division prepares for Middle East despite Penny Wong's no-combat promise](#)'.

Division: International Policy Division	
PDR No: SB26-000310	
Prepared by: Ashley Townshend Assistant Secretary United States Alliance and International Force Posture Policy Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 28 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Bernard Philip First Assistant Secretary International Policy Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026
Consultation: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary United States Force Posture Initiatives Date: 2 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry Group Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - CHINA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Industry Group.

Supporting: Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy Division to support on international policy questions.

Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Vice Chief of Defence Force to support on South China Sea operational questions.

Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Head Military Strategic Commitments to support on ADF activities and interactions with the People's Liberation Army.

Context: We are engaging in defence dialogue with China. The ADF continues operating in the region. We reiterate to China our expectation of safe and professional behaviour by the People's Liberation Army.

Key Messages

- Defence continues to engage in dialogue with China. Dialogue is critical to exchange policy positions and manage differences.
- Australia is clear-eyed that the relationship will remain challenging. Defence's approach to engaging China is anchored in Defence's national interests.
- The ADF has maintained a robust program of international engagement with countries in and around the South China Sea for decades.
- The ADF will continue to exercise its rights under international law to freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, and supports others in doing the same.
- Defence strongly condemns unprofessional and unsafe military conduct that can endanger the safety of ADF personnel and increase the risk of miscalculation.
- Australia continues to raise any instances of unsafe and unprofessional behaviour directly with China through the appropriate channels in Canberra and Beijing.

Talking Points

Defence engagement with China

- Dialogue is at the heart of the Government's efforts to maintain a constructive relationship with China.
 - As the Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon Anthony Albanese MP said during his visit to China in July 2025, dialogue needs to be at the centre of the relationship.
- Australia's defence relationship with China is focused on dialogue with the People's Liberation Army.
 - Australia-China defence dialogue occurs principally between ministers, respective defence attachés, Australian Defence officials and the People's Liberation Army Office for International Military Cooperation.
 - Australia continues to engage alongside the People's Liberation Army in select multilateral fora.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000311

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Bernard Philip

Recent defence engagement with China

- . **Ministerial:** The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP met his Chinese counterpart, the Minister for National Defence, Admiral Dong Jun at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus in Kuala Lumpur on 1 November 2025.
- . The Deputy Prime Minister previously met his Chinese counterpart, the Minister for National Defence, Admiral Dong Jun at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2024.
- . **Band 4/4 Star:** On 13 August 2025, Chief of Defence Force Admiral Johnston met the then Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Department, General Liu Zhenli in Beijing.
 - Australia affirmed the importance of all countries acting in a manner that respects sovereignty and upholds peace, security and stability.
- . **Band 3/3 Star:** Australia and China held the 23rd Defence Strategic Dialogue in Beijing on 17 February 2025.
 - The Vice Chief of the Defence Force and Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry led the Australian delegation.
 - Both sides exchanged views on bilateral, global and regional security issues, as well as military transparency and communication.
 - Australia reiterated the importance of all countries in the region operating in a safe and professional manner at all times to avoid miscalculation or escalation.
- . **Band 2/2 Star:** Australia and China held the Defence Coordination Dialogue in Beijing on 17 October 2024, at the First Assistant Secretary level.
 - The two sides discussed regional security issues, expectations for safe and professional military behaviour, and opportunities for future defence dialogue.
 - From 19 to 24 October 2025, a delegation led by Rear Admiral James Lybrand, Commander of the Australian Defence College, visited China's National Defence University in Beijing.
- . **Band 1/1 Star:** On 17 to 19 September 2025, a Defence Assistant Secretary represented Australia at the 2025 Beijing Xiangshan Forum – a China-hosted international security dialogue.
- . Australia expects to have bilateral defence dialogue with China in 2026. Defence is engaging with China on mutually agreeable dates.

Taiwan

- . As the Prime Minister has said, there has been no change to Australia's bipartisan one-China policy.
- . In accordance with the one-China policy, Australia maintains an unofficial relationship with Taiwan focused on economic, trade and people-to-people ties.
- . Australia remains concerned by Beijing's increasing military coercion around Taiwan.

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- . Australia opposes any unilateral action to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.
 - Disputes should be managed through dialogue, not the use of force.

ADF activity in the South China Sea

- . Australia's longstanding position on the South China Sea is consistent and clear.
 - Defence continue to speak up – and act – in Defence's national interest, to support a region which is open, secure and prosperous.
- . ADF ships and aircraft exercise Australia's rights under international law to freedom of navigation and overflight, including in the South China Sea.
 - Australia has maintained a robust program of international engagement with countries in and around the South China Sea for decades.
- . Australia is deeply concerned when countries pursue claims or engage in activities, which are inconsistent with international law.
 - Or advance claims by intimidation, coercion, or other grey-zone activity.
- . China is rapidly modernising its armed forces without the transparency and reassurance expected of a major power.
 - Defence is now seeing China's exercises growing military capability further afield more often, and with more lethal capabilities.
 - Defence expects China to exercise this greater power in a way that respects the rights of smaller states and to resolve territorial disputes in accordance with international law.

Australian transits of the Taiwan Strait

- . The ADF periodically transits the Taiwan Strait and will continue to exercise freedom of navigation under international law as it has done for decades.
- . Regional Presence Deployments allow Australia to maintain a near-continuous maritime presence within the region to support Indo-Pacific security and stability.

Recent transits include:

 - Royal Australian Navy Anzac Class frigate HMAS *Toowoomba* transited the Taiwan Strait over 20-21 February 2026, in accordance with international law.
 - Australia (HMAS *Brisbane*) and Canada (HMCS *Ville de Quebec*) transited the Taiwan Strait on 6-7 September 2025 during routine deployments to the region.

Unsafe incidents

- . The Peoples Liberation Army's expansion in size, reach and operational tempo means the ADF is operating in close contact with the People's Liberation Army more often.
 - The majority of these interactions are safe and professional.
 - But at times, Defence experiences unsafe or unprofessional behaviour by the People's Liberation Army.
 - When this occurs, Defence raises concerns with China directly, in both Beijing and Canberra.

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- The ADF always operates in a safe and professional manner, and expects the same of the People's Liberation Army.
- Defence will continue to call out behaviour that falls short of Defence's expectations.

Unsafe or unprofessional incidents in the past 12 months

- The Australian Government routinely makes representations to China in Canberra and Beijing through diplomatic and defence channels following unsafe or unprofessional interaction.
- On 4 March 2026, a RAN MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and crew, supporting United Nations Security Council sanctions enforcement against North Korea, experienced unsafe conduct by a People's Liberation Army-Navy Z-9C helicopter.
 - The People's Liberation Army-Navy Z-9C helicopter flew within close range (approximately 30 to 45 metres) of the RAN MH-60R Seahawk helicopter, forcing the RAN MH-60R Seahawk helicopter to undertake evasive manoeuvres.
- On 19 October 2025, a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft conducting a maritime surveillance patrol in the South China Sea experienced unsafe conduct by a People's Liberation Army-Air Force Su-35 fighter aircraft where flares were released in close proximity to the Royal Australian Air Force P-8A aircraft.
 - The Royal Australian Air Force P-8A crew continued with their mission following this incident and completed the flight safely.
 - The proximity of the flares created an unnecessary flight hazard to the P-8A. This includes potential to damage the aircraft.

People's Liberation Army - Navy Task Group 31 in the South Pacific [December 2025]

- The ADF, in close coordination with international partners, monitored a task group comprised of:
 - The four People's Liberation Army – Navy vessels included:
 - : Yushen-class Landing Helicopter Assault ship (LHA-31) named *Hainan*
 - : Renhai-class Guided Missile Cruiser (CG-106) named *Yan'an*
 - : Jiangkai II-class Frigate (FFG-575) named *Yueyang*
 - : Fuchi-class Replenishment Vessel (AOR-907) named *LumaHu*.
 - Defence maintained a high level of situational awareness on the People's Liberation Army – Navy Task Group, monitoring its movement within Australia's area of interest.
- Australia maintains situational awareness across the region and monitors maritime and air traffic in Australia's near approaches.

People's Liberation Army Task Group 107 high seas live firing [21-22 February 2025]

- Concerns regarding notification times and best practices when undertaking military exercises stand.

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PDR No: 5826-000311

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Bernard Philip

- The People's Liberation Army did not advise Defence in advance, nor submit a request to Airservices Australia to promulgate a Dangerous Activities Notice to Airmen, or establish a Restricted Operations Zone.
- It is the responsibility of all states to conduct their activities on the high seas with due regard to the safety of civilian aviation.
- Defence and foreign affairs officials made representations following the high seas firing event in Beijing and Canberra.

Maritime Cooperative Activities with the Philippines in the South China Sea

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy made clear that Defence needs to invest in regional partnerships, and Maritime Cooperative Activities are a central mechanism for deterrence and engagement.
 - Maritime Cooperative Activities are aimed at strengthening the interoperability of the participants' defence and armed forces.
 - As the Deputy Prime Minister stated, Maritime Cooperative Activities demonstrate unwavering commitment to working together to maintain a peaceful, stable and prosperous region'.
 - The most recent Maritime Cooperative Activity the ADF participated in was with the Philippines from 11-12 April.

Incidents in the South China Sea between China and Philippines

- Australia is deeply concerned by ongoing dangerous and aggressive actions by China against the Philippines in the South China Sea.
- This includes the repeated and intentional ramming of Philippine vessels, causing structural damage, and the use of water cannons.
 - Such dangerous actions undermine efforts to de-escalate tensions.
- Australia urges restraint and adherence to international law.
- Australia has raised concerns to China about these instances through both defence and diplomatic channels on multiple occasions.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
4 March 2026	ADF MH-60R helicopter launched from HMAS <i>Toowoomba</i> experienced an unsafe and unprofessional encounter with a People's Liberation Army-Navy helicopter in the Yellow Sea.
1 November 2025	The Deputy Prime met with his counterpart Admiral Dong Jun at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Plus Meeting in Kuala Lumpur.
30 to 31 October 2025	Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and the United States participated in a Maritime Cooperative Activity within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone.

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Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Bernard Philip

26 October 2025	The United States Navy reported two separate crashes involving US Navy aircraft in the South China Sea while conducting routine operations. The first incident involved an MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter, and the second involved a F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter jet. All crew members were recovered safely.
19 October 2025	A Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft experienced unsafe and unprofessional conduct in the South China Sea from a People's Liberation Army-Air Force fighter jet.
19 to 24 October 2025	A delegation led by Rear Admiral James Lybrand, Commander of the Australian Defence College, visited China's National Defence University in Beijing.
17 September 2025	An Assistant Secretary from Defence's Strategy, Policy and Industry Group attended the 11th Beijing Xiangshan Forum in Beijing.
13 August 2025	Chief of Defence Force Admiral Johnston met Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Department, General Liu Zhenli in Beijing.
12 to 18 July 2025	The Prime Minister visited China, and met President Xi and Premier Li.
24 June 2025	HMS <i>Spey</i> and HMAS <i>Sydney</i> conducted freedom of navigation activity in the South China Sea.
29 April 2025	Australia, the Philippines, and the United States participated in a Maritime Cooperative Activity within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone, off the west coast of Luzon.
25 February to 9 March 2025	A series of departmental releases noted the People's Liberation Army-Navy Task Group operated near Australia's northern approaches.
11 February 2025	A Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft experienced unsafe and unprofessional conduct in the South China Sea from a People's Liberation Army-Air Force J-16 fighter jet.
4 May 2024	HMAS <i>Hobart</i> 's embarked helicopter experienced unsafe conduct by a People's Liberation Army aircraft while airborne in the Yellow Sea.
14 November 2023	HMAS <i>Toowoomba</i> experienced unsafe conduct by a People's Liberation Army-Navy warship in an encounter in the East China Sea.
26 May 2022	A Royal Australian Air Force P-8A maritime patrol aircraft was intercepted by a People's Liberation Army J-16 fighter aircraft during a routine maritime surveillance activity in international airspace in the South China Sea.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: 5826-000311

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Bernard Phillip

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
13 May 2026	FOI	ABC News requested information regarding reports, emails, or letters within SP&I Group relating to Xue Long and Xue Long 2 icebreaker research vessels and the Polar Research Institute of China.	Not yet processed.
7 May 2025	FOI	An individual requested documents regarding China's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile test firing in September 2025, and in September 2024.	Decisions finalised.
3 December 2025	QoN	QON 911, Senator Sarah Henderson question on number of flare incidents since 2020.	Not yet tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 7 March 2026, William Elliot, The Australian, [PLA chopper's actions ignite Defence anger](#)
- On 6 March 2026, Tom Lowrey, The ABC, [China accuses Australia of 'distorting facts' about helicopters' encounter](#)
- On 18 January 2026, Anthony Galloway, The Australian, [China says Australia must accept Taiwan reunification or face 'no forgiveness'](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000311

Last updated: 14 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffery, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Bernard Philip

Division: International Policy Division	
PDR No: SB26-000311	
Prepared by: Karen Radford Assistant Secretary North and South Asia Strategy, Policy and Industry Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 14 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Bernard Philip First Assistant Secretary International Policy Strategy, Policy and Industry Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 14 May 2026
Consultation: s47E(d) Acting Director, Domestic and Regional Military Strategic Commitments Vice Chief of Defence Force Group	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Hugh Jeffery Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy to support on military assistance to Ukraine and new commitments.

Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Head Military Strategic Commitments to support on Operation KUDU.

Steven Groves, Chief Financial Officer to support on funding and financial arrangements.

Chris Deeble AO CSC, Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment to support on disposals.

Context: Russian forces continue to advance slowly in Eastern Ukraine at significant cost. The United States has temporarily lifted sanctions on major Russian oil companies in the context of the US-Iran conflict.

Key Messages

- Australia condemns Russia's unilateral, illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine.
- The Government remains committed to supporting Ukraine to resolve the conflict on its terms, and to imposing costs on Russia for its aggression.
- Australia has committed more than \$1.7 billion in support to Ukraine, including over \$1.5 billion in military assistance, since February 2022.
- Defence continues to provide support through Operation KUDU, including training Ukrainian personnel in the United Kingdom (as part of the United Kingdom's Operation INTERFLEX).
- From July to October 2025, Australia deployed an E-7A Wedgetail aircraft to Europe to support North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Ukraine.
- Defence takes a proactive approach to identifying options to support Ukraine.
- Australia will consider requests to contribute to efforts to strengthen the Armed Forces of Ukraine and support any ceasefire.

Talking Points

- Russia continues to exert pressure on Ukraine, including through slow progress in the East, and attacks on military and civilian targets, and critical infrastructure.
 - Ukraine's primary aim is to continue to demonstrate it is able to impose costs on Russian forces and military targets in both Ukraine and Russia.
- Australia supports all meaningful progress towards a just and lasting peace for Ukraine, and greater security and stability for Europe. Russia must end its invasion.
- Australia also welcomes the leadership taken by the United Kingdom and France in planning for a 'Coalition of the Willing' to support a potential ceasefire.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000313

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Steven Groves, Chris Deeble

Defence's contribution to Government support for Ukraine

- . Australia's objective is two-fold:
 - support Ukraine to resolve the conflict on its terms; and
 - impose costs on Russia in response to its aggression.
- . Defence continues to work closely with other government departments to support the coordinated response to Russia's invasion.
- . Defence support has taken two principal forms: materiel and financial support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and ADF commitments under Operation KUDU.
- . Australia, through Defence, has committed over \$1.5 billion worth in materiel and financial support for Ukraine's Armed Forces, including equipment from ADF stocks, procurements from Australian defence industry, and grants to partner-managed funds.
 - On 4 December 2025, the Government announced its most recent package of support for Ukraine, which included:
 - : A \$50 million contribution to NATO's Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List initiative, which funds critical military equipment for Ukraine;
 - : A \$43 million package of ADF materiel [tactical air defence, munitions, and combat engineering equipment];
 - : A \$2 million contribution to the Drone Capability Coalition; and
 - : Sanctions on 45 more vessels linked to Russia's shadow fleet.
 - We continue to assess options for further support, aligned with Ukraine's needs.
- . The ADF is undertaking a range of activities under Operation KUDU, including:
 - Training Armed Forces of Ukraine personnel under the United Kingdom's Operation INTERFLEX (extended to the end of 2026).
 - : This is provided by a rotational force of approximately 90 ADF personnel.
 - : Over 3,600 Ukrainian personnel have graduated from ADF-delivered training, and more than 56,000 Ukrainians have been trained under the wider Operation INTERFLEX.
 - In 2024, Operation KUDU was expanded to deliver training, logistics, and in-theatre support, participating in Support and Assistance Group – Ukraine and the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine initiative as an operational partner.
 - : Up to 50 ADF personnel are providing logistics coordination and support in Poland and Germany.
 - Operation KUDU is conducted with the consent of the host nations.
 - From July to October 2025, a Royal Australian Air Force E-7A Wedgetail aircraft deployed to Europe to help protect a vital international gateway for humanitarian and military assistance into Ukraine.
 - : Under Operation KUDU, up to 150 ADF personnel deployed alongside the aircraft.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000313

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Steven Groves, Chris Deeble

Peace plan negotiations

- Australia supports all meaningful efforts, including those of the United States and partners, towards a just and lasting peace for Ukraine.
- We support efforts to achieve a peace deal that ends Russia's illegal and immoral war and safeguards security and stability in Europe.
 - A lasting peace should uphold Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and ensure Russia does not renew its aggression.

Australia's position on the 'Coalition of the Willing'

- As the Prime Minister has said, we are proud to be part of multilateral efforts to help Ukraine resist Russian aggression.
- We are pleased to be working alongside key partners, as part of the 'Coalition of the Willing', to coordinate and strengthen support for Ukraine and advance efforts towards a peace on Ukraine's terms.
 - We are involved in planning efforts led by the United Kingdom and France.
 - It is premature to talk about specific contributions.
- As an active participant of the 'Coalition of the Willing', Australia strongly supports the Paris Declaration issued on 6 January 2026 and the robust security guarantees it would provide Ukraine following a ceasefire.
 - *[Note: this does not amount to a commitment for Australia to provide peacekeeping forces, or for Australia to provide security guarantees.]*

Russian drone incursions NATO airspace

- We stand with Ukraine and Europe against Russia's dangerous provocations.
- Russian incursions into NATO airspace are deeply concerning.
- Through this pattern of escalation, Russia is again making it clear it is not serious about peace.

Bilateral Security Agreement with Ukraine

- We are currently exploring what areas of cooperation a bilateral security agreement with Ukraine could include.

Appointment of a Defence Attaché to the Australian Embassy to Ukraine in Kyiv

- Since April 2025, Defence has had two Australian-based staff posted to the Embassy, a uniformed Defence Attaché and a civilian Defence Counsellor.

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Australia's allocations for Ukraine support, breakdown by each financial year*[Handling note: refer further questions to Chief Finance Officer.]*

- The following table provides allocations for Ukraine-related activities (military assistance and operations) from Defence by financial year:

Ukraine support	2021-22 [\$'m]	2022-23 [\$'m]	2023-24 [\$'m]	2024-25 [\$'m]	2025-26 (to date) [\$'m]	Total [\$'m]
Military assistance	279.1	325.0	270.0	509.0	112.0	1,495.1
Operation KUDU	-	2.7	19.5	15.0	44.9	82.1
Total	279.1	327.7	289.5	524.0	156.9	1,577.2

Supplementary funding received by Defence to cover the cost of Ukraine military assistance

- Since February 2022, Defence has received \$212.90 million in supplementary funding for Ukraine-related activities.
- Defence has to date absorbed the majority of costs related to the provision of support and assistance to Ukraine.

ADF equipment being sold on the open market which might have been gifted to Ukraine*Handling note: Refer more detailed questions on this topic to Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment.*

- Australia works closely with Ukraine to ensure we provide assistance that makes a difference.
- Defence is prioritising Ukraine as a potential recipient of surplus items, and Defence's disposals processes have been the source for significant gifting to Ukraine.

Requests Ukraine has made of Australia

- Australia will continue our strong and steadfast support for Ukraine. We will stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes.
- The Government has received a wide range of requests from the Ukrainian government.
- It would not be appropriate to comment on the details of these requests.
- The Government remains in regular contact with Ukrainian counterparts, and all formal requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- We continue to assess options for further support, aligned with Ukraine's needs.
- Additional gifting to Ukraine from ADF stocks needs to be balanced against risk to our own sovereign capabilities.

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PDR No: SB26-000313

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Steven Groves, Chris Deeble

Delivery of M1A1 Abrams tanks

- Defence has now delivered all 49 gifted M1A1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine [first tranche July 2025, second tranche December 2025].

[To be updated prior to estimates] Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH) Tiger Helicopters to Ukraine

- Defence will continue to operate the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter (ARH) Tiger helicopters until the capability is replaced by the AH-64E Apache.
- Defence has commenced end of service planning and has engaged Ukraine to understand its requirements and suitability of any gifting option.
- No ARH Tiger helicopters have been formally retired from service.

Default provision of retiring materiel to Ukraine

- The Government remains committed to providing military assistance, which is relevant, practical, aligned with Ukraine's needs, consistent with international law, and with no adverse impact on ADF preparedness.
- Not all materiel being retired or otherwise disposed would be appropriate or suitable for gifting to Ukraine.
 - Gifting requires comprehensive considerations around equipment condition, sustainability, export control, and logistics.

The Government's view on Ukraine striking targets inside Russia, including with Australian-supplied equipment

- Australia supports Ukraine's right to defend itself against Russian aggression, consistent with international law.
- It is Ukraine's prerogative on how it employs its force, providing it does so consistent with applicable law, including international humanitarian law.

ADF using Russian oil

- Australia has strict measures in place to restrict the importation, purchase and transport of oil coming from, or originating in, Russia.
- Regrettably, a number of countries do not have mechanisms in place to track and monitor all of their energy products.
- We are evaluating options to put further pressure on Russia's oil revenue.

Russia's links with China, Iran and North Korea

- We are deeply concerned by Russia's deepening cooperation with North Korea, Iran and China given the disruptive implications for global security.
- The sizeable deployment of North Korean military personnel to Russia represents a dangerous expansion of Russia's war on Ukraine.

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- . Australia continues to call on China to influence Russia to end its war with Ukraine.

Defence capturing lessons from Russia's invasion of Ukraine

- . Like other countries, we are taking lessons from the conflict, including the evolution of capabilities and what this may mean for potential future conflict.
- . This has included discussions with Ukraine – including in Kyiv – and with other close partners.

Materiel and financial contributions

- . The Government has committed a range of equipment for Ukraine from ADF stocks, including:
 - vehicles:
 - : 49 M1A1 Abrams tanks
 - : 120 Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles
 - : 56 M113AS4 armoured vehicles
 - : 14 special operations vehicles
 - : 28 MAN 40M medium trucks and
 - : 14 trailers.
 - artillery capabilities:
 - : six M777 155mm lightweight towed howitzers
 - : 105mm and
 - : 155mm ammunition.
 - air defence systems and interceptors
 - air-to-ground precision munitions and associated capabilities
 - mortar, cannon and small arms ammunition and anti-armour weapons
 - 14 sea boats
 - combat engineering equipment
 - soldier equipment, including boots and
 - de-mining equipment.
- . Additionally, \$102 million worth of equipment has been procured from defence industry for gifting, and a further \$124.2 million in assistance provided via grants to credible partner-led funds, including the US-NATO Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List initiative (\$50 million), the United Kingdom administered International Fund for Ukraine (\$50 million) and the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization Trust Fund (\$24.2 million).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: 5826-000313

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Steven Groves, Chris Deeble

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
12 February 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister delivered an intervention to the 33 rd Ukraine Defence Contact Group at NATO Headquarters in Brussels.
6 January 2026	France and the United Kingdom co-hosted a Coalition of the Willing leaders' meeting in Paris. Australia was represented by the Australian Ambassador to France.
5 January 2026	The Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP spoke with President Zelenskyy by phone.
5 January 2026	Chiefs of Defence for the United Kingdom and France hosted a meeting with counterparts. The Vice Chief of the Defence Force attended virtually on behalf of the Chief of the Defence Force.
4 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Defence Industry, and Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a \$95 million package of support for Ukraine, including \$50 million to Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List, \$43 million of ADF materiel, and a \$2 million contribution to the Drone Capability Coalition. The Ministers also announced sanctions on 45 more vessels linked to Russia's shadow fleet.
25 November 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister joined a call of the Coalition of the Willing leaders, co-hosted by France and the United Kingdom.
4 September 2025	The Prime Minister attended a call of Coalition of the Willing leaders, co-hosted by France and the United Kingdom.
25 and 28 August 2025	Defence Chiefs of the United Kingdom and France hosted a virtual 'Coalition of the Willing' meeting. The Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC joined both meetings on behalf of the Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral David Johnston AC RAN.
17 and 19 August 2025	The Prime Minister attended the 'Coalition of the Willing' leaders' calls virtually, co-chaired by France and the United Kingdom.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
7 March 2025	QoN	No. 726, Military Aid and Assistance to Ukraine. Senator Jacquie Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) asked about third-party approvals for defence equipment gifted to Ukraine.	Tabled.
9 October 2024	PQoN	No. 763, Disposal of Retire Military Equipment. Rebekha Sharkie MP (Centre Alliance, South Australia) asked about the disposal of retired military equipment without it being offered to Ukraine.	Tabled.

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PDR No: SB26-000313

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Bernard Philip, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Steven Groves, Chris Deeble

Date	Type	Title	Status
12 August 2024	IQ	No. 5, Requests for Military Assistance. Senator Raff Ciccone (Labor, Victoria) asked about the process of receipt and prioritisation of Ukraine's assistance requests through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

Australian media outlets have reported extensively on Australian support for Ukraine, for example:

- On 24 October 2025, Sky News [reported](#) Ukraine's Ambassador to Australia had called for further assistance to Ukraine, including more Bushmasters, M113 armoured personnel carriers, and economic assistance.

Division: International Policy	
PDR No: SB26-000313	
Prepared by: Rob Tugen Assistant Secretary Global Partners, International Policy Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Bernard Philip First Assistant Secretary International Policy Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026
Consultation: s47E(d) Deputy Director Global Commitments Date: 2 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - MIDDLE EAST UPDATE

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, Head of Military Strategic Commitments to support on Current ADF operations.

David Nockels, First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration to support on Defence export control processes.

Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy to support on Australia's defence relationship with Israel and Gulf partners.

Context: Ongoing conflicts across the Middle East, including heightened regional tensions involving Iran and its proxies, continue to generate significant parliamentary, public, and media scrutiny. Australia's military support to regional partners will remain issues of sustained interest in the coming months. These matters sit alongside broader concerns about the safety of Australians in the region, freedom of navigation in critical waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz, and Australia's contribution to collective security arrangements.

Key Messages

- . Australia continues to underline the importance of ceasefire.
- . We continue to encourage efforts toward a diplomatic solution.
- . Navigational rights and freedoms under international law must be respected, and the Strait of Hormuz opened permanently.
- . We are working with all our partners, the United Kingdom, France and also the United States on efforts to re-open the Strait of Hormuz.
- . Australia stands ready to support an independent and strictly defensive Multinational Military Mission, led by the United Kingdom and France, once it is established.
- . Our intention is to contribute Australia's world-leading E-7A Wedgetail aircraft to this defensive effort.
- . Australia has a long history of contributing to peace and security in the Middle East.
- . The ADF currently has an E-7A Wedgetail aircraft and supporting personnel deployed in the Middle East.
 - It will provide long-range surveillance capability, providing early warning and detection of threats such as UAVs and missiles contributing to collective self-defence of Gulf partners.
- . Australia has also provided Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs) to the UAE to help them defend against airborne attacks from Iran.
- . Australia has called on Iran and its proxies to cease their indiscriminate attacks against other countries in the region, including against civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- . Australia supported the United States (US) acting to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and from continuing to threaten international peace and security.

- We continue to call on all parties to uphold international humanitarian law and protect civilian life.

Talking Points

ADF deployments in the Middle East

- All Defence personnel deployed to the Middle East, or posted to embassies, are safe and accounted for.
- The safety of Defence personnel is our highest priority, and Defence makes force protection arrangements accordingly.
- We will continue to revise force protection measures as the situation in the Middle East evolves.

Strait of Hormuz

- Australia wants the Strait of Hormuz open and navigational rights and freedoms restored.
 - Navigational rights and freedoms are vital to global prosperity and security, both in the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific.
- Australia, alongside the United Kingdom, France, the United States and other countries are all committed to supporting coordinated and collective action on making the Strait of Hormuz accessible and safe.
- We will continue to engage with all partners on options available to allow freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

UK and France-led Multinational Military Mission

- On 12 May 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles, joined defence ministers from more than 40 other countries to reaffirm the use of collective diplomatic, economic and military capabilities to support freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.
- On 13 May 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles, announced that Australia intends to contribute an E-7A Wedgetail aircraft to the Multinational Military Mission, once it is established.
- The intended commitment of an E-7A Wedgetail is Australia's initial support to Multinational Military Mission planning.
- Australia wants the Strait of Hormuz opened and the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms restored.
- Defence has participated in military planning meetings for the Multinational Military Mission.
 - Defence was represented by two senior ADF Liaison Officers and one ADF joint military planner at the joint UK-France meeting regarding the Strait of Hormuz in April 2026.

US proposed Maritime Freedom Construct

- We can confirm that we have no formal participation in the US proposed Maritime Freedom Construct.
- We are considering our options for the proposal, and will not make further comment at this time.

E-7 Wedgetail Deployment to Middle East

- On 10 March 2026, the Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon Anthony Albanese MP announced the deployment of an E-7A Wedgetail to the Middle East, to assist with the collective defence of the Gulf States and help protect Australians in the region.
- The deployment contributes to the protection and defence of around 115,000 Australians in the region (24,000 in the United Arab Emirates) and other civilians in the Middle East.
- The E-7A Wedgetail has defensive capabilities that can provide critical support to protect and defend people and infrastructure in the region and contribute to the collective self-defence of Gulf States.
- On the 9 April 2026, the Prime Minister said the Wedgetail will be staying in the region for a period of time.
- The E-7A Wedgetail will continue to support our Gulf partners in the Middle East, as part of its contribution to opening the Strait of Hormuz.

Provision of AMRAAMs to the Middle East

- Following a direct request, the ADF delivered AMRAAMs to the UAE on 26 March 2026 to help them defend against airborne attacks.
- Further questions about the use of these AMRAAMs should be directed to the UAE Government.
- The provision of AMRAAMs to the UAE has not impacted preparedness.

Lebanon

- Australia welcomes the extension to the US-brokered ceasefire agreed by Israel and Lebanon.
 - We call on all parties, including Hizballah, to adhere to the ceasefire.
 - We want to see negotiations result in an end to the conflict, Lebanon's sovereignty respected, and Hizballah disarmed in line with UNSC Resolution 1701.
- Australia remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian impacts resulting from the conflict.
- Australia has raised our grave concern about military action in southern Lebanon with Israel, including the impact on civilians, noting the large number of Australians in Lebanon.
- Australia condemns Hizballah's attacks against Israel.
 - Hizballah's actions undermine peace and security across the region.
- Australia stands in solidarity with peacekeepers in the Middle East.

- On 8 April 2026, Australia, alongside our Declaration for the Protection of Humanitarian Personnel partners and others, released a joint statement calling for the respect of international humanitarian law in Lebanon.
- It is essential that peacekeepers on United Nations Peacekeeping Missions (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) are not targeted or threatened by the ongoing conflict in Southern Lebanon and across the Middle East.
 - Attacks on peacekeepers are unacceptable.

Operation BEECH 2026

- Following consultation with DFAT, ADF personnel and assets deployed under Operation BEECH have returned to Australia on 24 April 2026.
- The ADF remains ready to support whole-of-Australian-government efforts if requested.

Third country deployments

- There are long-standing arrangements in place relating to third country deployments to ensure Australian interests are managed appropriately.
- For operational security reasons, the ADF does not disclose specific details regarding third country deployments, including the number of personnel or their location.

Circumstances around the arrival of United States aircraft into Australia on 20 March 2026

- Defence provided access on 20 March 2026 to the Royal Australian Air Force Base Learmonth in Western Australia to meet a safety requirement from the US.
- US aircraft have been visiting Australia for decades, undertaking a range of activities and tasks. This is a longstanding feature of Australia's cooperation with the US, in accordance with well understood policies and procedures, and with full respect of Australia's sovereignty.
- As a matter of routine, Defence will not publicly discuss the details of operational security matters regarding its own activities, or those of allies and partners.

Defence exports to the Middle East

- See Exports to Sensitive Destinations brief (EC26-000979)

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
13 May 2026	On 13 May 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister announced that Australia is ready to contribute its E-7A Wedgetail aircraft to a UK and France-led, strictly defensive Multinational Military Mission (MMM) to support freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.
12 May 2026	On 12 May 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles, joined defence ministers from more than 40 other countries to reaffirm

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: 5826-000315

Last updated: 15 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, David Nockels, Bernard Philip

	the use of collective diplomatic, economic and military capabilities to support freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.
18 April 2026	On 18 April 2026, the Prime Minister held a Press conference , confirming leaders from 49 countries, including Australia, attended a virtual meeting led by UK and France, to discuss how they could work together to ensure there was a permanent opening of the strait of Hormuz.
9 April 2026	The Prime Minister held a Press conference that stated the Wedgetail will be staying in the region for a period of time.
27 March 2026	On 27 March 2026, the Prime Minister held a press conference that reiterated that there is no request being made to Australia to send vessels in relation to the Strait of Hormuz.
19 March 2026	On 19 March 2026 leaders of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Japan, Canada and others held a joint statement on the Strait of Hormuz.
10 March 2026	On 10 March 2026 the Prime Minister held a press conference and announced that Australia was deploying an E-7A Wedgetail to the Gulf and will be providing medium range Air-to-Air missiles.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
1 March 2026 onwards	FOI	Various FOI requests have been received seeking access to documents related to conflicts across the Middle East. Each request is assessed on a case-by-case basis, with consideration to national security and international relations sensitivities where necessary.	-
18 November 2024	QoN	No. 834 – Memorandum of Understanding with Israel on Defence. Senator David Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) requested release of the Memorandum of Understanding between Australia and Israel on Defence cooperation.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

Australian and international media outlets are producing continuous live feeds and significant analysis on the situation in Middle East.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000315

Last updated: 15 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley AO CSC RAN, David Nockels, Bernard Philip

Division: International Policy	
PDR No: SB26-000315	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary Global Partners International Policy Ph: s47E(d) Mob: s22 Date: 14 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Robert Tugen Acting First Assistant Secretary International Policy Ph: s47E(d) Mob: s22 Date: 14 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry Group Date: 14 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - DEFENCE FUEL SUPPLY

Lead: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle, Chief Joint Capabilities Group.

Supporting: Major General Jason Walk, Head National Support.

Context: Defence is fuel secure and continues to proactively monitor the Middle East conflict to minimise potential flow on implications to ADF operations.

Key Messages

- Prolonged conflict in the Middle East could pose challenges to the trade of liquid fuels and other commodities that Defence relies upon to maintain preparedness.
- Defence receives daily intelligence from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and participates in several whole-of-government working groups to maintain awareness of national fuel supply, allowing for timely decision making on Defence's own position.
- Defence is an active participant on several whole-of-government entities, including the National Fuel Supply Taskforce under Taskforce Coordinator, Anthea Harris and the Secretaries Strategic Fuel Supply Committee.
- Defence sources fuel through long term contracted supply with its strategic partner, Viva Energy Australia, Viva have provided assurances of fuel supply through to mid-2026.
- Defence has doubled its fuel stock holdings since 2022.

Talking Points**National fuel supply**

- The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is the appropriate authority to answer detailed questions on national fuel supply.
- The current events in the Middle East have put pressure on the international oil and gas industries. Australia is a net importer of liquid fuel with approximately 90 per cent of liquid fuel sourced internationally.
- Defence fuel use represents approximately one to two per cent of the nation's total fuel use. As a customer of the national fuel supply chain, Defence is heavily reliant on the importation of liquid fuel, hence any impacts to national fuel supply will be passed onto Defence.
- Defence receives daily intelligence from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the national supply situation. Defence is closely monitoring the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water advice in order to respond should the national supply situation change.
- Defence does not currently expect that its preparedness will be impacted due to the current Middle East conflict. This assessment may change if the conflict continues for an extended period.

Defence response to national supply challenges

- Defence predominantly uses military jet fuel and marine diesel. Therefore Defence does compete with public demand on price or supply.
- Defence is taking sensible efforts to take pressure off of the national fuel network.
- Through the conflict, Defence has not engaged in increased procurement of fuels such as gasoline and automotive diesel, which are in common use by the general population. Defence uses very low quantities of these fuels, which can be managed within current stock holdings and normal deliveries.
- On 13 March 2026, Defence personnel were directed to refrain from non-essential international travel.
- Active steps have been taken to ensure domestic ADF operations do not draw on civilian fuel infrastructure. Defence is using its own supplies of fuel and using Defence infrastructure and assets for refuelling, particularly in remote and regional areas.
- Defence is an active participant on several whole-of-government entities including the National Fuel Supply Taskforce (the Taskforce) under Taskforce Coordinator Anthea Harris and the Secretaries Strategic Fuel Supply Committee. On 8 April 2026, Defence was requested to provide two military planners to assist in the deliberations of the Taskforce.
 - Questions on the National Fuel Supply Taskforce should be directed to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as the appropriate authority.
- Defence is a member of the National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee. The National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee provides advice on the *Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984* and includes membership of fuel experts from the Commonwealth, all states and territories and the fuel industry.
 - Questions on National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee should be directed to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water as the appropriate authority.

Defence fuel holdings

- The exact size of Defence's fuel holding is classified as it would reveal the nature and tempo of operations the ADF could sustain.
- At any one time, Defence holds supply for normal operations with an additional amount held in reserve for surge operations. This is not an exact calculation as it varies by fuel type and is dependent on the nature of activities being undertaken.
- Defence receives large deliveries of fuel in anticipation of upcoming exercises and operations.
- Defence is in contract with Viva Energy Australia for all of Defence's fuel supply. This contract, established in June 2023, replaced the previous fuel supply panel. Where Viva cannot meet demand, Defence can still approach other wholesalers. This contract is valued at \$3.27 billion (over six years) from 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2029.

- Viva Energy Australia provides regular advice on the security of the Defence fuel supply chain. On 15 April 2026, Viva Energy Australia has provided assurances of fuel supply, which is the extent of their normal planning window. Viva Energy Australia engages in a diversified global supply chain and are not dependent on any single international source of fuel to ensure Defence supply.

Fuel resilience measures

- Defence has accelerated the enhancement of its fuel security as a result of guidance in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review. Of note are three key programs, the Defence Project 8191 Defence Fuel Resilience Program, the National Fuel Council and Defence's adoption of lower-carbon liquid fuels.

Defence Project 8191 Defence Fuel Resilience Program

- In response to the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, the Australian Government is investing \$3.7–\$4.8 billion over the decade to 2033–34 in Defence Project 8191 Defence Fuel Resilience Program. The focus of Defence Project 8191 Defence Fuel Resilience Program on fuel resilience through the establishment of a strategic fuel reserve for Defence in Australia along with increased storage and distribution capacity to improve fuel preparedness in support of Defence operations.
- Defence Project 8191 is being delivered in collaboration with other logistics projects and is integrated with the broader Defence theatre logistics network.
- Defence has established a strategic fuel reserve. The reserve is held at multiple locations across Australia in both Defence and industry owned storage sites. The size and the location of the reserve is classified for operational security reasons.

National Fuel Council

- The National Fuel Council was established in August 2023, in response to the Defence Strategic Review, to develop and deliver actions to enhance Australia's fuel security. The National Fuel Council developed measures to enhance Australia's fuel security in support of national resilience for all contingencies, including conflict.
- Members of the National Fuel Council were senior executives from the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and industry peak bodies. The state and territory governments and industry peak bodies were active participants.
- The National Fuel Council worked to identify options that can deliver a resilient national fuel network, including legislative actions, policy settings, and targeted investments.
- The National Fuel Council met eight times. The final meeting of the National Fuel Council was held on 13 November 2025. At this meeting, the final report was agreed. This included policy responses comprising tangible actions that address Australia's fuel security vulnerabilities were.
- This report is currently under consideration by the Government.

Lower-carbon liquid fuels

- Lower-carbon liquid fuels are currently the most viable option to provide Defence with

a secondary liquid fuel supply chain that has the potential to be produced entirely onshore. These fuels have the secondary benefit of reducing the carbon intensity of existing deployable capabilities while ensuring operational energy requirements can be supported on operations and throughout a platform's service life.

- Low-carbon liquid fuels are 'drop-in' fuels, meaning they can be used without modifications to engines, storage and handling facilities, or maintenance regimes. The establishment of an on-shore domestic renewable fuels industry carries the potential to reduce Defence's dependence upon imported fossil fuels.
- Since July 2024, Defence has certified its airframes to use Sustainable Aviation Fuel up to a 50 per blend with traditional fossil fuels.
- As of October 2025, Defence has approved up to a 30 per cent blend of renewable diesel across Maritime and Land platforms.
- Since 2023, Defence has conducted several successful lower-carbon liquid fuels demonstrations on ocean-going vessels Merchant Vessel *Sycamore* and Australian Defence Vessel *Reliant*, at Army's School of Armour at Puckapunyal and a long term trial at Royal Australian Air Force Base East Sale.
- On 12 March 2026, Defence established a fuel quality centre at Fisherman's Bend, Melbourne to assist in the acceleration of the development of an onshore lower-carbon liquid fuels industry.
- Defence makes the Fuel Quality Centre available to domestic industry to test and certify lower-carbon liquid fuels for use in ADF platforms. This eliminates the high costs and lengthy lead times associated with seeking international laboratory support.
- The Fuel Quality Centre is also an opportunity for Defence to educate lower-carbon liquid fuels procurers on the regulatory pathway required to supply fuels into the Australian market.

Fuel rationing/activation of the Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984

- Matters relating to activation of the *Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984* and national fuel rationing should be directed to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water as the appropriate authority.
- If a national fuel emergency was declared under the *Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984*, Defence is in effect exempt from rationing as an 'essential user'.
- Fuel stocks requisitioned under the *Liquid Fuel Emergency Act 1984* may also be provided to Defence for activities in the 'defence of Australia.' It is the purview of the National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee (an entity governed by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water), to determine how this is enacted. The Defence representative on the National Oil Supplies Emergency Committee is the Director General Fuel Capability.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000316

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM and Major General Jason Walk

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
Nil.	

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Nil.			

Relevant Media Reporting

- Australian media has reported extensively on fuel supplies and the impact that the Middle East conflict and the flow on implications to fuel supplies more generally.
- 3 February 2026, Andrew Hough, [Adelaide Advertiser, Cough up for RAAF refuel, Qantas](#)

Division: Joint Logistics Command	
PDR No: SB26-000316	
Prepared by: s47E(d) A/Director General Fuel Capability Joint Logistics Command Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 15 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Major General Carla Watts Commander Joint Logistics Joint Capabilities Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 16 April 2026 MAJGEN Jason Walk Head National Support Joint Capabilities Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 May 2026
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Vice-Marshal Benjamin Sleeman CSC DSM Acting/Chief of Joint Capabilities Joint Capabilities Group Date: 17 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - EXPORTS TO SENSITIVE DESTINATIONS

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry.

Supporting: Chris Deeble AO CSC, Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment.
David Nockels, First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration.

Context: Significant public interest in Australia's defence exports and export control framework at a time of accelerated geostrategic conflict.

Key Messages

- Australia maintains a robust and thorough export control regime, which requires each application to be assessed on its merits, in accordance with Australian export control legislation.
- Australia assesses the risk of potential misuse of goods and technology, including diversion, as part of its assessment process before the goods or technology leave Australia.
- A permit is refused if, on balance, Australia has identified an export would be used contrary to the national interest.

Talking Points

- Australia's defence export legislative framework addresses a range of issues including foreign policy, human rights, national security, regional security and Australia's international obligations including the Arms Trade Treaty.
- Defence scrutinises extant permits to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- The Government has taken proactive steps to enhance transparency and public reporting arrangements with regard to Australia's export data. This data is available on the Defence website.
- Defence does not comment on individual export permits for legal, privacy, security and commercial-in-confidence reasons.

Australian exports to Israel

- As the circumstances of the conflict evolved, the Government has continued to calibrate its approach.
- Defence does not comment on individual export permits due to legal, privacy and commercial-in-confidence reasons.

Australian exports to the United Arab Emirates and Sudan

- The Australian Government condemns the atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law in Sudan.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has imposed sanctions in relation to Sudan.

- : It is prohibited to directly or indirectly supply, sell or transfer arms or related material to designated persons or entities in Sudan from Australia without a sanctions permit.
- The Australian Government is aware of reports of goods and technology being supplied to Sudan by the United Arab Emirates.
 - : Extant permits undergo scrutiny to ensure they remain fit for purpose and in accordance with Australian export control legislation.
- Refer to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for further information on the Sudan and South Sudan Sanctions Framework.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 1003. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked questions related to F-35 fighter jets and the United States decision to sell them to Saudi Arabia. This includes Australia and Defence's involvement in the announcement.	Tabled.
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 934. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked how many defence military goods permits are currently with the UAE.	Tabled.
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 933. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked if we have any current military export permits with Sudan. Senator Shoebridge stated there were nine active permits between 2017 and 2023, and then asked how many are currently active.	Tabled.
3 November 2025	FOI	An individual requested a range of information and documents on export permits to Israel from 1 September 2023 to the present.	Decision finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 14 April 2026, ABC News published an article by Annika Burgess titled [Palestinian rights groups file legal action over Australia's arms exports to Israel](#)
- On 20 March, Amnesty International published an article titled [International pressure must continue to ensure governments halt weapons transfers to Israel](#)
- On 25 February 2026, Declassified published an article by Kellie Tranter titled [Australia remains committed to trading with Israel](#)
- On 11 November 2025, Amnesty International Australia published an article titled [Australian Department of Defence directive on arms exports to Israel a win for public pressure](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000318

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, Chris Deeble AO CSC, David Nockels

- On 3 November 2025, The Nightly published an article by Andrew Greene titled [Australian military companies face new Israel ban as Department of Defence quietly tightens trade restrictions](#)
- On 31 October 2025, Amnesty International Australia published an article titled [A reality check Australia cannot ignore: UN Special Rapporteur's report exposes Australian Government's complicity in Gaza genocide through combat aircraft supply chain](#)

Division: Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration	
PDR No: SB26-000318	
Prepared by: Emily Hall Assistant Secretary Defence Export Controls Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: David Nockels First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 7 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry Group	Date: 14 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - DEFENCE EXPORT CONTROLS (GENERAL)

Lead: Mr Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Industry.

Supporting: Mr David Nockels, First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration to support on export applications and assessments.

Context: The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has renewed public attention on Australia's Defence exports and export controls framework. Defence will outline how Australia regulates the export of military and dual-use goods and services in alignment with our international obligations.

Key Messages

- Australia takes its export controls obligations seriously.
- Each export application is assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether it would be prejudicial to Australia's national interests.
- A permit would be refused if, on balance, Australia identified an export would be used contrary to the national interest.
- Defence does not comment on individual exports due to legal, privacy and commercial-in-confidence obligations.
- The Australian Government has delivered on its commitment to streamline defence trade through the implementation of generational legislative reforms that provide reciprocal national exemptions for AUKUS partners from our respective export controls frameworks.
- Defence is committed to ongoing engagement with AUKUS partners, industry, higher education and research sectors to support the implementation of the licence-free environment and further streamlining of international defence industrial collaboration.

Talking Points

Assessment of defence export applications

- Defence undertakes a rigorous assessment on a case-by-case basis of each export application against the relevant legislation.
 - The legislated criteria considers foreign policy, Australia's domestic and international legal obligations, human rights, national security and regional security.
 - Consideration is also given to the nature and utility of the goods or technology for export, the parties involved, end-user and end-use destination, as well as contemporary information drawn from our diplomatic network, partners and allies, intelligence services and experience with exporters.
- Part of Defence's assessment of export applications includes assessing risks around legislative criteria and determining, on balance, whether an export would be in the national interest.

Exports to Sensitive Destinations

- For information on exports to sensitive destinations, please see brief SB26-000318.

AUKUS licence-free environment

- The AUKUS export licence-free environment commenced on 1 September 2024, unlocking streamlined investment and reducing barriers to collaboration for Australian industry and our AUKUS partners.
- Through the AUKUS export licence-free environment, industry, higher education and research sectors in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States are now able to export most military and dual-use goods, technologies and services among and between AUKUS partners without requiring a licence.
- There has been strong uptake of the licence-free environment from industry, higher education and research sectors.
- Defence continues to closely engage with industry, higher education and research sectors to ensure that the export licence-free environment is operating efficiently.
- Australia continues to work with the United Kingdom and the United States to ensure our respective national exemptions on defence export controls maximise licence-free trade among and between AUKUS partners and allow for expedited decision-making where a permit is still required.

Excluded Technology List

- Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom each have an Excluded Technology List of goods and technologies that cannot be transferred without a permit.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
1 March 2025	The new offences for the amended <i>Defence Trade Controls Act 2012</i> commenced (six months following commencement of the amendments on 1 September 2024).
1 September 2024	Amendments to the <i>Defence Trade Controls Act 2012</i> commenced, creating the AUKUS licence-free environment.
6 May 2024	Part IXAA to the <i>Defence Act 1903</i> – Safeguarding Australia's Military Secrets framework commenced.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 1004. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) requested a breakdown of current Part 1 and Part 2 permits by country.	Tabled.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000319

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, David Nockels

Date	Type	Title	Status
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 1002. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked several questions relating to F35 permits, including about export legislation, if parts made in Australia are treated differently to US parts, mechanisms for Australia to monitor end-use F35 parts and what other goods on the DSGI are considered the property of the US or a US company while in Australia.	Tabled.
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 1001. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales), requested the Department of Defence provide briefing notes on exports for the December 2025 estimates.	Tabled.
3 November 2025	FOI	An individual requested a range of information and documents relating to the export of F-35 ammunition.	Decision finalised.
26 May 2025	FOI	Senator Shoebridge requested the number of current/extant Defence export permits, broken down by country, as of 26 April 2025. Decision refusing access (as no document exists) issued 25 June 2025. Applicant sought review by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. The matter is ongoing.	Decision not yet finalised.

Division: Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration	
PDR No: SB26-000319	
Prepared by: Emily Hall Assistant Secretary Defence Export Controls Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 2 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: David Nockels First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and Industrial Collaboration Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 7 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - AUKUS

Lead: Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry.

Supporting: David Nockels, First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and AUKUS Advanced Capabilities to support on AUKUS Pillar II, and export controls and technology transfer.

Bernard Philip, First Assistant Secretary International Policy to support on United States and United Kingdom defence relationships and United States force posture policy.

Sheridan Kearnan, First Assistant Secretary Strategic Policy to support on Australian sovereignty policy.

