



Defence Security Zone Framework

Defence Legislation Amendment (Accelerating Capability and Protecting Bases) Bill 2026

Understanding the Defence Security Zone Framework

The Defence Security Zone Framework provides a modern legal framework to protect Defence personnel, facilities, activities, information and capabilities wherever Defence operates. It recognises that important Defence activities increasingly occur beyond traditional Defence bases, including at training areas, industry facilities and other locations that support Defence capability.

The Framework establishes a single, integrated approach to Defence security, replacing a collection of older arrangements that have developed over many decades.

The Framework does not create unrestricted security powers, establish arbitrary exclusion zones, or give Defence general law enforcement powers. It does not limit existing access arrangements, and remains subject to statutory safeguards and independent oversight.

Why is reform needed?

Defence security arrangements have historically been built around the protection of Defence establishments and traditional military infrastructure.

Today's Defence environment is significantly more complex. Sensitive Defence activities increasingly occur in partnership with Australian industry, involve advanced technologies, operate across multiple locations and rely on digital systems, specialised infrastructure and trusted international partnerships.

Defence requires a contemporary legislative framework capable of protecting Defence personnel, information, technologies and capability activities in this environment. The reforms modernise and consolidate existing arrangements so they are easier to understand, apply and oversee.

What is the Defence Security Zone Framework?

The framework establishes a consistent legislative approach for protecting Defence personnel, facilities, activities, information and capabilities.

Rather than relying on a collection of fragmented security arrangements, the Framework introduces a consistent set of powers, safeguards, governance arrangements and accountability mechanisms applying at all Defence Security Zones. It provides a clearer and more integrated approach to Defence security that is better aligned with the way Defence operates.



What is a Defence Security Zone?

A Defence Security Zone is a defined place, activity or platform to which specified security protections apply.

A zone may apply to a Defence facility, training area, vessel, aircraft, vehicle, exercise, industry facility or another location where Defence personnel, activities or capabilities require protection.

Security measures can be tailored to the nature of the activity and the level of security risk.

What types of Defence Security Zone can be established?

The Framework provides for:

- Permanent Defence Security Zones supporting enduring security requirements at fixed locations.
- Temporary Defence Security Zones supporting time-limited activities such as exercises, trials and major events.
- Mobile Defence Security Zones that move with Defence vessels, aircraft, vehicles, equipment or activities.
- Special Defence Security Zones for Australia's most sensitive Defence facilities and capabilities.

Where can defence security zones operate?

Can a Defence Security Zone be established anywhere in Australia?

No.

Defence Security Zones can only be established in the circumstances and for the purposes set out in the legislation. Establishing a Defence Security Zone must be reasonably necessary for a defence security purpose, and generally only following consultation with people likely to be affected by a Defence Security Zone.

The Framework protects Defence personnel, assets, activities and capabilities from identified security risks.

Can Defence Security Zones apply outside Defence land?

Yes.

Defence activities increasingly occur at industry facilities, training areas, temporary operating locations and other sites used for Defence purposes. The Framework recognises that appropriate security protections are required wherever Defence activities occur, rather than only on Defence-owned land.



Can an industry facility become a Defence Security Zone?

In limited circumstances, yes.

Defence increasingly partners with Australian industry to develop, test, sustain and operate Defence capability. Where a facility is being used for Defence purposes and security protections are necessary, the Framework provides a mechanism for applying appropriate security measures, following consultation.

The Framework protects Defence capability and activities. It does not regulate industry generally or create a new regulatory regime for businesses.

Does the Framework allow entry on to private land?

Generally, no.

While a Defence Security Zone to be declared in relation to private land, it does not give Defence authority to enter or use private land for defence purposes. Defence either needs agreement from the landholder, or another source of legal authority to enter private land.

The exception is a limited authority to enter private land when necessary to access an emergency defence security zone. This is limited to emergency situations, and does not include authority to enter private residences.

What happens in the Woomera Prohibited Area?

The reforms do not alter the existing coexistence arrangements that apply within the Woomera Prohibited Area.

Existing arrangements for Traditional Owners, pastoralists, resources companies, railway operators, tourists and other authorised users will continue.

The Framework integrates Woomera into the broader Defence Security Framework while preserving existing access and coexistence arrangements.



How does the Framework work?

What restrictions apply in a Defence Security Zone?

The Bill sets out offences that apply in a Defence Security Zone, including:

- Entering or being in a zone without permission,
- Operating a UXS device (drone) in a zone,
- Interfering with Commonwealth installations,
- Capturing images without permission,
- Undertaking restricted activities or dealing with restricted items, and
- Breaching conditions of a permission.

Higher penalties apply in special defence security zones. Additional offences for dealing with information relating to a special defence security zone and flying over a special defence security zone also apply.

How do people get permission to do things in a defence security zone?

The Bill sets out several ways a person may be given permission to enter or undertake activities in a defence security zone, including ad hoc permission (given by the minister for Defence or a delegate), standing permission (set out in the Act or rules made by legislative instrument), or permits (given in accordance with arrangements set out in rules made by legislative instrument).

Are Defence personnel being given police powers?

No.

The Framework does not make Defence personnel police officers or give Defence a general law enforcement role. Defence security officials may exercise only those powers provided by the legislation and only for Defence security purposes and in relation to defence security zones.

What enforcement powers are available to defence officials?