Questions on nuclear-powered submarines or Pillar I should be directed to the Australian Submarine Agency.

Context: The mission for AUKUS Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II) is to accelerate advanced capabilities, with a focus on near-term warfighting objectives.

Key Messages

- AUKUS is an enhanced technology and capability sharing partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- AUKUS partners are moving “full steam ahead” on AUKUS, recognising the importance of advanced capabilities development.
- AUKUS Pillar II is delivering tangible benefits to our three militaries at a faster rate than any one partner could achieve alone; making our militaries more resilient and able to operate together.

Talking Points

AUKUS strategic rationale

- AUKUS Pillars I and II contribute to Australia’s Strategy of Denial in the Indo-Pacific.
- AUKUS supports partners’ capabilities, collective security and deterrence by:
 - building on decades of close defence, capability and technology cooperation between our countries; and
 - enhancing AUKUS partners’ collective capability edge over the coming decades.
- AUKUS Pillar II supports Australia’s capacity to rapidly convert disruptive new technologies into Defence capability.

AUKUS Defence Ministers’ Meeting

- The three AUKUS Defence ministers met in Washington D.C. on 10 December 2025 (EST) to reaffirm the shared commitment to the AUKUS partnership.
(Note: To be updated late May 2026).
- The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, UK Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon John Healey MP, and the US Secretary of War, the Hon Pete Hegseth, all stated that we are committed to finding opportunities to

strengthen AUKUS and inject pace and focus on delivery to ensure the long-term success of the AUKUS partnership.

- They discussed opportunities to further accelerate the delivery of advanced capabilities developed under AUKUS Pillar II, with particular focus on near-term warfighting objectives.

AUKUS Pillar II achievements

- Our combined efforts are increasing the integration of advanced capabilities into AUKUS militaries and demonstrating our ability to work together trilaterally.
- Last year was a milestone year for AUKUS Pillar II:
 - At Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 25, AUKUS partners deployed artificial intelligence algorithms on an Australian P-8A Maritime Patrol aircraft for the first time. These algorithms collect and analyse undersea data from AUKUS nations' sonobuoys, allowing our forces to locate and identify adversary submarines quicker than human operators could alone.
 - AUKUS partners deployed artificial intelligence technologies on robotic and autonomous systems to conduct intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and simulated strike missions for amphibious landings.
 - AUKUS partners developed and deployed autonomous and remotely operated uncrewed underwater vehicles to conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, protecting our critical underwater infrastructure.
 - Under the Maritime Big Play exercise series, AUKUS partners and Japan worked together at Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 25 to enhance the use of underwater acoustic communications to task an uncrewed underwater vehicle to conduct activities at sea.
 - AUKUS partners conducted the first hypersonic test flight under the Hypersonic Flight Test and Experimentation (HyFLiTE) Project Arrangement, successfully testing key equipment and reducing risk for future experiments and test flights.

Enabling Environment and Technology Transfer

- The AUKUS partnership is driving reforms in all three nations to incentivise greater industrial cooperation, reducing trade barriers and the cost of regulatory compliance.
- A key achievement to date has been the establishment of the AUKUS licence-free environment, which incentivises unprecedented, and more rapid, levels of scientific, technological and industrial collaboration and co-development between and among AUKUS nations' industrial bases.
- Since 1 September 2024, Defence industry, higher education and research sectors in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States have been able to export and supply most military and dual-use goods, technologies and services among and between AUKUS partners without requiring an export licence.
- Defence continues to closely engage with industry, the higher education and research sectors to ensure the licence-free environment is operating efficiently and to identify opportunities for further reform.

- . Defence is also engaging closely with industry to identify opportunities for deeper industrial collaboration on Pillar II, and to improve the enabling environment.
 - The Advanced Capabilities Industry Forum brings together senior government representatives from each AUKUS partner nation, and senior officers from four trade associations in each partner nation.
 - : Australia's trade association members are the Australian Industry and Defence Network, the Australian Industry Group, the Business Council of Australia, and the Tech Council of Australia.

Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator and AUKUS Innovation Challenges

- . The Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator is supporting the development of priority capabilities identified through AUKUS Pillar II – Advanced Capabilities.
 - The AUKUS Innovation Challenge Series is a key initiative that will accelerate advanced capabilities to the ADF and enable Australian industry to engage and develop solutions that also meet capability priorities of AUKUS partners.
- . The Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator and its partners, the UK Defence Innovation and the US Defense Innovation Unit, has assessed two AUKUS Innovation Challenges, to identify opportunities to harness commercial technologies to support advanced capability development.
- . The first AUKUS Pillar II Innovation Challenge launched in March 2024 and focused on electronic warfare and sought electromagnetic spectrum technologies and capabilities that provide a competitive advantage to electromagnetic targeting, and protect Defence from adversary electromagnetic targeting capabilities.
 - Defence awarded three contracts worth \$218,000 to Australian companies PentenAmio, Inovor Technologies, and Advanced Design Technology.
 - 12 month follow-on contracts were awarded to PentenAmio and Advanced Design Technology to the value of \$3.0 million and \$4.3 million respectively, to further develop their technologies.
- . The second AUKUS Pillar II Innovation Challenge launched in March 2025, and sought innovative solutions for undersea communications and control of autonomous systems.
 - Over 275 submissions were received for this Challenge, signalling the depth of innovation capability across all three nations.
- . Planning is underway for the next AUKUS Innovation Challenge.

Additional Partners

- . In April 2024, the Deputy Prime Minister and his AUKUS counterparts announced they had developed principles for additional countries to collaborate on Pillar II on a project-by-project basis, where there was a mutual capability benefit for the other country and AUKUS partners.
 - In July 2025, through Exercise Talisman Sabre 25, Japan participated in Maritime Big Play acoustic communication activities.
 - AUKUS Pillar II remains a trilateral partnership. Any decision about involving additional projects or countries would be made on a trilateral basis.

AUKUS Advanced Capabilities Funding

- The 2023-24 Budget re-prioritised \$148 million over the forward estimates to 2026-27 of existing Defence resources to support Advanced Capabilities activities, as part of increased investment in Defence innovation.
- AUKUS Pillar II also leverages the Government's investment of up to \$4.3 billion in the Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator through the 2026 Integrated Investment Program.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
24 February 2026	The Hon Luke Pollard MP, UK Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, hosted the Hon Pat Conroy MP, Australian Minister for Defence Industry, for the Australia-UK Defence Industry Dialogue, where they issued a joint statement that recognised the importance of AUKUS Pillar II projects and accelerating their delivery to achieve near-term warfighting objectives.
22 February 2026	The Australian Submarine Agency issued a media release about HMS Anson's Visit to Western Australia's HMAS Stirling, and this mentioned AUKUS partners would undertake a combined AUKUS Pillar I and Pillar II activity, testing the interoperability of the Australian Speartooth large uncrewed underwater vehicle with the UK SSN, and assessing and enhancing AUKUS Pillar II anti-submarine warfare AI algorithms fitted to the RAAF P-8A Poseidon.
19 February 2026	Defence issued a media release about AUKUS partners coming together to test cutting-edge autonomous capabilities as part of an AUKUS Pillar II Maritime Big Play exercise.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
6 January 2026	FOI	An individual made a request seeking documents about the AUKUS Defence Industry Update October 2025 event.	Decision finalised.
15 December 2025	FOI	An individual made a request for documents and emails between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2024 where the text of the document contains both of the words "NDIS" and "AUKUS".	Withdrawn.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000321

Last updated: 29 May 2026

Key witnesses: Hugh Jeffrey, David Nockels, Bernard Philip, Sheridan Kearnan

Relevant Media Reporting

- 28 April 2026, Andrew Tillett, *Australian Financial Review*, [‘Failings’: AUKUS already in trouble, British probe warns](#)
- 28 April 2026, Angus Taylor, Opposition Leader, *Sky News*, [‘Deeply concerned’: UK probe finds AUKUS threatened by lack of leadership](#)
- 17 April 2026, Alexandra Hartman, *Archyde*, [Australia’s National Defence Strategy: Spending, Funding, and Drone Warfare](#)
- 25 March 2026, Zena Assaad, *Mirage News*, [Australia’s Crucial Military AI Policy Faces Test](#)
- 18 March 2026, Oishee Majumdar, *Janes*, [Special Report: AUKUS partners test Australian EW systems in Maritime Big Play exercise](#)
- 7 March 2026, Matthew Knott, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, [Albanese confirms three Australians on US sub](#)
- 5 March 2026, Tom Lowrey, *ABC News*, [Canada ‘unlikely’ to join AUKUS despite previous enthusiasm for pact](#)
- 18 February 2026, *the ADM Congress*, [Australian Defence Magazine Congress 2026](#)
- 14 February 2026, Michael Green, *The Australian*, [Japan’s Iron Lady is about to shake up the Asia-Pacific](#)

Division: Defence Trade, Regulation and AUKUS Advanced Capabilities	
PDR No: SB26-000321	
Prepared by: Matthew Flint Assistant Secretary AUKUS Policy and Engagement Ph: s47E(d) Date: 28 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: David Nockels First Assistant Secretary Defence Trade, Regulation and AUKUS Advanced Capabilities Ph: s47E(d) Date: 28 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Hugh Jeffrey Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group	
Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - COMMONWEALTH BUDGET, BUDGET REFORM AND INTEGRATED INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Lead: Steven Groves, Chief Finance Officer

Supporting: Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Vice Chief of the Defence Force and Samuel Volker, First Assistant Secretary Budgets and Financial Services.

Context: This brief outlines current headline 2026-27 Budget Estimates and key issues and trends in Defence funding over the coming decade, in line with the 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program.

Delivery of the Integrated Investment Program is occurring in a rapidly evolving threat environment and generating higher costs for projects. Capability delivery and pressures on the Integrated Investment Program have been topical in the media and at previous Senate Estimates. On 1 December 2025, the Government announced foundational reforms to Defence's capability development and delivery functions.

Key Messages

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy announced on 16 April 2026, builds on the foundations of the 2024 National Defence Strategy by increasing Australia's self-reliance, growing Australia's sovereign defence industry base, improving preparedness and resilience and strengthening bilateral and multilateral security partnerships.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy is supported by an Integrated Investment Program that includes new and increased investment in capability priorities to continue the transformation of the ADF into an integrated, focused force with ability to deter and respond to current and emerging threats.
- Through the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program the Government is investing an additional \$14 billion over the next four years (2026-27 to 2029-30) and a further \$53 billion over the decade. This will be delivered through direct Defence investment, estate modernisation, and alternative financing arrangements.
- This brings the combined additional investment across the 2024 and 2026 National Defence Strategies to \$30 billion over the next four years and \$117 billion over the decade.
- Defence spending is forecast to rise from 2.8 per cent of GDP in 2025-26 to around 3 per cent of GDP by 2033 (using the NATO definition of Defence spending).
- The Government is driving a generational investment of \$425 billion over the next ten years through the 2026 Integrated Investment Program to deliver an integrated ADF across the maritime, land, air, space, and cyber domains and focused on addressing the nation's most significant risks. Defence capability acquisition is the largest investment category in Defence, with expenditure forecast to reach \$21.0 billion in 2026-27.
- The 2026 Integrated Investment Program will transform the ADF into an integrated, focused force fit to defend Australia and its interests, with additional investment that supports continued delivery of critical Defence projects that underpin Australia's maritime capability and defence industrial strategy, including the Henderson Defence Precinct, the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program and General Purpose Frigates.

- Ongoing challenges to deliver the Integrated Investment Program are driven by global supply chain pressures and capacity constraints in industry, both domestically and with overseas suppliers.
- To help address these challenges, the Government has announced major reforms including establishment of a new Defence Delivery Agency headed by a National Armaments Director, and centralisation of capability development functions within the Department of Defence to better deliver an integrated focussed force.
- The Government is continuing its commitment to reduce the APS reliance on costly external labour, through savings made by Defence of \$2.9 billion from 2026-27 to 2029-30. This builds on previous Budget measures reducing spending on external labour and non-wage expenses, with savings made by Defence equating to \$5.7 billion since 2022-23.

Talking Points

Key Facts and Figures

- The average total ADF permanent workforce for 2026-27 is estimated to be 63,345 and the average total APS workforce is estimated to be 20,169.
- The total Department of Defence budget impact disclosed in the 2026-27 Portfolio Budget Statements across the five years from 2025-26 to 2029-30 is an increase in funding of \$0.8 billion. This is a result of the following major movements:
 - +\$7.0 billion direct Defence funding increase for the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program;
 - +\$0.9 billion increase in 2025-26 to support Defence's ongoing working capital requirements;
 - +\$0.3 billion increase in 2026-27 for continuing major Operations (ACCORDION, RESOLUTE & KUDU);
 - -\$3.6 billion decrease of foreign exchange reductions due to the strengthening of the Australian dollar;
 - -\$2.9 billion savings from External Labour and Other Non-Wage Expenses; and
 - -\$0.9 billion in funding transfers to other agencies for the continued implementation of the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program, which includes \$0.7 billion transferred to the Australian Submarine Agency.
- The Defence Portfolio including Defence, the Australian Signals Directorate, the Australian Submarine Agency and the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator combined appropriation is \$62.6 billion for 2026-27 and \$277.2 billion over the Forward Estimates (2026-27 to 2029-30).
- Based on Australia's traditional methodology for calculating Defence spending, our Defence budget will grow from 2.0 per cent in 2026-27 to a projected 2.2 per cent of GDP by the end of the Forward Estimates (2029-30), and 2.4 per cent by the end of the decade (2035-36).
- On 16 April 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister announced Australia's projection as a percentage of GDP aligned with the NATO definition.

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- Adopting the broader NATO methodology, which includes a wider range of Defence-related expenditures, (including Veterans' pensions, full military superannuation, border security, infrastructure, and intelligence), aims to improve international comparability and reflect the full scope of Defence-related spending.
- Using this NATO approach, total Defence spending is estimated at 2.8 per cent of GDP in 2025-26, and is expected to rise to around 3 per cent of GDP by 2033.

Table 1: Defence, Australian Signals Directorate, Australian Submarine Agency and Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator funding

	2024-25 Actual Result	2025-26 Estimated Actual	2026-27 Budget Estimate	2027-28 Forward Estimate	2028-29 Forward Estimate	2029-30 Forward Estimate	Total Budget and Forward Estimates
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
Defence Funding	53,525.5	60,498.4	59,501.5	62,042.1	69,456.7	74,013.1	265,013.4
Australian Signals Directorate Funding	2,740.4	2,330.9	2,531.5	2,382.3	2,265.9	2,404.0	9,583.7
Australian Submarine Agency Funding	353.0	385.4	512.5	593.5	641.1	601.6	2,348.7
Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator	-	29.3	50.0	62.9	75.9	61.4	250.2
Combined Defence, Australian Signals, Australian Submarine Agency and Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator Funding	56,618.8	63,243.9	62,595.5	65,080.8	72,439.6	77,080.0	277,195.9
Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (Traditional Methodology) (a) (b)	2.04 per cent	2.13 per cent	2.02 per cent	2.04 per cent	2.17 per cent	2.20 per cent	2.11 per cent
Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (NATO Methodology) (a) (b)	2.71 per cent	2.76 per cent	2.59 per cent	2.60 per cent	2.78 per cent	2.80 per cent	2.70 per cent

Notes:

- GDP figures from 2025-26 Estimated Actual onwards are as at 2026-27 Budget released on 12 May 2026, as advised by the Treasury.
- Totals may not add due to rounding.

- Table 2 below provides a detailed breakdown of the 2026-27 Defence Budget measures and other adjustments since the Defence Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2025-26.

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Table 2: Defence 2026-27 Budget Measures and Other Budget Adjustments

		2025-26 Estimated Actual ^[m]	2026-27 Budget Estimate	2027-28 Forward Estimate	2028-29 Forward Estimate	2029-30 Forward Estimate	Total
	Program	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
Budget Measures							
Payment Measures							
2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program ^[a]	Various	-	2,164.7	2,616.0	1,318.1	704.6	6,803.4
2026 National Defence Strategy - Enhancing Defence Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific ^[b]	Various	-	41.3	79.7	34.9	22.4	178.4
Supporting Defence Industry and the Strategic Policy Sector ^[c]	2.1	-	-1.4	-1.4	-1.4	-1.5	-5.7
Defence Assistance ^[d]	2.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Attorney-General's Portfolio - Additional Resourcing ^[e]	2.3	-	-50.4	-	-	-	-50.4
Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program - Continuation of Government Resourcing ^[f]	2.16	-	-91.7	-312.5	-267.9	-191.8	-863.8
Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program - further program support ^[g]	2.16	-	-	-	-	-	-
Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide – continued implementation ^[h]	Various	-	-	-	-	-	-
Australian Naval Infrastructure Injection for the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program ^[i]	2.16	-	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp
Finance Portfolio – additional resourcing ^[j]	Various	-	-3.1	-4.6	-4.7	-4.7	-17.1
Savings from External Labour and non-wage expenses - one year extension	Various	-	-	-	-	-1,435.2	-1,435.2
Total Departmental Budget Measures		-	2,059.4	2,377.3	1,079.0	-906.2	4,609.5
Other Departmental Budget Adjustments							
Further Savings from External Labour and non-wage expenses	Various	-	-458.6	-490.5	-515.8	-	-1,464.9
Foreign Exchange	Various	-387.9	-694.7	-782.5	-894.7	-844.9	-3,604.7
Working Capital Injection ^[k]	Various	900.0	-	-	-	-	900.0
Operation ACCORDION	1.2	-	83.2	-	-	-	83.2
Operation RESOLUTE	1.3	-	165.6	-	-	-	165.6
Operation KUDU	1.2	-	22.9	-	-	-	22.9
Other Budget Adjustments ^[l]	Various	1,841.1	-469.2	-1,138.5	320.0	-420.0	133.4
Total Other Departmental Budget Adjustments		2,353.2	-1,350.8	-2,411.4	-1,090.5	-1,264.9	-3,764.5
Total Defence Funding		2,353.2	708.5	-34.1	-11.6	-2,171.2	845.1

Notes

- This measure provides \$6.8 billion from 2026-27 to 2029-30 for the implementation of the 2026 National Defence Strategy and the Integrated Investment Program. This funding includes new investment for two marquee capability projects, General Purpose Frigates and Nuclear-Powered Submarines, as well as a targeted uplift for other capability enhancements and sustainment activities. Consistent with the 2026 National Defence Strategy, released on 16 April 2026, the Government has identified approximately \$5 billion of investment over the Forward Estimates for which Defence will prioritise the development of alternative financing and delivery options. This includes projects relating to the Defence estate, the consolidation of the Henderson Defence Precinct, and the development of the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Enterprise. In addition to the direct investment outlined in this measure, the Government has provisioned further funding in the 2026-27 Budget for the implementation of the 2026 National Defence Strategy over the Forward Estimates. Details of this funding are not for publication (nfp) due to commercial sensitivities.
- This measure provides further Defence investment in the Pacific region, including Defence's implementation of the PukPuk Treaty.
- This measure provides a total of \$106.4 million over six years, including \$47.3 million from 2026-27 to 2029-30 for continued investment in Defence careers through the Schools Pathways Program, and \$59.1 million from 2027-28 to 2031-32 for the implementation of 5-year Operating Funding for Strategic Policy Sector, which is being met from existing resourcing of the Department of Defence.
- This measure provides \$6.7 million in 2025-26, for military assistance including Gifting of Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles to the Government of the UAE and Gifting of Weapons System for Guardian-class Patrol Boat to the Republic of the Maldives, which is being met from existing resourcing of the Department of Defence.
- This measure provides funding for the continued operation of the Office of the Special Investigator, which is being offset from the Department of Defence.
- This measure includes transferring \$711.9 million in funding from Defence Program 2.16 Nuclear-Powered Submarines to the Australian Submarine Agency.
- This measure provides \$218.4 million over eight years from 2026-27 for continued support to the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program, which is being met from existing resourcing of the Department of Defence.
- This measure will provide \$311.9 million from 2026-27 to 2029-30 to implement the Government's response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which is being held in the Contingency Reserve.
- This measure is nfp due to commercial sensitivities.
- This measure provides funding for an independent cost assurance function within the Department of Finance, offset from the Department of Defence.
- This funding adjustment of \$900 million is to support Defence's ongoing working capital requirements, and is in addition to the \$700 million of working capital provided in the 2025-26 Budget. These funding adjustments increase Defence cash reserves to meet Defence industry commitments as and when they fall due for payment.
- This adjustment predominately relates to bringing forward Defence funding to accelerate delivery of capability, including \$1.7 billion into 2025-26 for the Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program.
- An amount of \$1,841.1 million is expected to be received through Appropriation Bill (No. 5) 2025-26 and \$900 million through Appropriation Bill (No.6) 2025-26. The 2025–26 Portfolio Supplementary Additional Estimates Statements also provide detail on these amounts.

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Defence Planned Workforce for 2026-27 and Forward Estimates

- The ADF permanent workforce has seen the highest recorded growth in 15 years due to increases in applications received and improvements in recruitment and retention initiatives. Defence forecasts that improved recruitment and retention processes will continue to drive strong growth into the ADF over coming years.
- Table 3 below provides the planned workforce forecast for the 2026-27 Budget and Forward Estimates.
- The average total ADF permanent workforce for 2026-27 is estimated to be 63,345, and the average total APS workforce is estimated to be 20,169.

Table 3: Planned Workforce Forecast for the 2026-27 Budget and Forward Estimates - Average Full-time equivalent

	2025-26 Estimated Actual (Workforce Achievement)	2026-27 Budget Estimate (Workforce Requirement)	2027-28 Forward Estimate (Workforce Requirement)	2028-29 Forward Estimate (Workforce Requirement)	2029-30 Forward Estimate (Workforce Requirement)
ADF Permanent Force ^(a)					
Navy	15,805	16,193	16,604	17,010	17,416
Army	29,056	29,685	30,444	31,169	31,777
Air Force	16,850	17,467	17,794	17,834	18,273
1 Total Permanent Force	61,711	63,345	64,842	66,013	67,466
Civilian Employees					
APS	19,786	20,169	20,167	20,167	20,170
2 Total Civilian Employees	19,786	20,169	20,167	20,167	20,170
Total Workforce Strength (1 + 2)	81,497	83,514	85,009	86,180	87,636

Notes:

- All numbers for the permanent and full-time workforce elements represent average full-time equivalents.
- Revised and Forward Estimates reflect the budgeted workforce requirements for ADF and approved Government budgeted allocations for APS.
- The budgeted workforce requirement will be reviewed with each PB Statements and PAES.

Defence 2026-27 Budget Summary

- In 2026-27, planned Defence expenditure (excluding the Australian Signals Directorate, Australian Submarine Agency and Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator appropriations) includes:
 - \$21.0 billion for capability acquisition (35 per cent of the Defence budget):
 - : \$15.4 billion for military equipment;
 - : \$4.2 billion for facilities and infrastructure;
 - : \$815.7 million for Information and Communications Technology; and
 - : \$534.7 million for other capital equipment (such as minor military equipment and other plant and equipment).
 - \$18.5 billion for sustainment (31 per cent of the Defence budget):
 - : \$12.6 billion military capability sustainment;
 - : \$3.7 billion facilities sustainment; and
 - : \$2.2 billion Information and Communications Technology sustainment.
 - \$18.4 billion for workforce (30 per cent of the Defence budget):
 - : \$14.0 billion military employees;

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- : \$3.0 billion civilian employees; and
- : \$1.4 billion other employee costs (e.g. recruitment, training, removalists and other employee related categories).
- \$2.3 billion (4 per cent of the Defence budget) for operating activities and services including business travel and consumable items; and
- \$0.4 billion for military operations (1 per cent of the Defence budget).

Budget Reforms

- . The budget reforms generated through the 2024 National Defence Strategy aimed to strike a balance between accelerating Defence capability delivery while simultaneously enhancing the levels of oversight, assurance and governance.
- . Central to the reforms was the introduction of a more flexible approach to Approval Pathways and Authorities, an updated program architecture in support of programmatic management of the Integrated Investment Program and increased accountabilities for the Investment Committee. These changes were implemented in 2024.
- . With the publication of the new Budget Process Operational Rules (January 2026) and the impending finalisation of the governance processes for the Medium Works Provision, all reforms have now been implemented.
- . Defence continues to actively manage the 2026 Integrated Investment Program in accordance with the Government approved transition to a capped model for over-programming. This includes monthly reporting on over-programming to key stakeholders, including central agencies.

2024-25 outcome for the Integrated Investment Program

- . The outcome of the 2024-25 Integrated Investment Program was an overspend of \$40 million or 1 per cent. This comprised a \$312 million, or 1.7 per cent, overspend in the Acquisition Programs and a \$272 million, or 1.6 per cent, underspend in the Sustainment Programs.
- . This outcome represents a historically high level of expenditure across both the Acquisition and Sustainment Programs.
- . Most recent data shows that the Integrated Investment Program remains under significant fiscal pressure.

Progress in delivering the Integrated Investment Program since the last estimates

- . To ensure effective delivery of the Integrated Investment Program, the Government announced major reforms to the capability system, including:
 - The establishment of the new Defence Delivery Agency, integrating three existing Defence capability delivery groups: Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group; Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group; and Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group. The independent agency will report directly to Ministers and have control over its budget, enabling coordinated and holistic delivery of defence capability and growth of sovereign defence industry.

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- A National Armaments Director will lead the new agency, responsible for advice to the Government on acquisition strategies, and the delivery of Government approved projects; and
- The centralisation of capability development functions under the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, to enable rigorous prioritisation, streamlined decision-making, and clearer accountability for new capability proposals.
- These reforms will strengthen project and budget management, cost estimation and assurance across the life of projects.
- Since the 2025-26 Supplementary Budget Estimates hearing, a number of milestones have been achieved. These are listed in the timeline below.

Management of the 2024 Integrated Investment Program

- Defence continues to deliver against the 2024 National Defence Strategy, while managing well-known challenges.
 - Cost uncertainty in developing innovative and sovereign capabilities.
 - Global supply chain pressures and industry capacity constraints, exacerbated by conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.
 - Workforce availability and skills shortage in industry.

Development of the 2026 Integrated Investment Program

- Through the development of the 2026 National Defence Strategy, Government will review ADF capability needs and resourcing.
 - Defence is prioritising resources to projects delivering the most critical capabilities and managing risks associated with project slippage.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
12 May 2026	The 2026-27 Budget delivers on the Government's recently released 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program outlining an additional \$14 billion over the next four years and \$53 billion over the decade that the government has invested in Defence in recognition of Australia's strategic environment. Albanese Government delivering for Defence and our veterans Defence Ministers
28 April 2026	The Government selected the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and the Precision Strike Missile (PrSM), investing \$2.3 billion over the decade and delivering a second long-range fires regiment at the Edinburgh Defence Precinct in South Australia. Albanese Government strengthens Army's long-range strike capability Defence Ministers.
18 April 2026	The Government took a major step towards delivering a larger and more lethal surface combatant fleet with contracts now signed for Australia's first three general purpose frigates. Australia locks in delivery of our first three general purpose frigates Defence Ministers.

16 April 2026	The Government released the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program. In recognition of our dangerous and unpredictable strategic circumstances, the 2026 Integrated Investment Program includes an additional \$14 billion over the next four years, and an additional \$53 billion over the decade, through Defence funding, estate modernisation and alternative financing where appropriate. As a result, Defence spending as a proportion of GDP will rise to 3 per cent by 2033 under the NATO approach. 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program Defence Ministers.
10 April 2026	The Government continues to expand opportunities for Australian businesses in support of AUKUS – helping to secure high-value manufacturing contracts that support Australian jobs, and develop robust and resilient supply chains. The Government announced the development and extension of two significant programs to help local industry tap into the supply chains of our AUKUS partners. Supporting Australian industry to join UK submarine supply chains Defence Ministers.
27 March 2026	The Government is delivering on its commitment to deliver capabilities to the Australian Defence Force (ADF) at pace with the first batch of Australian-built Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles (CRV) already rolling off the assembly line. First Australian-built Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles roll off assembly line Defence Ministers.
27 March 2026	The Government has taken a major step toward establishing domestic manufacturing of priority components for anti-ship cruise missiles, delivering another important boost to the nation's guided weapons capability. The Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP and German Minister for Defence, Mr Boris Pistorius observed the signing of a Letter of Intent between Defence and German warhead manufacturer TDW. Australia and Germany to closely cooperate on guided weapons components Defence Ministers.
24 March 2026	The Government announced an Australian Submarine Scholarship program, a \$15.8 million initiative to support the development of Australia's future nuclear-powered submarine workforce. STEM scholarships to propel nuclear submarine program Defence Ministers.
11 March 2026	The Government announced a \$176 million investment to deliver 40 new Australian-designed and built Bluebottle uncrewed surface vessels– one of the world's largest sovereign uncrewed surface vessel fleets. Albanese Government invests \$176 million in new fleet of Australian-made uncrewed vessels Defence Ministers.
8 March 2026	The Henderson Defence Precinct reached a major milestone with the award of the design services consultancy contract Bechtel Infrastructure Australia Pty Ltd – funded through the Government initial \$127 million, three year investment for planning, enabling works and design. Design contract signals decisive step in Henderson Defence Precinct consolidation Defence Ministers.

24 February 2026	The Government is strengthening Defence capability in northern Australia, with major milestones reached on delivering the \$250 million HMAS Cairns wharf upgrade and the completion of a new shared-user training facility for Australian Navy Cadets. The HMAS Cairns wharf upgrade is part of the Navy Capability Infrastructure Subprogram (NCIS), supporting the next generation of Navy vessels, including the Hunter class frigates, Supply class auxiliary oiler replenishment ships, and Arafura class offshore patrol vessels. \$250 million upgrade secures Navy's future in North Queensland Defence Ministers.
20 February 2026	The Government is investing \$4 billion into Army's future Landing Craft Heavy littoral fleet through a new contract covering the scope, timeline and material requirements that will see eight vessels built at WA's Henderson Shipyard. Major shipbuilding contracts underpin Army's transformation Defence Ministers.
4 February 2026	Release of the Defence Estate Audit and the Government's response. Delivering the Future Defence Estate Defence Ministers.
19 December 2025	Multi-year deed signed with Google Australia to deliver secure and air-gapped hyperscale cloud capability for Defence's information and communication technology environment. This deed will support Defence's transition to modern cloud-based infrastructure under projects DEF 2222 and JP 9111. Defence signs Deed of Standing Offer with Google Australia for Defence hyperscale cloud Defence.
17 December 2025	Final Operational Capability was declared for the block upgrade of Australia's C-130J Hercules fleet of 12 aircraft. Delivered under Project AIR 5440, upgrades to aircraft systems and safety-critical software and hardware bring the C-130J Hercules fleet up to the latest Block configuration (Block 8.1), enhancing capability, reliability, and mission readiness. C-130J Hercules block upgrade program complete Defence.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
19 April 2026	FOI	FOI 1591/25/26 Ben Packham requested documents generated in the last 12 months on the shift in defence budget reporting to NATO standards.	Outstanding
23 February 2026	QON	No. 128 Savings from External labour and savings from advertising, travel and legal expenses. Written QON from Senator Jane Hume.	Tabled
23 February 2026	QON	No. 150 Movement of Funds. Written QON from Senator Jane Hume on the ten largest movement of funds.	Tabled
23 February 2026	QON	No. 149 Estimates Variations. Written QON from Senator Jane on the ten largest estimate variations.	Tabled

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Date	Type	Title	Status
23 February 2026	QON	No. 163 Requests for additional funding. Written QON from Senator Jane Hume on the number of requests made by Defence for additional funding.	Tabled
19 February 2026	QON	No. 58 Henderson Defence Precinct. Written QON from Senator Michaela Cash on Henderson Defence Precinct Spending.	Tabled
13 February 2026	QON	No. 30 Defence GDP. Written QON from Senator Fatima Payman on Defence Spending as a per cent of GDP.	Not Tabled
11 February 2026	QON	No. 15 Defence Budget. Verbal QON from Senator Michaela Cash on the total defence budget.	Not Tabled

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 13 May 2026, Senator James Paterson issued a [media release](#) referencing analysis by Marcus Hellyer and Marc Ablong, calling for an explanation of the discrepancy between the 2026 NDS and the 2026-27 Defence Budget.
- On 13 May 2026, Joh Pike from Global Security reported <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/australia/2026/australia-260512-audod02.htm>
- On 13 May 2026, Marc Ablong reported from Australian Strategic Policy Institute [reported 2026 defence budget – A\\$17.4 billion in spending uplift still undecided](#)
- On 13 May 2026, Marcus Hellyer from Strategic Analysis Australia reported [Defence budget 2026-27: The \\$14 billion disappearing act - Strategic Analysis Australia](#).
- On 13 May 2026, Ben Packham reported that [the defence budget is expected to be about 2.02 per cent of GDP under the old standard in 2026-27, rising to 2.2 per cent by the end of the decade](#).
- On 13 May 2026, The Australian reported that [Defence is spending a hair over 2 per cent of GDP](#).
- On 13 May 2026, Jack Quail reported that [to support the rollout of the AUKUS submarine program, the federal government will invest in a new nuclear-powered submarine yard in South Australia over four years from 2026-27](#).
- On 12 May 2026, The Guardian reported that [the budget for Australia's contentious AUKUS deal has ballooned by more than \\$430m over four years](#).
- On 12 May 2026, The Hon Jim Chalmers MP Treasurer delivered the [2026-27 Budget speech, Parliament House, Canberra | Treasury Ministers](#).

- On 6 May 2026, Marcus Hellyer from Strategic Analysis Australia reported [Australia's 2026 National Defence Strategy - by the numbers you will know it - Strategic Analysis Australia](#).
- On 27 April 2026, The Strategist published an article [National Defence Strategy 2026: views in The Strategist | The Strategist](#).
- On 22 April 2026, The Strategist published an article [NDS 2026 – How Australia's defence strategy converges with US's balance of power | The Strategist](#).
- On 17 April 2026, ABC news reports that [In charts: A look at Australia's record spending on defence - ABC News](#).
- On 17 April 2026, Marcus Hellyer from Strategic Analysis Australia reported [Australia's National Defence Strategy: Canberra is yet to have its Carney moment - Strategic Analysis Australia](#).
- On 17 April 2026, the Sydney Morning Herald reports [National Defence Strategy 2026: Richard Marles hits back at critics over accusations of accounting tricks](#).
- On 17 April 2026, The Age reported [Australia defence spending: Trump made a change but not in the way he thinks](#).
- On 15 April 2026, ABC news reports that [Defence spending to lift by \\$53 billion over the next decade as government warns of 'intensifying' risks - ABC News](#).
- On 15 April 2026, the Australian Financial Review published an article titled [Australian Defence to get billion-dollar budget boost as Donald Trump targets lagging allies](#).
- On 11 March 2026, The Strategist published an article [When the world changes, so must our defence: Australian spending should exceed 2 percent | The Strategist](#).
- On 9 March 2026, the Australian Financial Review published an article titled [Australian defence budget set to increase beyond AUKUS commitments](#).
- On 22 February 2026, Oscar Godsell, Sky News, reported ['Labor gutting our defence': Shadow defence minister James Paterson urges more military investment to counter global threats | Sky News Australia](#).
- On 10 February 2026, Marcus Hellyer from Strategic Analysis Australia [Defence's 2025-26 budget update— billions spent earlier, but billions go out the back door - Strategic Analysis Australia](#).
- On 4 February 2026, ABC news reports that the [Government eyes off fire sale of historic defence properties around Australia - ABC News](#).
- On 15 January 2026, Hugo Hodge from ABC News reports [Why Australia is investing in defence infrastructure at five military sites in the Philippines - ABC News](#).
- On 29 January 2026, the Strategist published an article titled [The US National Defence Strategy will demand more from Australia | The Strategist](#).

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Divisions: Budgets and Financial Services / Force Design	
PDR No: SB26-000322	
Prepared By: Andrew Crosthwaite Assistant Secretary Budgeting and Reporting Defence Finance Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Samuel Volker First Assistant Secretary Budgets and Financial Services Defence Finance Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 14 May 2026
Prepared by: Jacinda Stewart Assistant Secretary Investment Portfolio Force Design Division Vice Chief of Defence Force Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 20 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Major General Matt Pearse AO Acting Head Force Design Vice Chief of Defence Force Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 20 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Steven Groves Chief Finance Officer Defence Finance Group Date: 14 May 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC Vice Chief of the Defence Force Date: 22 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – DEFENCE REFORM

Lead: Nadine Williams, Head of Defence Reform Taskforce

Context: On 1 December 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced reforms to Defence's capability development and delivery systems, including the creation of the Defence Delivery Agency.

Key Messages

- The Government will establish a new Defence Delivery Agency by 1 July 2027, with a singular focus on capability acquisition and sustainment.
- As an interim step, Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group, and Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group will be brought together within Defence under a single organisational structure by 1 July 2026.
- As outlined in the 2026 National Defence Strategy, the reforms to Defence's capability development and delivery functions are critical to delivering the capabilities required by the integrated, focused force.
- A whole-of-Government taskforce, led by a Deputy Secretary from PM&C, is developing a detailed implementation plan for Ministers to consider. The Taskforce has been asked to provide advice to Government in mid-2026.
- In parallel, Defence continues to improve its approach to procurement and contracting.

Talking Points**What structural reforms have Ministers directed Defence to undertake?**

- Throughout its first term, the Government directed a range of reforms to ensure Defence is better able to respond to Australia's deteriorating strategic circumstances.
- The Government is establishing a new Defence Delivery Agency with a singular focus on capability acquisition and sustainment. The Defence Delivery Agency will be stood up on 1 July 2027.
- The Defence Delivery Agency will consolidate key delivery functions currently in the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group, and Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group, under one accountable body, reporting directly to ministers.
- As in interim step, these three groups are being brought together under a single organisational structure, the Defence Delivery Group, within Defence by 1 July 2026.
- Defence is also centralising capability development functions under the Vice Chief of the Defence Force to support clearer prioritisation, streamlined decision-making and accountability for new capability proposals ensuring capabilities support an integrated, focused Australian Defence Force. These changes will be in place by 1 July 2026.
- This is a large and complex reform that will be implemented in phases, with full implementation expected by 1 July 2027.

Who is leading design and implementation of the reform?

- . A whole-of-government Taskforce has been established to develop an implementation plan for the reform.
 - The Taskforce, led by Nadine Williams, a Deputy Secretary from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, reporting directly to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry.
 - The Taskforce includes representatives from Defence, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and other key Government agencies.
- . A Defence Transition Support Team has been established to lead implementation of reform across the portfolio, following receipt of the Taskforce's advice.

Why is reform necessary now?

- . The 2023 Defence Strategic Review recommended a number of significant reforms to ensure Defence is better able to respond to Australia's deteriorating strategic circumstances.
- . Government has committed record funding for capability acquisition and sustainment.
 - With record funding, we need to ensure value for money.
 - The Defence Delivery Agency will provide greater contestability, improved project and budget management, cost estimation and assurance right across the life of a project.

What are the benefits of the Defence Reform?

- . The Government's record investment in Defence is driving a larger, more complex capability program. Reform is essential to ensure those capabilities are delivered on time, to budget and with clear accountability.
 - Fifteen years ago, 27 per cent of the projects we were delivering were rated in the two highest tiers of project complexity; today it is almost 60 per cent.
 - Over the same period, our acquisition budget across the major delivery groups has more than doubled, and it is expected to double again over the coming decade.
 - We are delivering resilient, sovereign defence industries in naval shipbuilding, guided weapons and explosive ordnance, autonomous systems and other sectors critical for Australia's national security, on a scale that is unprecedented since the Second World War.
- . Defence should always be looking for ways to make sure we're the most capable, professional organisation we can be, and demonstrating value for money.

- These reforms will position Defence to:
 - Strengthen accountabilities for delivery;
 - Improve the quality of advice to Government on cost, schedule and delivery risk, and strengthen internal contestability; and
 - Create clearer career pathways and professional development opportunities for both capability development and capability delivery.

What work has the Defence Reform Taskforce done to date?

- On 1 December 2025, the Government announced the establishment of the Defence Reform Taskforce and is due to provide its report in mid-2026.
- Identifying for Ministers detailed implementation options for the package of foundational reforms. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Accountability mapping
 - The design and establishment of the Defence Delivery Agency
 - The strengthening of Defence's cost estimation, assurance and contestation functions.

What industry and international engagement has been done to date?

- In addition to internal consultation within Defence, the Reform Taskforce's stakeholder engagement with industry, international partners and union representatives is ongoing.
- The Taskforce has engaged with industry Primes, Small and Medium Enterprises, State and Territory Representatives, and Peak Bodies and Associations.
- The Taskforce has also sought insights from Canada, United Kingdom, and the United States to understand their experiences through the comparable defence reforms being undertaken.
- The Taskforce will continue to engage relevant stakeholders as the work progresses.

Table of Stakeholder Engagement:

Date	Engagement
1 April 2026	Engagement with the Chief of the United States Military Group, United States Embassy
February – April 2026	Defence Reform ongoing engagement with internal and external stakeholders
28 January 2026	Defence Reform Briefing – Virtual Call: Industry SMEs, State and Territory Representatives, Peak Bodies and Associations
28 January 2026	Defence Reform Briefing – Virtual Call: Industry Primes
15 January 2026	Engagement with United Kingdom National Armaments Director

14 January 2026	Engagement with Canadian National Armaments Director
4 December 2025	Initial Briefing – Virtual Call: Union Representatives
4 December 2025	Initial Briefing – Virtual Call: Industry SMEs, State and Territory Representatives, Peak Bodies and Associations
4 December 2025	Initial Briefing – Virtual Call: Industry Primes

How will the Defence Delivery Agency differ from the Defence Materiel Organisation?

- The creation of the Defence Delivery Agency goes beyond any previous reforms.
- In contrast to past bodies such as the Defence Materiel Organisation, the Defence Delivery Agency will have autonomy over its budget, and will be directly accountable to Government for delivering capability.
- The Defence Delivery Agency will also rebuild the skilled APS workforce, consolidating specialist project management and commercial expertise.

How much will it cost to stand up the Defence Delivery Agency?

- The whole-of-government Taskforce is working on detailed implementation options.

Will these reforms result in job cuts?

- As the Deputy Prime Minister said on 1 December 2025, when asked if there would be job cuts: "...those people who are working in those groups today will be those who give rise to the creation of the Defence Delivery Group, and in time, the Defence Delivery Agency. And it will be the same number of people."

Will the reforms see some senior officers lose their jobs?

- The new Defence Delivery Agency will integrate the three existing delivery groups.
- The Taskforce is working on detailed implementation design work.

Procurement Reform

- Defence continues to evolve and uplift its approach to contracting to simplify how we work with industry, reduce the time it takes to get into contracts, while maintaining appropriate levels of governance, to meet changed strategic circumstances.
- Focus areas include the modernisation and digitalisation of the Australian Standard for Defence Contracting (ASDEFCON) suite of tendering and contracting templates, rationalisation of policy guidance and resources to make mandatory requirements easier to understand and apply, and building and upskilling of Defence's commercial workforce.

Facts and Figures

- Approximately 38 per cent of the defence budget will be delivered by the Defence Delivery Agency.

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- There are 6,434 APS and ADF for the three groups delivering and sustaining military equipment.
- There are 2,645 contractors (as at March 2025 External Workforce Census).

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
1 December 2025	In a joint media release the Minister for Defence and Minister for Defence Industry announced reforms to establish of a dedicated agency designed to strengthen and streamline acquisition and sustainment activities, Reforming Defence capability development and delivery.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
11 Feb 26	QoN	No 34, DDA Proposed Organisational Structure. Senator Henderson (Liberal, Victoria).	Tabled.
11 Feb 26	QoN	No 21, Defence Delivery Agency – Industry Briefings. Senator Henderson (Liberal, Victoria).	Tabled.
3 Dec 25	QoN	No 995, The new Defence Delivery Agency. Senator David Pocock (Independent, Canberra). Relationship between the new Delivery Agency and the Defence Industry Development Strategy, or DIDS.	Tabled.
3 Dec 25	QoN	No 929, Defence Delivery Agency. Senator Henderson (Liberal, Victoria). Defence Delivery Agency and engagement with industry.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 8 April 2026, Eleanor Campbell, The Canberra Times, [‘Search underway for new defence agency boss’](#).
- 12 March 2026, Richard Brabin-Smith, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, [‘Australia’s new defence acquisition organisation must be forward looking’](#).
- 20 February 2026, Dana Daniel, The Canberra Times, [‘Big hill to climb’: Defence outlines skills challenge in mega-agency transition’](#).
- 4 February 2026, David Schmidtchen, The Mandarin, [‘Rebuilding defence capability begins with rebuilding the bureaucracy’](#).
- 2 February 2026, Connor Pearce, The Mandarin, [‘Rethinking Defence procurement as part of changing strategic postures’](#).
- 2 December 2025, Michael Read, Australian Financial Review, [‘Marles launches biggest Defence overhaul in five decades’](#).
- 2 December 2025, Dana Daniel, Canberra Times, [‘Mega-agency in Defence overhaul’](#).
- 2 December 2025, Editorial, The Australian, [‘Turning hype into Defence gains’](#).
- 2 December 2025, Andrew Greene, The West Australian, [‘Shake-up of Defence must deliver results’](#).
- 2 December 2025, Ben Packham and Noah Yim, The Australian, [‘More bangs for bucks in ALP’s sights’](#).
- 1 December 2025, Olivia Caisley, ABC News, [‘Government unveils Department of Defence overhaul amid delays and cost blowouts’](#).
- 1 December 2025, Ben Packham, The Australian, [‘Marles poised to overhaul Defence Department to boost performance’](#).
- 1 December 2025, Matthew Knott, Sydney Morning Herald, [‘Government to scrap multiple defence agencies to fight massive blowouts’](#).
- 1 December 2025, Tess Ikononou, The Canberra Times, [‘Sweeping shake-up of Defence to deliver ‘bang for buck’](#).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June
Last updated: 10 April 2026
Key witnesses: Nadine Williams

PDR No: SB26-000324

Division: Defence Reform Taskforce	
PDR No: SB26-000324	
Prepared by: Megan Lees Deputy Head Defence Reform Taskforce Defence Reform Taskforce Mob: s22 Date: 9 April 2026	Cleared by: Nadine Williams Head of Defence Reform Taskforce Defence Reform Taskforce Mob: s22 Date: 10 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - POST-SEPARATION EMPLOYMENT CONTROLS

Lead: John Reid PSM, Deputy Secretary Governance

Supporting: Ben Wright, First Assistant Secretary Defence Integrity

Context:

At the February 2025 Senate Estimates hearings, Senator David Shoebridge questioned Defence's management of the post-separation employment of Major General Jeremy King, who commenced as CEO Lockheed Martin Australia and New Zealand on 12 January 2026. The engagement of former senior Defence officials by Defence contracting companies has been a frequent line of questioning at previous Senate Estimates hearings.

Key Messages

- Defence policy requires separating personnel to notify Defence of offers of post-separation employment that may create an actual or perceived conflict of interest to arise, and invests in educating personnel about the importance of this obligation for managing any conflicts appropriately.
- Defence engages with industry to proactively manage conflict of interest risks in post-separation employment, in particular for separating Senior Leadership Group members. The joint release of the Defence and Private Sector: Working with Integrity document sets the expectations around employment with Defence Industry Partners.

Talking Points

- Defence is aware that separating personnel often choose to pursue a career in a related field, and encourages those separating from Defence to consider a career in another area of the Defence workforce where their skills and experience may continue to contribute to the achievement of Defence's objectives.
- In turn, Defence actively recruits from the Defence industry workforce, and encourages Defence industry employers to support their employees in becoming members of the ADF Reserves.
- Defence Instruction (Provision AG5) Conflicts of Interest applies to all Defence officials and contains specific requirements relating to separation employment. This policy requires that all defence personnel must:
 - declare any offer of post-separation employment with a prospective employer that provides goods or services to Defence, is a member of a standing offer panel or that otherwise may give rise to a conflict of interest (actual or perceived), using the Defence Conflict of Interest Declaration Form, as soon as practicable and before accepting the offer.
 - in writing, notify their prospective employer of:
 - : their conflict of interest disclosure obligations to Defence on receipt of an offer of employment.
 - : any management strategies or restrictions imposed by Defence, before accepting an offer of post-separation employment.

- . For members of the Defence Senior Leadership Group (Senior Executive Service Band 1/1Star Ranked Officers, and above), Defence Conflict of Interest Declaration Forms would be provided to Group Heads / Service Chiefs as the delegates who would then brief the Secretary and/or Chief of the Defence Force as appropriate.
- . In addition to Provision AG5, there are a number of other controls in place to mitigate post-separation employment risks that apply to Defence officials, including:
 - security controls to cease security clearance sponsorship as part of the off-boarding process;
 - detective controls to monitor information and communications technology systems for unauthorised access;
 - strengthened consequences for individuals not authorised to access Defence information;
 - obligations on tenderers to disclose conflicts of interest including conflicts involving former Defence personnel in Defence-endorsed contracting templates and Deeds of Standing Offer for Defence strategic panels;
 - ‘cooling off periods’ in Defence-endorsed contracting templates and Deeds of Standing Offer for Defence strategic panels, that may restrict former Defence personnel involved in a procurement process from subsequently contributing to the development of a tender response or the performance of a Defence related contract;
 - requiring the private sector to seek approval from Defence before allowing former Defence personnel or Defence service providers to contribute to a tender response or Defence contract;
 - training and educating personnel focused on conflict of interest including mandatory training requirements;
 - actively engaging with industry on Defence’s post-separation employment and conflict of interest requirements, including the joint release of the Defence and Private Sector: Working with Integrity document;
 - a Moratorium on Contracting Recently Transitioned or Separated Personnel, issued in August 2023; and
 - proactive controls on employment with a foreign government or military, through the Safeguarding Australia’s Military Secrets framework, which commenced on 6 May 2024.
- . Since 2023, Defence has tracked individuals who have separated from Defence and returned as a contractor within 12-months of departure.

Numbers of Defence personnel separating and returning as Defence contractors, consultants or outsourced service providers¹

- . From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, 389 individuals were identified returning to Defence as contractors within a 12-month period post separation.

¹ This data is derived by matching records from PMKeys and Other Defence Support (ODS) data where an individual has separated from Defence and then returned within 12 months of the separation and has had an ODS account created. It should be noted that not all individuals who separate from Defence and return as a Defence contractor, consultant or outsourced service provider will have an ODS account created.

- From 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, 284 individuals were identified returning to Defence as contractors within a 12-month period post separation.
- From 1 July 2025 to 1 April 2026, 186 individuals were identified returning to Defence as contractors within a 12-month period post separation.
- During the period 7 August 2023 (date of release of the Moratorium on Contracting Recently Transitioned or Separated Personnel) to 1 April 2026, the Defence Contractor Taskforce has been notified of 18² exceptions. The exceptions were provided as follows:
 - five exceptions were granted to ADF members who initiated the transition process prior to 7 August 2023;
 - two exceptions were granted to APS employees who separated or resigned prior to 7 August 2023;
 - three exceptions were granted to two ADF members and one APS employee who had pre-existing commitments with a future employer;
 - one exception was granted to an APS employee due to Defence Capability needs
 - one exception was granted to an ADF member who had transitioned as a result of a Command Initiated Transfer to the Reserves and/or reaching retirement age;
 - one exception was granted to an ADF member who medically transitioned;
 - three exceptions were granted to former APS employees who were engaged on compassionate grounds/special measure and Defence capability needs;
 - one exception was granted to an ADF member who medically transitioned and Defence capability needs; and
 - one exception was granted to an ADF member due to commercial necessity.
- One individual was stood down after they were identified as being in breach of the Moratorium on Contracting Recently Transitioned or Separated Personnel.

Data on Foreign Work Authorisations required under Part IXAA to the *Defence Act 1903* – Safeguarding Australia’s Military Secrets

- As at 1 April 2026, Defence has received 4,039 Foreign Work Authorisation–related requests since the commencement of the Safeguarding Australia’s Military Secrets framework on 6 May 2024.
- As at 1 April 2026, 3,997 requests have been resolved:
 - 1,828 Foreign Work Authorisation requests have been granted;
 - four Foreign Work Authorisation requests have been refused;
 - 298 requests to vary a Foreign Work Authorisation request have been resolved;
 - 271 requests to withdraw or cancel a Foreign Work Authorisation request have been actioned; and
 - 1,596 requests that were not required under the legislation or were invalid have been resolved.

² 19 individuals were reported in the previous brief. This figure has been revised to 18 due to a discrepancy in the reporting of two exception categories that were assigned to one individual.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000326

Last updated: 10 April 2026

Key witnesses: John Reid PSM

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
	Nil.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
23 February 2026	QoN	No. 87, Post-Separation Employment. Senator David Shoebridge asked how many time Defence has waived the 13-month 'cooling off' period for staff being employed outside of Defence and requested data for each year over the last five years.	Tabled.
23 February 2026	QoN	No. 9, Major General Jeremy King Appointment. Senator David Shoebridge asked questions about Major General Jeremy King's employment with Defence (when he commenced and ceased with Joint Aviation Systems Branch).	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 7 April 2026, ABC News published an article titled [Australian Army reservist to face court over allegedly working for Ukraine military without authorisation](#).
- On 12 February 2026, The Canberra Times published an article by Eleanor Campbell titled ['Disrepute': Military chiefs defence General's move to Lockheed Martin](#).
- On 12 January 2026, Lockheed Martin announced that Jeremy King would assume the role of chief executive for Australia and New Zealand in a news release titled [Lockheed Martin Appoints Jeremy King As Chief Executive Australia and New Zealand](#).
- On 3 August 2025, The Age published an article by Deborah Snow and Michael Koziol titled [The suburban US office that brokered lucrative military contracts with Australia](#).
- On 2 August 2025, WA today published an article titled [Battle stations: The former PM, ministers, and military brass cashing in on Australia's defence spending bonanza](#) by Deborah Snow.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

Last updated: 10 April 2026

Key witnesses: John Reid PSM

PDR No: SB26-000326

Division: Defence Integrity Division	
PDR No: SB26-000326	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Director Integrity Policy and Industry Engagement Defence Integrity Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Ben Wright First Assistant Secretary Defence Integrity Defence Integrity Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026
Consultation: Emily Hall Assistant Secretary Defence Export Control Strategy, Policy, and Industry Group Date: 7 April 2026 s47E(d) Director Contractor Taskforce External Workforce Reform Branch Defence Finance Group Date: 2 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: John Reid PSM Deputy Secretary Governance Governance Group Date: 10 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - ANAO AUDITS

Lead: John Reid PSM, Deputy Secretary Governance.

Supporting: Chris Deeble AO CSC, Deputy Secretary Capability, Acquisition and Sustainment, to support on *Defence Procurement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles (Land 400 Phase 3)* and discussion on the Major Projects Report.

David Hanley, Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment, to support on *Collins Class Submarine Life of Type Extension - Planning and Implementation*.

Context:

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has tabled three performance audits in 2025-26 relevant to Defence (Land 400 Phase 3, Collins Class LOTE and Administration of Investigations in Defence).

On 6 March 2026 the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA) announced a decision to cease production of the Major Projects Report (MPR). On 1 April 2026, a motion calling for the reinstatement of the MPR was agreed to by the Senate. On 23 April 2026, the Auditor-General responded to the Senate advising that if the Major Projects Report were to be reinstated, a request from the JCPAA under the *Auditor General Act 1997* would be required.

Key Messages

- Defence is working to remedy all shortcomings that have been identified by ANAO's report on Land 400 Phase 3, Collins Class LOTE and Administration of Investigations in Defence.
- The Government, working with Defence and industry, is committed to extending the life of all six Collins class submarines by one full 10-year operating cycle.
- Defence is strengthening its processes to ensure that future strategic shifts, such as the Collins Class LOTE, trigger more structured and timely reassessment alongside continued delivery.
- Defence is committed to ensuring all Defence programs and projects are professionally executed and managed.
- Defence accepted the nine recommendations from the Investigations audit and is working to address the identified shortcomings.
- The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit (JCPAA)'s 6 March announcement that it would not ask Defence or the ANAO to continue to produce the MPR was based on the advice of the Auditor-General.
- That decision was informed by the growing non-disclosure of information based on security assessments that public release could damage the security, defence or international relations of the Commonwealth.
- There was no request by the Government or Defence to discontinue the MPR.
- Defence understands the ANAO remains committed to maintaining or enhancing the assurance over Defence's acquisition program.

- Recently the ANAO commenced a performance audit of Defence's management of its capability investment priorities, which will bring transparency to capability investment performance and how Defence manages the biennial Integrated Investment Program.

Talking Points

2025-26 ANAO Activities

- In 2025-26, the ANAO tabled three Defence performance audits:
 - 29 May 2026: Administration of Investigations in Defence
 - 22 May 2026: Defence's Collins Class Submarine Life of Type Extension - Planning and Implementation
 - 30 March 2026: Defence's Procurement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles under Land 400 Phase 3.

Administration of Investigations in Defence

- Defence acknowledged the Auditor-General's report on the administration of investigations and agreed to all nine recommendations. The report also recommended that Defence establish clear management arrangements for procurement complaints ahead of the Defence Delivery Agency's commencement in July 2027.
- In response to the findings, Defence will look to implement reforms to strengthen consistency, timeliness and oversight across its investigation framework including clarifying enterprise-wide investigative jurisdictions, referral pathways, definitions and decision-making responsibilities to ensure matters are directed and handled consistently.
- We are examining our enterprise oversight to see how it can be enhanced to expand reporting on investigation trends, timeliness and outcomes. We will look to do this by leveraging existing governance frameworks across investigative activities.
- Defence is strengthening capability and compliance by mapping mandatory investigator qualifications to roles and aligning practices with the Australian Government Investigations Standard, alongside improved training and guidance.
- Complementing these reforms, Defence and the IGADF are strengthening governance, assurance and oversight of the military justice system.
- We are also uplifting the Defence Enterprise Case Management System (DECMS) to improve data quality, reporting and system performance through to mid-2027.
- Defence is addressing impacts on personnel by strengthening workplace protections, embedding trauma-informed practices, and implementing recommendations from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to support a more effective, transparent and people-centred military justice system noting the 30 Defence-led and 13 IGADF-led recommendations addressing military sexual violence, unacceptable behaviour and military justice.

Collins Class Submarine Life of Type Extension - Planning and Implementation

- Defence acknowledged the findings contained in the Auditor-General's report on the planning and implementation of the Collins class Life of Type Extension (LOTE).
- Defence agreed to the five recommendations aimed at improving project planning, risk management and the quality of advice provided to government.

- The report identifies that Defence did not reassess delivery assumptions, nor present alternative delivery approaches to Government, with sufficient timeliness once strategic uncertainty had resolved. This contributed to increased program complexity, cost growth and schedule delay.
- Defence recognises the importance of robust governance, disciplined option analysis, and the provision of timely advice on risks and interdependencies. When implementing the recommendations, Defence will continue to prioritise the prevention of a submarine capability gap during the transition to future capability.
- As the fleet ages, a LOTE is required to maintain submarine capability and availability until Australia transitions to a future nuclear-powered submarine fleet under AUKUS.
- Without a service life extension, these submarines would be withdrawn from service between 2026 and 2036.
- The LOTE project involves significant public expenditure. It is critical to avoiding a submarine capability gap during the transition to nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS partnership.

Defence Procurement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles under Land 400 Phase 3

- Defence acknowledged the findings contained in the Auditor General's report on Defence's procurement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles under Project LAND 400 Phase 3, including that Defence's procurement and contract management of the project to date has been partly effective.
- Defence agreed to the two recommendations aimed at providing the Government with greater clarity about procurement options and improving the timeliness of Defence's payment of supplier invoices.
- Defence reform will address procurement options and implement training to reinforce payments and compliance with policy.

Defence's procurement process

- Defence conducted a competitive tender process over 2018-2021, including extensive test and evaluation in Australia of tendered vehicles.
- The tender process identified that Hanwha Defence Australia Redback best met Defence's requirements and provided a value for money outcome.
- When delivered, the world-class Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle will provide the necessary protection for our soldiers, enabling them to fight and win in a broad range of environments, and return home safely.
- The Infantry Fighting Vehicles will be delivered in the timeframe required to meet the Defence Strategic Review's call for Army to be transformed for littoral manoeuvre operations from Australia.
- In 2023, in the context of the Defence Strategic Review, the project was accelerated to deliver a reduced number of vehicles more appropriate to Australia's strategic circumstances, two years ahead of the original schedule.

- This has required the adoption of a risk-based and highly collaborative approach with industry partners, based on making acceptable trade-offs to deliver at pace.
- The project continues to progress through the design phase, with a number of prototypes now built to support the commencement of verification testing activities.

High risk matters raised by the ANAO

- As with the delivery of any complex capability, a number of technical matters are being actively managed, utilising extensive subject matter expertise across Defence, Hanwha globally and its industry partners to resolve.
- As noted in the ANAO report, two very high risks relate to mobility and lethality. These risks remain under intensive management, with one recently downgraded as the risk profile has reduced, and the other supported by a clear and credible action plan.
- The contract includes a comprehensive test and verification program to ensure that the vehicles delivered meet Defence's requirements.
- We appreciate the professionalism and collaborative partnership demonstrated by industry partners during the tender process and now in the delivery of this critical capability to Defence.

Major Projects Report - Background

- On 6 March 2026, the JCPAA resolved not to request Defence and the ANAO to continue production of the Major Projects Report (MPR).
- The Committee announced its intent to continue to exercise oversight of Defence acquisition governance and performance through more detailed examination of the Auditor-General's performance audits within the Defence portfolio.
- On 1 April 2026, Senators David Shoebridge and David Pocock put forward a motion that the Senate request the Auditor-General to urgently reinstate the ANAO's annual MPR. This was agreed to by the Senate the same day.
- On 23 April 2026, the Auditor-General responded to the Senate highlighting the growing non-disclosure of information which lead to the conclusion that the MPR is no longer fit for purpose.
- The Auditor-General stated that if the MPR were to be reinstated, it would require a request from the JCPAA under the *Auditor General Act 1997*.
- The Auditor-General letter to the President of the Senate is available [here](#).

Auditor-General performance audit of Defence's acquisition of Enhanced Defence High Frequency Communications System

- On 21 May 2026 the Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force were advised that the Auditor-General has decided to conduct a performance audit of Defence's delivery of the Enhanced Defence High Frequency Communications System.
- To form a conclusion against the objective, the ANAO will examine:
 - Are Defence's planning and project delivery arrangements fit-for-purpose?

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Last updated: 02 June 2026

Key witnesses: John Reid PSM, Chris Deeble AO CSC, David Hanley

- Is Defence able to demonstrate progress toward, and likely achievement of, the project's intended outcomes?
- . The ANAO have advised that the report is scheduled to be tabled in April 2027.

Auditor-General performance audit of Defence's management of its capability investment priorities - Background

- . On 7 April 2026 the Acting Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force were advised that the Auditor-General has decided to conduct a performance audit of Defence's management of its capability investment priorities.
- . The objective of this audit is to assess the effectiveness of Defence's management of its capability investment priorities through the Integrated Investment Program since 2024.
- . To form a conclusion against the objective, the ANAO will examine:
 - Has Defence established fit-for-purpose enterprise-level governance, control and decision-making arrangements to manage its capability investments?
 - Is Defence delivering on its capability investment priorities?
- . An entry meeting was held with the Vice Chief of the Defence Force on 21 April 2026.
- . The ANAO have advised that the report is scheduled to be tabled in March 2027

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PDR No: 5826-000328

Last updated: 02 June 2026

Key witnesses: John Reid PSM, Chris Deeble AO CSC, David Hanley

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
23 April 2026	The Auditor-General responded via a letter to the President of the Senate stating that a request from the JCPAA under the <i>Auditor General Act 1997</i> is required requesting the Major Projects Report be reinstated.
1 April 2026	The Senate agreed to a motion that the Senate requests the Auditor-General to urgently reinstate the ANAO's annual Major Projects Report
6 March 2026	The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit made a public statement not to request the Department of Defence and the ANAO to continue production of the Major Projects Report.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
24 March 2026	OPD	Order for the Production of Documents No.442 – Senator Fatima Payman, requested documents created after 1 July 2025 in relation to any proposals to discontinue the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) annual Defence Major Projects Report (MPR).	Approved for release
16 March 2026	FOI	Defence received a Freedom of Information request, seeking access to correspondence between Defence and the Auditor General since October 2025 regarding the Major Project Report.	Decision is not yet finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting**Australian media reported on the findings from the ANAO audit on the Defence Procurement of Infantry Fighting Vehicles under Land 400 Phase 3**

- On 1 May 2026, Hon Phillip Thompson MP published a media release titled [Cost blowouts put soldiers lives at risk](#)
- On 1 May 2026, the *Townsville Bulletin* published an article titled [Defence's \\$7.38bn vehicle project hit by major flaws](#)
- On 31 March 2026, *The Australian* published an article by Ben Packham titled [ANAO report puts Australian Army Redback IFV procurement under the microscope - Defence Connect](#)
- On 31 March 2026, *Australian Defence Magazine* published an article by Max Blenkin titled [ANAO releases Land 400 report - Australian Defence Magazine](#)
- On 31 March 2026, Bernard Keane published an article in *Crikey* titled [Yet another blunder at Defence, where 'off the shelf' is ignored for expensive bespoke solutions](#)

Australian media reported on the cancellation of the Major Projects Report

- On 4 May 2026, *Senator James Paterson* published a media release titled [Marles must restore basic Defence transparency](#)
- On 7 April 2026, *the West Australian* published an article by Andrew Green titled [A big win for transparency](#)
- On 6 April 2026, *the Nightly* published an article by Andrew Green titled [Veil of secrecy shrouding expensive Defence failures slips a little | The Nightly](#)
- On 2 April 2026, *the West Australian* published an article by Tess Ikononou titled [Labor about-turns on ending defence project scrutiny | The West Australian](#)
- On 1 April 2026, *the Nightly* published an article by Andrew Green titled [Defence forced to drop its shield of secrecy](#)
- On 1 April 2026, *the Nightly* published an article by Andrew Green titled [Albanese Government push to hide embarrassing defence project failures overturned | The Nightly](#)
- On 20 March 2026, *Strategic Analysis Australia* published an article by Marcus Hellyer titled [The tragic death of the Major Projects Report: a crime with 3 culprits & 27 million victims](#)
- On 19 March 2026, *Australian Defence Magazine* published an article by Max Blenkin titled [Defence Major Project Report at an end](#)
- On 18 March 2026, *the Canberra Times* published an article by Elenanor Campbell titled [Undermined: David Pocock condemns killing of major defence report](#)
- On 18 March 2026, *the Canberra Times* published an article by Eleanor Campbell titled [Watchdog loses eye on Defence spending](#)
- On 17 March 2026, *Strategic Analysis Australia* published an article by Marcus Hellyer titled [Victory in the War for Influence & Invoicing: Australia's Mandarin Advisory Complex at work in two reports](#)
- On 17 March 2026, *Region Australia* published an article by Andrew McLaughlin titled [Transparency 'at risk' as key annual audit office report on defence projects is axed](#)
- On 16 March 2026, *Defence Connect* published an article by Robert Dougherty titled [Defence exports warn "end of transparency, accountability" after Major Projects Report change](#)
- On 15 March 2026, *The West Australian* published an article by Andrew Greene titled [Defence project failings hushed](#)
- On 15 March 2026, *the West Australian* published an article by Andrew Greene titled [Auditor General reports of major defence projects quietly axed by parliamentary committee](#)
- On 13 March 2026, *the Australian* published an article by Ben Packham titled [Defence projects audit shelved](#)
- On 13 March 2006, *the Australian* published an article by Ben Packham titled [Defence major projects report axed in 'blow for transparency](#)

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- On 12 March 2026, the *Australian Strategic Policy Institute* published an article by Linus Cohen titled [The biggest window into Australian defence acquisition has closed](#)

Division: Defence Integrity Division	
PDR No: SB26-000328	
Prepared by: Jason Woods Assistant Secretary Audit and Fraud Control Defence Integrity Division Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 12 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Ben Wright First Assistant Secretary Defence Integrity Defence Integrity Division Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 12 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: John Reid PSM Deputy Secretary Governance Governance Group Date: 13 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - MRH-90

Lead: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Chief of Army, to lead on MRH90 Taipan incidents, investigations and inquiries.

Supporting: Air Vice Marshal David Scheul, Head Joint Aviation Systems Division, to support on technical aspects of the MRH90 Taipan helicopter.

Supporting: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Defence Aviation Authority, to support on questions related to the Defence Flight Safety Bureau investigation and final report.

Context:

On 28 July 2023, an Australian Army Taipan Multi-Role Helicopter (MRH90) impacted waters near Lindeman Island, Queensland, during a night-time training activity as part of Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2023.

Tragically, Captain Danniell Lyon, Lieutenant Maxwell Nugent, Warrant Officer Class 2 Joseph 'Phillip' Laycock and Corporal Alexander Naggs from the 6th Aviation Regiment were killed, and will always be remembered with great dignity and respect.

Key Messages

- On 3 April 2025, the Defence Aviation Authority announced that the Defence Flight Safety Bureau has finalised the Aviation Safety Investigation Report into the 28 July 2023 MRH90 Taipan helicopter accident during Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.
- The investigation concluded that the primary cause of the accident was an unrecognised loss of spatial orientation, commonly referred to as spatial disorientation.
- The 2023 MRH90 Taipan accident is subject to ongoing independent investigations and inquiries (Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force, Comcare, the Queensland Coroner and the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee).
- Defence has not been formally notified that any of these investigations have concluded.
- Defence is committed to supporting the conduct of thorough and independent investigations to identify causes and appropriate remediating actions that can be taken to help prevent future aviation accidents and incidents.

Talking Points**Investigations and Inquiries**

- The 2023 MRH90 Taipan accident is subject to ongoing independent investigations and inquiries (Inspector General of the Australian Defence Force, Comcare, the Queensland Coroner and the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee).
- The Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation is complete.

Comcare Investigation

- Defence is aware of a statement from Comcare advising: *"Comcare conducted a thorough investigation and provided a brief of evidence to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions. The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions advised in*

July 2025 that it did not consider there was sufficient evidence to commence a prosecution."

- . Defence has not been formally notified that the Comcare investigation has concluded.
- . Defence has not been provided the Comcare brief of evidence or the final report regarding their investigation into the MRH90 Taipan accident.
- . On 27 August 2025, the Senate approved Order for the Production of Documents No. 115 – Taipan helicopter crash moved by Senator Malcolm Roberts. The order was for:
 - the Comcare brief of evidence sent to the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions; and
 - the Comcare investigation final report.
- . Comcare partially complied with the order on 1 September 2025. Comcare withheld the brief of evidence on public interest grounds, and redacted personal information in the Comcare investigation final report.
- . On 1 September 2025, Senator Roberts made a speech in the Senate stating that it was "*probably illegal*" for Defence to release into service the Helmet Mounted Sight Display software Version 5.10, named Defence members and made a number of allegations about their involvement in the service release of the system.
 - Specifically that the named Defence members had fabricated documents to support service release, did not follow approved Defence Aviation Safety Regulation processes and acted outside their authorities.
 - Similar comments were made during Senate Estimates on 3 December 2025.
 - These statements are not factually correct.
 - Introduction of the Helmet Mounted Sight Display software Version 5.10 is being considered as part of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Inquiry into the accident.

Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Inquiry

- . The Inspector-General has a responsibility to inquire into the cause of death of ADF members.
- . Finding out what happened, and making recommendations to avoid or limit the risk of such an event occurring again, are important outcomes of this Inquiry.
 - The Inquiry will examine the circumstances and causes of the deaths to determine whether actions or inactions by ADF personnel or other personnel, including compliance or non-compliance with policies and procedures, were contributing factors to the crash.
- . The Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Inquiry has completed its public hearings, with the ninth hearing concluding on 9 May 2025.
 - The Inspector-General has invited family members of those who died to be involved in the inquiry process, ensuring their perspectives are considered.
- . Advice received from the Inspector-General indicates:
 - Since the hearings concluded, the Inquiry team has been carefully reviewing the substantial volume of evidence and submissions received.
 - A procedural fairness process has been undertaken. This legal process allows individuals or organisations who may be affected by proposed findings to respond before those findings are finalised.

- After considering the feedback from relevant parties, the Inquiry will finalise the report. As required by law, the final report will be provided to the Chief of the Defence Force.

Senate Inquiry

- The Senate established this inquiry through the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee on 4 February 2026.
- The Senate inquiry will examine the 28 July 2023 MRH-90 Taipan accident in the Whitsundays, with specific reference to:
 - Airworthiness assessments of the MRH-90 platform and associated equipment.
 - Army Aviation compliance with the Defence Aviation Safety Regulations.
 - Findings of the Comcare investigation.
 - Any other investigations into the incident.
 - The appropriateness of the decision not to prosecute any matters arising from the incident.
 - Any other related matters.
- Submissions are open until 1 May 2026, and the Committee is due to present its final report on 7 September 2026.

Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation

- The Defence Flight Safety Bureau is the independent Defence aviation investigation organisation responsible for investigating all Defence aviation accidents and select incidents that are serious or complex in nature, in accordance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation convention.
- The purpose of aviation safety investigations is to determine what happened from an aviation safety perspective, and make recommendations that reduce the probability of a reoccurrence.
- The report describes the cause of the accident, contributing organisational and systemic factors and makes recommendations for safety system improvement to prevent re-occurrence.
- The Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation is complete. The investigation concluded that the primary cause of the accident was an unrecognised loss of spatial orientation, commonly referred to as Spatial Disorientation.
 - On 3 April 2025, a briefing was provided to the families of the members who died in the accident on the findings of the investigation.
 - On 21 May 2025, an Official version of the Aviation Safety Investigation Report was provided to the families and released publicly.
- All 46 recommendations made by the Defence Flight Safety Bureau's Aviation Safety Investigation Report have been accepted and are being implemented by Defence.

What has Defence done so far in response to the MRH90 Taipan Lindeman Island accident?

- Defence has been proactive in actioning recommendations from the Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation Report.

- The action taken so far has been significant, some of which is listed on pages 168 to 171 of the Aviation Safety Investigation Report.
- . The Army has:
 - Implemented a series of enhanced risk control measures.
 - Established an Army Aviation Safety Campaign Plan to provide an additional layer of assurance and assist in the management and response to the incident, in conjunction with revising past reports and reviews to ensure historical lessons have been appropriately addressed.
 - Established the International Combat Aviation Safety Summit to draw together Australia's closest allies and partners in combat military rotary wing aviation to investigate, share information and collectively progress key safety issues.
 - : The inaugural summit was held in May 2024, and subsequently in February 2025 and March 2026.
 - Commissioned an independent Benchmark Review of Australian Army Aviation against peer international organisations.
 - : An Implementation Directive was issued in May 2025, with nine of the 26 recommendations completed to date.
 - : All recommendations are due for completion by mid-2027.
 - Focussed on an accelerated introduction into service of the UH-60M Black Hawk to replace the MRH90 Taipan capability.
 - : 19 Black Hawks have been delivered to Australia. All 40 aircraft are scheduled for delivery by 2029.
 - : Initial Operational Capability was declared in December 2024.
 - Leased rotary wing aircraft to supplement the Army aviation capability during transition.
 - : This includes five H-135 Juno helicopters acquired from the United Kingdom to support aircrew training and proficiency.
 - : Flying operations commenced at Oakey, Queensland in December 2024.
 - In response to the Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation.
 - : All 46 recommendations made by the Defence Flight Safety Bureau's Aviation Safety Investigation Report have been accepted and are being implemented by Defence.
 - : 25 of the 46 recommendations are assigned to Army Aviation.
 - : Army has completed actions for 18 of the recommendations (eight are closed, and ten are undergoing independent assurance before closure).
 - : Overall, 12 of the 46 recommendations have now been closed.
 - : Implementation is ongoing and being prioritised according to aviation safety requirements.

Army Aviation Test and Evaluation Section flight test report on MRH90 Taipan Helmet Mounted Sight Display 'Top Owl' software Version 5.10

- . The Army Aviation Test and Evaluation Section produced a flight test report on MRH90 Taipan Helmet Mounted Sight Display software version 5.10 in June 2019.
 - The report raised concerns that there was ambiguous display of flight information, under certain circumstances.
- . In response to the report, further test and evaluation of Helmet Mounted Sight Display software version 5.10 was conducted by Army and Navy operational and test aircrew.
 - This resulted in procedures being developed and key risk controls incorporated into MRH90 Taipan aircrew publications to address the identified hazards.
 - The software was subsequently released into service, and was independently assured by the Defence Aviation Safety Authority.
- . Aircrew were not permitted to fly with Helmet Mounted Sight Display software Version 5.10 until they completed training on the procedures and risk controls that enabled safe flight operations.
- . The Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation found that Captain Lyon and Lieutenant Nugent had completed the training as required, and concluded that it was almost certain that the Helmet Mounted Sight Display 'pitch scale attitude' was not contributory to the crew's loss of spatial orientation as it is not part of the pilots' instrument scan whilst flying in formation.

On the Army Aviation Test and Evaluation Section flight test report on the MRH90 Taipan Forward-Looking Infra-Red system

- . The MRH90 Taipan Forward-Looking Infra-Red system is part of the Original Equipment Manufacturer aircraft design and was in use from the arrival of the first aircraft in 2007 until 28 July 2023.
 - The MRH90 Taipan Flight Manual identified that the use of the Forward-Looking Infra-Red was as a supplementary flight aid.
- . In July 2021, the Army Aviation Test and Evaluation Section produced a flight test report on the use of MRH90 Taipan Forward-Looking Infra-Red system.
 - The report raised concerns about use of the Forward-Looking Infra-Red as a primary pilotage aid.
- . In response to the flight test report, qualified flying instructors and flight standards officers reviewed the procedures detailed in MRH90 Taipan aircrew publications for use of the Forward-Looking Infra-Red, in conjunction with other aircraft systems.
 - Updated procedures were developed that eliminate or minimise the identified hazards so far as reasonably practicable.
 - The MRH90 Taipan Flight Manual was updated to identify that the use of the Forward-Looking Infra-Red as a primary flight aid was prohibited.
 - These procedures were endorsed by Army Aviation Test and Evaluation Section in May 2022, and incorporated into MRH90 Taipan aircrew publications.

- The Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation identified that the Forward-Looking Infra-Red was not in use at the time of the incident.

On aviation fatigue management

- The Aviation Safety Investigation found that the Aircraft Captain and Co-Pilot were likely experiencing a level of fatigue shown to impede optimal performance and increase susceptibility to Spatial Disorientation.
- In January 2024, Army introduced updated aircrew fatigue management requirements including the need to complete the Fatigue Risk Assessment Tool prior to every flight.
- In response to Recommendation 21 of the Aviation Safety Investigation Report, Army Aviation has reviewed the standardisation of fatigue management policy to improve mitigation of risk due to aircrew fatigue.
 - The review considered the efficacy of policies in monitoring, managing and providing oversight of aircrew, maintenance and ground support personnel.
 - Review outcomes are being progressed to further enhance fatigue management as part of a system, which aims to maximise human performance.
- Army will continue to review aviation fatigue management training, policy and procedures, with fatigue management a key area of focus during all military training.

What support is being provided to the families of the members involved in the MRH90 Taipan Lindeman Island accident?

- Defence recognises that accidents of this nature are deeply upsetting for all involved.
 - Bereavement support teams and Defence Member and Family Support Helpline staff remain available to provide support to the families and Defence personnel.

Commemoration activities

- In July 2024, the Army supported the families with two activities to mark the one-year anniversary of the MRH90 accident, including:
 - the unveiling of the names of the fallen on the Australian Army Aviation Corps Memorial at Swartz Barracks in Oakey, Queensland; and
 - an on-water commemoration service at the accident site in the Whitsunday Islands, Queensland.
- Forty family members and support personnel attended these events, with air transportation provided by the Air Force.
 - A live-stream was provided for family members who could not attend.
- The second anniversary of the Lindeman Island accident was respectfully commemorated during a unit pause at the 6th Aviation Regiment, and a moment of silence at Exercise TALISMAN SABRE Exercise Control on 28 July 2025.
- Families continue to be invited to attend unit commemoration ceremonies on our national days of significance, Anzac Day and Remembrance Day.
 - The 6th Aviation Regiment, like all units in the Australian Army, remember their fallen in the same respectful way on these days whether those men and women died recently or some time ago.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: S826-000329

Last updated: 24 April 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Air Vice Marshal David Scheul, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell

- Major anniversaries of accidents, such as the 25th anniversary of the 1996 Black Hawk accident and the first anniversary of the MRH90 accident, are commemorated in standalone events.
- The names of Captain Danniell Lyon, Lieutenant Maxwell Nugent, Warrant Officer Class 2 Joseph 'Phillip' Laycock and Corporal Alexander Naggs are recorded on the Australian Army memorials at Swartz Barracks (Oakey, Queensland), 6th Aviation Regiment and the 2nd Commando Regiment (Holsworthy Barracks, Sydney, New South Wales).

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
4 February 2026	Senate Inquiry established through the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee.
1 September 2025	Following an Order for the production of documents the Comcare brief of evidence and final report were tabled to the Senate.
21 May 2025	The Defence Flight Safety Bureau Aviation Safety Investigation Report into the accident was released publically.
9 May 2025	The Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force Inquiry into the MRH90 accident concluded its final public hearing.
3 April 2025	Defence <u>announced</u> the Defence Flight Safety Bureau had completed its Aviation Safety Investigation into the accident. The Defence Flight Safety Bureau briefed the families on its findings.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Various	FOI	Defence has received a number of FOI requests from individuals and media outlets seeking access to documentation relating to the 2023 MRH90 incidents and historical documentation. Where applicants have sought external review by the OAIC, the matters remain ongoing.	Decision not yet finalised.
3 December 2025	QoN	QoN No 922, MRH-90 , Senator Malcolm Roberts (One Nation, Queensland) asked about MRH-90 HMSD.	Tabled.
3 December 2025	QoN	QoN No 938, MRH-90 Engineering standards , Senator David Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked about MRH-90 Engineering standards.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 1 December 2025, various syndications published stories in response to the 60 Minutes interview with the families of the Army Aviators killed in the MRH90 accident, and former Army Test Pilot Ian Wilson who alleges a cover up. [‘End cover-up, say grieving families of dead airmen’](#), [“Hear it when I close my eyes”: Heartbroken families of Taipan crash unite as questions remain](#), [“Never should have happened”: Families of the four airmen killed in Taipan chopper crash break their silence](#).
- On 30 November 2025, *Nine Sydney*, [‘In exclusive 60 Minutes interviews, the families of four ADF personnel killed in a Taipan crash say Defence is to blame, and the whistleblower alleges a cover-up, with their enduring grief driving a renewed push for accountability.’](#)
- On 1 October 2025, Andrew McLaughlin, *Asia Pacific Defence Reporter*, [‘Fleet Air Arm consolidates helicopter fleet while UAS ambitions remain all at sea’](#), reported on the MRH90 Taipan’s poor availability in ADF service.
- On 26 September 2025, *Mackay & Whitsunday Life*, [‘Plaque planned to Honour Taipan Crash Victims.’](#)
- On 2 September 2025, Rachel Riley, *The Courier Mail*, [‘Defence Smoking Gun’](#), covered the release of Comcare investigation documents to the Senate and allegations that Defence committed two serious breaches of the Workplace Health and Safety Act.
- On 2 September 2025, *Sky News* aired a segment with Ray Hadley called [‘Cover Up’](#) which covers voting in the Senate to not conduct an additional inquiry into the accident following the release of the Comcare investigation documents and alleging a ‘conspiracy’ by the Government.
- On 1 September 2025, Laura Lavelle, *ABC*, [‘Department of Defence failed to minimise risk before fatal Taipan helicopter crash that killed four, documents allege.’](#)
- On 24 July 2025, Laura Lavelle, *ABC News*, [‘Commonwealth prosecutors won’t lay charges over fatal defence helicopter crash due to lack of evidence.’](#)
- On 21 May 2025, Laura Lavelle and Andrew Greene, *ABC News*, [‘Defence investigation finds Taipan pilot’s actions possibly prevented further fatalities in crash.’](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000329

Last updated: 24 April 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Air Vice Marshal David Scheul, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell

Division: Army	
PDR No: SB26-000329	
Prepared by: Brigadier Andrew Thomas Deputy Commander Aviation Command Army Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 23 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Major General David Hafner Commander Aviation Command Army Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 24 April 2026
Consultation: Brigadier Steven Cleggett Director General Aviation Systems Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group Mob: s47E(d) Date: 15 April 2026 Air Commodore James Badgery AM Director General Defence Aviation Safety Authority Mob: s22 Date: 16 April 2026 Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM Chief of Air Force Date 17 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Major General Richard Vagg DSC Acting Chief of Army Date: 20 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - DEFENCE REFORM – DEFENCE TRANSITION SUPPORT TEAM

Lead: Celia Perkins, Acting Associate Secretary

Supporting: John Reid PSM, Deputy Secretary Governance

Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Vice Chief of the Defence Force

Context: Defence is delivering a number of enterprise reforms and reviews across the organisation; including the establishment of the Defence Delivery Group from 1 July 2026 and Defence Delivery Agency from 1 July 2027.

Key Messages

- The Government's announcement in December 2025 set a clear direction for reform in capability development and delivery across Defence.
- On 1 July 2027, the Government will establish the Defence Delivery Agency, which will report directly to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry, with a singular focus on capability acquisition and sustainment.
- Creation of the Defence Delivery Group on 1 July 2026 will support the establishment and transition to the new Defence Delivery Agency.
- These reforms will enable Defence to deliver major and complex capabilities faster, with stronger governance, clearer accountability and improved integration with reduced duplication.
- The independent whole-of-Government Defence Reform Taskforce has been developing a detailed implementation plan for Government.
- A Defence Transition Support Team was established in February 2026 to provide enterprise-level coordination to the implementation plan, governance and change management support.

Talking Points

- The establishment of the Defence Delivery Agency on 1 July 2027 is key to deliver on the Government's commitment to procuring major and complex capabilities faster, with stronger governance and clearer accountability.
- To support these enterprise reforms, a Defence Transition Support Team has been established to provide enterprise-level coordination, governance and change management support to Defence so that it can implement the reform activities in an integrated and sustainable way.
- The independent whole-of-Government Defence Reform Taskforce is developing a detailed implementation plan for Government consideration, with the Defence Transition Support Team responsible for managing Defence's implementation of the recommendations.

- Reforms are being delivered in two stages:
 - Phase one, to be delivered on 1 July 2026:
 - : Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group, and Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group will be brought together within Defence under a single organisational structure known as the Defence Delivery Group.
 - : Capability development functions from across the five warfighting domains are being consolidated under the Vice Chief of the Defence Force (VCDF). Contestability Division (currently in Strategy, Policy and Industry Group) is also being transferred to VCDF Group.
 - These are key elements of the Government's reform agenda and are essential to improving coordination of capability investment priorities, enabling delivery of complex capabilities faster, with stronger governance and clearer accountability.
 - Phase two, to be delivered on 1 July 2027:
 - : The establishment of the Defence Delivery Agency.

Defence Reform Taskforce

- The independent whole-of-Government Defence Reform Taskforce, led by Ms Nadine Williams, Deputy Secretary from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, is developing a detailed implementation plan for Government consideration.
- The Taskforce includes representatives from across Government agencies, Defence and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Defence Transition Support team

- The Defence Transition Support Team was established in February 2026. It is coordinating the program of work on behalf of the Department as it is received from the Defence Reform Taskforce.
- Operating as the central program management capability, the Defence Transition Support Team will ensure that reform activities are aligned, timely, high quality and within scope, this includes:
 - supporting sequencing and alignment across reform streams to avoid duplication or conflicting activity;
 - uplifting Defence's change management and communication capability, through consistent enterprise-wide messaging and coordinated engagement; and
 - providing oversight and integration of other major enterprise reforms.

Appointment of the National Armaments Director

- The Defence Delivery Agency will be led by a National Armaments Director who will be appointed by the Government at the appropriate time.
- The Government will make further announcements in due course.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: S826-000364

Last updated: 10 April 2026

Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, John Reid PSM

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
1 July 2026	To support execution of Defence Delivery Agency, three capability delivery groups - Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group; Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group; and Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group – to be integrated as Defence Delivery Group.
27 February 2026	Defence Transition Support Team established to plan, coordinate and provide oversight of approved implementation activities of Defence reform.
8 December 2025	Defence Reform Taskforce established in Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop evidence-based actionable plan for implementing reform. This includes advice to Government and detailed implementation plan.
1 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP and the Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy announced the establishment of the Defence Delivery Agency from 1 July 2027.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Nil			

Relevant Media Reporting

- 30 March 2026, Gregory Ferguson, *Wings Magazine*, '[Acquisition Reforms](#)'.
- 12 March 2026, Richard Brabin-Smith, *ASPI's Strategist*, '[Australia's new defence acquisition organisation must be forward looking](#)'.
- 20 February 2026, Dana Daniel, *Canberra Times*, '[Mega-agency skills lift 'big hill to climb'](#)'.
- 10 December 2025, Pat Conroy, *Canberra Times*, '[What you need to know about the new Defence Delivery Agency](#)'.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000364

Last updated: 10 April 2026

Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, John Reid PSM

Division: Defence Transition Support Team	
PDR No: SB26-000364	
Contact Officer: s47E(d) Director Communication Defence Transition Support Team Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 08 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Cassie Haynes First Assistant Secretary Defence Transition Support Team Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 08 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Mr John Reid PSM Deputy Secretary Governance Governance Group Date: 10 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Lead: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel to lead on Recruitment and Retention ADF.

Justine Greig PSM, Deputy Secretary Defence People to lead on Recruitment and Retention APS.

Supporting: Rear Admiral Letitia Van Stralen AM CSC RAN, Head Military Personnel to support on Recruitment and Retention ADF.

Leisa Craig, First Assistant Secretary Workforce and People Strategy to support on Recruitment and Retention APS.

Context: Defence is focused on recruiting and retaining a highly specialised and skilled workforce to meet and deliver on the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program. As a result of targeted recruitment and retention initiatives, the ADF has experienced growth in the last 12 months following a significant decline in the four years prior.

Key Messages

- At 1 April 2026, the permanent and full-time ADF workforce headcount reached 63,027, which is an increase of 3,004 from the same time 12 months ago.
- Retention has also improved. The ADF separation rate was 7.4 per cent as at 1 April 2026, below the 10-year average of 9.5 per cent.
- The ADF is on track to meet the target of 69,000 Average Funded Strength by the early 2030s, a key outcome of the 2026 National Defence Strategy and the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan, which provides a credible and budgeted pathway to grow the Defence workforce.
- With improvements in recruiting and retention, Defence was outperforming the growth path outlined in the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan. Whilst the target (69,000 by the early 2030s) remains, Defence has adjusted its growth path to reach the target.
- While these results highlight significant progress, work continues, particularly to strengthen the middle ranks.
- The APS workforce is on track to return to the workforce requirement of 19,863 and as at 1 April 2026, the APS average staffing level was 176 below this requirement.
- As at 1 April 2026, the APS workforce separation rate was 8.4 per cent which is a reduction of 1.7 percentage points over the last 12 months.

Talking Points

Workforce Figures and Growth

- Defence re-profiled its workforce requirements to deliver the 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program. The 2024 Defence Workforce Plan, released in November 2024, sets out a realistic and budgeted growth path for our permanent force to reach 69,000 by the early 2030s.
- With improvements in recruiting and retention, Defence was growing faster than anticipated and therefore outperforming the short-term budget phasing. Therefore, Defence has adjusted its growth path to 69,000. The 2026-27 Portfolio Budget Statements Budgeted Workforce Requirement for the permanent ADF over the Forward Estimates is:
 - 61,711 in 2025-26;
 - 63,345 in 2026-27;
 - 64,842 in 2027-28;
 - 66,013 in 2028-29; and
 - 67,466 in 2029-30.
- These figures were published in the 2025 Portfolio Additional Estimate Statements in February 2026 and the additional cost will be accommodated within the overall Defence budget envelope through reprioritisation measures, including from planned sustainment activities.
- At 1 April 2026, ADF Average Funded Strength was 61,441, against the Budgeted Workforce Requirement of 61,711. The ADF is currently 270 (or 0.4 per cent) under the adjusted growth path for 2025-26. These figures include, Service Category 7 and 6, Service Option C and Service Option G, (Gap Year).

	2025-26 PAES BWR ⁽¹⁾	2026-27 PBS BWR	Average Funded Strength (AFS) at 1 April 2026	Variation to Adjusted BWR	% Variation to Adjusted BWR
Navy	15,805	16,193	15,804	-2	-0.0%
Army	29,056	29,685	28,836	-220	-0.8%
Air Force	16,850	17,467	16,801	-48	-0.3%
ADF	61,711	63,345	61,441	-270	-0.4%

⁽¹⁾ BWR - Budgeted Workforce Requirement. As published in the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2025-26

- The forecast for 2025-26 indicates the ADF will reach the Budgeted Workforce Requirement growth path by 30 June 2026. Even so, the ADF continues to manage a number of employment categories with shortfalls, particularly in middle ranks.

ADF Headcount

- At 1 April 2026, the total Permanent and Full Time ADF workforce headcount was 63,027. This is an increase of 3,004 from 12 months ago. This includes:
 - Permanent ADF = 60,687;
 - Gap Year (SERVOP G) = 963; and
 - Reserve Continuous Full time Service (SERVOP C) = 1,377.

ADF Separations

- At 1 April 2026, the Permanent force separation rate was 7.4 per cent, a decrease of 1.2 percentage points over the last 12 months. The current rate is well below the 10-year average of 9.5 per cent.
- The declining separation rate is aiding the ADF to retain experienced personnel. This is essential as we grow the workforce in the middle ranks.
- Service specific separation rates are follows :
 - Navy's separation rate was 6.4 per cent, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points since 1 April 2025;
 - Army's separation rate was 9.1 per percent, a decrease of 1.3 percentage points since 1 April 2025; and
 - Air Force's separation rate was 5.5 per cent, a decrease of 1.4 percentage points since 1 April 2025.

	Separation Rates – 1 April 2026			
	Navy	Army	Air Force	ADF
Voluntary	4.1%	5.9%	3.3%	4.7%
Involuntary	0.5%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%
Medical ⁽¹⁾	1.8%	2.4%	1.5%	2.0%
Total	6.4%	9.1%	5.5%	7.4%

(1) Workforce reports produced prior to 1 Oct 24 combined Medical Separations with Involuntary.

ADF Recruitment

- Inflow into the Permanent ADF has improved in the last year.
- The ADF's Permanent force inflow target for 2025-26 is 8,777. This target includes both ab initio recruitment into the ADF (through Defence Force Recruiting) as well as prior service entry (such as re-enlistments, transfers from the Reserve and overseas lateral inflow). The full year all avenues target into the permanent ADF is 682 (8.4 per cent) higher than 2024-25.
 - The percentage achievement (at 1 April 2026) against permanent ADF all avenue targets are displayed below. This excludes Service Option G (Gap Year).

	2024-25			2025-26 FY to date		
	Ab Initio	Prior Service	Achievement	Ab Initio	Prior Service	Achievement
Navy	1,153	247	76%	1,165	241	87%
Army	2,406	627	72%	2,045	460	74%
Air Force	1,373	422	89%	985	399	99%
ADF	4,932	1,296	77%	4,195	1,100	82%

- Defence Force Recruiting ab initio application numbers at 1 April 2026 have decreased 0.6 per cent year-on-year compared to the same time last year, indicating that although a slight drop, the ADF remains an attractive option to Australians. For context, total 2024-25 application numbers were the highest since 2019-20.
- The average time taken between the last application and a candidate being booked to enlist is 268 days.
- 15 roles have an average velocity timeframe of less than 150 days in the preceding 12 months ie the 12 months to 1 April 2026.
- Fastest avenues of entry.** Navy and Army full time general entry roles in technical fields are the fastest-moving pipelines, given high Service demand, relatively low pipeline size, and focused efforts to accelerate candidates for these roles.
 - Navy roles include: Electronics Technician, Combat Systems Operator, Communications Operator, and Boatswains mate.
 - Army roles include: Infantry Soldier, Artillery Soldier, Driver, Warehouse Coordinator, Fitter Armament, and Vehicle Mechanic.
- Slowest avenues of entry.** Air Force and Army ADFA officer entry are the slowest moving pipelines due to the high number of candidates relative to the number of positions and candidate determination to wait for a position in their preferred role.
 - Air Force roles include: Air Force Security, Aircraft Technician, and Officer Aviation - Pilot
 - Army roles include: Combat Engineer, General Service Officer, Drone Operator, and Part Time Officer Commissioning Course Officer.
- The Defence Force Recruiting target audience spans prospective candidates and their influencers, such as parents, teachers and career advisors.
- Defence Force Recruiting will reach 98.1 per cent of the primary target audience of 16 to 30 year olds (as per the master media agency's proprietary planning tools) at an average frequency of 246 times a year through advertising across television, in cinema and online – through videos, social media, mobile, search, and audio – as well as out-of-home/outdoor billboards. The recent social media ban for under 16s does not impact this reach as the primary target audience is 16 to 30 year olds.
 - As 'ADF Careers', Defence Force Recruiting has a distinct brand presence on social media outlets like YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, X, Reddit, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. TikTok's inclusion as a channel was endorsed by the Department of Finance on 10 September 2024. It was included as a channel

within the 'I Am a Submariner' Government Communications Subcommittee (GCS) submission, and formally endorsed by GCS on 18 November 2024.

- ADF Careers advertising appears on TikTok but there is no ADF Careers TikTok account. The placement of advertising on TikTok aligns with the practice of other Government Departments (such as Health, Social Services, ATO, Foreign Affairs and Trade).

Recruiting Initiatives – Actions to improve Recruitment and Retention

- Defence has taken the following actions to increase inflow:
 - Introduction of the ADF Referral Scheme in October 2024, where ADF personnel can refer candidates to join the ADF and receive a financial payment incentive of \$1,000. Since Go-Live, ADF Careers has received 439 valid referrals, with 71 active candidates continuing through the recruitment journey. 22 candidates have successfully enlisted as at 1 April 2026.
 - Streamlined the recruiting system to enable faster recruitment. This includes the reform of initial entry medical assessments and policies to reflect contemporary medical treatments. Candidates who were previously refused may now be eligible to serve.
- Defence Force Recruiting has implemented a number of internal initiatives in order to improve outcomes and candidate progression.
- These have included:
 - Collaboration with Adecco on the implementation of specific initiatives to increase the rate of candidate clearance at their entry level medical examination. The initiative is now installed as routine practice.
 - Collaboration within Defence to provide continual review of the ADF Medical Entry Standards, in order to assist with improving efficiencies in the ADF recruitment process and providing consistency in occupational health decision making.
 - The change of the medical attestation activity from all candidates to an 'attestation by exception' arrangement.
 - Removal of the requirement for Blood Borne Virus testing.
 - Defence extending the validity periods of psychology and medical assessments and medical attestations for some specialist roles on the basis that this would improve clinician efficiency/throughput as an ongoing measure.
 - Increased Defence Force Recruiting Chief Medical Office workforce inclusive of increased contractor Full Time Equivalent and ADF medical officer support (commenced September 2025 and remains ongoing).
 - Collaboration with a UK-led Five Eyes community of practice comparative study of Defence Medical Entry standards across the Five Eyes community, to assess medical recruiting standardisation and identify further potential efficiency gains.
 - In July 2024, ADF Careers introduced the Basic Key Skills Builder tool to provide an alternate means of educational equivalency for Year 10 or Year 12 maths and/or English. At 1 April 2026, 4,357 candidates had utilised the tool with 3,327 candidates passing the educational assessment related to their preferred employment. 514 candidates have been sent to training who would not otherwise have met the education eligibility criteria.

- Candidates using the Basic Key Skills Builder are typically applying for non-technical roles.

Recruiting Initiatives – Recruitment of non-Australian citizens

- Defence has increased opportunities for potentially suitable applicants to join the ADF by widening the eligibility criteria.
- From 1 July 2024, eligible permanent residents from New Zealand have been able to apply to join the ADF.
- From 1 January 2025, eligible permanent residents from the remaining Five- Eyes countries have been able to apply to join the ADF.
- From 1 January 2026, eligible permanent residents who are citizens of Papua New Guinea have been able to apply to join the Australian Defence Force.
- As at 1 April 2026, there were 866 Five Eyes Nations and Papua New Guinea active applicants:
 - Canada – 18
 - New Zealand – 659
 - United Kingdom – 140
 - United States – 18 and
 - Papua New Guinea – 31.
- As at 1 April 2026, 197 candidates are at the pre-enlist stage and 24 have been successfully enlisted.
- Non-Australian citizen candidates require a citizenship waiver in accordance with the Defence Security Principles Framework, aligned to the Protective Security Policy Framework in order to begin the security clearance process. This is one contributing factor to the length of time candidates spend in the recruiting journey. To mitigate this time increase, non-Australian citizen candidates only require a baseline security clearance vice a Negative Vetting 1 security clearance prior to enlistment. AGSVA have recently provided permission for candidates to submit their application at the same time as the waiver although the application will not be commenced until the waiver is applied.

Retention Initiatives – Retention Bonuses

- To achieve greater levels of retention and extend the average length of service, an ADF Continuation Bonus was implemented on 1 July 2023, as a two-year pilot initiative, and ceased on 30 June 2025.
- The pilot offered eligible ADF personnel a \$50,000 bonus in return for an additional three years of service, following the completion of their initial service obligation.
- 5,805 eligible ADF personnel had accepted the pilot scheme ADF Continuation Bonus Part One (79 per cent).

- Following a successful pilot, the Government is investing \$604.9 million in recruitment and retention initiatives, including a revised and expanded ADF Continuation Bonus for ADF service.
 - From 1 July 2025, the ADF Continuation Bonus includes two parts. Part One and Part Two are both valued at \$40,000 and are offered at two critical career decision points.
- ADF Continuation Bonus Part One was available to junior ranks, at their first career decision point, which was the completion of their initial service obligation and a minimum of four years of service.
 - Through Part One, personnel at junior ranks were retained for a further three years to progress them through to the middle ranks.
- ADF Continuation Bonus Part Two is offered at a second career decision point; three years after completion of their initial service obligation and a minimum of seven years' service.
 - Part Two seeks to retain members from their seven-year service career point for a further three years, to maintain experience levels across the middle ranks/supervisor levels.
- At 1 April 2026, 6,451 ADF members have been assessed for eligibility for the new program:
 - 3,507 for ADF Continuation Bonus Part One.
 - 2,944 for Continuation Bonus Part Two.
- At 1 April 2026, 4,065 of the eligible ADF members have made their election:
 - 3,370 (82.9 per cent) members have ACCEPTED their offer.
 - 695 (17.1 per cent) members have DECLINED their offer.
- The combined effect of the two Continuation Bonus offers is expected to benefit approximately 12,000 permanent ADF personnel over the next three years. Offers commenced on 1 July 2025, and will run to 30 June 2028, a three-year initiative. The retention effects therefore last until to mid-2031. Members who accept the bonus in June 2028 will be expected to serve until at least 2031 under this initiative.

Retention Initiatives - Other

- To address critical skills shortages and grow areas of the workforce that have long-term workforce vulnerabilities, Defence implemented the Targeted Workforce Segments initiative on 5 June 2025, which represents a \$128 million additional investment in ADF salaries in Financial Year 2025 to 2026.
 - The Targeted Workforce Segments permanent salary increase was applied to the Intelligence; Engineering, Maintenance and Construction; and Communications and Cyber segments.
 - ADF personnel in an eligible employment category within the targeted workforce segments received a one pay grade increase.
- Further initiatives implemented aimed at encouraging personnel to serve longer include:

- Expansion to the ADF Family Health Benefits Program from 1 July 2023 by increasing services to ADF families, doubling allowances from \$400 to \$800 per dependent, and expanding reimbursable services, including:
 - : Physical activity. The cost of gym memberships or fitness classes where they form part of a program designed to improve a specific diagnosed health or medical condition.
 - : Healthy diet. The cost of dietician-led program subscriptions.
 - : Cancer prevention. Reimbursement for the cost of mole mapping skin cancer clinic appointments and bowel screening kits.
- Leave allocation has increased from 20 to 25 days, which is in addition to expanded leave benefits including greater flexibility and additional compassionate circumstances under the improved ADF Leave Framework.
- A new Location Framework, providing targeted benefits to ADF personnel undertaking Alternate Located Work agreements, and providing members who are transitioning from the Permanent force with access to housing and other benefits in their transition location. Alternate Located Work agreements are the agreement between a member and their commander/manager that allows a Defence member to work from another location within Australia that is alternate to their unit's normal working location.
- Increased investment in the Defence Assisted Study Scheme and Studybank to provide easier access to personal and professional development opportunities and more study choices.

APS Recruitment and Retention

- Defence is rebalancing its APS workforce to better align with the National Defence Strategy and the delivery of priority capabilities under the Integrated Investment Program. This will require targeted recruitment and upskilling to professionalise the APS and progressively reduce dependency on contracted labour.
- Defence APS deliver core capabilities, including policy, governance, capability development, science, technology, and program management.
- Between 2022-23 and 2025-26 (as at 1 April 2026) the Defence APS has grown by 2,910. This includes 2,000 for contractor conversions and 395 staff to deliver Government priorities including Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance, Continuous Naval Shipbuilding, AUKUS, Space, Cyber and Intelligence associated with new capabilities.
- As at 1 April 2026, the Defence APS Average Staffing Level was 19,687 against the Budgeted Workforce Requirement of 19,863. The Average Staffing Level is 176 or 0.9 per cent below APS Budgeted Workforce Requirement.
- The ongoing APS separation rate is 8.4 per cent as at 1 April 2026, which is a reduction of 1.7 percentage points over the last 12 months. This is 3.0 percentage points lower than the 5-year average of 11.4 per cent.

Defence Workforce Plan

- The 2024 Defence Workforce Plan directs Defence to implement eight strategic workforce tasks.
- In accordance with the biennial National Defence Strategy Development and Implementation Cycle, the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan will be reviewed and updated in line with the 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program. This work is underway.
- As outlined in the 2026 National Defence Strategy, the 2026 Defence Workforce Plan will update the eight strategic workforce tasks outlined in the 2024 Plan to reflect the Government's continued focus on growing and developing the Defence workforce.
- These eight strategic tasks will be:
 - : Optimised design of the integrated workforce and implementation of Defence reform to ensure Defence can operate and sustain ADF capabilities in competition, crisis and conflict
 - : Enhanced ADF inflow to ensure Defence has the highly skilled and specialised ADF workforce to protect and defend Australia's interests
 - : Partnerships with defence industry, Commonwealth agencies and state and territory governments to create, train and retain the highly skilled and experienced workforce needed to deliver capability outcomes for Australia's national security
 - : Enhanced ADF health services and readiness to provide healthcare to ADF personnel and to deliver a health effect in support of ADF warfighting capabilities
 - : Development and transformation of the Defence workforce to equip ADF and Defence APS personnel with higher levels of education, training and experience
 - : Management of the integrated workforce and strengthening of the ADF Reserve to deliver the integrated, focused force required to protect and defend Australia
 - : Improved culture, mental health and wellbeing and resilience to provide a positive and psychologically safe environment for the Defence workforce; and
 - : Support to Defence personnel, families and transitioning members to manage the impact that military service has on their day-to-day lives.
- As part of the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan, the Government invested \$604.9 million to extend and expand the continuation bonus for permanent members of the ADF and increase the ADF's Operational Reserve by an additional 1,000 personnel.
- Defence is also continuing to improve wellbeing and mental health support for its people, as well as organisational culture.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000331

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox, Justine Greig

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
Nil	

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Nil			

Relevant Media Reporting

- On Friday 28 November 2025, Ben Packham, *The Australian* '[PNG's new budget raises concerns about low citizen spending](#)' noted the Pukpuk Defence Treaty and potential ADF recruitment challenges.
- On Friday 7 November 2025, Jack Quail, *The Australian*, '[Labor in \\$200m splurge on adverts](#)' noted Defence ran the most expensive advertising campaign, resulting in the highest annual permanent full-time personnel intake since 2009-10, exceeding the department's recruitment targets.

Division: Workforce and People Strategy Division

PDR No: SB26-000331

Prepared by:

Air Commodore Matthew Cooper
Director General
Workforce Strategy

Mob: s22

Ph: s47E(d)

Date: 19 May 2026

Cleared by Division Head:

Leisa Craig
First Assistant Secretary
Workforce and People Strategy

Mob: s22

Ph: s47E(d)

Date: 19 May 2026

Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star:

Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC
Chief of Personnel

Date: 20 May 2026

Justine Greig PSM

Deputy Secretary Defence People

Date: 21 May 2026

CPARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES - ADF RECRUITMENT OF NON-AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS

Lead: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel.

Supporting: Justine Greig PSM, Deputy Secretary Defence People to support on policy regarding ADF recruitment of non-Australian citizens.

Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy and Industry to support on the Pacific.

Context: Defence is expanding the eligibility criteria to allow non-Australian citizens who are permanent residents living in Australia to apply to join the ADF. This policy applies to eligible permanent residents from New Zealand, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Papua New Guinea.

Key Messages

- Defence must recruit, retain and grow a skilled workforce to meet Australia's security challenges through the next decade and beyond, and is expanding the eligibility criteria to enable more people to apply to join the ADF.
- Defence expanded recruitment to eligible permanent residents from Papua New Guinea on 1 January 2026. Defence has previously expanded recruitment to eligible permanent residents from Five Eyes nations in 2024 (New Zealand) and early 2025 (Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States).
- As at 1 April 2026, Defence Force Recruiting have received a total of 10,776 enquiries since 1 July 2024 resulting in 866 active applications from Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Papua New Guinea.
- As at 1 April 2026, the active application numbers for these nations are:
 - Canada – 18 applications
 - New Zealand – 659 applications
 - United Kingdom – 140 applications
 - United States – 18 applications and
 - Papua New Guinea – 31 applications.
- As at 1 April 2026, 24 permanent residents from Five Eyes nations have entered the ADF. Non-Australian citizen applicants are continuing to progress through the recruitment process with 197 non-citizen candidates at the pre-enlist phase.
- Defence is expanding recruitment of permanent residents living in Australia through a staged approach.

Talking Points

Recruiting non-Australian citizens

- . As laid out in the National Defence Strategy 2026, Defence will continue to focus on recruiting, retaining and growing a highly specialised and skilled workforce required to deliver Australia's Defence Strategy.
- . Under a staged approach, Defence is widening the eligibility criteria to increase the application pool of people to join the ADF, including expanding the recruitment of eligible permanent residents living in Australia.
- . From 1 July 2024, eligible permanent residents from New Zealand have been able to apply to join the ADF.
- . From 1 January 2025, eligible permanent residents from the remaining Five Eyes countries have been able to apply to join the ADF.
- . From 1 January 2026, eligible permanent residents from Papua New Guinea have been able to apply to join the ADF.
- . Eligible non-Australian citizens may be appointed or enlisted in the ADF subject to satisfying all of the following conditions, as well as ADF entry standards:
 - Be a New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Canadian or PNG citizen in Australia, and a permanent resident, or Special Category Subclass 444 visa holder
 - Meet the security requirements for ADF service
 - Have lived in Australia for one year immediately prior to applying to join the ADF and
 - Have not served in a foreign military in the two years immediately prior to applying to join the ADF.
- . Non-Australian citizens who join the ADF are required to apply for and attain Australian citizenship to continue to serve.

Australian citizenship requirements for service in the ADF

- . Section 12 of *Defence Regulation 2016* provides for the Chief of the Defence Force to appoint or enlist a person in the ADF. Under Section 12, before a person is appointed or enlisted, consideration must be given to whether the person is a 'fit and proper person' to perform duties in the ADF.
- . The Military Personnel Policy Manual defines what constitutes a 'fit and proper person' with regard to enlistment, and includes Australian citizenship as a requirement for ongoing service in the ADF.
- . Under Section 21 of the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007*, to be able to apply for and be eligible for Australian citizenship, the person must, along with meeting other criteria, be a permanent resident at the time of application, and meet either Section 22 (the general residence requirement) or Section 23 (the Defence service requirement).
- . Section 23 requires a person to have served in Defence for 90 days to be eligible to apply for citizenship.

Direct recruitment of Papua New Guinean citizens

- As part of the Mutual Defence Treaty, Australia and Papua New Guinea have commenced consultations on a recruitment pathway to enable Papua New Guinea citizens to join the ADF. The second bilateral Joint Working Group on recruitment was held in late-March 2026.
- For information on direct recruitment from Papua New Guinea, see SB25-000481–Pacific partnerships.

Papua New Guinea recruitment

- Any expansion of recruitment to the Pacific would be in our mutual interests and contribute to deepening our already close partnerships.

If asked about alleged irregularities with Papua New Guinea Defence Force's recruitment process

- In April 2026, following a request from Papua New Guinea Prime Minister, the Hon. James Marape MP, Defence agreed to provide advisory support on recruitment systems and processes to assist PNG's investigation into alleged irregularities in Papua New Guinea Defence Force's recruitment process.
- The ADF advisor (a Brigadier General) will not be a decision maker in the investigation.
- Questions about the investigation are to be directed to Papua New Guinea.

Integration of non-Australian citizens into the Defence workforce and culture

- Defence must reflect the diversity of the nation it serves. Defence supports and values people with different backgrounds and experiences – inclusion is a critical enabler of capability.
- Diverse teams enhance operational effectiveness by bringing varied perspectives that improve decision-making and adaptability in complex environments. A culture of inclusion supports recruitment and retention by attracting talent from across the community.

- Defence personnel complete mandatory training such as workplace behaviour training that is aligned to the Defence values and behaviours. Defence offers several inclusion and awareness online training courses.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
1 January 2026	ADF recruitment extended to eligible permanent residents from Papua New Guinea.
6 October 2025	The Prime Minister of Australia the Hon Anthony Albanese MP and Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. James Marape MP signed the Papua New Guinea – Australia Mutual Defence Treaty. The Prime Minister of Australia announced that from 1 January 2026, eligible permanent residents living in Australia who are also Papua New Guinea citizens will be able to apply to join the ADF.
1 July 2025	During a visit to Canberra, the Fijian Prime Minister, reiterated his support for the recruitment of people from Pacific Island Nations into the ADF.
1 January 2025	ADF recruitment extended to eligible permanent residents from Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
5 November 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP released the 2024 Defence Workforce Plan , which sets out that Defence is looking to work with our Pacific family with a view to expanding the focus on non-Australian citizen recruitment to the Pacific.
1 July 2024	ADF recruitment opens to eligible permanent residents and Special Category Subclass 444 visa holders from New Zealand.
4 June 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister, announced the Australian Defence Force opens recruitment to non-Australian citizens.
27 April 2024	The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, issued a media release following a visit by the Australian Prime Minister, to Papua New Guinea from 22 to 25 April 2024, referring to “promising discussions” regarding the recruitment of Papua New Guineans into the ADF in Canberra.
17 April 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister released the 2024 National Defence Strategy and the 2024 Integrated Investment Program where he addressed the workforce challenges being faced by Defence, and the potential for widening eligibility criteria to join the ADF to, as appropriate, non-Australian citizens.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Nil.			

Relevant Media Reporting

- 2 April 2026, *The National* '[PNGDF probing alleged corrupt practices in recent recruitment](#)'.
- Australian media has reported extensively on the [announcement](#) made by the Deputy Prime Minister, regarding the ADF opening recruitment to non-Australian citizens.
- There has been significant coverage of the announcement in both traditional and social media in Papua New Guinea, some of which implies direct recruitment of large numbers of Papua New Guineans will begin very soon. Example of coverage from 20 October 2025, *The National* '[Australian defence deal to train PNG troops a 'win-win'](#)'.
- On 8 October 2025, the Papua New Guinea Defence Minister shared a Facebook Post from the PNGDF Recruitment, News & Updates page that '10,000 troops to join the ADF with direct Australian PR to commence in January 2026'. There were no numbers quoted in the official media release on the 6th October 2025.
- 6 October 2025, Stephen Dziedzic, *ABC News* '[Australia and Papua New Guinea sign landmark alliance vowing to defend each other in conflict](#)'.
- 6 October 2025, Lana Lam and Kelly Ng, *BBC* '[Australia signs key defence deal with Papua New Guinea](#)'.
- 27 August 2025, Miriam Zarriga, *Papua New Guinea Post-Courier* '[Australia and PNG to sign milestone Defence Treaty on Sept 15](#)'.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000333

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox; Justine Greig; Hugh Jeffrey

Division: People Policy and Development Division	
PDR No: SB26-000333	
Prepared by: Brigadier Kirk Lloyd OAM Director General People Policy and Employment Conditions Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 21 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Ky Blackman First Assistant Secretary People Policy and Development Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 21 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Justine Greig PSM Deputy Secretary Defence People Date: 30 April 2026 Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC Chief of Personnel Date: 21 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – DEFENCE’S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO DEFENCE AND VETERAN SUICIDE

Lead: Meghan Quinn, Secretary of Defence and Admiral David Johnston AC RAN, Chief of the Defence Force.

Supporting: Cath Patterson, Associate Secretary to support on enterprise level oversight and governance of implementation activities.

Justine Greig PSM, Deputy Secretary Defence People and Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel to support on the implementation of recommendations concerning the policies and management of Defence Personnel.

Context: Defence’s Implementation of the *Australian Government Response to the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide* (Government Response) in a transparent, timely and thorough manner is central to addressing the issue of Defence and veteran suicide.

Key Messages

- Defence is implementing the recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (Royal Commission) in a timely manner, enacting organisational change and enhancing support for ADF members and their families.
- Defence is responsible for 54 recommendations, and shares responsibility for a further 22 recommendations with the Department for Veterans’ Affairs and other agencies.
- As at 12 May 2026, Defence has implemented 23 recommendations, with work well progressed on the remaining 53 recommendations.
- Defence has prioritised reform activities related to mitigating health and safety concerns for ADF members, or those which relate to sexual violence, in consultation with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the Sexual Discrimination Commissioner and other relevant Commonwealth departments and agencies.
- In some cases, Defence is taking immediate steps while also preparing for future, more complex policy and legislative changes. Collectively, this work will create comprehensive cultural and systemic change for Defence.

Talking Points

The Australian Government response to the Royal Commission Final Report

- Following the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Implementation Taskforce within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 19 December 2025, Defence and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs have established a new Implementation Interdepartmental Committee. The purpose of the Interdepartmental Committee is to support inter-agency information sharing, collaboration and reporting to Government. The first Interdepartmental Committee was held on 24 March 2026 with a subsequent meeting on 7 May 2026.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000335

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Meghan Quinn; Admiral David Johnston RAN; Cath Patterson; Justine Greig PSM;

Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

Defence Reform Progress and oversight

- As at 12 May 2026, Defence has implemented 23 of the 76 recommendations for which it has sole or shared responsibility.
 - The implemented recommendations are recommendations: 6, 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 22, 29, 31, 32, 34, 37, 53, 55, 56, 59, 60, 69, 84, 104, 109, 112 and 117 (see Attachment A).
- The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Defence Implementation Program Board (the Program Board), chaired by the Chief of the Defence Force, is responsible for governance and oversight of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Defence Implementation Program on behalf of Defence.
- Reform Management Plans have been considered and approved by the Program Board for all 76 recommendations. The Reform Management Plans outline the approach for implementing each recommendation. The Program Board is focussing on tracking implementation progress and applying the evidence based process for closing recommendations.
- The Program Board will next meet on 25 June 2026.

Addressing Military Sexual Violence

- Defence acknowledges there is work to be done and that is why we have prioritised implementation of sexual-violence related recommendations of the Royal Commission.
 - Defence refers to all sexual offences, sexual related offences, sexual harassment and sex discrimination as sexual violence, rather than sexual misconduct. This better reflects the seriousness and impact of these behaviours and aligns to the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.
- The *Defence Regulation 2016* was amended on 11 December 2025 by the ***Defence Amendment (RCDVS Implementation) Regulations 2025***. These changes took effect on 13 December 2025 and supports implementation of Royal Commission recommendations 21, 22, 31, 32, 52, 53 and 63 to ensure Defence acts consistently to take action about people who commit acts of sexual violence. Significant changes include:
 - making it mandatory to issue a Notice of Proposed Separation - Involuntary for any Defence member who is found to have committed an act of sexual violence (recommendations 21 and 22);
 - providing that mental health conditions must be considered during involuntary separation processes (recommendation 31);
 - clarifying that a redress of grievance constitutes a merits review process (recommendations 32 and 52);
 - extending the timeframe from 14 to 21 days for a member to submit a redress of grievance once notified of a decision to end their service early (recommendation 53); and
 - replacing the term 'termination' with 'early end of service' or similar de-stigmatised language (recommendation 63).

- On 1 April 2026, the **Defence Force Discipline Amendment (RCDVS Implementation and Related Measures No. 1) Bill** (the Bill) was introduced in the House of Representatives. It seeks to implement the specific Royal Commission recommendations related to military justice that require legislative reform, and seeks to reform the military discipline system to achieve the Royal Commission's broader intent of minimising harm to victims and offenders engaged with the military discipline system. This Bill will introduce three key policy measures:
 - implementing Royal Commission recommendations 18, 20, 23, 34, and 63;
 - introducing mental health reform; and
 - streamlining and simplifying the military justice system.
- Since January 2023, all Defence personnel have been required to complete **mandatory sexual violence prevention education**.
 - With independent input, Defence has re-developed its facilitator-led Mandatory Sexual Violence Incident Management Workshop for commanders and managers, implementing recommendation 16 of the Royal Commission.
- In November 2023, Defence released its **Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence**, outlining Defence's commitment to addressing this issue. Defence is aligning the reforms associated with the Royal Commission with the goals of the strategy.
- Defence, in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission and Our Watch, Australia's leader in prevention of violence against women, has drafted a comprehensive sexual violence prevention strategy, in line with recommendation 17. This partnership ensures alignment with the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 and other national policies.
- Defence is implementing the Defence **Respect@Work Framework** and in line with recommendation 10, developed initial enterprise and service specific Respect@Work Action Plans which were implemented in January 2026.
- Defence has a central policy document (**Complaints and Alternative Resolutions Manual – Chapter 9 Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence**) for managers and commanders responding to and managing incidents of sexual violence. In December 2025, this policy was updated to:
 - mandate that on receipt of a report of sexual violence, managers and commanders should consult the Joint Military Police Unit to determine whether the conduct reported to them constitutes an offence;
 - include the requirement to complete mandatory training for all Defence personnel;
 - reflect the change in terminology to sexual violence;
 - amend definitions for sexual and sexual-related offences to reflect the *Crimes Act 1900* (ACT);
 - mandate that commanders and managers must apply workplace protections during sexual violence investigations;

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000335

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Meghan Quinn; Admiral David Johnston RAN; Cath Patterson; Justine Greig PSM;

Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

- mandate Notice of Proposed Involuntary Separation for personnel found to have engaged in acts of sexual violence; and
 - include guidance on prevention of sexual violence in relation to Respect@Work positive duty obligations.
- These updates support implementation of recommendations 15, 17, 18, 21 and 22.
- Defence incident categories were updated on 27 November 2025 to enable the publication of comprehensive data for all forms of sexual violence incidents.

Defence Annual Report

- Enhanced public reporting of sexual violence data commenced in the 2024-25 Defence Annual Report. Defence will incrementally increase the content (as data becomes available) over future financial years via a dedicated annual report until 2027-28 when we will deliver the full reporting required by recommendation 24.

The Military Justice System

Complaints Management

- The Complaints, Resolution and Support Services unit commenced operations on 19 January 2026, providing an avenue for complaints of unacceptable behaviour to be made outside chain of command/reporting lines, and anonymously.
 - The unit is recording all complaints received. As at 1 April 2026, the unit has received 114 complaints, 52 via email, four via phone call and 58 via the online form. Complaints have been received from; 36 members of the public or non-Defence employees, 29 identified Defence APS personnel, 28 identified Defence ADF personnel and 21 anonymous complaints.
- Defence has established the Alternative Dispute Resolution, Policy and Training Directorate within this unit and this is operating to provide training, dispute resolution services and policy development and updates within Defence.
 - From 1 January to 31 March 2026, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program delivered 495 Alternative Dispute Resolution interventions including mediation, facilitated conversations, group facilitations and conflict coaching. The Alternative Dispute Resolution Program also conducted 78 training presentations and workshops to establish workplace expectations, increase communications and provide solid grounding in the complaint management process to over 6,800 members.
- The Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office will remain the Defence unit focussed on support, education and training in relation to sexual violence.
- A number of updates are being made to Defence's central policy to include guidance on restorative engagement at the end of a complaint process to demonstrate acceptance of institutional responsibility for mistreatment experienced by a person during their time in Defence and responding to family and domestic violence.
- Clear, concise and easy-to-follow guides have been developed and published on the Complaints and Resolution intranet page to assist Defence personnel with understanding the complaints process.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000335

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Meghan Quinn; Admiral David Johnston RAN; Cath Patterson; Justine Greig PSM;

Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

Reporting of offences between ADF and civilian justice systems

- The Royal Commission (recommendation 23b) recommended the Government urgently enable the reporting of convictions for sexual and related offences between the ADF and civilian justice systems.
 - From 8 December 2025, ADF members who have been convicted of a sexual offence or other serious offence since 2015, may have those details recorded with the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission and uploaded to the National Police Reference System.
 - Defence is continuing to develop policy and work with the National Police Reference System to establish a two-way provision of information, ensuring the ADF maintains a complete and reliable record of serving members convicted of sexual offences and related offences in civilian courts.

Wellbeing

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- A number of the Royal Commission recommendations require input from members with lived experience. Defence has developed and endorsed the Defence Lived Experience Framework to ensure the safe inclusion of lived experience perspectives in the development and review of Defence policies, programs and initiatives.
- In June 2025, the **Lived Experience Advisory Forum** was established and has successfully on-boarded over 40 members who will provide lived experience expertise during the implementation of relevant recommendations. The Lived Experience Advisory Forum members have been engaged in a variety of activities to share their expertise including:
 - the review of the Keep Your Mates Safe Suicide Prevention Training module, providing valuable lived experience insights to continuously improve the training, as required under recommendation 69;
 - contributed to drafting policy for the Defence Health Manual on clinical care and support of members in suicide crisis as part of recommendation 70; and
 - provided their lived experience perspective in interviews as part of the development of the command and managers courses Connect, Access, Respond and Extend – skills for command and managers (CARE-C) and Connect, Access, Respond and Extend – advanced skills for command and managers (CARE-C (A)) that were released Q1 2026.
- Defence has established a **suicide postvention working group** with representatives from Defence, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Inspector-General of the ADF to progress recommendations 76 and 77. Postvention is the support offered to people impacted by a suicide death, including family members, friends, colleagues and the wider community.
 - In January 2025, Defence partnered with suicide postvention experts from Military and Emergency Services Health Australia to develop an initial suicide postvention framework and associated resources. This work was completed in

January 2026 and the working group is now tailoring the framework to ensure it meets the requirements of recommendation 76.

- On 4 September 2025, the **Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030 and Action Plans (Mental Health and Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention)** were launched. Work continues to progress with the Department of Veterans' Affairs on interdepartmental governance arrangements and implementation of joint action items.
- Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs have partnered on the development of the **Women Veterans' Strategy** which will assist in system-wide cultural and structural reform. This draft Strategy is undergoing internal consultation ahead of an external consultation process, led by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, in 2026.
- On 19 January 2026, the **Defence People Research and Evaluation Hub** was established in support of recommendation 116. The Hub provides support to research entities in navigating both command approval and ethics in respect of human research.
- In June 2025, the **Directorate of Research Capability** was established to lead research in the identified knowledge gaps of prevention and wellbeing, and translate outcomes into actionable insights and solutions. This Directorate is supporting the People and Research and Evaluation Hub and the implementation of recommendations 114, 115, 117 and 121 through its research capability.
- A new **Veteran Defence Common Access Card** has been created, affording access to bases for two years post-separation.
 - A six-month pilot program commenced on 1 November 2025 in Townsville (Queensland) and the Albury/Wodonga Military Area (Victoria/New South Wales). An evaluation of the pilot will be conducted prior to any rollout across Australia.
- Defence's 23 Squadron at Royal Australian Air Force Base Amberley is participating in **Comcare's Psychosocial Proactive Inspection Program** pilot, running from February to June 2026.
 - The program is designed to proactively assess and address psychosocial risks within Defence, aiming to ensure a safe and supportive working environment across all levels of the organisation.
 - The pilot will allow for adjustments to be made prior to broader rollout over July 2026 to June 2029.

Suicide Prevention Program

- Defence has enhanced our Suicide Prevention Program by developing a system-wide approach to suicide prevention, which includes providing education and training to promote wellbeing, mental health awareness and encourage help-seeking behaviours.
- The Defence Suicide Prevention Training suite was developed to support a system-wide approach to clinical practice change, and scaled to different levels of responsibility, enabling all ranks and roles to provide support to a member who is at risk of or experiencing suicidal crisis. This is consistent with the Royal Commission's recommendation 69.
- Defence continually enhances and tailors its training courses. In 2026, the existing leaders and managers e-course was replaced with two in-person courses for

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

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commanders and managers focused on supporting members at risk of suicide, self-harm and harm to others.

Defence Enterprise Resource Planning Case Management System – creation of Family and Domestic Violence category

- New Incident Categories have been created in Defence Enterprise Case Management System to improve consistency and accuracy in the recording and reporting of incidents of Family and Domestic Violence.
- These changes align with the 2023-2028 Defence Family and Domestic Violence Strategy which was released in November 2023, the corresponding Action Plan which was released in December 2024, and the Royal Commission's recommendation 102.

The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission

- The Royal Commission stated its most important recommendation was number 122, The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission (the Commission). The Commission commenced operation on 29 September 2025. The Commission provides independent oversight and evidence-based advice to the Government on reforms aimed at improving suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF members.
- The *Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner Act 2025*, which transitions the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission from Part VIIIIE of the *Defence Act 1903* into its own standalone Act, passed the Parliament on 31 March 2026.
- The legislation also brought forward the date of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission's first public report regarding the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations from 2 December 2027, to 5 February 2027.
- Ms Penny McKay, who is serving as Acting Commissioner, has been appointed the Defence and Veterans' Service Commissioner, commencing 1 June 2026.
- The Government has agreed to commission an independent inquiry into military sexual violence in the ADF (recommendation 25).
- The Australian Human Rights Commission has undertaken targeted consultation with specialist sexual violence and other services who work closely with victim-survivors to develop the Terms of Reference.
- The Defence and Veterans' Service Commission will conduct the inquiry, due to commence by mid-2026 and publish a report of the findings.

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- Defence is supporting the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission's inquiries by providing relevant information and documents, including for its first inquiry into the Government's implementation of recommendations 9 to 13 from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Interim Report on Access to Information and its second inquiry into implementation of Defence and Veteran Suicide Royal Commission recommendations.
- Defence is also supporting the Acting Commissioner by facilitating base visits and access to current serving Australian Defence Force personnel.

Handling note: Questions related to the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission should be referred to the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission.

Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office Operations

From January 2026 the Program Management Office staffing levels have reduced from 41 to 30 ASL and ADF personnel, to reflect the reduction in requirement to support stakeholder development of Reform Management Plan activities.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
2 December 2025	The Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP addressed the National Press Club to provide an update on the significant progress made in the 12 months since the Government Response.
29 September 2025	A media release from Minister for Defence Personnel recognised the establishment of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission on 29 September 2025 and acknowledged the Acting Commissioner Penny McKay.
9 September 2025	A media release from Minister for Defence Personnel recognised the 12 month anniversary of the Royal Commissions Final Report. The Minister addressed the media in Perth regarding the anniversary.
4 September 2025	The Minister for Defence Personnel provided an update to the Parliament on the progress of implementation of the Government Response.
17 January 2025	A joint release from the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP and the Minister for Defence Personnel announcing the appointment of Michael Manthorpe PSM as the Interim Head of the Defence and Veterans' Services Commission.
2 December 2024	The Prime Minister, The Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Personnel announced the Government Response to the Final Report.
19 September 2024	The Minister for Defence Personnel, in an interview with 6PR Perth Radio, advised the Government would agree to establish a new oversight entity and respond to the Final Report by the end of 2024.

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Date	Event
9 September 2024	The Royal Commission delivered their Final Report to the Governor General, three years and two months after commencement. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Personnel released a statement regarding the Final Report.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 2 and 3 December 2025, there was significant media reporting following the [Minister for Defence Personnel address to the National Press Club](#).
- There was significant media reporting focussed heavily on the announcement of the [‘Independent inquiry into military sexual violence, which will be undertaken by the Defence and Veterans’ Service Commission](#).

Division: Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office	
PDR No: SB26-000335	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Director Program Support Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 31 March 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Brigadier Melanie Cochbain CSC Director General Defence Royal Commission Program Management Office Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 31 March 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Justine Greig PSM Date: Date: 7 April 2026 Deputy Secretary Defence People Defence People Group Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC Date: 7 April 2026 Chief of Personnel Defence People Group Celia Perkins Date: 16 April 2026 Acting Associate Secretary Associate Secretary Group	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - WELLBEING AND CULTURE

Lead: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN, Chief of the Defence Force to lead on ADF culture and associated reform; Cath Patterson, Acting Secretary of Defence to lead on implementation of Royal Commission recommendations associated with culture.

Support: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel and Justine Greig, Deputy Secretary Defence People.

Context: Defence recognises that people are fundamental to capability. Wellbeing and culture remain enterprise priorities.

Key Messages

- Culture reform remains a priority for Defence. It supports the operational effectiveness required by the National Defence Strategy by enabling a capable, resilient and high-performing force that prioritises the health, wellbeing and safety of its people.
- Defence 2025 YourSay survey results show some areas of improvement, including engagement, morale and productivity with overall results remaining relatively stable. This indicates continued work is required to strengthen workforce experience.
- The Defence Culture Blueprint and Action Plan guide enterprise-wide reform, with progress monitored through surveys, reporting and senior leader oversight.
- Defence is implementing Government-agreed recommendations from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, including prioritising those addressing sexual violence, suicide prevention and improving complaints systems.
- This includes:
 - introducing a centralised Complaint, Resolution and Support Services unit;
 - developing a sexual violence prevention strategy that will help to implement legislative requirements of Respect@Work Positive Duty; and
 - implementing psychosocial safety through the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2030.
- Retention indicators suggest cultural reforms are contributing to workforce outcomes, with separation rates at their lowest levels in more than a decade.
- Defence continues targeted initiatives to increase representation of women, First Nations peoples, people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse personnel.

Talking Points

Class Action

- The Commonwealth is responding to the class action filed in the Federal Court of Australia relating to alleged contraventions of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* in the ADF.
- It would not be appropriate to comment on the particulars of the claim or the individuals involved due to legal considerations, including confidentiality and privacy.

- Defence acknowledges and respects the rights of all individuals to take part in the class action.

Unacceptable behaviour and sexual violence

- Defence established a centralised complaints unit - the Complaint, Resolution and Support Services, in January 2026.
 - Individuals can now report unacceptable behaviour directly to the Complaint, Resolution and Support Services unit, removing the need to go through their chain of command or reporting line if they do not wish to.
 - Anyone who comes forward will be offered trauma-informed support, and complainants can report anonymously if they wish.
- From 27 May 2024, the reporting and management of incidents of Unacceptable Behaviour occurs within the one system; the Defence Enterprise Resource Planning Case Management Solution.

Actions to address unacceptable behaviour at the Australian Defence Force Academy

- Significant reform has been underway to prevent and address unacceptable behaviour at the Australian Defence Force Academy and recent survey results indicate that cadets are increasingly confident that action will be taken if an incident occurs.
- With respect to the recent situation where a cadet was arrested, Defence's priority has been to provide support to those who have been impacted.
- As the matter is now before the courts, Defence is unable to provide further comments

Action to Prevent Unacceptable Behaviour and Sexual Violence

- In line with the Respect@Work Act 2022, Defence is continuing to implement the positive duty to proactively eliminate the risk of sexual violence.
 - Defence has released a commanders and managers prevention tool to support leaders in their role to proactively prevent sexual violence in Defence workplaces.
 - Defence is developing a comprehensive Sexual Violence Prevention Strategy and Respect@Work policy.
 - Defence has developed and is since December 2025 is now implementing enterprise and service specific Respect@Work Action Plans.
 - In 2025, the Chief of the Defence Force directed all ADF and APS personnel who manage ADF members to facilitate a discussion with their teams on the importance of respectful and safe workplaces and encouraged the completion of sexual violence prevention training.
 - Stop Sexual Harassment Directions and Stop Sexual Harassment Orders have been introduced for the ADF and APS respectively.

- Non-clinical trauma Informed Practices training is now available to all personnel. This training supports practical application of trauma-informed practice in the workplace.
- The **Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office** continues to provide specialist advice, training and support, with the training continuum becoming mandatory for all ADF, APS and contracted staff in 2023.
 - This mandatory training includes: Sexual Misconduct Foundation of Knowledge (FoundOK), Application of Knowledge: Consent Matters, Application of Knowledge: Peer Response to a Disclosure and Application of Knowledge: Technology with Respect.
 - Enterprise-wide compliance for this mandatory training is at approximately 72 per cent as at 1 April 2026.

Table 1

Compliance Rates SeMPRO Mandatory Training – 72 per cent (%) as at 1 April 2026	
	Total
NAVY	76%
ARMY	73%
RAAF	75%
APS	61%
Total	72%

* This data is drawn from WISE, representing APS, ADF (excluding SERCAT 2) and relates to the compliance with completion of four mandatory training modules (one to be completed each year over four years)

** The total column is overall compliance with SeMPRO mandatory training, noting that personnel within the first four years of service can be compliant without yet completing all modules.

- The timeline for implementing the Respect@Work legislation within Defence is detailed below.

Date	Completed and Embedded R@W Positive Duty Implementation
December 2025	Finalised initial Service and Enterprise Respect@Work Action Plans (per RCDVS recommendation 10)
October 2025	CDF Stand Down and Sexual Violence messaging Enterprise wide
September 2025	Respect@Work included in the Complaints and Alternative Resolutions Manual
4 August 2025	Respect@Work in Workplace Behaviour Mandatory Training

Date	Completed and Embedded R@W Positive Duty Implementation
1 August 2025	Respect@Work input into SLG Leadership metrics
30 July 2025	Respect@Work input into Psychosocial Risk Model
18 July 2025	Respect@Work information embedded in SeMPRO App OK Training
28 April 2025	Respect@Work included in WHS Diligence Presentation (SES 3)
10 March 2025	Respect@Work included in Capstone Training Program (SES 1 & 2)
4 March 2025	Culture Statement
2023	Introduction of Stop Sexual Harassment Direction/ Orders
December 2022	Passage of Respect@Work legislation
2022 (delivered 2023)	Work with Australian Human Rights Commission to develop the Defence Respect@Work Framework which outlines ways to improve both Defence response and prevention approaches.
Ongoing	Development of new Respect@Work Positive Duty policy to embed regular Respect@Work Positive Duty risk assessments and develop preventative actions.
Ongoing	Development of new Prevention of Sexual Violence Strategy with Our Watch and AHRC as required by Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Recommendation 17

- In accordance with Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Recommendation 25, the Hon Matt Keogh MP, the Minister for Veteran's Affairs and Defence personnel, has requested the Defence and Veteran's Service Commission lead an independent inquiry into military sexual violence within the ADF.

Definition of sexual violence

- Defence uses the term 'sexual violence' to encompass the spectrum of unwanted and unwelcome sexualised behaviours. Applying the term 'sexual violence' aligns with the Australian Government's National Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Fostering a culture of reporting

- Defence recognises people must have confidence that they will be protected and supported, and their experiences will be taken seriously, with appropriate action taken.
- The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and the 2023 Commonwealth Ombudsman report *Defending Fairness* highlighted the need to strengthen Defence's

reporting culture. In response, Defence is reforming policies and processes, improving data and reporting capability, and focusing on building confidence in reporting.

- Defence has also clarified expectations of all personnel to take action if they witness unacceptable behaviour, including through the Chief of the Defence Force Directive 07/2023 – Bystander Behaviour.
- Defence is strengthening reporting and analysis to ensure commanders and managers at all levels have access to timely information and are accountable for action taken. For example, Groups and Services are required to report on how they are responding to insights and trends identified through the Work Health and Safety Dashboard, provided quarterly to Group Heads and Service Chiefs.
- In May 2024, Defence introduced the Defence Enterprise Resource Planning Case Management Solution bringing unacceptable behaviour reporting into a single system. Reporting rates have remained steady over the past three years, and the system is being progressively enhanced to support identification of emerging 'hot spots'.

Improving mental health and wellbeing and psychosocial safety

- Defence has enhanced programs and supports for Defence personnel and their families, including:
 - Launching the joint Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030 (the Strategy). The Strategy complements the work of the Defence and Veteran Family Wellbeing Strategy 2025-30 and the Veteran Transition Strategy 2023 and is supported by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and the Suicide Prevention Action Plan.
 - Expanding the ADF Family Health Program.
 - Expanding remote locality leave travel for personnel posted to remote locations.
 - Enhancing the Defence Suicide Prevention Program through the Defence SafeSide Project to support an Enterprise-wide approach to suicide prevention.
- Defence monitors Work Health and Safety risks and incidents, including psychosocial risks, through the Work Health and Safety Dashboard, provided to senior leaders.
- The Dashboard highlights serious risks, insights and trends. Groups and Services are required to outline how risks are being managed through a Control and Evaluation Table, providing assurance to senior leadership that controls are in place, assessed for effectiveness, and strengthened where required.
- To further prioritise psychosocial risk management, Defence has:
 - Introduced psychosocial risk management as part of mandatory annual WHS training for all ADF, Defence APS and Contractors (Learn eXcel Perform course).
 - Implemented an annual Psychosocial Risk Deep Dive Report to provide more detailed analysis and identify workforce hotspots.
 - Introduced a Work Health and Safety Interactive Group and Service Dashboard to enable timely identification of incidents, trends and emerging risks.
 - Launched a Psychosocial Risk Portal, providing practical guidance and tools for leaders and individuals to proactively identify, manage and respond to psychosocial risks.

- Delivered targeted training to Group Heads and Service Chiefs to ensure understanding of, and commitment to, their due diligence obligations and Work Health and Safety accountabilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Implementation

- Defence continues to implement the agreed recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.
 - Defence is solely responsible for 54 recommendations, and has shared responsibility for a further 22 recommendations;
 - As of 1 April 2026, 75 Reform Management Plans have been approved by the Defence Royal Commission Implementation Program Board.

Monitoring and evaluation of Defence culture

- Defence is strengthening the evaluation and measurement of culture and wellbeing to better identify areas for improvement, target interventions and support for our people.
- Defence has developed its first annual culture report to baseline data and targets for monitoring the impact of the Defence Culture Blueprint program, and highlight efforts to keep improving the experience of our people at work.
- The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, along with our data insights, reaffirm we have more work to do to evolve Defence's culture to be supportive, inclusive and respectful for all personnel.

Recent Defence Survey Trends

- Results from the June 2025 Workplace Experience and Workplace Behaviours Surveys identify areas where Defence has improved.
 - There is a positive trend in Recognition, with an increase of six percentage points since the previous year, while Job Engagement and Morale have increased in the last three years. These trends are reflected in both ADF and APS respondents.
 - Individual Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance are higher in APS than ADF, with more than a five percentage-point difference between scores for groups.
 - Since 2023, Intention to Leave has declined by four percentage points; this trend is reflected in both APS and ADF respondents.
- The Surveys also identified areas where there is an ongoing need for action.
 - The 2025 Workplace Behaviours Survey found that 37 per cent of ADF respondents and 41 per cent of APS respondents reported to have experienced a form of unacceptable behaviour in the previous 12 months. These figures have remained relatively stable over the last five years.
 - There are seven types of unacceptable behaviour captured through the survey reporting, as defined in the Defence Complaints and Alternate Resolution Manual. These seven types of unacceptable behaviour are: harassment; workplace bullying; sexual violence; discrimination; abuse of power; conflict of interest and inappropriate workplace relationships; and violent behaviour.

- The Defence Corporate Plan Performance Measure 4.3 (Defence values and behaviours enable our people to deliver Australia's National Defence) measures Defence's progress towards improving the experience of the ADF and APS using results from Defence's enterprise-wide YourSay surveys.
- Defence's performance in 2024-25 was assessed as 'not achieved' against performance measure 4.3. Achievement would have required at least a 5 per cent change in the responses to the identified survey questions.
 - In 2024-25 results from the 2025 Workplace Behaviours Survey showed that 80.9 per cent of participants believed appropriate action would be taken if they reported an incident of unacceptable behaviour. In 2023-24 the result was higher at 82.0 per cent (Performance Measure 4.3a).
 - In 2024-25, results from the 2025 Workplace Behaviours Survey showed that 38.8 per cent of respondents had experienced unacceptable behaviour in the previous 12 months. In 2023-24 the result was lower at 37.9 per cent (Performance Measure 4.3b).
 - In 2024-25, 80.4 per cent of participants of the 2025 YourSay Workplace Experience Survey viewed that Defence values were being used in their work area. In 2023-24 the result was lower 79.6 per cent (Performance Measure 4.3c).
 - Defence has chosen to amend the performance measure 4.3 targets for 2025-26 to reflect the desired state, which is that; 100 per cent of enterprise-wide survey participants believe appropriate action would be taken if they reported unacceptable behaviour; 0 per cent of staff experience unacceptable behaviour; and 100 per cent view that Defence values are used in their work area.

Recruitment and retention

- Recruitment and retention are reliable indicators of the impact of culture change.
- Retention interventions such as the ADF Continuation Bonus and the implementation of the Targeted Workforce Segment pay increase in 2024-25 have been successful in helping to retain ADF members in the junior and middle ranks as well as critical workforce segments.
- As at 1 April 2026, the APS separation rate was 8.4 per cent, which is a reduction of 1.7 percentage points over the last 12 months.
- As at 1 April 2026, the ADF separation rate was 7.4 per cent, below the 10-year average of 9.5 per cent.
- There is no indication of a single factor for ADF members to leave or remain in service.
 - 2025 Workplace Experience Survey results indicate:
 - improving job satisfaction, benefits and conditions of service could all influence a members' decision to continue their service.
 - ADF members were least satisfied with ways of working, and career and personal development.

- . In the ADF, 3.9 per cent identify as First Nations and 1.7 per cent of the APS. Under the 2025-2030 First Nations Commitment Defence has set a target of 5 per cent by 2030.
- . Defence has a range of initiatives aimed at recruiting and retaining First Nations people. Examples include:
 - The Indigenous Pre-Recruit Program and the Army and Navy Indigenous Development Programs. The Indigenous Pre-Recruit Program supports First Nations peoples with meeting required fitness, personal or resilience standard ahead of the formal ADF Recruit Course. In turn, the Army and Navy Indigenous Development Programs are intensive, 17-week programs that similarly support First Nations candidates achieve entry-level standards to enlist as full time soldiers or sailors.
 - Defence delivers the Whole-of-Government Indigenous Graduate Pathway Program and leads recruitment for the Indigenous Graduate Pathway on behalf of the whole-of-Government Australian Government Graduate Program.
- . Supplemented by targeted Affirmative Measures recruitment, these programs encourage First Nations Australians to undertake a career that contributes to Australia's national security and building a sustainable pipeline of Indigenous talent into the APS.
- . As at 1 April 2026, women's representation in the integrated Defence workforce (APS and ADF) is 25.5 per cent. To increase representation, targets have been set for women's participation in the ADF.
- . In 2024, women's participation targets in the ADF were revised to a common endpoint of 2030, with ADF overall target of 25 per cent.
 - As at 1 April 2026:
 - : Navy achieved 24.5 per cent women participation (across the permanent workforce), and have revised their target to 26.5 per cent by 2030. Participation is consistent with 1 December 2024.
 - : Army achieved 15.2 per cent women participation (across the permanent workforce), with a revised target of 17 per cent by 2030. Participation is consistent with 1 December 2024.
 - : Air Force achieved 27.4 per cent women participation (across the permanent workforce) with a revised target of 32 per cent by 2030. Participation has seen a 0.1 percentage point increase from 1 December 2024.
 - : All ADF employment categories are open to women, including combat roles.
 - APS women's representation (ongoing workforce) at 1 April 2026 is 48.9 per cent, a 0.4 percentage point increase from 1 April 2025.

- Defence has a number of programs to support the recruitment and retention of women for example, Army has the 'Army Pre-Conditioning Course' which is a seven-week program to develop all candidates' fitness, confidence and resilience; Recruit to Area, Recruit When Ready, and ADF Gap year program.
- For the APS, STEM capabilities are being built through employment programs such as the Defence Science and Technology Group led NAVIGATE. NAVIGATE brings experienced STEM professionals into Defence and Defence aims to achieve 50 per cent representation of women in this program. Defence has employed 124 people through the NAVIGATE program since 2022, including 69 women.
- . As at 1 April 2026, 3 per cent of ongoing Defence APS employees identify as having one or more disabilities, this is consistent with 1 April 2025.
 - Since 2014, Defence has been providing ongoing and sustainable APS work opportunities to people living with an intellectual disability or acquired brain injury through the Inclusive Employment Program.
 - The Defence Assistance Program is a Defence initiated program delivered by local Australian Disability Enterprises. The program employs team coordinators and disability support workers who provide support to approximately 90 people living with intellectual disabilities across ten ADF bases.
 - The ADF is exempt under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. As at 1 April 2026, 0.4 per cent of permanent ADF members identified as having one or more disabilities, this is a 0.1 percentage point decrease from 1 April 2025.
- . As at 1 April 2026, 37.3 per cent of ongoing APS employees and 29.3 per cent of permanent ADF members identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (a 0.5 and 0.3 percentage point increase from 1 April 2025 respectively).
 - 26.4 per cent of ongoing APS employees who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse are SES APS employees.
 - 30 per cent of the ADF who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse are Senior ADF Officers.
 - Defence measures where an individual meets one or more of the following variables: birth country, ancestry or language, in accordance with the Australian Bureau of Statistics standards for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse reporting.
 - Defence is implementing an agency specific Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Action Plan.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
10 March 2026	QoN	No. 11, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office. Senator Larissa Waters (Greens, Queensland) asked about the number of current positions in SeMPRO and the percentage of the total workforce this made up.	Tabled
15 November 2024	QoN	QoN No. 83, Female Cadets, Senator Jacqui Lambie asked for the actions the government has taken to address rates of sexual harassment faced by female cadets.	Tabled.
6 June 2024	QoN	QoN No. 596, Service Level Unacceptable Behaviours Data, Senator David Shoebridge asked for unacceptable behaviour, bullying and sexual harassment results for Navy, Army and Air Force for 2021, 2022 and 2023.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- There has been extensive media coverage in relation to the Class Action against Defence.
- On 4 March 2026, a YouTube recording reported Senator Jacqui Lambie criticised the Government in the Senate over its handling of the ADF sex discrimination class action, citing Royal Commission findings of widespread sexual violence, alleging systemic failures to protect women serving between 2003–2025, and accusing the Commonwealth of attempting to avoid accountability by arguing anti-discrimination laws do not apply to abuse occurring overseas. [Jacqui Lambie Slams Government over ADF Sex Discrimination Case.](#)
- On 24 March 2026, *The Canberra Times* reported an increase in Defence bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints, alongside commentary on Defence culture, workforce wellbeing and accountability. [Defence bad behaviour complaints surge.](#)
- On 25 March 2026, *The Nightly* reported on findings by the Commonwealth Ombudsman regarding historical ADF Resistance to Interrogation training, including allegations of sexual humiliation and abuse, and the payment of reparations to affected personnel. [Mock executions, water torture and rape: ADF's depraved 'resistance to interrogation' training exposed](#)
- 5 November 2025, Cate Carter, *The Lowy Institute*, ['Beyond the headlines: the risk of stereotyping women in uniform'.](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000336

Last updated: 15 May 2026

Key witnesses: Cath Patterson, Admiral David Johnston AC RAN

Division: Workforce and People Strategy	
PDR No: SB26-000336	
Prepared by: Rebecca Wootten Assistant Secretary People and Culture Workforce and People Strategy s47E(d) Date: 13 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Leisa Craig First Assistant Secretary Workforce and People Strategy Defence People Group s47E(d) Date: 15 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Justine Greig PSM Deputy Secretary Defence People Defence People Group Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC Chief of Personnel Defence People Group Date: 15 May 2026 Date: 15 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - EXTERNAL WORKFORCE AND CONSULTANTS

Lead: Steven Groves, Chief Finance Officer

Supporting: Sam Volker, First Assistant Secretary, Budgets and Financial Services

Context: Defence is committed to supporting the Government's agenda to strengthen the APS workforce by increasing the proportion of work undertaken by public servants and progressing initiatives to implement the 2023 APS Strategic Commissioning Framework. Defence has implemented initiatives to rebalance our workforce, including converting contractors to APS.

Key Messages

- Defence has achieved on its commitment to reduce its use of contractors by 2,000 by December 2024, achieving a reduction of 2,212 full-time equivalent (FTE), confirmed through the External Workforce Census conducted in March 2025.
- In March 2026, Defence undertook the annual External Workforce Census. Results reported a further 4 per cent or 236 FTE reduction in contractors relative to 2025.
- Defence has progressed further initiatives to continue strengthening the APS and reducing its reliance on the contractor workforce across key job families, including introduction of the External Workforce Pricing Improvement Program, Defence core consulting training and governance and market management reforms.
- As Defence implements the Integrated Investment Program, the demands on the external workforce will change by location, work type and in aggregate.
- Defence will continue to engage technical specialists through the external workforce to respond flexibly to changing circumstances, including surge requirements.
- Further to the commitments to strengthening the APS, the Government continues its broader support for Defence industry.

Talking Points

Steps Defence has taken to progress the Government's commitment to improving the public service reducing contractor expenditure

- Defence received an increase of 2,000 ASL between 2023-24 and 2025-26 to facilitate the conversion of contractors into APS positions. These positions were provided in stages:
 - An additional 660 ASL in 2023-24, 1,190 in 2024-25 and 150 in 2025-26.
 - This provides an unfunded ASL uplift of 2,000 by 2025-26.
- In March 2026, Defence undertook the annual External Workforce Census. The Census highlighted that Defence is rebalancing the workforce and reducing reliance on external labour, where possible. The reduction of 2,212 contractors from prior years which were supported by contractor conversions has not changed.
- Defence has established the External Workforce Reform Branch and developed a 2024-26 External Workforce Reform Action Plan to support Defence in delivering the Government's commitment.

Commonwealth Savings Measures

- Defence has contributed \$2.8 billion in savings towards the Government's commitment to reduce the costs of external labour. Refer to [Table A](#) below for savings over the Forward Estimates.
- In April 2025, the Government announced across the Commonwealth its' Election commitment of a further \$6.4 billion in savings from external labour, and other non-wage expenses. The 2025-26 component of this is \$430.5 million.
- As part of the 2025-26 Budget process, Government allocated a further \$1.4 billion in savings to Defence, to reduce spending on consultants, contractor and labour hire and non-wage expenses.

Table A – Breakdown of Defence's Savings over the Forward Estimates

Budget Measure (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	Total
2022-23 Oct PBS: One off saving measure	144.6	-	-	-	-	-	-		144.6
2023-24 PBS: Savings from External Labour, and savings from Advertising, Travel and Legal Expenses	-	154.3	158.8	163.7	155.1	-	-		631.9
2024-25 PBS: Savings from External Labour - Extension, and the commissioning of a new Audit of Employment	-	-	23.7	25.8	25.6	196.8	-		271.9
2025-26 PBS: WoG External Labour Savings - Extension Measure	-	-	-	-	-	-	196.8		196.8
2025 Election Commitment 2025-26 PAES: Savings from External Labour	-	-	-	188.8	376.6	437.7	502.7		1,505.8
2025 Election Commitment 2025-26 PAES: Travel Savings				52.2					52.2
Total savings per year	144.6	154.3	182.5	430.5	557.3	634.5	699.5	-	2,803.2
2026-27 PBS: External Labour additional FE allocation					458.6	490.5	515.8		1,464.9
2026-27 PBS: Measure Extension								1,435.2	1,435.2
Total savings per year	144.6	154.3	182.5	430.5	1,015.9	1,125.0	1,215.3	1,435.2	5,703.3

Size of Defence's external workforce

- The External Workforce Census in March 2026 reported 36,653 FTE engaged as part of the external workforce in Defence. Overall, the total external workforce decreased by 225 FTE (1 per cent) compared to the March 2025 Census.

- . 30,997 FTE, or 85 per cent of Defence's external workforce were engaged through outsourced service providers.
 - This was a decrease of 24 FTE from 31,020 FTE since the March 2025 Census. A majority of these contracts are outcomes based, causing some minor variation in results depending on specific workloads during the census period.
- . 5,414 FTE, or 15 per cent, were engaged as contractors. This reflected:
 - a decrease of 236 FTE since March 2025.
- . 242 FTE, or 1 per cent, were engaged as consultants. This was an increase of 35 FTE from 208 FTE since March 2025.
- . The next External Workforce Census will occur in March 2027.

Reasons Defence uses contractors and does not employ more APS personnel

- . In some areas, Defence has taken a decision to outsource delivery of certain functions because the private sector has specific expertise or skills, and represents better value for money.
- . This includes functions such as base services, delivery of health services, or the use of defence industry to sustain military assets of the contracted workforce:
 - 12,987 (35 per cent) are providing Platform or Fleet sustainment and maintenance;
 - 5,631 (15 per cent) are supporting information technology; and
 - 3,764 (10 per cent) are providing property services.
- . Defence remains committed to ensuring it achieves best value for the Australian taxpayer when it accesses the external market.
- . The majority of Defence's external workforce (30,997 or 85 per cent) are outsourced service providers.
- . Overall, 80 per cent of the external workforce is now contracted on a solely or partially outcomes basis (64 per cent outcome based and 16 per cent combined outcomes/time and materials contract).
- . Defence's use of the external workforce is expected to change over the coming years in response to the 2026 National Defence Strategy and the workforce policies set by the Government.
- . The 2024 Defence Workforce Plan commits to reducing reliance on the contractor workforce for core APS jobs, while recognising there will continue to be a need for contracted support in specialist areas.

Defence spend on external workforce in 2024-25

- . In 2024-25, Defence spent \$12.7 billion on outsourced service providers, \$2.1 billion on contractors and \$124 million on consultants (all figures GST exclusive).
- . Defence spent approximately \$2.8 billion on APS employee expenses in 2024-25.

Background

- The External Workforce Census provides an estimate of the Full Time Equivalent of outsourced service providers, contractors and consultants engaged by Defence as shown at [Table B](#). Combined with expenditure data shown at [Table C](#), this details how Defence is using external support.
- This year's census shows a marginal decrease in overall size of the external workforce (down 1 per cent). The growth is only in consultant staff. Both contractors and outsourced service providers have continued to decline.

Table B - Past External Workforce Census Results

FTE by Category	March 2023	March 2024 (percentage change)	March 2025 (percentage change)	March 2026 (percentage change)
Contractors	8,523	6,681 (down 22 per cent)	5,650 (down 15 per cent)	5,414 (down 4 per cent)
Outsourced service providers	28,446	29,073 (up 2 per cent)	31,020 (up 7 per cent)	30,997 (down 0.1 per cent)
Consultants	361	285 (down 21 per cent)	208 (down 27 per cent)	242 (up 17 per cent)
Total	37,330	36,038* (down 3 per cent)	36,878 (up 2 per cent)	36,653 (down 1 per cent)

* Total varies slightly to the figures represented above due to rounding.

** Numbers in table are as published at each census. Note that subsequent contractor numbers include reclassifications and other movements not attributed as savings/reductions and not counted towards the reduction target. The difference between March 2023 and March 2025 is different to the official reduction figure.

Table C - External Workforce Expenditure over Time

Overall External Workforce Expenditure (GST exclusive)	2020-21 (\$billion)	2021-22 (\$billion)	2022-23 (\$billion)	2023-24 (\$billion)	2024-25 (\$billion)
Consultants	0.116	0.154	0.162	0.145	0.124
Contractors	1.873	2.487	2.572	2.263	2.126
Outsourced Service Providers	10.955	13.072	11.513	11.970	12.729
Total Expenditure	12.944	15.713	14.247	14.378	14.979
Expenditure on external workforce as a percentage of Defence expenditure	30.88 per cent	33.99 per cent	29.55 per cent	28.59 per cent	28.30 per cent

The 'Big Four' contracting and consultant firms

- In March 2026, 693 FTE from the Big Four were delivering services to Defence, down from 785 FTE in March 2025, as shown in [Table D](#).

Table D – Big Four Full Time Equivalent

Company	March 2026				March 2025			
	Consultant	Contractor	OSP	Total	Consultant	Contractor	OSP	Total
KPMG	17	184	45	247	4	238	53	295
Deloitte	20	80	105	205	23	88	95	205
Scyne	-	68	2	70	-	82	4	86
EY	2	77	91	170	8	90	101	199
Total*	40	409	243	693	35	496	254	785

*Totals may not add up due to rounding.

- The Big Four provide many services to Defence, these services predominantly relate to project management (244 FTE or 35 per cent of total Big Four FTE) and information technology (173 FTE or 25 per cent of total Big Four FTE).
- In 2025-26 YTD (as at 31 March 2026), Defence has spent \$252m (GST inclusive) with the 'Big Four', comprising:
 - KPMG (\$97 million)
 - Deloitte (\$85 million)
 - Ernst & Young (EY) (\$54 million) and
 - Scyne (\$23 million).
- For the Big Four, expenditure was categorised as contractors (60 per cent), outsourced service providers (35 per cent) and consultants (6 per cent).

Major Service Providers

- In March 2026, 3,176 FTE from the major service providers were delivering services to Defence (down from 4,051 FTE in March 2025). The major service providers resources included:
 - Overall:
 - 2,267 contractor FTE (down from 2,506 FTE)
 - 906 outsourced service provider FTE (down from 1,523 FTE) and
 - 3 consultant FTE (down from 22 FTE).
 - From specific providers:
 - 1,239 external workforce from Team Downer (Major Service Provider) FTE (down from 1,804 FTE)
 - 491 external workforce from Team Nova (Major Service Provider) FTE (down from 869 FTE)
 - 915 external workforce from KBR (Major Service Provider) FTE (up from 743 FTE) and

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Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witness: Steven Groves

PDR No: SB26-000345

- : 530 external workforce from Jacobs (Major Service Provider) FTE (down from 635 FTE).
- Primary activities were in the fields of:
 - : sustainment (734 FTE, 23 per cent)
 - : property (644 FTE, 21 per cent) and
 - : project management (644 FTE, 20 per cent).

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
Nil.	

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
Nil.			

Relevant Media Reporting

• Nil current Media reporting.

Division:	Budgets and Financial Services
PDR No:	SB26-000345
Prepared by: Rob Coffey Assistant Secretary External Workforce Reform Defence Finance Group Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 13 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Sam Volker First Assistant Secretary Budgets and Financial Services Defence Finance Group Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 14 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Steven Groves Chief Finance Officer Defence Finance Group	Date: 18 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - SENIOR OFFICER ENTITLEMENTS

Lead: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN, Chief of the Defence Force.

Supporting: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel.

Context: As Senior Leadership Group members, Star Rank officers have access to specific legislated workplace benefits to support professional duties.

Key Messages

- The Pay and Conditions Manual (PACMAN) is the ADF's legislative instrument under the *Defence Act 1903*, which carries the force of law ensuring consistent and compliant administration of pay and benefits across the Defence Force.
- The Pay and Conditions Manual captures the Star Rank officer's access to specific workplace benefits of official travel provisions, official travel lounge memberships, designated parking and hand held devices.

Talking Points

- Pay and Conditions Manual Chapter 4 Part 6: Additional benefits for Star Rank officers captures the Senior Leadership Group member's access to specific workplace benefits of official travel, including lounge memberships, designated parking, and hand held devices.
- As at 1 April 2026, these Star Rank officer entitlements comprise:
 - **Official travel provisions for Senior Leadership Group travel:** Travel must be undertaken by the most efficient, effective, economical and ethical means. All travel requests are reviewed by the appropriate delegate to ensure there is a genuine business need, the best fare of the day is selected, and the requirements of Defence's Official Travel Policy are met. Defence members are not to accept offers by airlines to upgrade their class of travel.
 - **Business class travel:** Business class travel is not supported from Canberra to Sydney or Melbourne. Business class travel is available for Star Rank officers or Service Warrant Officers when travelling on Defence business if:
 - : they are accompanying a Minister, senior Government official or foreign delegation and collaborative work is required during the flight;
 - : the flight is part of a connecting flight for a longer domestic journey and the total journey is greater than 90 minutes;
 - : they have a recognised medical condition, which precludes them from travelling in economy class; and/or
 - : the scheduled flight time is longer than 90 minutes at the time of booking.
 - **Spouse accompanied travel:** Spouse accompanied travel is for representational purposes and is defined as travel undertaken at Commonwealth expense by a spouse who will perform a representational role while accompanying a Defence Official during Official Travel.

- : Approval for Commonwealth-funded travel is only considered in the most compelling and exceptional circumstances or where serious cultural offence can be reasonably anticipated. The threshold for compelling and exceptional circumstances is very high and must be demonstrably in the interests of the Commonwealth.
- : For all statutory appointments, the Minister for Defence is the approving authority for Commonwealth-funded spouse or partner accompanied travel.
- : For all other Defence staff, the Secretary or Chief of the Defence Force is the approving authority.
- : Spouse or partner accompanied travel (or hosting) not at the Commonwealth's expense is at the discretion of the participating officer's immediate supervisor (independent of whether the role is a statutory appointment). Instances where a host country provides funding for spouses or partners must comply with gifts, benefits, and sponsorship policies.
- **Official Travel Lounge Memberships:** Senior Leadership Group members are entitled to airline lounge memberships through their workplace agreements. These memberships are not extended to partners, and are paid by the individual's Group or Service using Defence-issued travel or purchasing card. Qantas and Virgin Australia offer complimentary access to their lounge facilities for business class fares. Defence members are not to solicit gifts of lounge memberships from airlines.
- **Tied Residences:** Under the Defence Determination 2016/19, Conditions of Service, Division 6 (7.6.24) the following appointments must live in the Service residence assigned to their position:
 - : Chief of the Defence Force
 - : Vice Chief of the Defence Force
 - : Chief of Navy
 - : Chief of Army
 - : Chief of Air Force
 - : Commander Australian Fleet
 - : Land Commander
 - : Air Commander, and
 - : Chief of Joint Operations
- Under Division 6 (7.6.25) the Chief of the Defence Force may require and assign a specific Service residence on or near a Defence establishment, as long as the member fulfils one of the following criteria:
 - : They attend outside normal hours to perform duty essential to the working of the establishment. The extra duty happens often and without notice. The member's duty roster is so frequent that it often disrupts their domestic life.

- : The member is responsible for the safety of life or property at the establishment.
- : The member is responsible for the important health or welfare matters at the establishment.
- : The location is remote and a Service residence is provided for a member posted there.
- The Chief of the Defence has assigned other Service residences to specific positions.
- For any ADF member that occupies a Service residence, including tied residences, a rental contribution is made.
- **Designated Parking Space or Permit:** Full-time Senior Leadership Group members are eligible for a parking space at or near their service location, to which the member may be required to make a contribution. At Russell, Campbell Park, ANZAC Park West, Ben Chifley Building, Brindabella Business Park or Fairbairn (all within the Australian Capital Territory), Senior Leadership Group members are allocated a designated parking bay or access to a secure parking lot tied to their position.
- **Hand Held Devices:** Defence will meet the cost of providing and operating a telephone or device, including limited personal use. A member of the Reserves may be eligible if they have a minimum expected liability to serve 100 days per year, or the members' Commander or manager approves that the benefit be made available, with regard to the duties that the member is required to perform.
- **Transition assistance and support programs:** Star Rank officers transitioning from full-time ADF service receive transition assistance funding to assist in securing follow-on employment or to support meaningful community engagement. These provisions are in line with the Joint Transition Authority Manual and comprise financial advice, transition training support and outplacement support.
- **Merit-based learning and development opportunities:** Star Rank officers are offered merit based learning and development opportunities in Australia and overseas. Nominations for these opportunities are provided at the Star Planning Meeting for consideration and selection. These courses are designed to help develop Star Rank officers' leadership and executive function.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 20 March 2026, Charles Chadwick, The Daily Telegraph, [Taxpayers billed \\$2 million for public servants to study at Harvard and Oxford](#)

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PDR No: SB26-000344

Last updated: 21 April 2026

Key witnesses: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN; Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

Division: Directorate of Senior Officer Management	
PDR No: SB26-000344	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Executive Officer Senior Officer Management – ADF Defence People Group Ph: s47E(d) Date: 7 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: s47E(d) Deputy Director Senior Officer Management – ADF Defence People Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026
Cleared by 3 Star: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC Chief of Personnel Defence People Group Date: 15 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

Lead: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN, Chief of the Defence Force to lead on information related to the ADF.

Ms Meghan Quinn PSM, Secretary of Defence to lead on information related to the Secretary.

Supporting: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC, Chief of Personnel

Context: On 18 May 2026, Ms Meghan Quinn PSM, commenced her statutory appointment as Secretary of the Department of Defence. The statutory appointments of Chief of the Defence Force, Chief of Navy and Chief of Army expire in early July 2026.

Key Messages

- On 28 April 2026, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, announced the Government would recommend to the Governor-General that Ms Meghan Quinn PSM be appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Defence. Ms Quinn's term commenced on 18 May 2026 for a five-year period.
- On 13 April 2026, the Government recommended to Her Excellency, the Governor-General, a number of senior command changes within the ADF. Subject to the Governor-General's consideration and approval, these changes will take effect from July 2026.
- The Government recommended;
 - Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN to be appointed as the Chief of the Defence Force;
 - Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, to be appointed as the new Chief of Army; and
 - Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley AM CSC RAN to be appointed on promotion as the Chief of Navy.

Talking Points**Secretary of Defence**

- The appointment of Mr Greg Moriarty AO as Secretary of the Department of Defence was due to conclude on 3 September 2027.
- On 25 January 2026, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, announced the government would recommend to the Governor-General that Mr Greg Moriarty AO be Australia's next Ambassador to the United States. Mr Moriarty concluded his role as Secretary of the Department of Defence on 19 April 2026 to take up this new role.
- Under section 58(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, the Secretary of Defence is appointed by the Governor-General, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.

- Pursuant to section 58(6) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, before recommending to the Governor-General that a person be appointed as the Secretary of a Department, the Prime Minister must have received a report about the appointment from the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department.
- On 28 April 2026, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, announced the government would recommend to the Governor-General that Ms Meghan Quinn PSM be appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Defence. Ms Quinn's term commenced on 18 May 2026 for a five-year period.
- Ms Quinn has a distinguished career as a senior leader in the Australian Public Service and was previously the Secretary of the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
- Ms Quinn has advised Government on a wide range of Australian and international policy matters. She previously held several Deputy Secretary roles at the Department of the Treasury and was head of the Secretariat for the 'Australia in the Asian Century White Paper' at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Ms Quinn is the first woman to substantively hold the position of Secretary of the Department of Defence.

Chief of the Defence Force, Chief of Navy and Chief of Army

- The appointment of Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral David Johnston AC RAN, is due to expire on 9 July 2026. The appointments of Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, and Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC, are due to expire on 7 and 8 July 2026 respectively.
- Pursuant to subsection 7(3) of the *Defence Regulation 2016*, before the Governor-General appoints a Service Chief, the Minister for Defence must take into account recommendations made by the Chief of the Defence Force.
- Should a statutory officer be appointed to another statutory office before their original appointment is due to expire, such as a Service Chief being appointed to Chief of the Defence Force, the Governor-General, by notice in writing pursuant to subsection 10(1) of the *Defence Regulation 2016*, is required to terminate the statutory officer's original appointment at the same time as appointing them to their new role.
- The Federal Executive Council Handbook requires ministers to write to the Prime Minister seeking his or, at his discretion, Cabinet's approval of significant appointments before appointment documents are presented to the Federal Executive Council.
- The Government has recommended to the Governor-General;
 - Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN to be appointed as the Chief of the Defence Force;
 - : Vice Admiral Hammond has had a distinguished career, spanning 40 years, in the Royal Australian Navy serving in frigates, and extensively in and later commanding submarines and the Australian Fleet. Appointed the Chief of Navy in 2022, Vice Admiral Hammond will continue to bring valuable insight to the role of the Chief of the Defence Force – including towards Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear powered submarines through AUKUS, and the delivery of Navy's future surface combatant fleet.

- Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, to be appointed as the new Chief of Army; and
 - : Lieutenant General Coyle enlisted as a soldier in the Army Reserves in 1987, Lieutenant General Coyle has worked at the tactical, operational and strategic levels and in command roles, including Head Information Warfare, Commander Forces Command, Commander Joint Task Force 633, Commander 6th Brigade, Commander Task Group Afghanistan and Commanding Officer 17th Signal Regiment. Lieutenant General Coyle will be the first woman in our nation's history to command the Australian Army.
- Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley AM CSC RAN to be appointed on promotion as the Chief of Navy.
 - : Rear Admiral Buckley has served in Oberon and Collins class submarines, including commanding HMAS Collins and commanding the Submarine Force. He was the Head of Nuclear Submarine Capability at the Australian Submarine Agency, before becoming Deputy Chief of Navy in January 2025. This experience places Rear Admiral Buckley in a unique position to lead the Royal Australian Navy and its people over the coming years as it continues its vital contributions to the peace, safety and stability of the Indo Pacific region.
- The next Chief of Joint Capabilities will be appointed in due course.

National Armaments Director

- Once fully established on 1 July 2027, the new Defence Delivery Agency will integrate three existing Defence capability delivery groups and elevate the professionalism and strategic focus of Defence capability acquisition and sustainment.
- The Defence Delivery Agency will be led by the National Armaments Director, who will be selected and appointed by the Government at the appropriate time.
- As an interim step towards the creation of the Defence Delivery Agency, from 1 July 2026, Defence will bring together three current Groups, the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group, the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, and the Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group, into a single organisational structure. Leadership arrangements from 1 July 2026 will be put in place in due course.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
9 July 2026	Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN will be promoted to Admiral for appointment as the Chief of the Defence Force.
9 July 2026	Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral David Johnston AC RAN appointment cease date.
8 July 2026	Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM will be appointed to Chief of Army.
8 July 2026	Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC appointment cease date.

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PDR No: SB26-000343

Last updated: 30 April 2026

Key witnesses: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN; Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

7 July 2026	Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley AM CSC RAN will be promoted to Vice Admiral for appointment as Chief of Navy.
7 July 2026	Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN appointment cease date.
18 May 2026	Ms Meghan Quinn PSM commenced her appointment as the Secretary of the Department of Defence.
28 April 2026	The Prime Minister announced that the government would recommend to the Governor-General that Ms Meghan Quinn PSM be appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Defence
19 April 2026	Secretary of the Department of Defence, Mr Greg Moriarty AO concluded his appointment.
13 April 2026	The Prime Minister announced the appointment of the incoming Chief of the Defence, Chief of Navy and Chief of Army.
25 January 2026	The Prime Minister announced that the Government would recommend to the Governor-General that Mr Greg Moriarty AO be Australia's next Ambassador to the United States of America.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
Nil			

Relevant Media Reporting

- 8 April 2026, Eleanor Campbell, *The Canberra Times*, '[Search underway for new Defence agency boss.](#)'
- 16 February 2026, Ben Packham, *The Australian*, '[Senior female army officer in line for top Defence leadership role.](#)'
- Australian media has reported extensively on the Prime Minister's media release on Australia's next Ambassador to the United States.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000343

Last updated: 30 April 2026

Key witnesses: Admiral David Johnston AC RAN; Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC

Division: Defence People Group	
PDR No: SB26-000343	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Executive Officer Senior Officer Management – ADF Defence People Group Ph: s47E(d) Date: 7 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: s47E(d) Director Senior Officer Management – ADF Defence People Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Lieutenant General Natasha Fox AO CSC Chief of Personnel Defence People Group Justine Greig PSM Deputy Secretary Defence People Defence People Group Date: 30 April 2026 Date: 30 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - CONDUCT AFTER CAPTURE/ RESISTANCE TO INTERROGATION

Lead: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Chief of Joint Capabilities.

Context: Conduct After Capture training, previously known as Resistance to Interrogation training, is a Defence training program designed to prepare ADF personnel to understand the rigours of captivity and exploitation while enabling them to survive a capture situation. The training is one of Defence's most closely reviewed and supervised activities.

Key Messages

- Defence remains committed to continually reviewing and improving Conduct After Capture training to ensure it is delivered safely, appropriately, and in a way that supports the wellbeing of all personnel and the training objectives.
- Conduct After Capture training is continually improved based on the feedback from trainees and safety staff (including neutral observers and ADF psychologists) at the completion of each activity. The training is aligned with training delivered by our closest coalition partners.
- The training is voluntary and participants retain the right to withdraw from training or seek support at any time.
- In April 2016, the Conduct After Capture training framework was legally reviewed by a senior barrister, as an ADF reserve legal officer. The Australian Government Solicitor reviewed the advice and concurred with the initial review, that the training was compliant with Australian domestic law and applicable international legal obligations at that time.
- Defence has implemented all recommendations related to Conduct After Capture training by the 2017 Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee.

Talking Points

The Nature of Conduct After Capture

- Conduct After Capture training is the 'resistance' element of the ADF survival, evasion, resistance and escape continuum. Conduct After Capture training details how ADF personnel, if captured or detained, are to behave, resist exploitation and survive in captivity.
- Conduct After Capture has been designed for members who are assessed as being at high-risk of isolation and capture or detention in warlike situations.
- The training is voluntary and participants retain the right to withdraw from training or seek medical and/or psychological support at any time.
- Current protocols require all participants to receive a pre-activity brief outlining the training methods to enable them to make an informed decision about participating in the training. Participants sign a volunteer declaration form, and their volunteer status is individually affirmed immediately prior to the commencement of training.

The Structure of Conduct After Capture Training

- Since 2006, there are three levels of voluntary training available:
 - **Level A** – An introductory computer based package that provides a basic awareness of the ADF Conduct After Capture policy
 - **Level B** – A one-day theory workshop covering Introduction to Conduct After Capture, Hostage Survival, Foreign Government Detention, Military Exploitation, Common Survival Strategies and Level C activity brief and
 - **Level C** – Practical immersion training for identified ‘prone-to-capture’ personnel such as special forces personnel. The activity includes the three Conduct After Capture scenarios of Foreign Government Detention, Hostage Survival and Military Exploitation.

Conduct After Capture and Resistance Trainers

- The Defence Force School of Intelligence is the only unit authorised to deliver Conduct After Capture training.
- Only qualified ADF Resistance Trainers are authorised to deliver training and that trainer qualification is awarded following a suitability assessment, including psychological testing, as well as the successful completion of a five week Resistance Trainer course which covers all aspects of Conduct After Capture training. Resistance Trainers are not permitted to support other intelligence training activities, such as interrogation training.

Previous reviews and Inquiries

- In April 2016, the Conduct After Capture training framework was legally reviewed by a Senior Counsel as an ADF reserve officer. The Australian Government Solicitor then reviewed the advice and concurred with Senior Counsel, that the training was compliant with Australian domestic law and applicable international legal obligations at the time.
- In November 2016, Senator Jacqui Lambie called for a Senate Standing Committee inquiry into the Operation of the ADF resistance to interrogation training (known as Conduct After Capture). On 10 November 2016, the Senate referred the matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 March 2017. Subsequently, the Senate Standing Committee provided a number of recommendations related to Conduct After Capture training.
- In February 2023, Comcare requested documents relating to the information provided to participants of Conduct After Capture training.
 - On 15 May 2023, Comcare informed Defence they had finalised their inquiry into Conduct After Capture training and determined the training does not contravene the Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations.
- In 2023, Conduct After Capture training was subject to inquiry by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Final Report made no findings or recommendations regarding Conduct After Capture training.

- . In 2023, the 2016 advice provided by Senior Counsel was reviewed by the Australian Government Solicitor again to ensure the advice was accurate following changes to legislation and Commonwealth laws since the 2016 review by Senior Counsel. The advice was found to be still relevant and accurate following the amendments.

Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme (2014-2023) and Findings of Ombudsman

- . The Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme is administered by the Commonwealth Ombudsman in its capacity as the Defence Force Ombudsman. The Defence Force Ombudsman's function provides an independent and confidential mechanism to report abuse for those who felt unable to access Defence's internal reporting mechanisms.
- . The Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme was limited to abuse that occurred on or before 30 June 2014, and final lodgement of completed applications closed on 30 June 2023. Under the Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme, reparation payments of up to \$50,000 could be made to reportees.
- . Over the life of the Defence abuse reporting function (which closed on 30 June 2023), the Defence Force Ombudsman received 4,966 reports of abuse, with 65 of those complaints concerning Conduct After Capture. The Defence Force Ombudsman concluded that in 57 of those claims, the conduct that occurred during Resistance to Interrogation and Conduct After Capture training met the highest threshold for abuse under federal regulations. 48 of the complaints were represented by Donaldson Law (Adair Donaldson) before the Defence Force Ombudsman.
- . In 47 of those 48 cases represented by Donaldson Law, the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office assessed that the burden of proof 'reasonably likely' was met under the Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme to recommend the maximum \$50,000 reparation payment.
- . All reportees who receive a reparation payment are also offered a Restorative Engagement with a senior Defence representative.
- . In February 2026, the Commonwealth Ombudsman made their assessment on the 57 Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme Conduct After Capture cases that occurred between 1976 and 2012.
- . The Ombudsman is independent of Defence. Defence is unable to comment on specific outcomes of the Ombudsman's findings.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
March 2026	During the week commencing 23 March 2026, the media published a series of reports in relation to the Commonwealth Ombudsman's investigation into complaints made by former members of the ADF who allege abuse in the context of Resistance to Interrogation / Conduct after Capture training between 1976 and 2012. Commencing with 'The Nightly' article on 24 March 2026. In total, the Ombudsman received 65 complaints under the Defence Abuse Reparation Scheme. The Ombudsman concluded that in 57 of those claims met the highest threshold for abuse under federal regulations.
February 2026	The Commonwealth Ombudsman's office finalised their assessments on the Defence Reparation Scheme cases concerning Conduct After Capture training.
3 October 2025	The Australian Government Solicitor met with the claimants' legal representative on a without prejudice basis and expressed that the Commonwealth did not consider a meaningful prospect of liability being established on the individual statement. In respect of the other statements provided, the Australian Government Solicitor advised that the Commonwealth considers the balance of the statements notified to Defence to be statute-barred.
27 May 2024	Defence Legal received a letter from Adair Donaldson of Donaldson Law, enclosing potential claimant statements, an unfiled Statement of Claim relating to one of the individual statements and a submission regarding the Australian Defence Force's Conduct After Capture.
2023	In 2023, Conduct After Capture training was the subject of inquiry by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide Final Report made no findings or recommendations regarding Conduct After Capture training.
15 May 2023	Comcare informed Defence that they had finalised their inquiry into Conduct After Capture training and determined that the training does not contravene the Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations.
23 January 2023	The Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force received a submission from a former soldier which was subsequently investigated. The Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force inquiry did not make any adverse findings into Conduct After
September 2022	Defence had implemented all 2017 Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee inquiry recommendations as agreed to by Government.
18 June 2021	Army received notification of an Australian Human Rights Complaint by a former soldier who attended Conduct After Capture Level C training in March 2019. This matter progressed to Conciliation between the former soldier and Defence on 04 July 2022, which was unsuccessful.

	The complainant subsequently initiated proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia
10 November 2016	The Senate referred the operation of the ADF resistance to interrogation training (known as Conduct After Capture) to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 27 March 2017. Subsequently, the Senate inquiry provided a number of recommendations related to Conduct After Capture training.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
27 March 2023	FOI	Documents related to Conduct After Capture Level C training. Documents refused in original decision. Applicant has sought review by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. Matter is ongoing.	Decision not yet finalised

Relevant Media Reporting

- 27 March 2026, Adair Donaldson, *The Nightly*, [‘ADAIR DONALDSON: Systemic failure, not rogue soldiers, at heart of ADF's torture training’](#)
- 27 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The West Australian* [‘Missing in Action Torture Hell’](#)
- 26 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The Nightly* [‘Marles dodges horror ADF abuse questions’](#)
- 26 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *Broome Advisor* [‘Defence Minister Richard Marles dodges key questions as ADF's resistance to interrogation abuse claims mount’](#)
- 26 March 2026, Aaron Patrick, *The West Australian* [‘Torture so brutal it was reviled in SAS ranks’](#)
- 26 March 2026, Aaron Patrick, *The West Australian* [‘Torture so brutal it was reviled in SAS ranks’](#)
- 25 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The Nightly* [‘More ADF abuse victims emerge’](#)
- 25 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The Nightly*, [‘ADF acknowledges interrogation training abuse claims in wake of Ombudsman findings as more allegations emerge’](#).
- 25 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The West Australian* [‘Tortured in the Line of Duty’](#)
- 24 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *Harvey-Waroona Reporter* [‘Mock executions, water torture and rape: ADF's depraved 'resistance to interrogation' training exposed’](#)
- 24 March 2026, Kristin Shorten, *The Nightly* [‘SAS soldiers subject to 'sadistic' torture regime’](#)
- 16 February 2023, Christopher Knaus, *The Guardian*, [‘Australian ex-soldier alleges 'sexual violence' inflicted on him during secretive course | Australian military | The Guardian’](#).
- 16 February 2023, Pat McGrath and Sarah Curnow, *ABC News*, [‘Federal Court releases documents detailing claims about controversial Defence torture-resistance training program’](#).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000341

Last updated: 01 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle

- 26 September 2022, Joey Watson and Christopher Knaus, *The Guardian*, '[Australian soldier alleges torture survival course involved simulated child rape and left him with PTSD](#)'.

Division: Joint Capabilities Group	
PDR No: SB26-000341	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Commander Joint Training Command Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 9 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Shaun Love CSC CSM Acting Deputy Chief of Joint Capabilities Joint Capabilities Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 16 April 2026
Consultation: s47E(d) Chief of Staff Australian Defence Force Headquarters Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 10 April 2026 Brigadier Matthew Campbell AM Chief of Staff Army Headquarters Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 15 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM Chief of Joint Capabilities Joint Capabilities Group Date: 01 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - ENHANCED MARITIME DOMAIN LETHALITY

Lead: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, Chief of Navy

Supporting: David Hanley, Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment

Context: The 2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program will deliver a larger and more lethal Navy as part of the integrated, focused force. Navy is responding to the direction in the 2026 National Defence Strategy by rapidly developing and delivering maritime capability priorities in line with the 2026 Integrated Investment Program. This includes accelerating delivery of an enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, long-range strike, integrated air and missile defence, and autonomous systems, while realigning workforce and sustainment funding in accordance with the Government's 2026 capability priorities

Key Messages

- Navy has made rapid progress in delivering a larger and more lethal surface combatant fleet in line with the Government's response to the Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet and the 2024 National Defence Strategy.
- Through the 2026 Integrated Investment Program, the Government is significantly increasing investment in maritime capabilities, including surface combatants, long-range strike, and integrated air and missile defence.
- A larger surface combatant fleet increases Australia's ability to contribute to deterrence operations and regional stability alongside partners.
- Australia's economic security depends on secure sea lines of communication. Navy's enhanced lethality and persistent presence underpin this access.
- Defence continues to progress sovereign development and manufacture of uncrewed and autonomous maritime systems.

Talking Points

- Since 2024, Navy has demonstrated the ability to strike land and sea targets at longer ranges following the successful first-of-class firings of the Naval Strike Missile, Standard Missile 6 and Tomahawk Land Attack Cruise Missile from our surface combatant fleet.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program set a clear direction for a larger, more lethal and more integrated Navy, with significant additional investment in maritime strike, air and missile defence, and undersea warfare.
- The finalisation of contracts for the first three general purpose frigates in April 2026 represents a major milestone in delivering the enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet outlined in the 2026 Integrated Investment Program. The first general purpose frigate will be delivered in 2029
- Navy's enhanced lethality is being delivered as part of an integrated, focused force, combining crewed surface combatants, long-range strike weapons, and uncrewed and autonomous maritime systems.
- Investment in maritime capabilities under the 2026 Integrated Investment Program strengthens deterrence, contributes to regional stability, and supports Australia's economic security through protection of sea lines of communication.

General Purpose Frigates

- In April 2026, the Albanese Government finalised contracts for Australia's first three general purpose frigates, marking a major step towards delivering a larger and more lethal surface combatant fleet. The contract finalisation was marked by the Deputy Prime Minister and Japan's Minister of Defense signing the 'Mogami Memorandum', reaffirming both Governments' commitment to successful delivery of Australia's general purpose frigates and deeper defence industry cooperation.
- Built by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the ships will be of the upgraded Japanese Mogami class frigate design, with the first scheduled to be delivered to the Royal Australian Navy in 2029.
- The Australian Government is working closely with the Japanese Government and industry to enable future upgraded Mogami class frigates to be constructed in Western Australia, subject to consolidation of the Henderson Defence Precinct, in line with the Government's commitment to continuous naval shipbuilding.
- Defence is also working with Japanese industry and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force to develop an initial capability to sustain and operate the upgraded Mogami class frigates in Australia, supported by Australian industry and workers.
- The upgraded Mogami class frigate has a range of up to 10,000 nautical miles and a 32-cell Vertical Launch System, will be equipped with surface-to-air and anti-ship missiles, crewed by approximately 92 Royal Australian Navy personnel, and capable of operating Navy's MH-60R Seahawk maritime combat helicopter.
- The decision to acquire the upgraded Mogami class frigates accords with the Government's commitment to more than double the size of Navy's surface combatant fleet, following the independent analysis of Navy's surface combatant fleet.
- In the 2026 Integrated Investment Program, the Government committed up to \$20 billion over the decade into general purpose frigates.
- Royal Australian Navy personnel have trained with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force aboard Mogami class frigates, including during transit to Australia in March for Exercise KAKADU, strengthening interoperability and the longstanding defence relationship between Australia and Japan.

Surface Fleet Lethality

- In response to the Defence Strategic Review, released on 24 April 2023, the Government agreed to conduct an Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet to ensure its size, structure and composition complement the capabilities provided by the forthcoming conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.
- Released on 20 February 2024, the Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet agreed with the Defence Strategic Review's assessment that an enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet is required to provide increased strike, air defence, presence operations and undersea warfare to address the breadth of maritime missions.
- The Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet was led by retired United States Navy Vice Admiral William Hilarides and assisted by the former Secretary of the Department of Finance, Ms Rosemary Huxtable AO PSM, and former Commander of the Australian Fleet, Vice Admiral Stuart Mayer AO CSC and Bar.

- The Strategic Advisor was Jim McDowell, who was the Deputy Secretary of the Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group from 31 July 2023 to 11 April 2025.
- The enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet will comprise of:
 - three Hobart Class destroyers with upgraded strike capabilities;
 - six Hunter Class frigates to boost Navy's undersea warfare and strike capabilities;
 - 11 general purpose frigates to provide maritime and land strike, air defence and force protection capabilities and replace the ageing Anzac Class frigates; and
 - six large optionally crewed surface vessels to boost Navy's long-range strike capacity.
- The enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet will deliver more naval power sooner when compared to the previous surface combatant plan.
- The enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet boosts Navy's multi-domain strike, integrated air and missile defence and undersea warfare capabilities.
- Construction commenced on the first Hunter Class frigate on 21 June 2024. The first Hunter Class frigate will be delivered to the Royal Australian Navy service in 2032.
- Upgrades to the Hobart Class destroyer have commenced, which will add the Aegis Baseline 9 Combat System.
- HMAS *Anzac*, the first of class, was decommissioned on 18 May 2024 after 28 years of service. Navy will provide advice to Government on the decommissioning of the remaining Anzac Class frigates in due course.

Uncrewed Maritime Warfare Vehicles

- Uncrewed Systems are increasingly vital for modern warfare due to their ability to support a range of military operations. While the ADF currently operates a very broad range of uncrewed platforms for specific purposes, the Government is making further investments in emerging technologies to provide asymmetric capability advantage, including highly advanced, extremely capable autonomous systems able to operate and survive in contested warfighting environments.
- Defence is investing in three Australian-designed and manufactured uncrewed maritime warfare vehicles. These systems will be optimised for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike, and complement Navy's surface combatants and conventionally-armed nuclear powered submarines.
- The performance characteristics of these vehicles, such as range and depth, are classified to maintain an advantage over a potential adversary's ability to exploit them. Likewise, the payload effectors and sensors carried by these platforms are also classified. The number of payload types will continue to grow over time to increase the types of missions able to be performed by the platforms and to take advantage of emerging technology, to counter evolving threats.
- The three vehicles are the:
 - Anduril Australia Ghost Shark Extra-Large Autonomous Underwater Vehicles;
 - Ocius Bluebottle Uncrewed Surface Vessels; and
 - C2 Robotics Speartooth Large Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles.
- Australia's geographic disposition and operating environment necessitate larger, longer range and more survivable autonomous platforms than those seen in the maritime domain in Europe.

- Defence has made progress in the sovereign development and manufacture of uncrewed autonomous systems. Importantly, this is an example of Defence's evolving focus on industry partnership to accelerate the development of sovereign technologies through prototypes that can be transitioned to Defence capability to meet our strategic circumstances.
- As a result of Defence's collaboration with industry partners, the Australian-made Ghost Shark prototypes have successfully demonstrated their mission readiness against Navy performance parameters. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry officially announced the award of a \$1.7 billion contract to Anduril Australia on 10 September 2025. This contract will develop, deliver, and maintain a fleet of dozens of Ghost Shark XL-AUVs.
- On 11 March 2026, the Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, announced the Australian Government is investing up to \$176 million in the Australian-designed and built Bluebottle uncrewed surface vessel capability, delivering an overall fleet of 55 vessels to boost long-range maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance across Australia's vast maritime domain.
- In line with the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program emphasis on autonomous systems, further work is being undertaken to develop options for future investments, including Speartooth large uncrewed underwater vehicle.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
18 April 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, announced the contract signature for the first three general purpose frigates.
16 April 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, announced the release of the 2026 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program.
11 March 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP, and the Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP announced that the Albanese Government invests \$176 million in new fleet of Australian-made uncrewed vessels.
11 September 2025	Anduril Australia opened a new Ghost Shark manufacturing facility in NSW
10 September 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Richard Marles MP and the Minister for Defence Industry announced the Ghost Shark Contract at Garden Island Navy Base.
26 August 2025	Co-signing of the Ghost Shark Contract by CoA and Anduril Australia
26 August 2025	Defence and Anduril Australia entered into a five-year, \$1.7 billion contract for the acquisition of Ghost Shark

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PDR No: SB26-000339

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley

Date	Event
5 August 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister announced the upgraded Mogami class frigate as the preferred platform for the Navy's new general purpose frigates.
01 July 2025	Defence and Ocius extended the contract for provision of Bluebottle ISR as a service to Operation RESOLUTE for another 12 months
30 June 2025	Ghost Shark Prototypes Bravo 1 and Bravo 2 complete an intense four-week period of trials and Mission Ready Prototype demonstrations in Jervis Bay and the Bass Strait
24 April 2025	Ocius opened a new purpose-built Bluebottle manufacturing and operations facility in Alexandria, NSW
10 December 2024	In a joint media release, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the successful firing of Tomahawk cruise missile.
25 November 2024	In a joint media release, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the two preferred shipbuilders, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), to progress designs for Australia's future general purpose frigates.
10 August 2024	The Minister for Defence Industry announced Navy conducting firing of Standard Missile 6 as part of Government push to provide ADF with enhanced capabilities.
22 July 2024	The Minister for Defence Industry announced Navy conducted successful firing of Naval Strike Missile.
21 June 2024	In a joint media release, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the first step in boosting Navy's undersea warfare and strike capability
18 May 2024	Defence media released the following: HMAS Anzac the first of her class, was decommissioned after 28 years of service.
20 February 2024	In a joint media release, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the expansion of Defence's industrial base to deliver Navy's enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
1 December 2025	FOI	Documents between Defence, Ministerial Offices and Anduril related to Ghost Shark testing, feedback or milestones. Matter active as at 16 April 2026.	Decision not yet finalised.
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 242, Ghost Shark and Ghost Bat. Senator Cash, concept of operations and ownerships of	Tabled.

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PDR No: S826-000339

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley

		intellectual property for Ghost Shark and Ghost Bat.	
11 August 2025	FOI	Documents regarding intellectual property rights of Ghost Shark/Ghost Bat. Full refusal decision issued 20 February 2026.	Decision finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 22 April 2026, *Strategic Analysis Australia* [reports](#) the Government is leaving our military badly under-equipped in the drone era.
- 22 April 2026, the Interpreter [reports](#) Maritime gaps remain in Australia's defence
- 22 April 2026, *Defence Here*, [reported](#) Rolls-Royce MT30 selected to power Australia's future Mogami-class frigates
- 19 April 2026, Sky news interview with the **Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP** around autonomous systems.
- 18 April 2026, [MarketScreener](#) reported the NEC contract signature for equipment for the general purpose frigate.
- 18 April 2026, [various news outlets](#) reported the contract signing between Australia and Japan for the general purpose frigates.
- 17 April 2026, *The National Tribune* [reports](#) on the Japan's Minister of Defense, Koizumi Shinjiro, visit to Australia
- 14 April 2026, [various news outlet](#) mentioned Ghost Shark and Bluebottle as part of the autonomous systems investment in the 2026 Integrated Investment Program.
- 19 March 2026, Tom Lowrey, *ABC News*, '[Australia isn't sending a warship to the Persian Gulf. But if the government wanted to, is there one to send?](#)'

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000339

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley

Division: Navy Capability	
PDR No: SB26-000339	
Prepared by: Commodore Edward Seymour CSC RAN Director General Maritime Surface and Above Water Combat Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 23 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Commodore Ashley Papp CSC RAN Acting Head Navy Capability Navy Capability Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 23 April 2026
Consultation: Sheryl Lutz First Assistant Secretary Major Surface Combatants & Combat Systems Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group Date: 09 April 2026	
Leonie Neiberding Assistant Secretary Finance - Navy Defence Finance Group Date: 09 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley AM CSC Acting Chief of Navy Date: 12 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - NAVAL SHIPBUILDING AND SUSTAINMENT

Leads: David Hanley, Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group; and Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group.

Supporting: Mr John Chandler, First Assistant Secretary Submarines (CNSS and NSSP); Luke Parsons, First Assistant Secretary Henderson Defence Precinct (Henderson); Commodore Peter Mingay, Acting Head Patrol Boats and Specialist Ships (SSA); and Pat Sowry, First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure (Submarine Rotational Force-West infrastructure).

Context: Released on 20 December 2024, the updated Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Plan outlines the Government's approach to delivering maritime capability and uplifting the Australian maritime industrial base.

Key Messages

- The maritime capability projects and coordinated industrial uplift set out in the 2024 Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Plan (the Plan) underpin the Government's approach to National Defence.
- The Plan outlines the approach to delivering maritime capability and targeted uplift of the maritime industrial base through continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment.
- The Plan includes a 30-year forecast of anticipated naval shipbuilding and sustainment activities at principal shipyards and regional maintenance centres.
- Defence is working with Commonwealth departments, the Western Australian Government and industry to manage the complex infrastructure interdependencies in South-West Perth required to support the AUKUS Pillar 1 Optimal Pathway and continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment.

Talking Points

Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Plan

- Australia's sovereign industrial capability is a key driver of our ability to withstand, endure and recover from disruptions. It allows us to exert sovereign control of our maritime assets and capability effects.
- The 2026 IIP sets out an investment of \$170–\$222 billion over the next decade in the acquisition and upgrade of maritime capability.
- The Plan encompasses the acquisition and sustainment of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines, enhanced lethality surface combatants, Army landing craft and a number of other major construction and upgrade projects.
- The Plan details the construction or upgrade of 79 vessels over a 30-year period. Industrial uplift will be supported through the implementation of the Industrial Cornerstone initiatives:
 - Maritime Workforce and Skills Council;

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PDR No: SB26-000338

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

- Workforce Planning and Intelligence Service;
 - Shipbuilding Pathways Program;
 - Henderson Defence Precinct;
 - National Maritime Infrastructure Master Plan;
 - Sea Systems Implementation Program; and
 - Maritime Security Assurance Program.
- The program of work contained within the Plan will support over 8,500 direct jobs in naval shipbuilding and sustainment by 2030, plus 20,000 direct jobs in support of the nuclear-powered submarine program over the next 30 years.

Maritime Workforce and Skills Council

- The Maritime Workforce and Skills Council brings together industry, state governments and workers to progress workforce planning to support Australia's continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment enterprise.
- Three meetings have been held to date, with the most recent taking place on 17 March 2026 in Canberra.

Henderson Defence Precinct

- The Henderson precinct plays a critical role in delivering continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment of the surface fleet and Collins class submarines, and will also support future sustainment of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.
- On 16 October 2024, the Government committed an initial \$127 million over three years to progress planning, consultation, preliminary design and feasibility studies, for critical infrastructure enabling works.
- This work is underway and will progress well into 2026. Specifically, Defence:
 - has completed preliminary feasibility studies to understand options for siting of the various Defence shipbuilding and sustainment requirements.
 - has completed a market sounding activity to investigate potential commercial and operating models.
 - has awarded the Design Services Consultancy contract to Bechtel Infrastructure (Australia) Pty Ltd (Bechtel), who will work with stakeholders to develop a 10% Master Plan and Feasibility Report for the precinct.
 - Is finalising the Site Characterisation contract award. The successful tenderer will undertake a range of site characterisation studies and analyses.
 - is working with the WA Government to plan and coordinate activities at the Precinct, with the aim of ensuring continuity of service for existing industry activities.
 - is implementing an engagement plan to ensure industry and the community are informed and consulted, with the support and involvement of the WA Government, Local Government, industry and community.
- On 14 September 2025, the Government announced a further \$12 billion over 10 years towards delivering the Henderson Defence Precinct, building on the initial commitment of \$127 million.
- This investment will help enable:

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Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

- the construction of surface vessels, starting with Army's Landing Craft and the future domestic build of Australia's General Purpose Frigates;
- facilities to support the sustainment of Australia's surface combatant vessels;
- a contingency docking capability for Australia's future conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet; and
- depot-level maintenance, including graving docks.

Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement

- On 5 August 2025, the Government announced the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between Defence and Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd (Austal Defence Australia), providing the framework for delivery of a steady pipeline.
- The Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement will commence with Pilot Programs consisting of Landing Craft Medium and Landing Craft Heavy in order to enable the capability uplift required for the Strategic Shipbuilder to deliver larger and more complex shipbuilding projects.
- This represents a shift to a new operating model of managing maritime acquisition programs, from the previous project-by-project procurement process to a more strategic and programmatic approach over the long term.
- The initial term for the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement is until 31 December 2032.

Submarine Rotational Force – West Infrastructure

- Submarine Rotational Force–West), the first phase of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway, will establish a rotational United Kingdom and United States submarine force at HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia from 2027.
- Approximately \$8 billion will be invested over the next decade at HMAS *Stirling*, as identified in the in the 2026 IIP.
- The Government will invest around \$2.3 billion to upgrade and enhance HMAS *Stirling* to enable the safe and secure Initial Operating Support of the Submarine Rotational Force–West Priority Works from 2027.
- Completed Infrastructure work, work underway or planned to commence through mid-2026, includes:
 - Base entry upgrades (complete);
 - living-in accommodation at HMAS *Stirling* (complete);
 - training centre (under construction);
 - Emergency Preparedness and Response Complex (under construction);
 - non-regulated facilities for logistics, and working accommodation (under construction);
 - regulated facilities for the safe mooring of nuclear powered submarines (under construction); and
 - regulated facilities for the management of very low to low radiological waste – the Controlled Industrial Facility (preliminary works have commenced).
- Various work packages have received approvals and licences from the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the

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Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

Environment and Water and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.

- Community engagement occurred as part of the approvals processes and will continue to occur as planning progresses.
- Defence continues to work with the Australian Submarine Agency and the Western Australian Government to ensure industry and the community remain informed through a range of regular community and local government engagement activities.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
19 April 2026	The Government announced the delivery of the final Guardian class Patrol Boat to the Republic of Maldives as part of the Defence Cooperation Program. It marks the 24 th and final ship built by Austal Ships Pty Ltd delivered to Australia's partner nations.
18 April 2026	The Government announced the signing on a contract to deliver Australia's first three general purpose frigates.
8 March 2026	The Government announced the appointment of Bechtel Infrastructure Australia as the design services consultancy to undertake master planning for the Henderson Defence Precinct.
20 February 2026	The Government announced awarding of the Landing Craft Medium Design and Build and Landing Craft Heavy Build Tasking Statements under the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between the Commonwealth and Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd.
20 February 2026	The Landing Craft Heavy Build Tasking Statement under the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between the Commonwealth and Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd was executed.
18 December 2025	The Landing Craft Medium Design and Build Tasking Statement under the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between the Commonwealth and Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd was executed.
14 September 2025	The Government announced \$12 billion towards delivering a Defence Precinct at Henderson to deliver continuous naval shipbuilding and AUKUS in Western Australia.
28 August 2025	The Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between the Commonwealth and Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd was executed.
21 August 2025	Defence published the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), satisfying approval conditions 6-8 of the EPBC Act approval.
5 August 2025	The Government announced a Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement with Austal Defence Shipbuilding Australia Pty Ltd.

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PDR No: 5826-000338

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

17 March 2025	The Government announced the commencement of the Defence Industry Pathways Program and the Shipbuilding Employment Pathways pilot in South Australia.
20 December 2024	The Government announced the release of the 2024 Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Plan.
16 October 2024	The Government announced plans to establish a consolidated Commonwealth-owned Defence Precinct at Western Australia's Henderson shipyard.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
11 December 2025	QoN	No. 982, Landing craft Heavy infrastructure. Senator Michaelia Cash (Senator for Western Australia) asked about decisions relating to infrastructure of near-term projects such as Landing Craft Heavy.	Tabled.
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 983, Henderson Defence Precinct definition and schedule. Senator Michaelia Cash (Senator for Western Australia) asked about the Western Australian Government's involvement in the precinct's boundaries and definition, and if the US or UK have expressed concerns over the project's timelines.	Tabled.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 880, Henderson funding, nuclear licensing, and local jobs. Senator David Shoebridge (Senator for NSW) asked for a breakdown of the \$12 billion funding, whether Henderson holds a nuclear license, and evidence that the precinct will create jobs.	Tabled.
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 249, Henderson Defence Precinct definition and schedule. Senator Michaelia Cash (Senator for Western Australia) asked about the Western Australian Government's involvement in the precinct's boundaries and definition, and if the US or UK have expressed concerns over the project's timelines.	Tabled.

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PDR No: SB26-000338

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

Relevant Media Reporting

- 20 February 2026, Andrew Greene, The West Australian, [\\$5B WIN FOR WA SHIPYARD](#).
- 28 December 2025, Rhiannon Shine, ABC News, [Rockingham's leap to major AUKUS defence hub leaves some locals trepidatious](#).
- 4 November 2025, Nigel Pittaway, The Australian, [\\$12bn spend on Henderson hub plan remains a mystery](#).
- 24 September 2025, Andrew Greene, The West Australian, [Marles apart on Henderson's blurred lines](#).
- 27 September 2025, Andrew Greene, The West Australian, [Fears over WA's Preparedness for Multibillion-Dollar Defence Project](#).
- 28 August 2025, Naval News, [Austal and Australia sign strategic shipbuilding agreement](#).
- 6 August 2025, Christopher Dore, The Western Australian, [Japan is ready, but will Henderson be?](#)
- 13 November 2024, Jake Dietsch, The West Australian, [Austal predicts huge workforce growth as it readies for continuous shipbuilding program](#).

Division: Submarines and Continuous Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment	
PDR No: SB26-000338	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary, Continuous Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Branch Ph: s22 Date: 1 April 2024	Cleared by Division Head: John Chandler First Assistant Secretary Submarines & Continuous Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Ph: s22 Date: 8 April 2026
Prepared by: Helen Loundes Assistant Secretary Maritime Infrastructure and Integration Ph: s22 Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Pat Sowry First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure Ph: s22 Date: 9 April 2026
Consultation: RADM Stephen Hughes, Head Navy Capability, Navy Ms Mikaela James, Acting Head Policy Strategy and Engagement, Australian Submarine Agency	

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000338

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: David Hanley, Celia Perkins, John Chandler, Sheryl Lutz, CDRE Peter Mingay, Pat Sowry

Cleared by Deputy Secretary:

David Hanley
Deputy Secretary
Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment

Date: 13 April 2026

Cleared by Deputy Secretary:

Pat Sowry
Acting Deputy Secretary
Security and Estate

Date: 9 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - HUNTER CLASS FRIGATE

Lead: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, Chief of Navy.

Supporting: David Hanley, Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group.

Context: The 2024 National Defence Strategy directed the enhancement of Navy's strike and undersea warfare capabilities through the delivery of six Hunter Class frigates under the SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate project.

Key Messages

- The SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project will deliver six Hunter Class frigates to a single configuration baseline.
- Optimised for anti-submarine warfare, the Hunter Class frigate is based on the BAE Systems Type 26 Global Combat Ship design and will be modified to meet Australian requirements.
- Approved scope is for design and construction of the first three vessels in Osborne, South Australia including facilities, infrastructure and industry mobilisation.
- Official construction of the first vessel, NUSHIP *Hunter* commenced on 21 June 2024, with 50 out of 78 units currently under construction.
- The first ship is expected to achieve Vessel Acceptance Date in 2032.

Talking Points**Strategic Need**

- The Hunter Class frigate was selected as it best suited Australia's requirements for a superior anti-submarine warfare capability. The capability met the mandated requirement to incorporate Australian combat systems, including the US Aegis Combat System, the Australian designed and manufactured CEA Technologies Phased Array Radar and the systems needed to support the Australian inventory of guided weapons and the ability to operate the MH 60R Seahawk Romeo anti-submarine helicopter.
- The acquisition of the Hunter Class frigate is a foundational project for continuous naval shipbuilding, a key part of the Government's planned expenditure on naval shipbuilding and maritime capability and contributes to the ongoing capability of Defence.
- In February 2024, following the Independent Analysis of Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet, the Government committed to the construction of six Hunter Class frigates of the same configuration, in two batches of three.
- In June 2024, the Government approved construction of the first three Hunter Class frigates to form part of Navy Tier 1 Surface Combatants.
- Construction formally commenced on 21 June 2024, at a steel cutting event at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia. Currently 50 out of 78 units are under construction.
- The SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project is being managed through relationships with industry and a close partnership with the United Kingdom.

- In September 2025, Norway announced the purchase of at least five T26 from the United Kingdom. Norway's request to join the Global Combat Ship User Group has been agreed by Australia, Canada, and the UK.

Continuous Naval Shipbuilding

- The 2024 National Defence Strategy confirmed the importance of naval shipbuilding as a sovereign industrial capability. The 2024 Defence Industry Development Strategy further emphasised the role of continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment in the uplift of sovereign defence industrial capability, which is vital for developing higher levels of military preparedness and self-reliance.
- The Hunter Class frigate is a foundational project for continuous naval shipbuilding and sustainment. It will deliver an established industrial base, including combat system architecture and support related industries, as well as heavy engineering and advanced manufacturing industries.
- The SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project will contribute to the Government's strategic objectives by supporting development of continuous naval shipbuilding, maximising Australian industrial capability, and developing a skilled science, technology, engineering and mathematics workforce capable of constructing naval ships and submarines.

Protected Industrial Action

- A series of work stoppages at Osborne were initiated in February 2025. Following negotiations, the workforce accepted BAESMA's offer of a 25.1 per cent increase over 4 years, ending in 2028.
- Initial indications suggest the cost and build program will remain on track, with delivery of ship one expected to be on time and within budget.

Project cost and value for money

- As outlined in the 2026 Integrated Investment Program, \$27–\$32 billion has been allocated to the SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project over the decade to 2035–36. The SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project is utilising a staged approval process for this procurement.
- In June 2024, the Government announced that a contract had been signed for the construction phase for the first three Hunter Class frigates supporting construction of the first three ships, as well as procurement of other items including delivery of the support system and initial training that will support the Hunter Class frigates.
- The Hunter Class Frigate Program budget provides for delivery of all fundamental inputs to capability (FIC), not just the cost of the vessels. This includes FIC elements such as infrastructure, training, maintenance, and other sustainment functions.
- The acquisition of the Hunter Class frigates provides Defence with a fit-for-purpose undersea warfare ship, and contributes to the Australian economy, through the creation of jobs and sovereign capability.

- The acquisition of the Hunter Class frigate provides value for money in establishing a sovereign shipbuilding capability. The establishment of continuous naval shipbuilding in Australia, including the sovereign combat system enterprise, will increase Australia's self-reliance, support the development of resilient supply chains and enhance export opportunities. It will also develop domestic knowledge and skills, employ and continually upskill a domestic workforce and maintain a domestic complex manufacturing footprint.

Unit Cost and Comparisons

- The Hunter Class Frigate Program budget provides for delivery of all fundamental inputs to capability, not just the cost of the vessels. Examples of non-vessel budget inclusions are; costs to build new facilities for training/operation of the fleet, warehouse and shipyard lease costs, initial spares, training and training devices/systems, post delivery Navy trials, including any test equipment required to support trials such as targets. The budget also includes contingency that Defence does not expect to utilise.
- A cost comparison of the capability provided by the Hunter Class Frigate Project with the publicly available information of international navies, including the recently announced Norwegian program is not possible. Other militaries are known to use different organisational constructs and cost allocation.
- The recent decision by Norway to purchase T26 frigates demonstrates that the Hunter Class frigate is still an excellent choice for advanced ASW capabilities. The addition of Norway to the Global Combat Ship User Group will result in four nations working together to ensure the best possible ASW capabilities are maintained at the highest levels.
- Any direct cost comparison with the upgraded Mogami class frigate is not possible. These are significantly different platforms and both provide different capabilities to support the broader enhanced lethality fleet.

Inclusion of Tomahawk and Naval Strike Missile capability into the Hunter Class frigate

- Since the SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigate Project approval, Tomahawk and Naval Strike Missiles have entered into service.
- Acquisition of the Naval Strike Missile to replace the Harpoon missile was approved by Government in December 2022 due to its proven capability.
- In 2024, the Government agreed the Hunter Class frigate baseline will include the Tomahawk weapon system, subject to the outcomes of a feasibility study which will be provided to Government when finalised.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: 5826-000337

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
21 June 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister stated , with reference to the Hunter Class frigate steel cut event, that "the first milestone is not just about cutting steel; we are supporting Australian workers to build frigates in an Australian yard, supporting Australian industry" with the "milestone [exemplifying] our government's commitment to deliver continuous naval shipbuilding".
11 June 2024	The Government provided Second Pass approval to acquire the first three of six Hunter Class frigates under the SEA 5000 Hunter Class Frigates Project to form part of the Tier One surface combatant fleet capability.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
26 February 2025	QoN	No. 17 Hunter Class Frigate costs , Senator David Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked, in relation to the cost being 3.6 times as expensive as the Constellation class frigates, are they 3.6 times as good?	Tabled.
26 February 2025	QoN	No. 16 Hunter Frigates Costs Per Unit , Senator David Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked about the cost per unit for the ships.	Tabled.
26 February 2025	QoN	No. 29 Hunter Class Frigate costs comparison , Senator David Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) sought knowledge of other vessels, apart from United States nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, that is more expensive than a Hunter Class frigate.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 11 March 2026 Defence Connect published an article titled [Hunter Class frigates to benefit from new navigation-combat system integration](#)
- On 11 Mar 2026 Army Recognition published an article titled [Australian Hunter-class frigates gain direct link to US Aegis missile defense system](#)
- On 23 November 2025 Naval News published an article titled [Australian Hunter-class frigate program hits milestone on sonar suite](#)
- On 18 November 2025 Australian Defence Magazine an article titled [Babcock completes Critical Design Review for Hunter frigate system](#)
- On 10 October 2025 Asia Pacific Defence Reporter published an article by Gordon Arthur titled [Construction of first Hunter frigate proceeds apace](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000337

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley

Division: Navy Capability Division	
PDR No: SB26-000337	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Director-General Maritime Surface & Above Water Combat Navy Capability Mob: s22 Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Commodore Ashley Papp CSC RAN Acting Head Navy Capability Navy Capability Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 12 May 2026
Consultation: Sheryl Lutz First Assistant Secretary Major Surface Combatants & Combat Systems Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group Date: 8 April 2026 Commodore Arran Melville RAN Acting Head Maritime Sustainment Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group Date: 8 April 2026	
Cleared by CFO / DPG / DSR: Leonie Neiberding Assistant Secretary Finance Navy Defence Finance Group Date: 8 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley AM CSC RAN Acting Chief of Navy Navy Date: 12 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - COLLINS CLASS SUBMARINES

Lead: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, Chief of Navy.

Supporting: David Hanley, Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment to support on Collins Class submarine materiel delivery and sustainment.

John Chandler AM CSC CSM, First Assistant Secretary Submarines to support on Collins Class submarine materiel delivery and sustainment.

Context: Australia's transition to conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines is underpinned by the ongoing availability of the Collins class submarine fleet.

Key Messages

- The Government, working with Defence and industry, is committed to extending the life of all six Collins class submarines by one full 10-year operating cycle.
- Extending the life of the Collins class involves successful execution of the LOTE project integrated with effective ongoing sustainment, and selected capability upgrades.
- The Government's new approach to extending the life of the class will focus on sustaining and retaining base components rather than replacing them outright, while continuing to upgrade critical weapons and systems.
- The LOTE project design work and equipment procurements conducted to date provide important engineering and logistical options that strengthen the new approach to Collins Class life extension.
- This approach aims to maximise overall Collins class availability and the associated submarine deterrence capability.

Talking Points**Collins Class life-of-type extension storyboard – Risk Management**

- The life extension of complex capabilities such as the Collins Class beyond their designed life is not risk free.
- The risks to extending the life of the Collins Class are significant; however, Defence continues to consider these manageable.
 - Defence continues to balance capability and availability, without compromising safety standards, in its management of the Collins Class through life extension.
- Defence is taking a risk-based approach to scoping the SEA1450 Collins LOTE project
 - SEA1450 is scoped to contend with the highest risks to sustaining the Collins Class by a further ten year operating cycle.
 - Defence, supported by industry, has periodically contemporised its risk assessment (in 2019, 2022, and again in 2025/26).
- The Government's recently announced updated approach to Collins Class life-extension was based on contemporary judgement that, as the fleet aged and sustainment

pressures evolved, the engineering, schedule and workforce risks associated with replacing some major systems had become greater than the risks associated with sustaining existing systems where operationally appropriate.

- . Incremental SEA1450 LOTE Government approvals have supported project execution needs with manageable risk and within prevailing fiscal circumstances.
- . Similarly, incremental SEA1450 LOTE contract changes have supported project execution needs with manageable risk and within prevailing fiscal circumstances.
- . Defence, in partnership with the Australian Submarine Agency, manages Australia's submarine capability as an integrated Enterprise, recognising that Collins sustainment, industrial capacity, workforce growth and transition to nuclear-powered submarines are now deeply interconnected. Risks are managed across the Collins and NPS dimensions of the Enterprise to protect continuity of Australia's submarine capability.
- . Defence continues to balance capability and availability without compromising safety, in its approach to the life of type extension program.

Collins Class life-of-type extension plans

- . Defence's contemporary assessment is that sustaining submarine availability through the AUKUS transition requires a more deliberate balance between engineering ambition, operational availability, industrial capacity and sustainment risk than was contemplated under earlier LOTE constructs.
- . The life of type extension project is scoped to contend with the highest risks to sustaining all six Collins Class submarines for a full 10-year operating cycle.
- . Defence applies a risk-based approach to defining the scope of the life of type extension, recognising that risks evolve over time.
 - The initial scope was based on risks to achieving an additional full operating cycle, with further assessments conducted with industry in 2022 and refined through reviews in 2025 and early 2026.
 - Defence, supported by industry, will continue to regularly reassess sustainment risks as the program progresses.
 - Recent and independent analysis confirms that strengthening sustainment of existing systems is the most effective way to manage life-extension risks.
 - Consistent with this contemporary risk-based sustainment approach, Defence will sustain the existing diesel and propulsion systems where operationally appropriate, unless future operational assessments identify a clear requirement for replacement.
 - As sustainment improves, reliance on more complex life of type extension interventions is reduced.
- . The conditions-based sustainment approach will focus on sustaining and retaining base components of the Collins class, rather than replacing them outright, while continuing to upgrade critical weapons and related systems.

- This will reduce engineering risk by sustaining existing systems where appropriate while continuing to upgrade critical capabilities, including weapons and combat systems.
 - The balance between acquisition and sustainment will shift, placing greater emphasis on sustainment to maximise availability.
 - This will include investment in advanced asset management and strong industry partnerships to support existing systems – rather than replacing them.
- This approach is intended to maximise the likelihood that the Collins Class remains a potent, operationally available and credible undersea capability throughout Australia's transition to nuclear-powered submarines.

HMAS *Farncomb*

- HMAS *Farncomb* will commence its life of type extension by the end of May 2026.
- As one of the oldest boats in the Collins class fleet with the highest number of sea days and distance travelled, HMAS *Farncomb*'s life of type extension will also include a detailed engineering assessment period.
- The detailed engineering assessment will both inform the work needed to return *Farncomb* to service, and also life extension asset management and sustainment approaches for the rest of the Class.
- Building on experience from last decade's reforms, *Farncomb* will serve as a fleet-wide sustainment and asset management testbed during its assessment period, generating insights intended to improve availability and sustainment outcomes across the broader Collins enterprise.
- This approach provides a deliberate 'circuit breaker' to regain schedule discipline, stabilise sustainment performance, and reset the way maintenance and asset management activities are prioritised across the fleet.
- Defence is working with industry to develop options to return HMAS *Farncomb* to service as soon as practicable, cognisant that Government has decided to prioritise the other Collins Class submarines starting with the youngest, HMAS *Rankin*.

Cost of Collins Class sustainment

- In the 2026 Integrated Investment Program, the Government committed \$7.8-\$11 billion over the decade to ensure the Collins Class submarines remain a potent strike and deterrent capability.
- The investment to date in the design and procurement of replacement equipment preserves the option to replace this equipment should there be a clear operational need in the future. These options strengthen the new approach to Collins Class life extension.

ANAO Audit of LOTE

- Defence acknowledges the Auditor-Generals report on the planning and implementation of the Collins class LOTE project and agrees its recommendations.
- The Government's plans for extending the life of the class, announced on Tuesday 19 May 2026, pivots from the previous approach that was examined by the ANAO.
- The ANAO findings reinforced broader Defence and Government concerns regarding the complexity, achievability and risk profile of the earlier LOTE construct.
- The Government has taken a methodical and measured approach to extending the life of the class.
 - An endeavour of this scale and complexity has necessitated careful review and deliberate consideration at each stage, including the incorporation of independent advice.
 - The pivot of approach will ensure our Collins class submarines remain a potent and highly capable undersea platform today and for years to come.

Collins Class Life-of-Type Extension Independent Assurance Activity

- The revised Collins LOTE approach was informed by independent assurance advice, Product of Concern deliberations, and Defence's ongoing reassessment of engineering, sustainment and operational risks across the Collins enterprise.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
22 May 2026	The Auditor-General released its ANAO report on Defence's Collins Class Submarines Life of Type Extension — Planning and Implementation.
19 May 2026	The Government announced the commencement of the Collins Class life of type extension from May 2026.
2 March 2026	A fourth Product of Concern Ministerial Summit was held in Canberra on 2 March 2026 to discuss ongoing progress to remediate Collins Class sustainment performance.
1 December 2025	A third Product of Concern Ministerial Summit was held in Canberra on 1 December 2025 to discuss ongoing progress to remediate Collins Class sustainment performance.
30 July 2025	A second Product of Concern Ministerial Summit was held in Canberra on 30 July 2025 to discuss ongoing progress to remediate Collins Class sustainment performance.
21 March 2025	The Government announced a \$200 million agreement with the United States to acquire additional quantities of MK-48 Heavy Weight Torpedoes.
12 February 2025	A Product of Concern Ministerial Summit was held in Canberra on 12 February 2025 to discuss progress to remediate Collins Class sustainment performance.
13 December 2024	The Government announced Collins Class submarine sustainment had been listed as a Product of Concern.
Quarter 2, 2024	The Collins Class submarine Life-of-Type Extension Independent Assurance report was provided to the Government.
27 July 2024	The Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP and the Minister for Finance Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher jointly announced that the Government had signed a new four-year sustainment contract with ASC Pty Ltd, securing South Australia and Western Australia as the centres of excellence for the sustainment of the Collins Class submarines.
5 June 2024	The Government announced that the optronics upgrade to the Collins Class would not proceed, and installation of the Tomahawk cruise missile into the Collins Class was not viable and did not represent value for money.
25 October 2023	The Government announced an independent assurance activity to inform the Life-of-Type Extension of the Collins Class submarine fleet.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000334

Last updated: 27 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley, John Chandler AM CSC CSM

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
21 May 2026	FOI	An individual has sought access to documents relating to long-lead items.	Decision not finalised.
6 March 2026	QoN	In response to QoN 38, Valdez Report from Senator Shoebridge, the Secretary receive correspondence from the Chair of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee advising the response was not accurate and asking Defence to reconsider the response.	Not yet tabled.
16 April 2026	FOI	An individual sought access to documents regarding full-cycle docking.	Decision finalised.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 38, Senator Shoebridge, (Greens, NSW), requested a copy of the Valdez report.	Tabled.
1 August 2025	QoN	No. 142, Procurement and Sustainment of the Collins class Combat System. Senator the Hon Jacqui Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) asked how much has been spent on the Collin Class Combat System (procurement and sustainment) over the past three financial years.	Tabled.
26 February 2025	QoN	No. 20, WA industrial action costings. Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds (Liberal, Western Australia), asked for a breakdown of the variation to Collins Class Sustainment funding in 2024-25 Portfolio Additional Estimate Statements.	Tabled.
6 November 2024	QoN	No. 02, Valdez report Minister reception. Senator the Hon David Fawcett (Liberal, South Australia), asked whether the Minister for Defence had read the Valdez report.	Tabled.
6 November 2024	QoN	No. 03, Valdez report departmental advice. Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham (Liberal, South Australia), asked when the department was asked to provide formal advice to the Government on the Valdez report.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 25 May 2026, The Australian published an article by James Madden titled ['Twenty seconds from certain death': at last, the full story of HMAS Dechaineux can be told.](#)
- On 23 May 2026, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Botched Collins-class submarine upgrades waste \\$700m, ANAO finds.](#)
- On 21 May 2026, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Richard Marles has 'questions to answer' over sub refits amid looming audit report, says James Paterson.](#)
- On 21 May 2026, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Labor mugged by reality on our capability gap.](#)
- On 21 May 2026, The West Australian published an article by Andrew Greene titled [Ageing Collins-class submarines enter uncharted waters as overhaul raises capability fears before AUKUS.](#)
- On 20 May 2026, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Patch jobs only: Labor's plan to keep Collins-class submarines going.](#)
- On 20 May 2026, The West Australian published an article by Andrew Green titled [Major overhaul to planned upgrades of Australia's ageing Collins-class submarines ahead of AUKUS.](#)
- On 13 May 2026, The Advertiser published an article by Paul Starick titled [Collins-class \\$11b push into future.](#)
- On 21 April 2026, Defence Connect published an article by Robert Dougherty titled [2026 National Defence Strategy: Collins Class Submarines funded for sustainment, upgrades into 2040s.](#)
- On 11 February 2026, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled ['Not locked in': Doubt cast over scope of Collins sub upgrades.](#)
- On 12 November 2025, cyberdaily.au published an article by Daniel Croft, David Hollingworth and Stephen Kuper titled [Exclusive: Threat actor alleges treasure trove of sensitive Hunter, Collins class info.](#)
- On 11 November 2025, The Asia Pacific Defence Reporter published an article by Gordon Arthur titled [LOTE or lottery for the Collins class?](#)
- On 24 May 2025, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Strikes a threat to vital defence work, says navy chief Mark Hammond.](#)
- On 19 March 2025, The Australian published an article by Ben Packham titled [Minister admits subpar Collins refit on the cards.](#)
- On 19 March 2025, The Advertiser published an article by Paul Starick titled [Pay rise blow for subs.](#)
- On 18 March 2025, in The Australian, Peter Jennings reported [Forget Collins - we have much more important priorities.](#)
- On 17 March 2025, in The Australian, Ben Packham reported [Secret submarine scandal: Collins lined up for lite-on refit.](#)

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PDR No: SB26-000334

Last updated: 27 May 2026

Key witnesses: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN, David Hanley, John Chandler AM CSC CSM

Division:	Submarines
PDR No:	SB26-000334
Prepared by: Commodore Dan LeRaye RAN Director General Submarine Sustainment Submarines Division Mob: s22 Date: 26 May 2026	s47E(d) Acting Director General Submarines Navy Mob: s22 Date: 26 May 2026
Cleared by Division Head: John Chandler AM CSC CSM First Assistant Secretary Submarines Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 27 May 2026	Rear Admiral Stephen Hughes AM CSC RAN Head Navy Capability Navy Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 27 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary and 3 Star: David Hanley Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group Date: 28 June 2026	Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN Chief of Navy Navy Date: XX June 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - GUIDED WEAPONS & EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE ENTERPRISE

Lead: Air Marshal Leon Phillips OAM, Chief of Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance.

Supporting: Dan Fankhauser, First Assistant Secretary Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Manufacturing Division to support on domestic manufacturing initiatives.

Rear Admiral Nigel Smith CSC RAN, Head Guided Weapons Explosive Ordnance Systems Division to support on war-stock inventory uplift and maintenance.

Context: In line with the recommendations of the 2026 National Defence Strategy, the Government will invest \$26–36 billion over the next decade to enhance Australia's Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance (GWEO) Enterprise.

Key Messages

- Defence continues to make significant progress in the establishment of a GWEO domestic manufacturing and maintenance capability in Australia.
- Defence's missile factory in Port Wakefield, South Australia, was opened in December 2025 and has already produced and successfully test fired the first batch of Lockheed Martin's Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles.
- A second missile factory is under construction in Newcastle, New South Wales which will manufacture and maintain Kongsberg's Naval and Joint Strike Missiles.
- Northrop Grumman Australia has been selected as an initial preferred industry partner to assist in the establishment of a domestic solid rocket motor manufacturing capability.
- Defence is working closely with our international partners and we continue to receive deliveries of guided weapons.
- Defence's GWEO stockpiles continue to increase with new storage facilities under construction to accommodate our increasing stockpiles.

Talking Points

Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan

- The Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan was released on 30 October 2024. It sets out how the Government will manufacture guided weapons and explosive ordnance in Australia and deliver a transformative uplift in Australia's defence industrial capabilities.
- The next iteration of the Plan is expected to be released in the second half of 2026.

AUSMIN

- At the recent Australia – United States Ministerial Consultations meeting in December 2025, Principals re-affirmed their commitment and endorsed a two-year shared pathway for the GWEO Enterprise including:
 - Pursuing co-production, co-sustainment and follow on development of Hypersonic Attack Cruise Missile;

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PDR No: SB26-000332

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Leon Phillips, Dan Fankhauser, Rear Admiral Nigel Smith

- Furthering depot-level sustainment of AIM-9X Sidewinder and AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile;
 - Identifying cooperation on maritime strike and interceptor capabilities to be integrated into the pathway in 2026.
- There was a commitment to expand the practical use of export control license exemptions, and usage of authorised exemptions where appropriate to support ongoing and future work related to the GWEO Shared Pathway.

Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System

- Defence opened a new facility at Port Wakefield, South Australia on 5 December 2025 and, in partnership with Lockheed Martin Australia, commenced the production of the first batch of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles.
 - The first batch were successfully test fired at Woomera in April 2026.
- Creating 20 regional jobs, the facility will be capable of producing up to 300 missiles per annum for use by the ADF, as well as complementing United States supply chains.
- Australian industry continue to be uplifted with Defence signing a contract with Lockheed Martin Australia to begin manufacturing key guided weapons components, providing opportunity for Australian made components to be incorporated into the global supply chain.
 - Moog Australia have been chosen to design and build a Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System Control Actuation System.
 - AW Bell has been selected to manufacture the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missile canards.
- On 14 October 2025, Defence, the United States Government and Lockheed Martin Corporation signed a Joint Statement of Intent, paving the way for further co-development and production of variants of the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System family of munitions and the Precision Strike Missile.

Australian Weapons Manufacturing Complex

- Australia intends to establish a dedicated Weapons Manufacturing Complex with capacity for high-rate production of guided weapons from the end of the decade.
- Working with Lockheed Martin Australia, the initial focus is to establish the capacity to produce Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System weapons with a view to providing a pathway for the manufacture of other weapon types, such as Precision Strike Missiles.
 - The Government's preferred location for establishing the Australian Weapons Manufacturing Complex is subject to due diligence activities and further updates will be made in due course.

Precision Strike Missile

- On 15 May 2025, Australia and the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Precision Strike Missile production, sustainment and follow-on development.

- The Memorandum of Understanding sets the foundation for future domestic manufacturing and maintenance of Precision Strike Missiles in Australia, with negotiations on these options underway.

Rocket motors

- On 16 September 2024, the Government committed an initial \$22 million to develop options for manufacturing rocket motors in Australia by 2030.
- On 30 April 2026, the Government announced its Rocket Motor Manufacturing Strategy, which includes:
 - Defence conducting a multi-stage solid rocket motor production activity for Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles with an initial manufacturing demonstration planned for 2027, ahead of production by 2030;
 - the selection of Northrop Grumman Australia as the preferred industry partner to establish a domestic rocket motor manufacturing capability;
 - Defence working with DefendTex, Black Sky Industries and Anduril Australia to explore their novel manufacturing methods;
 - initial delivery of Australian solid rocket motors through leveraging an upgraded production facility at Mulwala, purpose-built for the mixing, casting and curing processes of energetics that are also used for solid rocket motor manufacturing; and
 - in the same timeframe, Defence will provide tangible opportunities to Australian component-level suppliers and innovative solid rocket motor manufacturers as on-ramps for production to meet future ADF requirements.

155mm Large Calibre Munitions

- In 2023, Defence released a tender for the establishment of a domestic forging capability to manufacture 155mm large calibre projectiles.
- Changes in the global industrial base for the manufacture of 155mm large calibre projectiles, along with a surge in international demand for naval 5-inch projectiles, resulted in Defence reassessing its manufacturing priorities and approach.
- On 27 June 2025, Defence announced it ceased the tender activity for the domestic forging of 155mm large calibre projectiles, to refine requirements prior to re-approaching the market.
- A new tender was issued on 28 August 2025, closing on 21 October 2025. Contract negotiations with the preferred tenderer have commenced, with contract award expected in Quarter 2, 2026.
- The forge will be constructed and certified by 2028, capable of producing 15,000 rounds each year from 2029, with capacity to scale to higher volumes.
 - On 11 March 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the United States, enabling the co-production of 155mm ammunition in Australia for national defence purposes.

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PDR No: SB26-000332

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Leon Phillips, Dan Fankhauser, Rear Admiral Nigel Smith

Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile

- The Government is progressing the refurbishment of an existing facility at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills, New South Wales, to undertake maintenance and final assembly and check out of explosive components for Kongsberg's Strike Missile family.
- This Orchard Hills facility is intended to be Government owned contractor operated. Physical building work is now complete, with commissioning and licencing activities underway with operations expected to commence before the end of June this year.
- The intent is for Kongsberg to utilise this facility for both missile assembly and the maintenance of missiles. This capability will be operated collaboratively with the Newcastle facility and is an important step in the future production of Naval and Joint Strike Missiles in Australia.
- The Government has committed up to \$850 million in partnership with Kongsberg Defence Australia to manufacture and service missiles in Newcastle, New South Wales, and qualify Australian companies to manufacture and maintain priority Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile components.
- On 28 March 2025, Defence signed a contract with Kongsberg to establish a missile production facility in Newcastle for the Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile.
- Construction of the facility in Newcastle commenced in September 2025. Missile production is expected to commence in 2027, with full-rate production in 2028–29.
- Defence continues to take deliveries of Naval Strike Missiles from Norway with final assembly and check out in Australia commencing at Orchard Hills in 2026.
- Integration of the Joint Strike Missile onto the F-35A Lightning II is progressing with a series of end-to-end tests underway in the United States throughout 2026.

Family of Strike Munitions Memorandum of Understanding

- The Norwegian Government has developed a Strike Family Memorandum of Understanding, a multilateral agreement that enables information exchange and collaboration between partner nations on the Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile, developed by Norwegian missile manufacturer Kongsberg.
- On 10 April 2026, Australia became the third country to sign the Memorandum of Understanding along with other key signatories which are yet to be publicly announced.
- The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding further supports Australia's efforts to acquire, manufacture and maintain Naval Strike Missiles and Joint Strike Missiles, enhancing our domestic industrial base.

TDW Letter of Intent

- On 27 March 2026, Defence and German company TDW signed a Letter of Intent to explore options to manufacture and maintain warheads for Kongsberg's Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missiles in Australia.

GWEO Enablers

- Defence is rapidly expanding its network of storage facilities to provide secure and protected storage of Defence's expanding GWEO inventory.

- Current approved projects will provide a mixture of earth-covered buildings, light frangible buildings and containerised storage at HMAS *Stirling*, Royal Australian Air Force Base Amberley, Defence Establishment Orchard Hills, as well as Explosive Ordnance Depots Jennings and Myambat.
- In January 2026, Government announced \$508 million for two major capital works projects – both part of the 2024 Australian GWEO Plan – which include the redevelopment of base facilities and the construction of new explosive ordnance storage at Orchard Hills.
- Defence is also investing in GWEO workforce development through the delivery of a Masters-level degree in explosive ordnance engineering in partnership with the University of New South Wales.
- Further investment is also being made in post-graduate-level research through the Australian Energetic Materials Research Network, led by the Defence Science and Technology Group in partnership with Flinders University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, University of New South Wales and University of Sydney.

Long Range Anti-Ship Missile

- In April 2020, Government approved the acquisition of Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles from the United States Navy, via the Foreign Military Sales framework, at an estimated cost of \$818.3 million.
- All tranche 1 quantities of Long Range Anti-Ship Missile have been delivered to Australia. Australia signed an amended Letter of Offer and Acceptance on 7 December 2023 to procure an additional (tranche 2) quantity of Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles.
- Operational test and evaluation of Long Range Anti-Ship Missile on the F/A-18F Super Hornet is complete. This included the live firing of two Australian Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles at a maritime test target in February 2025.

Spike Missile

- Defence contracted Varley Rafael Australia, now Rafael Systems of Australia, for the acquisition of Spike LR2 and associated hardware to equip the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle, Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle and dismounted soldiers with an anti-tank capability able to engage threats at greater ranges.
- Defence remains in contract with the next deliveries due to arrive in country between late 2026 and early 2028.

Iron Fist Light Decoupled Active Protection System Contract with Elbit Systems

- On 1 September 2025, Defence contracted Elbit Systems for countermeasure munitions used in the Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle's active protection system, under LAND 400 Phase 3.
- These countermeasures will be used solely by the Australian Army in operation of the Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle's active protection system. They are not for export to Israel.

- It is standard practice for Defence to procure explosive ordnance directly from suppliers, consistent with other explosive ordnance acquisition arrangements for Armoured Fighting Vehicles.
- Defence has an obligation to acquire capability that best ensures our ADF personnel are protected and kept safe as they conduct their mission in the defence of Australia.

Missile Acquisitions

- The global supply chain situation for guided weapons is dynamic. Defence continues to work closely with our international partners and continues to receive deliveries of guided weapons.
- For operational security reasons, Defence does not disclose the quantities or delivery times for our guided weapons orders.
- Defence continues to uplift warstocks with the acquisition of a number of missiles:
 - \$3.5 billion to acquire accelerated missile strike capability inclusive of both Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile Extended Range for Air Force and Naval Strike Missile for Navy surface fleet;
 - \$7 billion for the acquisition of Standard Missile 2 Block IIIC and Standard Missile 6 for use on Navy's Hobart Class destroyers, and future Hunter Class frigates;
 - \$2.12 billion in additional stocks of Advanced Medium-Range missiles AIM-120D-3 for the Super Hornet, Growler and Lightning II fleets; and AIM-120C-8 boosting Army's ground-to-air defence capability;
 - \$1.3 billion acquisition of more than 200 Tomahawk cruise missiles for Navy's Hobart Class destroyers;
 - \$895.5 million for the acquisition of Long Range Anti-Ship Missile increasing the Super Hornet, Poseidon and F-35A Joint Strike Fighter's maritime strike capability;
 - Up to \$1.08 billion investment (\$431 million in Aug 2023 and up to \$650 million in Jan 2025) investment to acquire additional Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile-Extended Range missiles, enhancing the air-launched capabilities of Air Force's Super Hornet, Growler and in future the F-35A Joint Strike Fighter aircraft; and
 - \$200 million agreement with the United States for additional quantities of Mark-48 Heavy Weight Torpedoes.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000332

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Leon Phillips, Dan Fankhauser, Rear Admiral Nigel Smith

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
28 May 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that Defence has contracted Lockheed Martin to commence manufacturing key guided weapons to be manufactured by Australian companies Moog Australia and AW Bell.
14 May 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that Australia is one of a number of partner nations that has signed a Strike Missile Family Memorandum of Understanding with the Norwegian Government for the acquisition and maintenance of the Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile.
30 April 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that Northrop Grumman Australia has been selected as an initial partner to assist in the establishment of a domestic solid rocket motor manufacturing capability. [Drafting note: to be confirmed in next update post announcement in April.]
13 April 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the successful test firing of the first batch of Guided Multiple Launch Missiles produced at Defence's Port Wakefield facility in South Australia.
27 March 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that Defence and German warhead manufacturer TDW signed a Letter of Intent to explore options for the manufacture and maintenance of warheads for Kongsberg's Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile in Australia.
10 March 2026	The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that Defence would provide defensive military assistance to the United Arab Emirates including Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles.
28 January 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced a \$508 million investment in two major capital works projects at Defence Establishment Orchard Hills, Western Sydney, which include the redevelopment of base facilities and the construction of new explosive ordnance storage.
9 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister released the Joint Fact Sheet on Australia – United States Ministerial Consultations 2025, endorsing a two-year shared pathway for the Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Enterprise.
5 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the commencement of the manufacture of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles, at a Defence owned facility in Port Wakefield, South Australia.
4 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced that Australia would donate additional munitions to Ukraine as part of a \$95 million military assistance package.

1 December 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the establishment of the Defence Delivery Agency as part of its reform agenda.
7 November 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the one-year anniversary of the release of the Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan, and the progress made in those 12 months.
14 October 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that Australia, United States and Lockheed Martin Corporation signed a Joint Statement of Intent on guided weapons.
14 August 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that two major export deals worth a combined \$80 million have been secured by Kongsberg Defence Australia.
25 July 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the successful live firing of a Precision Strike Missile from a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.
3 July 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced an investment of up to \$2.12 billion in additional stocks of advanced medium-range missiles.
27 June 2025	Defence announced it had made the decision to cease the 155mm large calibre munitions tender.
6 June 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced that Australia and the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Precision Strike Missile production, sustainment and follow-on development.
21 March 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced the successful live firing of the AGM-158C Long Range Anti-Ship Missile.
17 March 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced the signing of the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System Co-Assembly and 155mm Ammunition Co-Production Memorandum of Understanding with the United States and the Congressional approval for the Foreign Military Sale of additional Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missile kits.
30 January 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced the investment of up to \$650 million to acquire additional Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile-Extended Range missiles.
10 December 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced the successful firing from HMAS <i>Brisbane</i> , of a Tomahawk cruise missile during a test and evaluation activity off the west coast of the United States.

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PDR No: 5826-000332

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Leon Phillips, Dan Fankhauser, Rear Admiral Nigel Smith

6 December 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced plans to equip the Australian Army with a second long-range fires regiment.
19 November 2024	Defence announced as part of AUKUS Pillar II, Australia, United Kingdom and the United States have established a Project Agreement accelerate the testing of hypersonic vehicles and related technologies.
30 October 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced the 2024 Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
23 February 2026	QoN	No. 73, Long-Range Precision Strike Missile Agreement with the US. Senator Jessica Collins (Liberal Party of Australia, New South Wales) asked about the progress of Australia's cooperative program with the United States for the Precision Strike Missile.	Tabled
19 February 2026	QoN	No. 66, GWEO Timelines and Ambition. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal Party of Australia, Western Australia) asked about GWEO investment priorities, and domestic manufacture of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System Missiles.	Not yet Tabled
11 December 2025	QoN	No. 990, Joint Strike Missile and Naval Strike Missile. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal Party of Australia, Western Australia) asked about the construction of Kongberg's Newcastle facility, missile production volumes and export opportunities.	Tabled
11 December 2025	QoN	No. 991, Rocket Motor Program. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal Party of Australia, Western Australia) asked about the status of the Rocket Motor program and sub system and component development.	Not yet Tabled
11 December 2025	QoN	No. 992, GWEO Timelines. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal Party of Australia, Western Australia) asked about GWEO investment priorities, and domestic manufacture of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System and Precision Strike Missiles.	Tabled
3 December 2025	QoN	No. 925, Imports for production of ammunition. Senator Tyron Whitten (Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Western Australia) asked for a list of the components that are imported for the manufacture of small calibre munitions.	Tabled
21 November 2025	IQ QoN	No. 1, GWEO Investment Pipeline. Senator Deborah O'Neill (Australian Labor Party, New South Wales) asked about the GWEO investment and expenditure to date.	Tabled

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Last updated: 28 May 2026

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14 November 2025	FOI	An individual sought access to the current contract between Defence and Thales for the operation of the munitions factories in Victoria and New South Wales.	Decision Finalised
3 November 2025	FOI	An individual sought access to the contract(s) and associated documents between Defence and the United States Government related to AusTender Contract Notice CN4198387.	Decision Finalised
20 October 2025	FOI	An individual sought documents relating to assessment of potential locations for the Kongsberg missile factory	Decision finalised
16 October 2025	QoN	No. 904, Munitions Production Tender. Senator Jacqui Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) asked about current and future production demand for 155mm and naval 5 inch munitions.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 59, Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems manufactured by end of 2025. Senator Leah Blyth (Liberal Party of Australia, South Australia) asked about planned Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System manufacture in 2025.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 60, Joint Strike Missiles acquired by end of 2025. Senator Leah Blyth (Liberal Party of Australia, South Australia) asked how many Joint Strike Missiles Australia would acquire by the end of 2025.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 61, Amount of locally made missiles produced by GWEO. Senator Leah Blyth (Liberal Party of Australia, South Australia) asked how many domestically manufactured missiles Australia has produced to date.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 72, 155mm Ammunition - Thales. Senator Jacqui Lambie (Jacqui Lambie Network, Tasmania) asked about the cessation of the M795 155mm tender and subsequent retender.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 241, GMLRS Production. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal Party of Australia, Western Australia) asked about production volumes of Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems.	Tabled
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 908, Recipe. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the GWEO cookbook and the Ministers favourite recipe	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 6, Munitions Production and Supply Chain. Senator Tyron Whitten (Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Western Australia) asked whether Australia's small calibre supply chain uses Australian-produced or imported components.	Tabled

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9 October 2025	QoN	No. 7, Development Ammunitions Capability in Australia. Senator Tyron Whitten (Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Western Australia) asked if there was a plan to uplift the raw materials industry, specifically brass for use in the manufacture of small arms.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 22, GWEO Cookbook cost breakdown. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the production costs associated with the development of the GWEO Cookbook.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 23, Re-tender M795 155 Forge Capability. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked for information relating to the re-tender of the M795 155mm contract.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 24, Costs of tendering for 155mm Forge Capability. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the costs of tendering for the 155mm forge capability tender.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 25, Contracts that have been delayed, amended or cancelled since 2023. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the number of GWEO contracts that have been delayed, amended or cancelled since 2023.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No.30, Current contracts with GWEO. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked for details on all GWEO contracts.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 31, ASL for GWEO Group. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the total Average Staffing Level for GWEO Group.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 32, Amount of munition lines currently producing in volume under the GWEO program. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked about the lines and volumes of munitions produced at Defence munition factories.	Tabled
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 33, Details surrounding Thales contract. Senator Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party of Australia, Victoria) asked for all correspondence relate to the cessation of the M795 155mm tender, citing perceived job losses at Benalla as a result.	Tabled
6 October 2025	FOI	A human rights activist sought documents constituting approval by Defence for Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions to manufacture 25mm ammunition at Benalla.	Decision Finalised

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 30 April 2026, multiple media outlets reported on the release of the Rocket Motor Manufacturing strategy including; [Defence Connect](#), [Australian Defence Magazine](#), [APDR](#) and [Mirage News](#).
- On 29 April, the Australian Financial Review published an article titled, '[Labor taps super funds for \\$36 billion Defence build-out](#)' by Michael Read and Lucas Baird.
- On 27 April, The Australian published an article titled '[Government unveils land-missile plan, manufacturing aspirations](#)', by James Dowling.
- On 23 April 2026, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published an article titled '[NDS 2026 – GWEO gets priority, with little published detail](#)' by Madi Jones.
- On 15 April 2026, multiple media outlets reported on the successful Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System test fire at Woomera Test Range including; [Space and Defense](#); [Australian Manufacturing](#); [Australian Defence Magazine](#) and [Manufacturers' Monthly](#).
- 12 April 2026, 7News reported on '[Australia test-fires locally made missiles in 50 years](#)' by Tim Lester.
- On 17 March 2026, APDR published an article titled, '[Lockheed Martin's PrSM Increment 2 takes flight](#)', by Kym Bergmann
- On 11 March 2026, The West Australian published an article titled, '[Cupboard runs mare as conflict shows our modern warfare inadequacy](#)', by Andrew Greene.
- On 10 March 2026, The Australian published an article titled, '[Iran war's toxic inflation penalty as troops sent to the Middle East](#)', by Ben Packham and Matthew Cranston.
- On 10 March 2026, The Australian published an article titled, '[The US has a missile problem – can we rise to the occasion?](#)', by Elizabeth Buchanan.
- On 10 March 2026, the ABC published an article titled, '[Australia to provide military support to Gulf states attacked by Iran](#)', by Holly Tregenza, Stephen Dziedzic and Clare Armstrong.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000332

Last updated: 28 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Leon Phillips, Dan Fankhauser, Rear Admiral Nigel Smith

Division: Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Manufacturing	
PDR No: SB26-000332	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Chief of Staff Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Manufacturing Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Mr Dan Fankhauser First Assistant Secretary Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Manufacturing Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 10 April 2026
Consultation: Rear Admiral Nigel Smith CSC, RAN Head Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Systems Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group Date: 10 April 2026	
Cleared by DFG: Miss Emma McCarthy Assistant Secretary Finance - Army Defence Finance Group Date: 13 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Marshal Leon Phillips OAM Chief of Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – SPACE AND CYBER DOMAINS

Lead: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Chief of Joint Capabilities

Supporting: Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn RAN, Head Space and Cyber Capabilities to support on space capabilities

Context: Space and cyber are critical operational domains and of vital interest to Defence and Australia's national security. Defence's investment in both space and cyber reflects the priorities set out in the 2026 National Defence Strategy, to deliver space and cyber capabilities that strengthen situational awareness, the ability to project force and decision advantage.

Key Messages

- The Government is investing \$27–\$38 billion over the decade in resilient space, cyber and electronic warfare capabilities to support the ADF's ability to respond to potential threats, including protecting ADF forces and safeguarding our critical infrastructure, while also harnessing rapid advancements in technology.
- Defence's Joint Capabilities Group is responsible for the generation and delivery of space and cyber power, and Information Operations as part of the integrated force in competition and conflict.
- Space capabilities are critical to the ADF's warfighting effectiveness and support resilient communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, targeting, positioning, navigation and timing.
- Defence is continuing to develop options to ensure access to the space domain, with a focus on resilient communications, space domain awareness and space control capabilities.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy identified the need for cyber capabilities that enable enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, deliver resilient communications and provide computer network defence and disrupt options.
- The cyber domain is comprised of cyberspace and the electromagnetic spectrum. ADF capabilities apply cyber power in support of the integrated force, enabling all forms of military power. The bedrock of the domain is the cyber terrain that carries our networks, data and applications.

Talking Points**Space Domain**

- Government agencies, the commercial sector and the Australian public depend on access to space systems for essential everyday activities including telecommunications, transport, financial services, traffic management, emergency response and environmental monitoring.
- The space domain plays an integral role in how Defence conducts integrated operations.
- The space domain is becoming a more congested and contested environment. Defence must have capabilities that ensure access to space, and deter unwanted actions by potential adversaries in space.

- In response to Australia's strategic circumstances, space capabilities that enhance intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, provide resilient communications, and counter emerging space threats, are the highest space domain investment priorities for Defence under the 2026 National Defence Strategy.
- Defence space workforce delivery continues with the implementation of space employment categories for ADF personnel and a dedicated space domain training continuum for space professionals in the ADF.

Cyber Domain

- Aligned with strategic direction, Defence is enhancing its cyber domain capabilities, consistent with the other domains.
- The cyber domain is fundamental to secure communications in the interconnected battlespace, maintenance of situational awareness, integrated operations, contemporary logistics supply chain security and military decision-making.
- On 25 March 2024, Defence established a Cyber Command within the Joint Capabilities Group. This saw the amalgamation of the Defence cyber security, worthiness and assurance functions, as well as the creation of an organisation specifically designed to prepare cyber forces to support ADF operations.
- A Joint Force Cyber Component has been established alongside the other components (Maritime/Air/Land/Space). The component conducts integrated planning, enabling the synchronisation of cyberspace and electromagnetic spectrum capabilities and effects.
- Defence is leveraging a hyperscale cloud technology to fundamentally change Defence's approach to warfighting networks and what they will look like in the future.

Threats to Space and Cyber Capabilities

- Competitors' capabilities can interfere with – and influence – satellites and other space domain capabilities. Actions can range from non-kinetic means, such as electronic attack for jamming communications, to kinetic weapons, such as direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles.
- Defence is aware that some of Australia's strategic competitors are deploying advanced space capabilities and technologies, which may be dual use in nature, which could affect the space capabilities of other nations.
- Defence is a trusted space actor and supports efforts to promote international norms, transparency, and cooperation in encouraging assured access, security, stability and responsible behaviour in space. Defence operates consistently with Australia's international obligations, and the principle of free access to the exploration and use of space.
- State and non-state actors continue targeting Australian citizens, businesses, the Government and national critical infrastructure providers for financial gain or increased influence.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000330

Last updated: 21 April 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn RAN

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
9 February 2026	In a joint media release, the Minister for Defence Personnel and Minister for Veteran's Affairs the Hon Matt Keogh MP announced the opening of direct entry recruitment for Joint ADF Space Operations Officer and Space Operations Specialist roles. The announcement confirmed the establishment of new space employment pathways, commencement of sovereign space workforce development, and delivery of specialist training through the Defence Space and Cyber School at HMAS <i>Harman</i> .

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
Nil.			

Relevant Media Reporting

- 9 February 2026, Petra Stock, The Guardian, [‘Australian defence force expands space workforce as new specialist training centre unveiled’](#).
- 6 December 2025, Lachlan Colquhoun, Australian Space Outlook, [‘Space Command enhances Australia’s Defence capability’](#).
- 28 November 2025, The Australian, [‘ADF forced to utilise old satellite equipment as Labor scraps \\$7b military upgrades’](#).
- 28 November 2025, Ben Packham, The Australian, [‘Australian Defence Force at risk with old satellite kept on line’](#).
- 28 November 2025, David Allen, InnovationAus, [‘Gig Guide: Defence on the hunt for new CISO’](#).
- 26 November 2025, Space & Defense Tech and Security News, [‘ADF secures UHF satellite communications’](#).
- 9 November 2025, Lauren Kent, CNN, [‘UK and Germany have accused Russia of threatening their satellites. Here’s what that means’](#).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000330

Last updated: 21 April 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn RAN

Division: Joint Capabilities Group	
PDR No: SB26-000330	
Prepared by: Major General Robert Watson CSC Commander Cyber Command Cyber Command Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 08 April 2026 Major General Greg Novak AM Commander Space Command Space Command Joint Capabilities Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 09 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn Head of Space and Cyber Capabilities Space and Cyber Capabilities Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 April 2026
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Vice-Marshal Benjamin Sleeman CSC DSM Acting Chief Joint Capabilities Joint Capabilities Group Date: 16 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - INNOVATION AND ASYMMETRIC CAPABILITIES

Lead: Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC, Vice Chief of the Defence Force.

Supporting: Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO, Chief of Navy, to support on Navy systems.

Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC, Chief of Army, to support on Army systems.

Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM, Chief of Air Force, to support on Air Force Systems.

Hugh Jeffrey, Deputy Secretary Strategy, Policy, and Industry, to support on AUKUS.

Prof Tanya Monro AC, Chief Defence Scientist, to support on science and technology priorities.

Context: Innovative technology and asymmetric capability development are critical to ensuring Defence is fit for purpose in addressing Australia's most significant strategic risks, with the Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator (ASCA) supporting this effort through mission-focused technology acceleration for the ADF.

Key Messages

- ASCA is investing up to \$4.3 billion over the next decade to fast-track delivery of critical capabilities, ensuring the ADF remains effective in a rapidly evolving strategic environment.
- As at 31 March 2026, ASCA has launched five Missions, transferred Ghost Shark, delivered two Innovation Challenges and executed 126 contracts worth \$405.2 million to accelerate capability at pace.
- Strong collaboration with Australian industry remains central to ASCA's ability to deliver relevant, scalable capability solutions for Defence personnel.
- Investment in emerging technologies is enhancing Defence's asymmetric advantage, including advanced autonomous systems designed to operate in contested environments.

Talking Points

Innovation and Asymmetry

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy affirms that rapid innovation and the development of asymmetric advantage are fundamental to equipping the ADF for a more dangerous and unpredictable strategic environment, enabling deterrence through denial and decision advantage against potential adversaries.
- The Defence Innovation, Science and Technology Strategy, *Accelerating Asymmetric Advantage*, aligns Defence's innovation system to deliver transformational, mission-focused capability at speed from finite resources.
- Defence drives enterprise-wide asymmetric capability innovation, with ASCA providing a dedicated pathway to rapidly develop, transition, and scale priority asymmetric effects—directly enabling the integrated, focused force and advancing the Strategy of Denial.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000327

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Hugh Jeffrey, Tanya Monro

Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator (ASCA)

- . ASCA delivers mission-focused capabilities that generate asymmetric advantage for the ADF.
- . ASCA transitioned to the Vice Chief of the Defence Force Group in 2025 to more closely align Defence's technological innovation functions to ADF operational requirements, and Defence capability development and integration functions.
- . Innovation and technology are central to maintaining Defence's capability advantage. Targeted investment in the defence innovation, science and technology priorities of hypersonic weapons, high energy lasers, autonomous systems, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and undersea warfare supports the ADF's ability to respond to emerging threats, enhance situational awareness, and deliver operational effects with greater speed, precision and survivability. Working collaboratively with Capability Managers across all five domains, including their innovation organisations, ASCA focuses on delivering capabilities that are ready, relevant and aligned to Defence priorities.
- . After more than two years of operation, ASCA in partnership with Australian industry and research organisations, continues to address Defence priorities and deliver at pace:
 - Five Missions are underway, with 23 contracts signed.
 - Ghost Shark (Mission 0) has been successfully transferred to Navy as Capability Manager and to the Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group as Delivery Manager. Anduril is now in contract to deliver an operational capability.
 - ASCA has completed the Sovereign UAS Challenge and the AUKUS Pillar II Electronic Warfare Challenge, and has launched a further AUKUS Pillar II Innovation Challenge and the ASCA Undersea Navigation Challenge.
 - ASCA hosted its inaugural Pitch Day on 18 September 2024 and its second Pitch Day on 3 November 2025. ASCA has released the Request for Information Packs for a further two ASCA Pitch Days in August and October 2026:
 - : Resilient C2 – released via Austender on 10 March 2026 with a Market Brief conducted 17 March 2026; and
 - : Decoy Deception Camouflage and Concealment – released via Austender on 4 May 26 with a Market Brief conducted 13 May 2026.
- . ASCA has signed 126 contracts valued at \$405.2 million, including:
 - Missions Program – 24 contracts (\$217.5 million);
 - Innovation Incubation Program – 28 contracts (\$28.9 million);
 - Emerging and Disruptive Technologies Program – 58 contracts (\$125.1 million); and
 - Legacy Program – 16 contracts (\$33.7 million).
- . ASCA's success is underpinned by strong and sustained engagement with Australian industry. During 2024 and 2025, ASCA representatives presented at over 23 industry events and for 2026, ASCA has presented at eight industry events.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000327

Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Hugh Jeffrey, Tanya Monro

- . ASCA has commenced providing classified briefs to Industry, with the first conducted in Adelaide 25 September 2025, with further sessions planned in 2026.
- . Feedback from industry has been overwhelmingly positive. Participants commended ASCA's openness, transparency, and direct engagement with ADF personnel. Industry stakeholders reported a significant uplift in the relevance and quality of proposals, attributing this to ASCA's streamlined Innovation Challenge process and its commitment to co-design with end users.

AUKUS Innovation Challenge Series

- . ASCA is supporting the trilateral development of priority capabilities identified through AUKUS Pillar II – Advanced Capabilities.
 - The AUKUS Innovation Challenge Series is a key initiative that will accelerate advanced capabilities to the ADF and enable Australian industry to engage and develop solutions that also meet capability requirements of AUKUS partners.
- . ASCA and its partners, the United Kingdom Defence Innovation – Defence and Security Accelerator and the United States Defense Innovation Unit, have conducted two AUKUS Innovation Challenges to seek and rapidly develop innovative solutions from industry that address shared capability gaps.
- . The first AUKUS Innovation Challenge launched in March 2024 focused on electronic warfare. PentenAmio and Advanced Design Technology were selected for follow-on development contracts commencing February 2025 worth \$3.0 million and \$4.3 million respectively. The companies successfully demonstrated their developed technologies in November 2025 and ASCA is currently exploring opportunities to continue to progress these technologies with vendors.
- . The second AUKUS Innovation Challenge launched in March 2025 focused on undersea communications and control of autonomous systems. ASCA has signed contracts with Mission Systems worth \$1.6 million and L3Harris worth \$3.0 million. The third and final contract worth \$1.6 million was signed in April 2026, with technology demonstrations by November 2026.

Uncrewed Systems

- . Uncrewed systems are playing an increasingly vital role in modern warfare due to their asymmetry, persistence and ability to support a range of military operations.
 - The ADF currently operates a number of uncrewed platforms and continues to invest in emerging uncrewed technologies.
- . Defence is developing long-range autonomous undersea warfare capabilities that can conduct stealthy and persistent intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike.
 - Ghost Shark, an extra-large autonomous undersea vehicle is an exemplar of how Defence and Australian industry is rapidly developing new sovereign capabilities to respond to contemporary challenges.
 - Government announced in September 2025 that it is investing \$1.7 billion in acquiring Ghost Shark, building on approximately \$140 million already invested in

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the development of the Ghost Shark platform, payloads and production facilities since entering into a collaborative contract with Anduril Australia in 2022.

- Speartooth is a large uncrewed undersea vehicle designed for long range, extended duration operations. Deployment and integration of kinetic and non-kinetic for the platform is being explored
 - On 11 March 2026, the Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP, announced the Government is investing \$176 million for the Australian-designed and built Bluebottle Uncrewed Surface Vessel to significantly boost long-range intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability.
 - Ocius Bluebottle is an uncrewed surface vessel that will augment the ADF's surface and sub-surface intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. Defence continue to engage with Ocius on future capability investment opportunities.
- MQ-28A Ghost Bat, a Collaborative Combat Aircraft, is a cutting edge autonomous capability and the first military aircraft in more than 50 years to be designed, engineered and manufactured in Australia.
 - Autonomous systems work with crewed aircraft and have the potential to fundamentally change the way the ADF operates.
 - Government's total commitment to the development of MQ-28A, under DEF 6014, is \$1.01 billion.
 - Government is investing nearly \$1.4 billion in autonomous collaborative platforms, including MQ-28A, under AIR 6015 – Autonomous Collaborative Platforms.
 - The MQ-28A will compete for Germany's Collaborative Combat Aircraft program, under a partnering agreement between Boeing Australia and Rheinmetall.
- Defence is also developing and acquiring counter uncrewed systems and technologies to provide capability options for the ADF, including protection of personnel, platforms and bases from drones.
 - The Government has allocated over \$10 billion for drone and counter-drone technology and autonomous systems in the 2026 Integrated Investment Program.
 - The ADF has been developing and operating advanced drone systems for many years and continues to develop these capabilities to meet operational needs. Defence is also acquiring and developing counter-uncrewed systems and technologies to protect personnel, platforms and bases from drone threats.
- Project LAND 156 was approved in February 2025 to deliver a counter small uncrewed aerial capability that protects domestic and deployed ADF force elements from threats posed by drones.
 - Project LAND 156 demonstrates delivery of speed to capability.
 - : Just five months after the announcement, the Government had issued a suite of contracts worth \$41.4 million to 20 vendors, including 14 Australian companies.

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: In August 2025, Leidos Australia was announced as Project LAND 156's Systems Integration Partner in a contract valued at \$41.8 million.

- Defence is examining developments in Ukraine, the Middle East and other conflict zones, and applying these lessons to strengthen its capacity and capability to detect, track and defeat extant and evolving drone threats. Through Project LAND 156, the ADF will continually upgrade and refresh capabilities to address these threats.
 - ASCA's Mission Syracuse is developing advanced counter drone technologies to provide options for integration into LAND 156. ASCA has signed contracts with two vendors (AIM Defence and Sypaq Systems) worth \$21.4 million and \$10.4 million respectively; a third contract is pending in 2026. Technologies developed under Mission Syracuse may be considered for acquisition under LAND 156.
- Defence partners closely with industry, academia and works with international collaborators to develop trusted autonomy of automated systems, through the Defence Science and Technology Group and through AUKUS Pillar 2.
- Defence fosters innovation through various initiatives aimed at enhancing its capabilities to achieve asymmetric advantage in a rapidly evolving strategic environment, including through dedicated service innovation units, such as Army's Robotic and Autonomous Systems Implementation and Coordination Office, Air Force's Jericho Disruption Innovation, and Navy's Maritime Integrated Capabilities.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
21 April 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the signing of two contracts under Mission Syracuse, as part of the Government's investment of up to a \$7 billion dollars in counter drone technology.
31 March 2026	Rheinmetall and Boeing Australia announced their intent to partner on the MQ-28 and pitch for the Germany Collaborative Combat Aircraft competition.
11 March 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that the Government will invest \$176 million in a new fleet of Australian-made Bluebottle uncrewed vessels.
29 January 2026	The Government announced it is boosting Australia's counter-drone capability by partnering with industry through a new advisory and procurement panel and updating Defence regulations to empower the ADF, in support of law enforcement, to detect and defeat hostile drones domestically to protect personnel, assets, critical infrastructure and public safety.
6 January 2026	Defence announced that the Australian Government is investing almost \$40 million through ASCA's Emerging and Disruptive Technologies program to strengthen the ADF's Decision Advantage, funding 14 AI-enabled projects across all domains to deliver faster, better-informed decision-making and build future asymmetric capability.

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9 December 2025	The Government announced the acquisition of six additional MQ-28A Block 2 and the development of a prototype MQ-28A Block 3 as part of a \$1.4 billion investment.
10 September 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced a \$1.7 billion contract to Anduril Australia under the Ghost Shark program.
27 August 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the acquisition of counter-drone capabilities for the ADF as part of a \$1.3 billion investment.
25 August 2025	The Government announced the signing of three additional Information Warfare and Quantum contracts as part of the Emerging and Disruptive Technologies program.
19 August 2025	The Government announced the successful completion of the Sovereign Uncrewed Aerial Challenge and that Defence is acquiring additional units from across the three companies valuing over \$1.5million.
24 July 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced through Project LAND 156 and Mission Syracuse, the acceleration in acquiring cutting-edge drone and counter-drone technologies for the Australian Defence Force to keep Australians safe and protect our military assets.
23 May 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry spoke at a Gold Coast Press Conference about the re-shaping of ASCA.
16 May 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced launch of Mission Talon-Strike: Albanese Government to accelerate development of loitering munitions.
9 May 2025	The Government announced the launch of Mission Syracuse: ASCA Launches next Defence mission focused on counter small uncrewed aerial systems.
31 March 2025	The Government announced the launch of the second AUKUS Innovation Challenge: <i>AUKUS partners launch Innovation Challenge 2025</i> .

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
11 December 2025	FOI	An individual requested documents on incident reports, testing failures, missed milestones, or testing incidents for Ghost Shark.	Decision not yet finalised.
11 December 2025	FOI	An individual made an FOI request in regards to all briefings the Minister for Defence Industry has received regarding Anduril Industries and/or its operations in Australia.	Decision finalised.

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Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Hugh Jeffrey, Tanya Monro

15 October 2025	QoN	No. 242, Ghost Shark and Ghost Bat. Senator Cash, concept of operations and ownerships of intellectual property for Ghost Shark and Ghost Bat.	Tabled.
11 September 2025	FOI	An individual requested information relating to the ownership of intellectual property associated with the development of MQ-28A.	Decision finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 8 May 2026, Defence Technology Review, [NIOA adds punch to Sypag's drone interceptor](#).
- 6 May 2026, Coolah District Diary, [Government to invest up to \\$7 billion in counter drone defence](#).
- 1 May 2026, Australian Defence Magazine, [UTS Wins Defence AI Contract](#).
- 22 April 2026, Gregor Ferguson, [Defence to invest up to \\$7 billion in C-UAS capabilities](#).
- 22 April 2026, Andrew McLaughlin, [Government ups investment in counter-drone systems after lessons from Middle East and Ukraine](#).
- 17 April 2026, James Riley, [Defence embraces future with private financing](#).
- 15 April 2026, Gregor Ferguson, [ASCA calls for Persistent and Pervasive ISR](#).
- 31 March 2026, Stephen Kuper, Space Connect, [Australian Quantum tech start-up launches world first optical clock component into orbit](#).
- 29 March 2026, Gregor Ferguson, Wings Magazine, [Acquisition Reforms](#).
- 29 March 2026, Wings Magazine, [\\$40m for technology development](#).
- 29 March 2026, Wings Magazine, [Ready today prepared for the future](#).
- 20 March 2026, Mark Story, Azzet, [IPO watch: Defence drone firm eyes ASX debut](#).
- 10 March 2026, University of Technology Sydney, [AI research charts a new course for naval technology](#).
- 5 March 2026, Tegan Jones, SmartCompany, [Australian AI start-ups may face the same defence dilemma as OpenAI, Anthropic](#).
- 24 February 2026, Mark Kirk, United States Studies Centre, [Is AUKUS Pillar II a solution in need of a problem?](#)
- 20 February 2026, Gregor Ferguson, EX2, [Defence tests autonomous capabilities during EX AUKUS Maritime Big Play](#).
- 19 February 2026, Jason Van Schyff, The Strategist, [Making the Advanced Capability Investment Fund count](#).

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Last updated: 13 May 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, Lieutenant General Simon Stuart,
Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, Hugh Jeffrey, Tanya Monro

- 10 February 2026, Johnathan Nally, SpatialSource, [PNT assurance in the age of NAVWAR](#).
- 6 February 2026, Malcolm Davis, Australian Air Power Today, [ADF autonomous warfare go BIG go FAST](#).

Division: Vice Chief of Defence Force Group	
PDR No: SB26-000327	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Director Strategic Plans and Policy Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: MAJGEN Hugh Meggitt, AM CSC Head Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 May 2026
Consultation: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, DSC, CSC, OAM Chief of Air Force, Air Force Commodore Michael Turner, CSM and Bar Director General Maritime Integrated Capabilities, Navy Brigadier James Kidd, DSM (and Bar), CSM Director General Future Land Warfare, Army Brigadier James Davis, AM, CSC Director General Systems and Integration, Army s47E(d) a/Assistant Secretary AUKUS Policy and Engagement, Strategy Policy and Industry Group	
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, AO, CSC Vice Chief of the Defence Force	Date: 10 April 2026

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - AIR DOMAIN

Lead: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM, Chief of Air Force.

Supporting: Air Vice-Marshal Gerald van Leeuwen AM CSC, Head Aerospace Systems to support on program delivery.

Context: Defence continues to introduce the latest and most advanced combat capabilities to meet the needs of the 2024 National Defence Strategy.

Key Messages

- In December 2024, the final F-35A Lightning II was delivered to Australia, bringing the fleet to 72 aircraft.
- On 7 July 2025, Defence achieved Final Operational Capability for AIR 6000 Phase 2A/2B – F-35A Lightning II Acquisition.
- In July 2024, the first MQ-4C Triton arrived in Australia, the second and third aircraft arrived in May 2025, and the final MQ-4C is planned for delivery in 2028.
- In February 2025, the MQ-4C Triton completed its first flight, participated in Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025, and continues to progress through test and evaluation events to support realisation of an operational capability.
- In January 2026, the first MC-55A Peregrine arrived in Australia. The second MC-55A was delivered in March 2026. The aircraft has entered test and evaluation to support introduction to service.

Talking Points**F-35A Lightning II**

- The F-35A Lightning II will continue to be Australia's most capable and survivable aircraft for conducting air-to-air combat missions against advanced threat aircraft and air-surface missions against well-defended targets.
- Continued investment in the fleet will provide incremental improvements to the aircraft's capabilities, including integration of long-range strike munitions such as the Long Range Anti-Ship Missile, Advanced Anti-Radiation Guided Missile – Extended Range, Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile – Extended Range and the Joint Strike Missile.
- Air Force will continue to optimise and increase effective use of assigned funding. Recent changes to the F-35 support contracts moved us from a period of surge to a normalised level of support. BAE Systems Australia will continue to provide regional depot maintenance, repair, overhaul, and upgrade services for the global fleet. Depot maintenance is planned to increase from 2026. Lockheed Martin Australia (LM) continues to support the F-35 Program, including Air Force workforce supplementation, as well the delivery of regional services through the F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO).

MQ-4C Triton

- The MQ-4C Triton is a high-altitude, long-endurance, maritime intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance capability that will enable persistent patrol of Australia's strategic areas of interest and maritime approaches.

- The 2016 Defence White Paper stated Defence would acquire up to seven MQ-4C Triton aircraft through a Cooperative Program with the United States.
- Defence joined the Cooperative Program to realise the benefits of shared design and development of the MQ-4C Triton to meet our operational surveillance requirements whilst maximising interoperability.
- On 3 March 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister and Chief of Air Force announced Number 9 Squadron as the operating squadron of the MQ-4C Triton.
- On 19 September 2023, the Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced that the Government had approved the purchase of a fourth MQ-4C Triton.
- The 2024 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program states that Australia will acquire four MQ-4C Triton aircraft to undertake maritime surveillance at greatly extended ranges to detect, deter and respond to potential adversary capabilities.
- Australia's first MQ-4C Triton arrived at RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory, in June 2024. The Deputy Prime Minister unveiled the aircraft in July 2024 and it conducted its first flight in February 2025.
- Australia's second and third MQ-4C Triton Uncrewed Aerial Vehicle arrived at RAAF Base Tindal in May 2025. The three air vehicles are conducting training, test and evaluation events, including participation in exercises such as Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025 and multiple domestic exercises during 2026.
- Australia's fourth MQ-4C Triton is in production and scheduled for delivery in 2028. There are no plans to expand the Triton fleet beyond four aircraft.

MC-55A Peregrine

- The MC-55A Peregrine is a first-of-type Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Electronic Warfare aircraft that will enable delivery of multiple sources of intelligence in support of Defence operations.
- On 18 March 2019, the Minister for Defence Industry announced the acquisition of four modified Gulfstream G550 aircraft – to be designated the MC-55A Peregrine – for the Royal Australia Air Force.
- Defence is acquiring MC-55A through a Foreign Military Sales arrangement with the United States Air Force.
- Australia's first MC-55A Peregrine arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Edinburgh, South Australia, on 22 January 2026.
- On 24 January 2026, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the arrival of Australia's first of four MC-55A Peregrine aircraft at Royal Australian Air Force Base Edinburgh, South Australia.
- The aircraft has commenced test and evaluation to support introduction into service.
- The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced all four aircraft will be delivered in 2026.

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Last updated: 13 April 2026

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- The second aircraft arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Edinburgh on 12 March 2026.

Special Purpose Aircraft

- Special Purpose Aircraft have flown authorised persons since 1959. Special Purpose Aircraft support the Government to conduct business in a timely, efficient and secure manner, enabling Government business to continue when commercial travel options are not suitable.
 - The aircraft afford passengers an efficient and secure transport option with reduced transit times. Cabin security and secure communications allow Government passengers to continue working during the flight.
- The Special Purpose Aircraft fleet consists of two 737-8 Boeing Business Jets, three Dassault Falcon 7X aircraft and one KC-30A Government Transport and Communications aircraft.
- These aircraft ensure authorised persons can transit efficiently and securely to fulfil parliamentary and international duties, supporting Australia's position as an important diplomatic partner in our region and the world.
- When Special Purpose Aircraft demand exceeds capacity, Defence seeks advice from the Government as to which tasks are to be prioritised.
- Approval processes for the use of Special Purpose Aircraft are outlined in the *Guidelines for the Use of Special Purpose Aircraft*, which is available on the Defence website.
- *Special Purpose Aircraft* schedules are regularly published on the Defence website.

Background

F-35A Lightning II

- F-35A Lightning II Initial Operational Capability was declared on 28 December 2020, defined as one operationally-ready squadron and one unit providing a sovereign training capability.
- The final Australian F-35A arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Williamtown on 18 December 2024, to mark the completion of Australia's current orders.
- On 7 July 2025, Defence achieved Final Operational Capability for AIR 6000 Phase 2A/2B – F-35A Lightning II Acquisition.

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PDR No: SB26-000325

Last updated: 13 April 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM; Air Vice-Marshal Gerry van Leeuwen AM CSC

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
12 March 2026	On 12 March 2026, the second of four MC-55A Peregrine aircraft arrived at Royal Australian Air Force Base Edinburgh, South Australia.
28 January 2026	On 28 January 2026, Defence ministerial news released announcing that the Assistant Minister for Defence officially opened the Triton Maintenance Hangar at Royal Australian Air Force Base Tindal, Northern Territory.
24 January 2026	On 24 January 2026, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence industry announced the arrival of the first of four MC-55A Peregrine aircraft, to be operated by 10 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force.
7 July 2025	Defence achieved Final Operational Capability for AIR 6000 Phase 2A/2B – F-35A Lightning II Acquisition.
31 July 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister unveiled Australia's first MQ-4C Triton aircraft at Royal Australian Air Force Base Tindal, Northern Territory.
17 April 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister and the then titled Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery released the 2024 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program .
19 September 2023	On 19 September 2023, the then titled Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery announced that the Government had approved acquisition of a fourth MQ-4C Triton aircraft, as a combined announcement with upgrades to the P-8A Poseidon fleet.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
August 2025	FOI	An individual requested documents relating to export of F-35 parts and components	Decision finalised.
August 2023	FOI	An individual requested documents related to flights for Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister between June 2022 and August 2023. Matter subject to external review	Decision not yet finalised.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 26 March 2026, Australian Aviation published an article [RAAF's Second Peregrine Reconnaissance Plane Touches Down](#).
- On 26 March 2026, Defence Connect published an article [See more, know more: Second MC-55A Peregrine aircraft touches down in Australia](#).
- On 12 March 2026, Global Defense News published an article [Australia receives second MC-55A Peregrine intelligence aircraft for Indo-Pacific surveillance](#).

- On 5 February 2026, The Canberra Times published an article [RAAF to fly same private jet model operated by billionaires](#).
- On 28 January 2026, [NT News](#), [Australian Aviation](#) and [ABC news](#) published articles regarding the completion and opening of the Triton Maintenance Hangar at RAAF Tindal.
- On 28 January 2026, Global Defense News published an article [First MC-55A Peregrine Delivered as U.S. Air Force Expands Joint Intel Missions with Australia](#).
- On 25 January 2026, Contact published an article [Australia's first Peregrine arrives](#).
- On 25 January 2026, Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter published an article [L3Harris delivers intelligence aircraft to USAF: US will transfer planes to RAAF](#).
- On 24 January 2026, Australian Defence Magazine published an article [Arrival of First MC-55A](#).
- On 23 January 2026, The Nightly published an article [MC-55A Peregrine spy plane: ADF's new 'eyes and ears' in the sky finally arrives](#).
- On 23 January 2026, Australian Aviation published an article [RAAF Receives Its First Peregrine Surveillance Aircraft](#).
- On 23 January 2026, Defence Connect published an article [Australia's first MC-55A Peregrine aircraft arrives at RAAF Base Edinburgh](#).
- On 12 December 2025, the Australian Defence Magazine published an article stating [that Defence has declared FOC for the F-35 Lightning](#).
- On 6 November 2025, the Australian published an article by Ben Packham on [F-35 Sustainment Funding](#), reporting that dozens of BAE Systems Australia and Lockheed Martin workers tasked with maintaining and upgrading the Australian F-35A aircraft have been redeployed due to a Defence wide austerity drive to pay for nuclear submarines and surface ships.
- On 23 October 2025, The Australian published an article reporting that [Defence is delaying projects, reducing maintenance costs and cutting workforce spending](#).
- On 16 October 2025, The Australian published an article relating to [Triton's participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre](#) and commencement of operational test and evaluation.
- On 31 July 2025, ABC (USA) reported on a [United States Navy F-35C crash in California](#), with the pilot ejecting safely and no other personnel harmed.
- On 16 June 2025, the Australian published an article by Nigel Pittaway reporting an [Air of anticipation: RAAF planners look beyond F-35](#) for future unmanned aircraft, including the Global Combat Aircraft Program.
- On 19 December 2024, the Australian Defence Magazine published an article titled [RAAF completes F-35A fleet](#) indicating the final three F-35A aircraft landed in Australia on 18 December 2024, six years after the first two F-35A arrived in Australia.
- On 5 September 2024, the Australian Defence Magazine published an article titled [Australia to introduce Joint Strike Missile from 2025](#) reporting that Defence has signed a \$142 million contract with Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace to acquire Joint Strike Missiles (JSM) for the Royal Australian Air Force's F-35A fleet, with deliveries of the missile to begin in 2025.

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PDR No: SB26-000325

Last updated: 13 April 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM; Air Vice-Marshal Gerry van Leeuwen AM CSC

Division: Air Force	
PDR No: SB26-000325	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Director General Air Combat Capability Air Force Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Air Vice-Marshal Nicholas Hogan Head of Air Force Capability Air Force Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 13 April 2026
Consultation: Air Commodore David Houghton Director General Aerospace Combat Systems Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group Date: 7 April 2026 Air Commodore Alison MacCarthy Director General Aerospace and Response Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group Date: 7 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM Chief of Air Force Date: 14 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - LAND DOMAIN

Lead: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC, Chief of Army.

Supporting: Major General Richard Vagg DSC, Head Land Capability.

Context: Following the release of the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, Army is transforming to adopt new concepts, roles, capabilities, organisation and force posture, and reviewing the state of the Army profession.

Key Messages

- Since the release of the Defence Strategic Review in April 2023, the Army has rapidly transformed in response to Government direction to optimise for littoral manoeuvre with a long-range land and maritime strike capability.
- The Army is executing its largest equipment recapitalisation in generations, with nearly every major land warfare system to be replaced with world leading equipment between now and 2030.
- New concepts and capabilities position the Army to support maritime and air force projection and manoeuvre to hold adversary forces at risk, control strategic land positions, provide localised sea control and denial, maintain persistent forward presence, and protect and sustain deployed forces.
- The Army has reorganised, including its headquarters to enable more effective command and control during conflict.
- The Army is delivering capabilities in accordance with its approved budget and the 2026 Integrated Investment Program direction.
- The Army is responding proactively to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to strengthen its culture, individual and collective resilience.

Talking Points**Concepts**

- Army's transformation includes new concepts to conduct multi-domain operations with a focus on littoral warfighting, supported by long-range land and maritime strike.
 - The new land concepts link 2026 National Defence Strategy direction to Army's operational approach with a focus on littoral warfare, controlling strategic land positions and denying adversaries access to Australia's northern approaches.
 - These concepts have driven new doctrine, force structures and changes to training in Army schools.
- Army aligns its conceptual efforts to the National Defence Strategy cycle, which occurs on a biennial basis.
 - Army's concepts are contemporary, strategically led and threat informed.

Command, Control and Posture

- On 28 September 2023, the Deputy Prime Minister announced a new force structure, enhanced posture and command and control changes.

- These structural and posture changes best leverage the key characteristics of land forces: persistence, asymmetry, presence, versatility and value.
- . Army implemented command and control changes in early 2025.
 - Army Headquarters is designed to exercise command and control in war. The bulk of the Army is organised to fight as two Divisions and three enabling commands.
 - : The 1st (Australian) Division on littoral operations.
 - : The 2nd (Australian) Division on homeland defence.
 - : Special Operations Command is functionally aligned to four core outputs: special reconnaissance, strategic strike, special warfare and technical enablement.
 - : Army Aviation Command delivers aviation capability to support the generation of land power for the Integrated Force.
 - : Forces Command delivers individual and collective training through a unified land training system that sets the conditions for Army's contribution to Defence expansion or mobilisation.
- . Army also created:
 - the 10th Fires Brigade to deliver long-range land and maritime strike, and air and missile defence; and
 - the Littoral Manoeuvre Group to operate medium and heavy littoral manoeuvre vessels.
- . Battlefield Aviation disposition:
 - Support to the Battlefield Aviation capability has been simplified through a reduction to two strategic industry partnerships and operating nodes.
 - : A Boeing Defence Australia node is centred in Townsville, Queensland to support the AH-64E Apache and CH-47F Chinook helicopter fleets.
 - : A Lockheed Martin Australia and Sikorsky node centred in the Sydney, New South Wales region, supporting the UH-60M Black Hawk and Navy's MH-60R Seahawk.
 - On 1 July 2023, Government announced its decision to relocate the 1st Aviation Regiment from Darwin, Northern Territory to Townsville, Queensland. This relocation has commenced, coinciding with the introduction into service of the AH-64E Apache into Townsville, and the relocation of the 16th Aviation Brigade Headquarters from Brisbane to Townsville.
- . Army made hard choices to achieve these changes within assigned resources:
 - disestablishing the 6th Brigade;
 - redesignating the 9th Brigade as a part time formation;
 - disestablishing the 7th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment; and
 - re-rolling the 1st Armoured Regiment from an armoured cavalry regiment to a dedicated experimentation unit to test, develop and integrate future land combat concepts and emerging technologies.

Capability

- . Army capability delivery is focused on:
 - Long Range Strike:
 - : Government has selected the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System to equip Army's two long-range fires regiments. An initial delivery of eight High Mobility Artillery Rocket System launchers has arrived in Australia, with a further 20 to be delivered later in 2026.
 - : Army will continue to progressively introduce increments of the Precision Strike Missile to extend the range and variety of targets that land based long-range fires can strike. Precision Strike Missile was delivered two years ahead of schedule, and a live-fire demonstration was conducted on Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025.
 - : The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System also supports the firing of Australian-made Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles. The manufacture of these missiles in Australia provides a pathway for future long-range fires munitions – such as the Precision Strike Missile – to be locally manufactured.
 - Littoral Manoeuvre:
 - : In June 2024, Government approved the build of 18 Landing Craft Medium and 15 Amphibious Vehicle Logistics under LAND 8710 Phase 1. Defence is now working with Austal Defence Australia to commence construction of Landing Craft Medium in 2026. Birdon Pty Ltd has been contracted to design and deliver the Amphibious Vehicle Logistics.
 - : In November 2024, Government selected the Damen Naval-designed Landing Ship Transport 100 as the Landing Craft Heavy design.
 - : In February 2026, Defence and Austal Defence Australia executed the Landing Craft Heavy Build Tasking Statement, valued at over \$4 billion. The Tasking Statement will see Austal Defence Australia deliver eight Landing Ship Transport 100 Landing Craft Heavy vessels.
 - : Ongoing Defence recruitment initiatives, supported by accelerated training, have significantly expanded the specialist soldier-mariner workforce required to operate large hull landing craft in open-ocean conditions, ensuring crews are prepared for the delivery of the first vessels.
 - Combined Arms Land System:
 - : The Combined Arms Land System centres on the M1A2 SEPv3 Abrams main battle tank. 75 tanks have now been delivered and are being operated in training and on regional activities.
 - : Army has also received 14 of the 29 Assault Breaching Vehicles and eight of the 17 Joint Assault Bridges. Initial training commenced in August 2025.
 - : Army has received 25 Block I and 19 Block II Boxer Combat Reconnaissance vehicles. Six Block II Boxers deployed on Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2025.
 - : The Combined Arms Land System will be supported by 30 AS9 Huntsman Self-Propelled Howitzers and 15 AS10 Armoured Resupply Vehicles.

Defence has received the first seven AS9s, along with the first AS10, and commenced operator training at the School of Artillery, in Puckapunyal, Victoria. Vehicle production is ongoing at the Hanwha Centre of Excellence, Geelong.

- : In July 2023, Government approved the acquisition of the Hanwha Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle. The first vehicle is scheduled to be delivered in 2027. The design process to support this delivery schedule is progressing as planned. Defence has received prototype hulls from South Korea that will support the conduct of verification and validation activities for the vehicles.
- Battlefield Aviation
 - : Army's Battlefield Aviation capability is rebuilding capacity through proven and mature platforms.
 - : In February 2023, Government approved the acquisition of 40 UH-60M Black Hawk Utility Helicopters with delivery commencing from July 2023 and Initial Operating Capability achieved in December 2024. As at 20 April 2026, 19 UH-60M Black Hawks have been delivered to Australia. All 40 aircraft are expected by 2030.
 - : Government approved the acquisition of 29 AH-64E Apache helicopters in January 2022 to replace the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters. The first four AH-64E Apache helicopters were delivered to Australia in October and November 2025, with flying operations commencing in Townsville on 27 November 2025. On 12 May 2026, a further two aircraft were delivered, bringing the total in Australia to six. All 29 aircraft are expected by 2029.
 - : Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter withdrawal activities have commenced in accordance with the approved End of Service Strategy. Defence is developing disposal options.
 - : An expanded fleet of 14 CH-47F Chinook helicopters achieved Initial Operating Capability in June 2025, and will continue to deliver Defence's battlefield helicopter capability through to the achievement of Final Operating Capability in 2028.
- Integrated Air and Missile Defence:
 - : LAND 19 is introducing an integrated short range ground based air defence capability for Army, which will contribute to the Australian Integrated Air and Missile Defence System. The short range ground based air defence system is based on the Raytheon-Kongsberg National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System, enhanced with the integration of the CEA Technologies Active Electronically-Scanned Array radars.
 - : The first National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System live fire activity took place at Woomera Test Range in November 2023, and Initial Operating Capability was declared by the Chief of Army in December 2023.
- Robotics and Autonomous Systems and Counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems:
 - : Army is establishing the organisational structures, workforce skills, training pipelines and governance frameworks required to field uncrewed and counter-uncrewed systems at scale from 2027.

- : LAND 135 – Uncrewed Land Warfare is currently undergoing strategy planning and consultation. LAND 135 seeks to advance Army's Robotics and Autonomous Systems capability through a 'learn, experiment, innovate' methodology to invigorate Australian industry and academia.
- : LAND 156 – Counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems. Defence has awarded contracts worth \$41.5 million to 21 vendors, including 15 Australian companies, to rapidly deliver dismounted counter-drone capability and technologies. These counter-uncrewed aerial systems are being delivered to the ADF's highest readiness forces under the LAND 156 capability rollout.
- : DEF 129 Tactical Uncrewed Aircraft Systems has replaced Army's RQ-7B Shadow 200 with the Integrator, providing an enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability, based in Brisbane Queensland. Minimum Viable Capability was declared in December 2025.
- : DEF 129 Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems is delivering small uncrewed aerial systems for use by the Army and the Air Force. These include the Quantum Vector 2-in-1 and the Sypaq CorvoX. The Vector Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems is assembled and sustained by Quantum-Systems in Brisbane, Queensland. The CorvoX Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems was developed through the Defence Innovation Hub and is manufactured and sustained in Melbourne, Victoria. Delivery commenced in Quarter 1, 2026. DEF 129 Small Uncrewed Aircraft Systems are scheduled to deliver Minimum Viable Capability in 2027.

Culture

- . The Army is preparing its soldiers for the challenges of the future operating environment.
 - This includes a review into the state of the Army profession to examine the Army's jurisdiction, professional body of knowledge and regulation.
- . Army continues to respond proactively to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide to reduce the incidence of suicide and suicidality, by building individual and collective resilience, cohesive teams, and aligning policy and practice and better integration of families.
- . Related to this work, Army is implementing a system to monitor and record exposure to low-level blast during training, and concurrently introducing controls to reduce blast and overpressure injuries – referred to as Mild Traumatic Brain Injury.
 - This is informed by allies and partners best practice and an advisory panel comprising of Australia's leading brain injury experts.
 - Although no specific threshold for low-level blast exposure currently exists, general workplace health and safety legislation mandates that risks be minimised so far as reasonably practicable.
 - : The United States has introduced an interim threshold of 4 pounds per square inch. Defence introduced the same value as an interim risk management threshold on 1 October 2025.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
28 April 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced that it had selected the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System and the Precision Strike Missile for the Australian Army's second long-range fires regiment.
13 April 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the test firing of the first Australian-made Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles at the Woomera Test Range in South Australia.
30 March 2026	Defence announced the establishment of the new Littoral Manoeuvre Group. Landing craft battalions will be located in Brisbane, the Northern Territory and north Queensland. This was supported by a parade and media event at Gallipoli Barracks.
27 March 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the completion of the first batch of Australian-built Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles. This was supported by a departmental and industry media engagement at Rheinmetall Defence Australia's facility at Redbank, Queensland.
26 February 2026	Hanwha Defence Australia announced completion of the first three Australian produced AS9s with accompanying Ministerial Doorstop .
24 February 2026	Defence announced the signing of a \$4 billion agreement for the construction of eight landing craft heavy vessels. This was supported by a departmental media engagement at Henderson.
3 December 2025	Australian soldiers fired the AS9 Huntsman 155mm self-propelled howitzer on Australian soil for the first time on 1 December 2025 .
28 November 2025	Defence announced the commencement of AH-64E Apache flying operations in Townsville. This was amplified on 5 December 2025 by a departmental and industry media engagement at RAAF Base Townsville to discuss Army Aviation milestones.
2 October 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Industry announced the arrival of Australia's first AH-64E Apache attack helicopters. This was supported by a departmental media engagement at RAAF Base Townsville.
27 August 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that the Government has appointed Leidos Australia as the LAND 156 project's Systems Integration Partner in a contract valued at \$45.9 million.
25 July 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the successful test firing of a Precision Strike Missile from a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System by the Army for the first time.
24 July 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry announced that under Project LAND 156, contracts worth \$16.9 million to 11 vendors have been issued, including five Australian companies, to rapidly deliver counter-drone capability and technology.

8 July 2025	Defence announced the Army Aviation Training Centre will transfer flying training to Oakey from 2026. Locating elements of the Black Hawk fleet is crucial to fulfilling Defence's utility helicopter requirements, and is the next step in establishing a sovereign UH-60M training capability.
1 July 2025	Defence announced that in a world first, Australian Army soldiers fired an AIM-9 Sidewinder from the Hawkei High-Mobility Launcher at Woomera Test Range.
18 June 2025	Defence announced that Australian Army sappers have begun training on the M1150 Assault Breacher Vehicle and M1110 Joint Assault Bridges, which significantly enhance soldier protection and mobility in conflict.
6 June 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister announced Australia and the United States have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Precision Strike Missile production, sustainment and follow-on development.
1 May 2025	Defence announced the Australian Army has consolidated its heavy armour capabilities in Townsville, to bolster operational readiness and align with the 2024 National Defence Strategy.
30 April 2025	Defence announced the realisation of 10th Brigade located in the Edinburgh Defence Precinct, and equipped with new capabilities, including National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.
24 March 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister announced the delivery of the first two High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, providing the ADF with long-range precision strike capability as directed in the Defence Strategic Review.
27 February 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister announced the receipt of the first two AS9 Huntsmans and the first AS10 armoured ammunition resupply vehicle. The Deputy Prime Minister also announced the commencement of domestic production of these vehicles at the Hanwha Armoured Vehicle Centre of Excellence.
19 February 2025	The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence Industry announced the achievement of an Initial Operational Capability for the Australian Army's UH-60M Black Hawks.
22 November 2024	The Government announced that it had selected a design by Damen Shipyards Group as the preferred option for the Landing Craft Heavy.
23 July 2024	The Minister for Defence Industry announced the accelerated build of 18 Medium Littoral Vessels in addition to heavy landing craft, all to be built by Austal at Henderson, Western Australia.

Key Information Requests

- Nil

Relevant Media Reporting

- Australian media has reported extensively on all the issues represented in this paper.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000323

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC; Major General Richard Vagg DSC

Division: Land Capability Division	
PDR No: SB26-000323	
Prepared by: Brigadier James Kidd DSM and Bar, CSM Director General Future Land Warfare Army Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 9 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Major General Richard Vagg DSC Head Land Capability Army Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 29 April 2026
Consultation: Brigadier James Davis, Director General Systems and Integration Army Date: 17 April 2026 Brigadier Andrew Thomas, Director General Aviation Army Date: 17 April 2026 Brigadier Andrew Langford, Director General Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Land, Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Group Date: 17 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC Chief of Army Date: 30 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE SATCOM SYSTEM

Lead: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Chief of Joint Capabilities.

Supporting: Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn, Head Space and Cyber Capabilities.

Chris Deeble AO CSC, Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment to support on commercial aspects.

Context: Defence is developing a resilient, multi-orbit satellite communication architecture.

Key Messages

- The 2026 National Defence Strategy describes space as a critical enabler of military operations, supporting communication, targeting and situational awareness.
- The 2026 National Defence Strategy directs the delivery of a resilient, multi-orbit satellite communications system that will provide communications to Australian Defence Forces in the Indo-Pacific.

Talking Points

- Satellite communication capabilities are delivered through Space Project 9102 (the project).
- Defence will take a continuous capability development approach to evolve its satellite communication capability. The project will continuously maintain and manage the evolution of capability through a combination of orbits and providers.
- Defence will look to leverage Australian innovation in future solutions for the project, balanced against the user requirement.

Dependence on Military Partners and Commercial Providers

- Australia's cooperation with international partners, including the United States, is managed through robust policy frameworks and principles that maintain and protect our sovereignty.
- Existing frameworks guide how we collaborate together to conduct activities and acquire capability effects in line with Australia's national interests.
- The United States has mature space domain awareness and space control capabilities to protect and defend satellite communication assets in orbit. Australia is afforded these additional protections to our military services as a contributing partner.

Opportunities for Australian Industry

- Defence will look to leverage Australian innovation in future solutions for the project, balanced against the user requirement.
- Australian industry is currently engaged in the maintenance and operation of space communications ground and control infrastructure.

- Defence continues to engage Australian industry through research and development challenges to identify innovative solutions or sovereign opportunities.

Project 'Cancellation'

- Space Project 9102, formerly known as JP9102 Phase 1, was not cancelled. Defence ceased commercial activity for the Project with Lockheed Martin Australia in late 2024.
- Defence reassessed its approach to deliver a resilient satellite communication system due to emerging threats, evolving technologies and strategic priorities. The project's realignment remains consistent with the 2026 National Defence Strategy.
- The** Lockheed Martin contract for Japan's Next-Generation Defense Satellite Communication System is different from what was offered to Defence in JP9102 Phase 1. Publically available information suggests that Lockheed Martin is providing a communications payload only to Japan.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
26 June 2025	Defence released a Request for Information to industry seeking a rough order of magnitude pricing and delivery schedule, along with development and delivery risks for a resilient Narrowband satellite communication component.
4 November 2024	Defence notified Lockheed Martin Australia of the decision to cease procurement activities under SPA9102 Phase 1.
3 April 2023	Lockheed Martin Australia announced as preferred tenderer.
22 April 2021	Defence released a tender for a Defence owned and operated Geostationary Earth Orbit satellite communications system.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
Nil.			

Relevant Media Reporting

5 March 2026, Stephen Kuper, Defence Connect, 'Japan taps Lockheed Martin to deliver next-gen, resilient MIL SATCOM capability'. 28 November 2025, Ben Packham, The Australian, 'ADF at risk: old satellite kept on line'. 24 November 2025, Justin Hendry, InnovationAus, 'Defence pays Intelsat \$180m to extend satellite lifespan'. 16 October 2025, Nigel Pittaway, The Australian, 'Eggs no longer all in one basket as communication satellite program relaunched'. 27 June 2025, Max Blenkin, Australian Defence Magazine, 'Defence re-visits JP9102'.
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2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000320

Last updated: 12 May 2026

Key witnesses: Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, Chris Deeble AO CSC, Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn

- 27 June 2025, Stephen Kuper, Space Connect, [‘Exclusive: Backflip as new JP 9102 could include GEO satellite’](#).
- 27 June 2025, Stephen Kuper, Defence Connect, [‘Epic backflip: Government releases ‘new look’ 9102 program RFI’](#).
- 16 June 2025, Malcom Davis, The Australian, [‘Where next for satellite communications’](#).

Division: Space and Cyber Capabilities Division	
PDR No: SB26-000320	
Prepared by: BRIG Hamish Ashman Director General Space Capability Space Capability Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 12 May 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Rear Admiral Andrew Quinn Head Space and Cyber Capabilities Space and Cyber Capabilities Mob: s22 [REDACTED] Ph: s47E(d) [REDACTED] Date: 8 April 2026
Consultation: Air Vice-Marshal Martin Nussio Head Air Defence and Space Systems Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group Date: 9 April 2026	
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Vice-Marshal Benjamin Sleeman CSC DSM Acting Chief of Joint Capabilities Joint Capabilities Group Date: 16 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – PREPAREDNESS REPORTING

Lead: Vice Chief of the Defence Force, Air Marshal Robert Chipman, AO, CSC

Context: Andrew Tillett (*Australian Financial Review*) published an article on 30 June 2025, titled 'Defence Minister left in the dark over formal reporting', stating 'military chiefs failed for almost two and a half years to provide formal updates to the Defence Minister'.

Key Messages

- The 2024 National Defence Strategy outlined the ADF's shift from a balanced force capable of responding to a range of contingencies, to an integrated, focused force designed to address the nation's most significant strategic risks.
- This shift in strategy required Defence to review and adjust preparedness settings.
- Defence paused specific preparedness reporting from early 2023 during the development of the Defence Strategic Review and the 2024 National Defence Strategy.
- Preparedness judgements were an element of the Defence Strategic Review and the National Defence Strategy considerations that were presented to Government.
- Defence continued to advise the Government on the capacity and status of capabilities of the force through other reporting means.
- Formal preparedness reporting to Government resumed in 2025.

Talking Points**Pause in formal preparedness reporting**

- Defence maintains multiple forms of reporting to Ministers and the Government on the status of Defence capabilities, equipment, workforce, and projects.
- Preparedness reporting is structured against the requirements of the defence strategy at the time.
- The 2024 National Defence Strategy focused Defence preparation on prioritised scenarios, delivering integrated capability across the five domains to enhance lethality and range.
- Defence paused specific reporting against the superseded preparedness requirements while the new Defence Preparedness Management System was developed and introduced to meet 2024 National Defence Strategy direction.
- Internally, Defence continued to manage and report force capability risks and issues. As appropriate, these issues were reported to Government.

How Defence informed Government on preparedness during the development of the 2024 National Defence Strategy

- Defence provided specific reporting to Government related to sustainment and readiness of platforms and materiel. This included a number of classified on-occurrence reporting related to the availability of certain capabilities.
- Defence keeps the Government informed through the National Security Committee of Cabinet, on-occurrence reporting, National Defence Strategy updates and project reports.

New preparedness reporting system

- Formal preparedness reporting to Government has resumed.
- The new Defence Preparedness Management System brings the following improvements:
 - consideration of whole-of-Defence contributions to the operations of an integrated force, not just ADF contributions;
 - consideration of Defence's contributions to National Defence over time, not just contributions of the current force;
 - close linkage to intelligence assessments and National Defence Strategy updates; and
 - reporting that better reflects Defence preparedness requirements for the changing strategic environment.
- Defence is undertaking a review of the Preparedness Management System following release of the 2026 National Defence Strategy to ensure alignment.
 - Defence does not anticipate any impact on routine preparedness reporting to Government.

Media reporting on the relationship between Government and Defence

- Defence officials regularly meet with Government on a range of issues within the Defence portfolio. Defence works productively and impartially to serve the Australian Government of the day.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements.

Date	Event
30 June 2025	The Defence Preparedness Management System, which is responsible for coordinating preparedness (including reporting) across the Defence enterprise, reached Initial Operational Capability.
27 June 2025	Auditor-General Performance Audit – Sustainment of Canberra Class Amphibious Assault ships (Landing Helicopter Dock) report published.
4 November 2024	Classified investment program update, including future preparedness system details.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: 5826-000317

Last updated: 9 April 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC

15 October 2024	Classified maritime capability availability update.
16 September 2024	Classified supply ship capability update.
9 July 2024	The Vice Chief of the Defence Force approved the re-establishment of the Defence Preparedness Management System.
17 April 2024	The Deputy Prime Minister issued a media release, announcing the release of the National Defence Strategy and the Integrated Investment Program.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Released
15 October 2025	QoN	No. 9, Preparedness Reporting. Senator Michaelia Cash (Liberal, Western Australia) asked about preparedness reporting to Government, including the period of suspension and recommencement.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 31 March 2026, Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral David Johnston AC RAN address [Securing our Future: a ready and resilient Australia.](#)
- 5 March 2026, Ben Packam, The Australian, [Iranian drone swarms are a wake-up call for Australia's defence capabilities.](#)

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000317

Last updated: 9 April 2026

Key witnesses: Air Marshal Robert Chipman AO CSC

Division: Military Strategic Plans	
PDR No: SB26-000317	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Director General Defence Preparedness Defence Preparedness Branch Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 7 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Air Commodore Steven Ferguson Acting Head Military Strategic Plans Military Strategic Plans Military Strategic Plans Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 9 April 2026
Cleared by 3 Star: Air Marshal Robert Chipman, AO, CSC Vice Chief of the Defence Force Vice Chief of the Defence Force Group Date: 10 April 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES – DELIVERING THE FUTURE ESTATE

Lead: Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group.

Supporting: Peter West, First Assistant Secretary Estate Transformation

Context: The Defence estate must enable an integrated, focused and lethal ADF to address the nation's most significant strategic risks. The Defence estate needs to be logistically networked and resilient to support force posture and the ADF's ability to operate from Australia's northern bases.

Key Messages

- In response to the recommendations of the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, the Government commissioned an enterprise-wide, independent audit to assess whether the Defence estate meets contemporary operational and capability requirements, now and in the future.
- The report was delivered to the Government in December 2023.
- The Government directed Defence to undertake further analysis to understand the impacts of the audit's findings and recommendations, particularly with respect to ADF personnel and capability.
- The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance released the outcomes of the Audit, and the Government's response, on 4 February 2026.

Talking Points

- Defence is committed to implementing the Defence Estate Audit recommendations through a careful and detailed consultation process and change management plan, to ensure our people have the facilities to respond to the nation's strategic needs.
- Since the Government's announcement of the Defence Estate Audit, we have undertaken extensive consultation in Defence and with key stakeholders.
- The Prime Minister announced on 10 May 2026 that the Government will work with the Tasmanian Government to redevelop and transform the Derwent Barracks site on Dowsing Point to provide housing, open space and community infrastructure. The Defence transition from the site is expected to take at least 12 months.
- The Deputy Prime Minister and Assistant Minister have led consultation sessions in local communities around the country and hosted roundtables with key stakeholders including peak organisations including local and State Government representatives, the Australian War Memorial, Shrines of Remembrance, the National Trust, and the Returned Services League.
- Defence is finalising a history and heritage plan to ensure that significant places and important collections are managed and protected during the divestment process.

Defence Estate Audit

- The Government released the Report on 4 February 2026 after considering the full range of impacts of the proposed findings and recommendations, including any impacts to Defence capability, Defence personnel and their families, and the local community.
- A total of 68 sites were identified for divestment by the Audit. The Government has agreed to, wholly or partially, divest 67 sites.
- The independent co-leads visited more than 70 Defence sites across Australia to identify common themes, trends and issues.
- Site visits were supplemented with stakeholder engagement sessions with more than 50 Defence senior leaders.
- Internal roundtables and discussions were held with industry partners and external assurance providers as well as representatives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments and peak industry bodies.
- The Audit recommendations, including each site proposed for divestment, were rigorously assessed against Defence's current and projected capability requirements in consultation with a senior 2 Star/Band 2 steering group with representatives from all Defence Groups and Services.
- The Government has made hard decisions to divest under-used and ageing properties to enhance Defence's ability to deliver a future estate aligned to current and future capability needs.
- The National Defence Strategy 2026 reinforces the importance of implementing the Defence Estate Audit through urgent interventions to correct unsustainable costs resulting from decades of deferred decisions on estate issues.

Defence Site Divestments

- The divestment of under-used and ageing properties will enhance Defence's ability to deliver the future estate.
- 67 sites are proposed for divestment - Defence will retain 736 sites across Australia.
- Defence will transition sites to the Department of Finance over the next two years. Individual site divestment timelines will vary due to commercial sensitivities, heritage, and environmental factors.
- The Audit estimated the divestment process could generate approximately \$3 billion in gross proceeds, with transition costs of \$1.2 billion, for a net return of ~ \$1.8 billion.
- Net proceeds from the divestment program will be reinvested in the Defence portfolio to meet National Defence Strategy priorities.
- Divestment proceeds will support costs associated with the divestments program including relocation of personnel and capability, and key national security priorities in the National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Programs.

- Based on the Defence capability analysis, the Government has agreed to the partial divestment of three sites – HMAS Penguin, RAAF Laverton, Warradale Barracks and the retention of one site – Pittwater Annex in NSW.
- Partial divestments have been agreed where it was not cost effective to relocate a critical capability, but surplus land on the site could be released.
- The Pittwater Annex at HMAS Penguin provides critical training for Navy water operations and diver training for HMAS Penguin that is unable to be replicated on other Defence sites.

Properties already divested

Location	Date Sold	Sale Price \$m	Sold To
89-93 Duckworth St Garbutt Qld	1 February 2024	\$2.400	Endeavour Foundation
Former Amaroo Holiday Apartments Magnetic Island Qld	14 March 2025	\$0.859	Private Family Trust
Former Army Training Depot Haberfield, NSW	27 March 2025	\$44.545	Private residential buyers. Inner West Council purchased one lot for open parkland

If Asked: Has the Penrith Multi-User Depot (MUD) already sold?

- A sale process for the Penrith MUD is underway. Details remain commercial in confidence. Outcomes of the sale process will be announced once finalised.

Internal consultation

- 21 engagements with over 9300 staff around the country. Town hall-style meetings for personnel at affected sites were held in February and March 2026.

Engagements	Participants
Face-to-face town halls	1,405
Virtual town halls	7,943
Total internal participants	9,348

Community consultation

- A national community consultation program commenced 7 April 2026, with 18 sessions delivered across Tasmania, Queensland, Northern Territory, Victoria and New South Wales, South Australia and ACT to date. Engagements in Western Australia will occur from 9 to 11 June 2026.
- There was strong community participation (over 1,200 attendees to date), including local governments, veterans, reservists, cadets and community groups.
- Defence will continue to engage local governments, veteran groups, cadet units, and community organisations as part of divestment planning.

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Last updated: 29 May 2026
Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Peter West

PDR No: SB26-000314

- Further details on community consultation sessions will occur as the divestment process progresses.

Relocation of Defence Personnel

- Defence is undertaking a comprehensive program of engagement with all internal stakeholders, personnel, capability managers and business/community groups to shape divestment plans, including options for new workplace locations.
- Fact sheets for each divestment site are available on-line with information on proposed alternative locations to relocate people and capability.
- Consultation with APS employees will be undertaken in accordance with the Defence Enterprise Collective Agreement.
- No ADF or Australian Public Service positions will be lost as a result of the Audit. Units will not relocate until an appropriate site is identified.

Cadets and Reserves

- A Band 1 / 1-Star Cadet and Reserve Relocation Working Group is coordinating planning.
- Individual site and unit transition planning and consultation is led by the responsible Service (Navy, Army or Air Force).
- 1 Star Cadet leads have engaged local unit commanders at each site to capture local insights and help identify relocation options

Cadets

- 27 divestment sites accommodate cadet programs and 45 cadet units will be relocated.
- Cadet Site selection prioritises locations within a 15km radius, with a preference to retain units within their local community to minimise disruption.
- Two cadet units have been relocated to date
 - Youngtown Cadets relocated to Paterson Barracks, Launceston in December 2025, pending delivery of the new tri-service Cadet training depot in North Launceston.
 - Training Ship Barwon (Geelong) relocated to Newland Barracks in December 2025, and
 - Geelong Air Force Cadets (VIC) will relocate to Newland Barracks by end June 2026. Cadet representatives have been consulted on the relocation - the latest meeting was held 27 May 2026.
- Defence has identified and engaged more than 30 potential alternative locations across Tasmania and South Australia, including schools, councils and community facilities; and written to State Education Departments about relocating cadets to State schools.

Reserves

- 27 sites used by ADF Reserves will be impacted by divestment. At partial divestment sites (ie. Warradale Barracks SA) Reserves will remain on the site.

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Last updated: 29 May 2026

Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Peter West

- We are working closely with Army Headquarter to develop site-specific implementation plans to manage transition and minimise disruption to capability.
- As an example, the relocation of an Army Reserve unit at Carlton Training Depot has changed following unit consultations from a proposed transition to Simpson Barracks to Mount Waverley Training Depot.
 - Local change management meetings are convened as transition plans are developed, and led by Army Headquarters, Director General Logistics.
 - The first meeting at Carlton Training Depot was on 26 May 2026.

History and Heritage Management

- Fifteen divestment sites have Commonwealth Heritage listings. Point Cook is also included in the National Heritage List. Two sites, Pialligo South and Defence Site Maribyrnong, are undergoing divestment by Defence. Remaining sites are:
 - Victoria Barracks Brisbane, Lancer Barracks, RAAF Base Point Cook, RAAF Williams Laverton, Victoria Barracks Sydney, Victoria Barracks Melbourne (including 310 St Kilda Road), Fort Queenscliff, Irwin Barracks, HMAS Penguin, HMAS Cerberus, Randwick Barracks, Spectacle Island, Kokoda Barracks, St Kilda Training Depot and Swan Island.
 - 310 St Kilda Road, also known as the Repatriation Clinic, is protected under the Victoria Barracks Precinct Commonwealth Heritage listing.
- Defence is developing a History and Heritage Plan to inform future conservation and management options for divestment sites with heritage considerations.
 - This will be informed by consultation and engagement with heritage and veterans organisations.
 - The Assistant Minister for Defence hosted the first History and Heritage roundtable on 20 April with peak national heritage organisations.
- The divestment process will comply with heritage obligations under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*, including protecting the Commonwealth Heritage values of places to be sold.
- Once sites are no longer Commonwealth land, Defence and Finance will pursue options such as nominating places to equivalent state/territory or local heritage registers and including protective covenants in sales contracts.
- Significant museums and collections will be preserved and options for increasing public access will be identified, including relocation.
- Defence will work with state, territory and local governments and other stakeholders to conserve historically significant places and collections so the public can continue to engage with our national and military history.

If asked: Commemoration on Defence sites

- We are aware that ashes have been spread at several Defence sites. The History and Heritage treatment of sites will endeavour to honour important connection to a site.

Defence Estate Audit Independent Co-Leads

- The independent Defence Estate Audit co-leads were appointed on 1 August 2023, having been selected for their relevant skills and insights from managing large infrastructure and property portfolios.
 - Ms Jan Mason is a former Deputy Secretary in the Department of Finance and Managing Director of Defence Housing Australia.
 - Mr Jim Miller is a former Chair of the Infrastructure Victoria Board.
- The independent co-leads were engaged via an outcome-based contract to deliver a final report to the Government by the end of 2023 published on AusTender on 14 September 2023.
 - The total contract value for each co-lead was \$297,000 (GST inclusive), comprised of a fixed-fee component payable on completion of defined milestones, and a provision for reimbursable expenses.
 - Both contracts were extended to 30 June 2024 for up to five additional days to support post report activities, with services provided on a pro-rata daily rate.
 - Defence has paid the co-leads a total of \$26,143.40 post-release, bringing the total remuneration to \$608,717.86.

If asked: Did the auditors declare any conflicts of interest?

- The independent co-leads made conflict of interest declarations and these were managed appropriately in line with standard practice.

If asked: Why is the Estate Audit referred to as an Audit and not a review

- The 2023 Defence Strategic Review recommended that an enterprise-wide audit to baseline Defence estate and infrastructure, including protective security, be completed no later than the end of 2023.
- As the independent leads described in the Audit Report, it was not intended to be a traditional audit conducted to the accounting standards normally used to measure performance or financial results.
 - The Audit was designed to provide an independent assessment of Defence's estate and infrastructure to ensure it was fit for purpose; and
 - To provide clear, strategic and actionable advice to the Government against recommendations made in the Defence Strategic Review and any other estate challenges identified during the Audit.

If asked: Impact of divestments on Counter-terrorism capabilities

- The Audit recommendations, including each site proposed for divestment, were assessed against Defence's current and projected capability requirements in consultation with a senior 2 Star/Band 2 steering group with representatives from all Defence Groups and Services.
 - This included the analysis of ability to generate capability at alternate sites to a divestment site.
- The ADF plans for and can provide counter-terrorism support from sites across Australia.

- It would be inappropriate to go into the details of ADF counter-terrorism planning or requirements for security reasons.
- Following the audit divestment Defence will still have sites in all States and Territories including all capital city regions.

If asked: Impact of Victoria Barrack Sydney divestment on Counter-terrorism operations

- No significant counter terrorism operations or event support in the last 20 years has used Victoria Barracks Sydney as the primary operational site.

If asked: How is Defence engaging across Government to implement the Estate Audit?

- A regular SES Band 2 Divestment Program Steering Committee and SES Band 1 Working Group meet monthly and have representatives from Defence, Finance, Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury and the Department of Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).
- Defence and Finance are meeting weekly at the Band 1/1-Star level.

If asked: Has Defence engaged DCCEEW?

- DCCEEW attended a Government Stakeholder Roundtable with the Independent lead on 26 September 2023; three Interdepartmental Committee meetings on the report implementation in 2024, and the Divestment Program Steering Committee as outlined above.

If asked: What engagement has Defence had with the RSL?

- Mr Peter West met with Tasmanian RSL President Mr Michael Gallagher on 9 April 2026 at the RSL Tasmania Headquarters.
- The RSL participated in the Queenscliff Stakeholder Roundtable, held by DPM and AMINDEF, at the Queenscliff RSL on 29 April 2026.
- Mr Peter West phone call with RSL National President Mr Peter Tinley on 19 March 2026.
- AMINDEF and Mr Peter West met with the RSL on 26 March 2026.

If asked: How many museums are affected by the divestment program and when are they open to the public?

- Five sites included in the divestment program have museums with public access hours:

Museum	Open to the public
Lancer Barracks Museum	Sundays from 10am to 4pm
The Army Museum of New South Wales, Victoria Barracks Sydney	Every Thursday from 10am to 2pm and for one Sunday a month from 10am to 3pm
Army Museum South Queensland, Victoria Barracks Brisbane	Free escorted public tours on Wednesdays (except for every third Wednesday). Tours are not offered from mid-December to February

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Fort Queenscliff Museum	The Fort Queenscliff Heritage Association conducts tours of Fort Queenscliff on Mondays and Fridays at 11am, and on weekends at 11am and 1.45pm.
RAAF Museum at Point Cook	Open every Thursday and Sunday from 10am to 3pm.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
31 March 2026	The Assistant Minister for Defence announced the start of a series of Defence estate community consultation sessions.
14 March 2026	The Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel held a press conference at Irwin Barracks, Perth.
18 February 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry made a speech about Defence reform at the Australian Defence Magazine Congress 2026.
6 February 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister visited and held a press conference at Victoria Barracks, Sydney.
4 February 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister held a radio interview with ABC Melbourne .
4 February 2026	The Deputy Prime Minister released the Defence Estate Audit at a press conference in Canberra alongside the Assistant Minister for Defence, the Minister for Finance, and the independent co-leads, Jan Mason and Jim Miller.

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 Last updated: 29 May 2026
 Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Peter West

PDR No: SB26-000314

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
18 March 2026	OPD	Order for the Production of Documents No. 368. Senators Lambie (Jacquie Lambie Network, Tasmania) and Shoebridge (Greens, NSW), Independent Audit of the Defence Estate.	Not yet tabled.
6 March 2026	QoN	In response to No. 819, Defence Estate Audit. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, NSW), the Secretary received correspondence from the Chair of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee advising the response was not accurate and asking Defence to reconsider the response.	Updated response not yet tabled.
4 March 2026	FOI	FOI 1335. Senator James Paterson (Liberal, Victoria), request for a copy of the full unedited report of the Defence Estate Independent Audit. A refusal decision was issued on 26 March 2026	Decision finalised
23 February 2026	QoN	No. 90, Defence Estate Audit. Senator David Pocock (Independent, ACT), raised questions on the Defence Estate Audit report.	Tabled.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 863, Defence Estate Audit. Senator Sharma (Liberal, NSW), questioned the Department's processes for disposing, selling or repurposing Defence surplus or unused landholdings.	Tabled.
9 October 2025	QoN	No. 819, Defence Estate Audit. Senator Shoebridge (Independent, NSW), questioned if a copy of the Defence Estate Audit would be provided to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.	Tabled.
5 March 2025	QoN	No. 65, Defence Estate Audit. Senator Sharma (Liberal, NSW), questioned when the Defence Estate Audit will be released.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 25 May 2026, the Herald Sun published an article by Athos Sirianos titled [‘Council community ‘strongly oppose’ housing at historic Point Cook RAAF Base’](#).
- On 25 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Sue Bailey titled [‘Dowsing Point army site redevelopment hailed as nationally significant opportunity’](#).
- On 21 May 2026, the Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Read titled [‘Mosman NIMBYs fear military base sale leaves nation ‘defenceless’](#).
- On 21 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘Senate inquiry reveals \\$20m to be spent on consultants as Govt sells our military history’](#).
- On 20 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘Sacred ground for sale’](#).
- On 18 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Bridget Clarke titled [‘Tasmania army barracks to be transformed into 1000 new homes’](#).
- On 18 May 2026, Pulse Tasmania published an article titled [‘RSL Tasmania raises concerns over Derwent Barracks divestment’](#).
- On 18 May 2026, The Australian published an article by Pamela Rontziokos titled [‘Not thought through: Ex-chief of Australia’s army slams defence base sale plan’](#).
- On 14 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘Hastie: Barracks sell-off a disgrace’](#).
- On 13 May 2026, Southbank News published an article by Sean Car titled [‘Packed meeting lays bare community hopes for Defence sites as council backs school and open space vision’](#).
- On 12 May 2026, Crikey published an article by Jack Callil titled [‘What secret budget items are not for publication’](#).
- On 12 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph/NT News published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘National Trust warns Victoria Barracks sale leaves site with less protection than a post office’](#).
- On 10 May 2026, The Age published an article by Cara Waters titled [‘Reece hopes plan for historic site something to barrack for’](#).
- On 9 May 2026, the Beaudesert Bulletin published an article titled [‘Uncertainty surrounds future of Canungra Area Golf Club following Defence consultation’](#).
- On 9 May 2026, NT News published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘Government defies top general’s security warnings over Victoria Barracks sale’](#).
- On 7 May 2026, ABC News published an article by Annika Burgess titled [‘What will become of the Victoria Barracks? Communities have their say’](#).
- On 7 May 2026, Bellarine Times published an article by James Taylor titled [‘Queenscliff golf course gains unlikely national security status’](#).
- On 7 May 2026, The Daily Telegraph published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘Dollar signs over our defence’](#).
- On 1 May 2026, the Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Read titled [‘Mental health at risk if Defence golf courses sold’](#).

- On 30 April 2026, The Australian published an article by Lachlan Leeming titled [‘Steggall housing plan puts electorate off-side’](#).
- On 30 April 2026, Geelong Times published an article by James Taylor titled [‘Divestment plan promises to protect fort’s heritage values’](#).
- On 30 April 2026, Mosman Collective published an article by Anna Usher titled [‘Mosman residents to grill Defence over HMAS Penguin sale, as Masterplan clock ticks’](#).
- On 29 April 2026, Wentworth Courier published an article by Peter Jenkins titled [‘RSL slams \\$1.8bn sale of barracks’](#).
- On 4 April 2026, The Mercury published an article by Elise Kaine titled [‘Tassie defence cuts a ‘risk’](#).
- On 1 April 2026, The Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Read titled [‘Defence kicks off \\$3b land sale with ‘compelling’ training base’](#).
- On 31 March 2026, Defence Connect published an article by Bethany Alvaro titled [‘We look forward to hearing directly from communities’: Defence Estate consultations begin’](#).
- On 22 March 2026, the Beaudesert Bulletin published an article by Susie Cunningham titled [‘Open for business: golf club stays upbeat’](#).
- On 12 March 2026, the Ipswich Tribune Today published an article by Byron Peszko titled [‘Councillor lines up against any ADF Milford St sale’](#).
- On 11 March 2026, Southbank News published an article by Sean Car titled [‘Southbank unites: we want a school at Victoria Barracks’](#).
- On 11 March 2026, Real Commercial published an article by Nathan Mawby titled [‘RSL calls for Senate Inquiry into government’s \\$3bn Defence sell-off’](#).
- On 8 March 2026, The Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Read titled [‘Developers circle Defence sites as \\$5b mega-bid rejected’](#).
- On 6 March 2026, Ocean Grove Voice published an article by Jena Carr titled [‘Community opposes Fort sale’](#).
- On 6 March 2026, the Geelong Advertiser published an article by Jordan McCarthy titled [‘Golf clubs left in rough’](#).
- On 5 March 2026, the Ipswich Tribune Today published an article by Byron Peszko titled [‘ADF: no sale at Milford St’](#).
- On 5 March 2026, the Herald Sun published an article by Mark Schroffel titled [‘Future and past critical in Defence’s big sell-off’](#).
- On 4 March 2026, Inner City News published an article by Sean Car titled [‘Defence audit flags Carlton training depot for sale as local housing push gathers pace’](#).
- On 27 February 2026, Bellarine Times published an article by James Taylor titled [‘New taskforce to consult community’](#).
- On 26 February 2026, Bellarine Times published an article by Ellie Claringbold titled [‘Signal Tower upgrade in doubt amid fort sale’](#).

- On 20 February 2026, Bellarine Times published an article by James Taylor titled [‘Henderson keeps fighting against fort sale’](#).
- On 19 February 2026, Defence Connect published an article by Robert Dougherty titled [‘Defence Estate Audit: Two sites to be divested ‘as rapidly as possible’ this year’](#).
- On 19 February 2026, North Side Living published an article by Michelle Giglio titled [‘Partial HMAS Penguin sale ‘concerning’](#).
- On 17 February 2026, the Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Annett Hamilton titled [‘Pause the \\$50b Defence estate sell-off’](#).
- On 17 February 2026, ABC News published an article by Jasmine Hines titled [‘Central to Defence Working Group outlines pitch for larger Defence presence in central Queensland’](#).
- On 17 February 2026, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published an article by Raelene Lockhorst titled [‘Without clarity, Defence Estate Audit tests Australia’s trust’](#).
- On 15 February 2026, The Sydney Morning Herald published an article by Alexandra Smith titled [“‘Belongs to the nation’: Cross-party push to stop sale of Victoria Barracks”](#).
- On 6 February 2026, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute published an article by Jennifer Parker titled [‘Defence land policy should reflect mobilisation and reserves planning’](#).
- On 6 February 2026, The Mercury published an article by David Killick titled [‘RSL takes aim at plan to close defence sites’](#).
- On 5 February 2026, the NT News published an article by David Killick titled [‘RSL slams ‘catastrophic’ plan to close 15 Tasmanian defence sites’](#).
- On 5 February 2026, the Herald Sun published an article by Alesha Capone and Nathan Mawby titled [‘VIC Defence sell-off’](#).
- On 4 February 2026, The Nightly published an article by Andrew Greene and Caitlyn Rintoul titled [‘Defence fire sale: Mass sell-off as Albanese Government scrambles for military cash’](#).
- On 4 February 2026, syndicated reported published articles on the [‘Government divesting Defence sites after release of the Defence Estate Audit’](#).
- On 4 February 2026, syndicated reported published articles on [‘Defence ready to sell off historic Victoria Barracks’](#).

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June
Last updated: 29 May 2026
Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Peter West

PDR No: SB26-000314

Division: Estate Transformation	
PDR No: SB26-000314	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary Estate Transformation Division Mob: Ph: Date: 7 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Peter West First Assistant Secretary Estate Transformation Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 28 May 2026
Cleared by Deputy Secretary/3 Star: Celia Perkins Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group Date: 29 May 2026	

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - PFAS INVESTIGATION AND MANAGEMENT

Lead: Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate.

Supporting: Pat Sowry, First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure.

Context: Defence's PFAS Investigation and Management Program is focused on monitoring, managing and remediating PFAS contamination on and around Defence bases due to the historic use of legacy fire-fighting foams. PFAS contamination is a significant issue for impacted communities, who are concerned about health and impacts to their property values.

Key Messages

- On 12 September 2025, the Assistant Minister for Defence announced the PFAS National Coordinating Body to strengthen coordination across and between all levels of Government, with the third meeting held on 21 April 2026.
- The Assistant Minister for Defence has oversight of the PFAS National Coordinating Body.
- The PFAS National Coordinating Body has set up the Williamstown Working Group to pilot practical actions to address PFAS at a local level, with the third meeting held on 30 March 2026.
- On 19 November 2025, the Select Committee on PFAS released its final report into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS, with recommendations focusing strongly on health concerns, regulation of PFAS, and impacts on First Nations communities.
- Defence works closely with stakeholders, particularly state, territory and local governments, in responding to PFAS contamination.
- Currently available technologies do not completely stop the movement of PFAS from a base. Remediating low-levels of contamination across large areas is not feasible.

Talking Points

- Defence's PFAS Investigation and Management Program manages risks associated with PFAS contamination on and around Defence properties resulting from the historic use of legacy firefighting foams. From 2004, Defence transitioned away from these legacy firefighting foams.
- Defence has completed investigations at 28 priority sites across the estate. These investigations assessed the nature and extent of PFAS contamination, and any associated human health and/or ecological risks.
- All sites have specific plans in place that recommend remediation and/or other actions to manage and reduce the risks, including the continued movement of PFAS from the Defence estate. Remedial works are underway, planned or complete at many sites.
- Defence continues to monitor PFAS at affected locations to track changes to where PFAS are found and at what concentrations.
- Defence provides access to information about its response to PFAS in plain English factsheets, presentations, monitoring reports and various technical reports via Defence's website and through the pfas.gov.au website.
- Since 2015, Defence has held 188 community engagement events for PFAS-affected communities. Defence will continue to keep communities informed with community information sessions or through tailored engagements with specific stakeholders.

PFAS National Coordinating Body and Williamtown Working Group

- The PFAS National Coordinating Body has been established, and the third meeting was held on 21 April 2026. Members included representatives from key Commonwealth portfolios, together with New South Wales, Queensland and Northern Territory officials, to promote a stronger and more integrated government response to PFAS.
- The Assistant Minister for Defence has direct oversight of the PFAS National Coordinating Body, with:
 - New South Wales Minister for the Environment, the Hon Penny Sharpe;
 - Northern Territory Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, the Hon Joshua Burgoyne; and
 - Queensland Minister for Environment, the Hon Andrew Powell.
- The PFAS National Coordinating Body strategic priorities for the first 12 months are:
 - National Coordination
 - Improving Transparency
 - Indigenous Engagement
 - Advice that supports decision making about land use
 - Supporting a national approach to PFAS policy and guidance, including updating Health guidelines, where required
 - Managing risk
 - Sharing lessons learned
 - Exploring further support options.
- The PFAS National Coordinating Body strategic priorities support the themes of the PFAS Independent Review recommendations and the intent of the Government response for national coordination on PFAS-related issues.
- From considering the strategic priorities, the PFAS National Coordinating Body has implemented several Review recommendations. The Defence Secretariat will report to the Assistant Minister for Defence in June 2026 on the progress of the implementation of the Government response to the PFAS Independent Review.
- The PFAS National Coordinating Body is piloting initiatives in New South Wales through the Williamtown Working Group, including progressing local PFAS-related issues such as improvements to drainage near Royal Australian Air Force Base Williamtown, New South Wales.
- Members of the Williamtown Working Group include representatives from:
 - New South Wales Environment Protection Authority;
 - New South Wales Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water;
 - Port Stephens Council;
 - Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council;
 - local community; and
 - Defence.
- The Williamtown Working Group agreed the annual Williamtown Work Plan, which outlines the Working Group's priorities for the year.
- Defence publishes outcomes of Williamtown Working Group meetings online. Opportunities are available for the broader community to offer input to the Working

Group, including through community drop-in sessions hosted by the Member for Paterson, Ms Meryl Swanson, prior to each Working Group meeting.

- The Williamstown Working Group will serve as a pilot to inform further PFAS working groups. Working groups for the RAAF Tindal, Northern Territory and Swartz Barracks Queensland are under consideration by the National Coordinating Body.

Select Committee on PFAS: Inquiry into the extent, regulation and management of PFAS

- The Senate Select Committee on PFAS released the Inquiry Report and recommendations on 19 November 2025.
- The report has 47 recommendations, four of which specifically reference Defence:
 - Recommendation 8 that work health and safety regulations extend to private companies working on PFAS remediation, such as for Defence;
 - Recommendation 20 that Australian Government agencies, including Defence, work with First Nations communities to update PFAS management plans;
 - Recommendation 23, that Defence reach out to local health services to co-design material for Aboriginal communities impacted by PFAS contamination at the Katherine River; and
 - Recommendation 26 that Australian Government agencies, including Defence, identify additional airport sites impacted by PFAS, not yet addressed by existing PFAS management programs.
- Two other recommendations call for actions for the PFAS National Coordinating Body including establishing community based working groups and collaborative actions with the Heads of Environmental Protection Authorities to conduct an audit and develop plans, frameworks and national standards on PFAS remediation.
- The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water are coordinating the Commonwealth's response to the Inquiry Report and recommendations.
- Government will consider the recommendations and provide a response in due course.

RAAF Base Pearce - Bullsbrook Scheme Water Infrastructure

- A number of private groundwater bores are impacted by PFAS from Royal Australian Air Force Base Pearce, in the Bullsbrook area.
- Defence has provided mains water connection for 183 residences in Bullsbrook.
- Defence has also committed to paying the water bills, supply charges, and associated maintenance costs for a period of eight years for these properties.
- Defence flushes and tests water connections to ensure the drinking water meets Australian Drinking Water guidelines. Defence will take any necessary actions to meet the guidelines and will continue to provide alternative drinking water until the testing process is complete.
- The Western Australia Water Corporation requires a device be installed at each connected property to mitigate potential for backflow of water into the scheme water pipeline. Defence will cover the annual test costs for backflow devices which will align with the remaining tenure of current water assistance provisions.
- Defence has held community information and drop-in sessions, provided newsletters and frequently asked questions, met with community members, and maintained a project hotline and email address to respond to community enquiries.

Working with the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community at Jervis Bay

- Defence is continuing PFAS monitoring at Wreck Bay to understand any changes to the extent and levels of PFAS contamination, and has provided training and equipment to nine Booderee National Park Rangers to allow independent community-led sampling for PFAS at off-base locations in areas of community interest.
- In September 2025, Defence supported Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council representatives to replace missing or damaged precautionary health advice signage at key locations around Wreck Bay. Defence is also working with the community to design new precautionary health advice signage with improved messaging.
- Defence has held 11 stakeholder engagements with the broader Wreck Bay community since 2016. Defence regularly engages with the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council and wider community to provide updates on its program of works, training and equipment to enable community led PFAS sampling, conduct walkovers of remediation work areas, and attend community events.
- Residents in the Jervis Bay Territory can use mains water for all purposes, including drinking, washing and food preparation. There are no PFAS impacts to mains water.

Detections around Swartz Barracks, Oakey

- Monitoring results show detections of PFAS in groundwater further west than previously detected. Defence is undertaking further groundwater investigations to better understand potential PFAS movement.
- Defence has informed the Queensland Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Queensland Health, of the new detections and will work with agencies on next steps.
- Defence held drop-in sessions for stakeholders on 12 and 13 September 2025 in Jondaryan (west of Oakey), with 22 residents attending across both days.
- Following the engagement, Defence sampled 21 private properties to ensure drinking water supplies met Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, and provided results to property owners.
- On 30 April 2026, Defence held a follow-up community engagement event in Oakey to provide an update on remediation and monitoring activities.
- Since 2014, Defence has routinely monitored PFAS in groundwater on and around Swartz Barracks. Previous monitoring found PFAS concentrations above Australian Drinking Water Guidelines at numerous off-site locations primarily to the south and south-west of Swartz Barracks. Monitoring did not previously indicate PFAS migration to the west.

PFAS health class action investigation

- In May 2026, Defence became aware that Shine Lawyers are seeking expressions of interest for a potential class action relating to the health impacts of PFAS. The Shine website refers to Defence use of PFAS but does not limit the scope to only Defence locations.
- Defence is not aware of timeframes for the initiation of the potential health class action.

- Five class actions have been settled by the Commonwealth in relation to PFAS contamination around Defence bases. These actions did not address health impacts. These actions were:
 - On 5 June 2020, the Federal Court approved the \$212.5 million settlement for the three class actions related to the Defence bases at Williamstown, NSW, Katherine, NT and Oakey, QLD.
 - On 19 June 2023, the Federal Court approved the \$22 million settlement for the open class action related to the Defence bases at Jervis Bay.
 - On 25 August 2023, the Federal Court approved the \$132.7 million settlement for the open class action related to Defence bases at Pearce, WA, Darwin, NT, Richmond, NSW, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Edinburgh, SA, Bandiana, VIC and Townsville, QLD.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
17 November 2025	The Assistant Minister for Defence issued a media release announcing the Williamstown Working Group membership.
24 October 2025	The Assistant Minister for Defence issued a media release announcing Queensland and Northern Territory would join New South Wales as members of the PFAS National Coordinating Body.
3 October 2025	Williamstown Working Group community membership expression of interest closed.
12 September 2025	The Assistant Minister for Defence, issued a media release announcing the establishment of the PFAS National Coordinating Body, the Williamstown Working Group and the expression of interest.
25 August 2025	The Assistant Minister for Defence, wrote to the Hon. Lia Finocchiaro MP, NT Chief Minister, and to the Hon Andrew Powell MP, Queensland Minister for Environment and Tourism, to provide an update on the National Coordinating Body and invite them to nominate representatives.
5 December 2024	In a joint media release , Ms Meryl Swanson MP, and the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP, released the independent review of land uses around key Defence sites impacted by PFAS and the Government's response.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
26 March 2026	FOI	An individual has requested various documents and information related to PFAS contamination at a particular Defence site. As at 29 April 2026 the matters are ongoing.	Decision not yet finalised.
5 September 2025	IQ	No. 24 Senate Select Committee on PFAS requested a breakdown on legal costs, details about litigation against PFAS manufacturers and an update on management actions at Wreck Bay.	Tabled.

2026-27 Budget Estimates May/June

PDR No: SB26-000312

Last updated: 26 May 2026

Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Pat Sowry

Date	Type	Title	Status
5 September 2025	IQ	No. 23. Senate Select Committee on PFAS requested Defence's total spend on PFAS management and health.	Tabled.
5 September 2025	IQ	No 18. Senate Select Committee on PFAS Chair requested a breakdown of settlement values for class actions, litigations and non-litigated claims.	Tabled.
27 June 2025	IQ	No. 67. Senate Select Committee on PFAS Chair requested an update on the status and actions undertaken by the National Coordinating Body and Williamstown Working Group.	Tabled.
25 June 2025	IQ	No. 68. Senate Select Committee on PFAS Chair requested a summary of Program expenditure, project completions and further information about the foams transition.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- 6 April 2026, Brendan Gullifer, *the Daily Telegraph*, '[Government pushes ahead with billion dollar Blamey Barracks upgrade despite toxic chemical fears](#)'.
- 2 April 2026, ABC Perth broadcast an article regarding [properties being connected to scheme water at Bullsbrook](#).
- 1 April 2026, Seven News Western Australia broadcast an article regarding [properties being connected to scheme water at Bullsbrook](#).
- 3 March 2026, Oliver Jacques, *PS News*, '[Wagga fish farmer sues government over alleged PFAS contamination from RAAF Base](#)'.
- 2 February 2026, Chris Edwards, *Inside Water* '[What the Government's PFAS response means for drinking water](#)'.
- 13 December 2025, Simon McCarthy, *Newcastle Herald*, '[Residents losing faith in long PFAS fight](#)'.
- 21 November 2025, Romy Gilbert, ABC, '[Inquiry demands immediate supply of clean drinking water for Aboriginal community contaminated by PFAS](#)'.
- 20 November 2025, Isadora Bogle, ABC '[Senate inquiry urges government to ban use of PFAS in firefighting foams](#)'.
- 19 November 2025, Ben Clifford, ABC, [PFAS inquiry hands down 47 recommendations to better regulate 'forever chemicals' in Australia](#).
- 17 November 2025, Matthew Kelly, *Newcastle Herald* '[New PFAS working group members seek 'meaningful outcomes' on behalf of community](#)'.

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Last updated: 26 May 2026
Key witnesses: Celia Perkins, Pat Sowry

PDR No: SB26-000312

Division: Infrastructure	
PDR No: SB26-000312	
Prepared by: s47E(d) Acting Assistant Secretary PFAS Investigation and Management Security and Estate Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 22 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Pat Sowry First Assistant Secretary Infrastructure Security and Estate Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 22 April 2026
Cleared by CFO: Jennifer Makunde Assistant Secretary Finance Enabling Group Date: 15 April 2026	
Cleared by Defence Legal Michael Lysewycz Defence General Counsel Dispute Resolution & Litigation Date: 15 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Celia Perkins Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group Date: 26 May 2026	



PFAS INVESTIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM **SNAPSHOT** – as at 30 April 2026

REMEDIAL ACTIVITIES

Remediation works targeting contaminated water, soil and other materials are underway or completed at Swartz Barracks, HMAS Cerberus, Lavarack Barracks, Jervis Bay Range Facility, and RAAF Bases Williamtown, Edinburgh, Richmond, Tindal, Wagga, Darwin, Pearce, East Sale and Townsville. Remediation works are planned to commence at HMAS Albatross, Blamey Barracks, Bandiana Military Area and RAAF Base Amberley.

LONG TERM MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

All actions within the PFAS Management Area Plan for HMAS *Cerberus*, Singleton Military Area and Robertson Barracks have been addressed. Defence will continue monitoring for PFAS on and around these sites.

PFAS management actions at RAAF Base Learmonth and Naval Communication Station Harold E Holt are nearing completion. Once complete, Defence will continue monitoring on and around each site.



PFAS CONTAMINATION RESULTED IN LITIGATION



LEGAL CLAIMS as of 31 March 2026

Defence has settled 4 litigated* and 342 non-litigated claims. * Excluding 5 class actions

18 open claims



55 denied claims

These figures do not include claims that are inactive, withdrawn, or resolved via policy initiative.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Defence is committed to evidence based and responsible remediation and management of PFAS contamination on and around Defence facilities across Australia.

Defence's first priority in responding to PFAS contamination is to ensure the wellbeing of affected communities, and to reduce their exposure to PFAS.

NATIONAL COORDINATING BODY

The PFAS National Coordinating Body, established in September 2025, works to promote a stronger and more integrated government response to PFAS. It comprises of representatives from key portfolios including infrastructure, health and environment, together with state and territory agencies.

The Williamtown Working Group, formed in November 2025, is the first community-based group formed under the PFAS National Coordinating Body. As the national approach evolves, additional community-based working groups may be established to drive progress at a local level on PFAS-related issues near RAAF Base Tindal and Swartz Barracks.



549 properties CONNECTED to town water



161 RAINWATER TANKS provided to 117 properties



188 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT events held



785 properties have been provided with WATER ASSISTANCE

FINANCIAL FACTS

\$1.306b

invested to manage, remediate and conduct research since FY 2015/16

INCLUDING



\$408.7 million
Legal claim settlements

PARLIAMENTARY: 2026-27 BUDGET ESTIMATES - BASE SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

Lead: Celia Perkins, Deputy Secretary Security and Estate.

Supporting: Lieutenant General Simon Stuart AO DSC, Chief of Army, to support on Legislation and technology for countering Unmanned Aerial Systems.

Major General Jason Walk AM, Head National Support, to support on Supply Chain Security.

Monique Hamilton PSM, First Assistant Secretary Defence Security, to support on Espionage and Foreign Interference, dual citizenship declaration, protest activity, SAFEBASE System, and Defence Security Principles Framework.

Lee-anne Monterosso, First Assistant Secretary Service Delivery, to support on Security Limitations.

Context: Base security issues have been the subject of ongoing media interest, particularly the threat from drones and threats to AUKUS related bases, especially HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia.

Key Messages

- Defence works closely with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority and the Australian Federal Police to Counter Uncrewed Systems at Defence bases in compliance with Australian law.
- Defence is also exploring capability options to conduct counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems activities to protect bases and assets from the drone threats.
- Defence engages closely with law enforcement and intelligence agencies in deterring, identifying, mitigating and responding to Espionage and Foreign Interference threats.
- Defence works closely with the Department of Home Affairs in their role as the whole of government policy lead on the security of foreign manufactured connected vehicles, and with national security agencies to assess and manage risks associated with connected vehicles.
- Defence is engaging with internal and external stakeholders, and other government agencies to develop and implement consistent and mutually reinforcing supply chain security measures across Australia and with international partners.
- Defence has established policy and procedures to review and manage base security through 'SAFEBASE', and can adjust base security levels nationally or locally in response to any credible threat.

Talking Points

Counter Uncrewed Systems

- Defence works closely with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, the Australian Federal Police and some State and Territory law enforcement agencies to Counter Uncrewed Systems at domestic Defence bases, in compliance with Australian law.
- The Governor-General of Australia signed into law the *Defence Amendment (Counter UXS Measures) Regulations 2025*, (Regulations) which came into effect on 13 December 2025.
- The amended Regulations give authority for Defence, in support of law enforcement agencies, to detect and disable or destroy drones that are suspected of posing a threat to ADF assets and establishments.
- Defence has implemented drone detection systems.
- Defence is also introducing capability to respond to the drone threat through project LAND 156 Counter Small Uncrewed Aerial Systems.
 - Project LAND 156 is delivering counter-drone sensors and effectors to protect Defence facilities, people and capabilities from drone threats.
 - Project LAND 156 has also established an industry panel of counter-drone providers that will enable Defence and other Government agencies to procure counter-drone services for domestic security.
 - Defence Security is working closely with LAND 156 to ensure that all LAND 156 providers comply with Defence Security requirements, including being members of the Defence Industry Security Program.
 - Defence will employ Counter Uncrewed Systems services and capabilities at Defence bases where it is necessary to do so for security or safety purposes. It is not appropriate to comment specifically regarding where such services and capability are or may be employed.

Espionage and Foreign Interference

- Hostile foreign intelligence activity is occurring at an unprecedented scale in Australia, and Defence is aware that its information, people, assets and capabilities are all targets for foreign intelligence services and their proxies.
- Defence takes these threats seriously, and has layered security policies and procedures to protect our people, information and capabilities.
- Defence engages closely with law enforcement and intelligence agencies in deterring, identifying, mitigating and responding to espionage and foreign interference threats.
- Defence continues to support the prosecution of former ADF member Kira Korolev.
 - In response to the serious allegations made against Ms Korolev, Defence suspended the member from service, which included the immediate suspension

of accesses to Defence bases and information and communication technology systems, and commenced separation processes.

- Ms Korolev was separated from Defence on 8 October 2024.
- As highlighted by the Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Mike Burgess AM, at the time of the arrest, Government security processes worked well in identifying and managing risks while investigations and law enforcement activities were ongoing.
- This case highlights that hostile foreign intelligence activity is currently occurring in Australia.
- Defence is unable to provide further information on an active investigation.

Dual Citizenship Declaration

- Dual nationals are first, and foremost, Australian citizens. Defence does not discriminate against dual nationals.
- All Defence employees are vetted to ensure their allegiance to Australia as part of the security clearance process.
- Recent changes to the Government Protective Security Policy Framework have strengthened vetting and waiver standards, to ensure security settings are appropriate for the current threat environment.

Supply Chain Security

- Defence is engaging with internal and external stakeholders, and other government agencies, to develop and implement consistent and mutually reinforcing supply chain security measures across Government and with international partners.
- Defence is finalising a supply chain security control that will be incorporated into the Defence Security Principles Framework.
- Given the diversity of Defence's global supply chain, Defence's approach to protecting supply chains will be policy led, intelligence informed and risk based.
- Defence is also working closely with the Department of Home Affairs on implementation of the broader Government Technology Vendor Review Framework, as announced by the Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Tony Burke MP on 20 December 2024.

Defence supply chain security will also continue to be reinforced by the Defence Industry Security Program and the Defence Supply Chain Analytics and Resilience Capability.

Protest activity near Defence bases and Defence Industry facilities

- Defence is aware of an increase in protest activity by individuals and organisations near Defence bases and Defence Industry locations.
 - The right to protest is an essential part of Australia's democratic process and the vast majority of protest activity in Australia remains peaceful and lawful.

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- Defence has layered security policies and procedures to protect our people, information and capabilities and works closely with law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

SAFEBASE system

- SAFEBASE is a security alert level system used to alert people to the threat of a violent act on Defence premises in Australia.
- Defence has well established policies and procedures in place to manage SAFEBASE, and reviews the national SAFEBASE level in response to threat level changes in the strategic environment.
- The SAFEBASE system allows for tailored alert levels for specific bases and sites across the Defence estate, which can be enacted locally in response to any specific threat.

Connected Vehicles

- Defence does not comment on individual security arrangements at bases. Defence proactively monitors movements around the Defence Estate to ensure the highest levels of safety and security are maintained. The Department of Home Affairs is the government policy lead on security of foreign manufactured connected devices including vehicles.
- Defence works closely with the Department of Home Affairs and national security agencies, through the Government Security Committee, to assess and manage risks from connected vehicles. This includes assessing and mitigating potential cyber security risks.
- Defence base security complies with Government Protective Security Policy Framework requirements, and includes a range of policies and operational practices controlling vehicular access to bases and sensitive areas on bases.

Defence Security Principles Framework

- Defence applies government Protective Security Policy Framework requirements through the Defence Security Principles Framework.
- The Defence Security Principles Framework is Defence's source for protective security policy and provides tailored security controls that take account of local needs and unique business requirements.
- Defence reporting is incorporated into the public Protective Security Policy Framework Annual Assessment Report, published by the Department of Home Affairs.

Security Limitations and Base Hardening Planning

- Defence employs a range of protective security controls to ensure the safety and security of the Estate and assets. Including physical and electronic security, access controls, security governance such as threat and risk management, security training, the management of security incidents, and information security arrangements.
- Defence conducts regular reviews and updating of security policies, Security Risk Assessments and Base Security Plans across all sites.

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- Defence Base Security and Incident Management procedures, responsibilities, and accountabilities are articulated through the Joint Framework for Base Accountabilities.
- The Joint Framework for Base Accountabilities provides direction on the management of base incidents to ensure the safety of Defence personnel and assets.
- These directions are aligned with the SAFEBASE, and regulatory and legislative provisions.
- Defence has an ongoing program of base security uplift to meet evolving threats. This program is driven by 2024 National Defence Strategy priorities and security risk assessments.
- For security reasons, Defence does not publicly comment on specific base security procedures or provisions.

Timeline of Major Events and Ministerial Announcements

Date	Event
11 February 2026	Two further Chinese nationals living in the ACT charged for allegedly covertly collecting information about a Canberra Buddhist association on behalf of a foreign principal, under Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce Operation Autumn Shield.
29 January 2026	The Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP announced Government boosts response to drone threats and CUAS.
5 November 2025	The Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Mike Burgess AM, delivered a speech at the 2025 Lowy Institute Lecture on social cohesion, foreign interference and espionage in Australia.
4 August 2025	A Chinese national living in the Australian Capital Territory was charged with an espionage offence by the Australian Federal Police, under Counter Foreign Interference Taskforce Operation Autumn Shield.
24 July 2025	The Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Pat Conroy MP announced the acceleration of counter-drone technology.

Key Information Requests

Date	Type	Title	Status
26 February 2025	QoN	No. 4, Removing someone from the ADF. Senator Shoebridge (Greens, New South Wales) asked about the threshold for removing someone from the ADF, following discovery of demonstrated loyalty a foreign nation.	Tabled.

Relevant Media Reporting

- On 24 February 2026, the Australian published an article by Natasha Bitá titled '[Spies enrolling as fake students to target researchers, Australian university reveals](#)'.
- On 20 February 2026, the Brisbane Times published an article by Dominique Tassell and Cloe Read titled '[Accused Russian spy couple back in court](#)'.
- On 11 February 2026, ABC News published an article by Tahlia Roy titled '[Two more Chinese nationals accused of foreign interference after allegedly gathering information in Canberra](#)'.
- On 10 February 2026, The Sydney Morning Herald published an article by Mike Foley titled '[Is your car spying on you?](#)'.
- On 25 November 2025, the Australian Financial Review published an article by Michael Read titled '[Taiwan asks to join AUKUS, warns on China's coercive behaviour](#)'.
- On 18 November 2025, the Daily Telegraph UK published an article by Tom Cotterill titled '[MoD tells staff not to discuss secrets in cars amid China spying fears](#)'.
- On 9 November 2025, Sky News Australia published an article by Max Melzer titled '[Iran-backed hackers steal and post plans for Australia's new \\$7 billion infantry fighting vehicles following attack on Israeli arms companies](#)'.

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Division: Defence Security	
PDR No: SB26-000309	
Prepared by: Simon Buckley Assistant Secretary Security Policy and Services Defence Security Division Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026	Cleared by Division Head: Monique Hamilton PSM First Assistant Secretary Defence Security Security and Estate Group Mob: s22 Ph: s47E(d) Date: 8 April 2026
Consultation: Major General Jason Walk AM Head National Support Joint Capabilities Group Date: 8 April 2026	
Cleared by Deputy Secretary: Pat Sowry Acting Deputy Secretary Security and Estate Group Date: 13 April 2026	