The Bill sets out enforcement powers available to law enforcement officers in a defence security zone. Powers can be extended to appropriately trained and authorised defence security officials, where reasonably necessary for defence security purposes. A defence security official is only able to exercise powers they are explicitly authorised to exercise.

Powers include directing people to identify themselves, refusing entry, limited search powers, removal, detention (pending handover to police), and stopping and entering vehicles and vessels. All powers are subject to statutory thresholds and limitations. Exercise of some



powers, including non-consensual searches and detention powers, must be reported to the Inspector-General ADF.

Can a defence security official use force?

Law enforcement officers and defence security officials exercising powers under the framework may use necessary and reasonable force. Use of force likely to cause death or serious injury is only permitted to protect other people from death or serious injury.

Responding to modern security threats

How does the Framework respond to the threat of drone incursions?

The Framework provides Defence with modern tools to respond to evolving threats, in particular drones and other autonomous or remotely operated systems. The Bill establishes offences for operating UXS devices (drones) in, over or below the surface of a defence security zone. It provides comprehensive authority for undertaking counter-UXS measures in relation to defence security zones.

The legislation adopts a technology-neutral approach, allowing Defence to respond to threats across land, maritime, underwater and air domains as technologies evolve.

What counter-drone powers are available?

The Bill sets out powers to:

- Detect, track, monitor and identify drones (domain awareness measures),
- Interfere with and neutralise drones (interdiction measures),
- Inspect and examine seized or captured drones (exploitation measures).

All measures must be reasonably necessary for defence security purposes applying at a defence security zone. Interdiction measures are only available within prescribed zones and adjacent areas, or where a drone is reasonably suspected of posing a threat.

Additional safeguards apply to ensure there is no risk to aviation safety when undertaking counter-drone measures.

What is a UXS device?

A UXS device, short for 'Uncrewed system', includes autonomous and remotely operated devices that move in the air, water or over the ground, which does not have people on board. It includes drones (uncrewed aerial systems), as well as uncrewed marine vessels and uncrewed ground vehicles.



Safeguards and protections

Will the Framework affect lawful protest, journalists or other legitimate public activity?

No.

The Framework is directed at conduct that creates a risk to Defence personnel, activities, information or capability.

Powers cannot be exercised simply because a person is participating in protest, dissent, assembly, industrial activity or journalism. Any exercise of powers must be connected to a Defence security purpose.

Does the Framework affect environmental, heritage or native title protections?

No.

The Framework does not remove existing environmental, cultural heritage or native title protections. These protections continue to apply in accordance with existing laws.

Does the Framework impose new obligations on members of the public or businesses?

No.

The Framework is designed to protect Defence personnel, facilities, activities and capability where security measures are necessary. It does not create a general regulatory regime for members of the public or Australian businesses. Any restrictions that apply within a Defence Security Zone are limited to the particular zone and the security requirements applying to it.

What safeguards apply?

The Bill includes a range of safeguards supporting the operation of the Framework.

These include statutory limits on powers, training and authorisation requirements, governance arrangements, record-keeping obligations, review mechanisms and information-handling requirements. Powers may only be exercised where specified legal thresholds are met. The Inspector-General ADF provides independent oversight of the operation of the framework, including the exercise of powers by defence security officials.

What oversight and accountability arrangements apply?

The Framework is supported by independent oversight.

The Bill expands the role of the Inspector-General ADF, who will provide independent oversight and review of activities conducted under the Framework. This arrangement helps ensure Defence security powers are exercised lawfully, appropriately and consistently with the legislation.



Types of Defence Security Zone

What is a mobile defence security zone?

Defence security zones can be established by reference to a mobile asset, activity or platform. The defence security zone moves with the asset, activity or platform. For example, a defence security zone could be established within a specified distance of an ADF vessel, moving with the vessel while it is in transit.

What is an emergency defence security zone?

An emergency defence security zone can be established quickly in response to an incident, for example to secure the site of an accident.

What is a special defence security zone?

The Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap is a special defence security zone. Other defence security zones may be determined by the Minister for Defence, in a legislative instrument, to be a special defence security zone, where reasonably necessary for defence security purposes. Mobile and emergency defence security zones cannot be declared as special defence security zones.

Special defence security zones will only apply at the most sensitive Defence sites. Additional offences and higher penalties apply, based on existing arrangements in the *Defence (Special Undertakings) Act 1952*. These arrangements provide additional deterrence for actions likely to constitute a significant risk to Australia's national security.

What is a regulated proximity area?

The Bill allows for regulated proximity areas to be declared, in legislative instruments, in the immediate vicinity of a defence security zone, where reasonably necessary for defence security purposes. Law enforcement officers can issue directions, including move-on directions, to prevent people from engaging in conduct that poses a risk to defence security purposes at that location.



Additional information

What existing arrangements are consolidated in the new Framework?

The Defence Security Zone Framework modernises and consolidates arrangements from:

- Security of defence premises arrangements in Part VIA of the *Defence Act 1903*,
- Prohibited areas in the *Defence (Special Undertakings) Act 1952*,
- Commonwealth explosives areas in the *Explosives Act 1961*,
- Naval waters in the *Control of Naval Waters Act 1918*,
- Defence areas in the *Defence Regulations 2026*,
- Defence practice areas in the *Defence Force Regulations 1952*, and
- Public areas of defence land in Part IXB of the *Defence Act 1903*.

The Framework also applies in the Woomera Prohibited Area. The Bill includes modifications to Part VIB of the *Defence Act 1903*, which addresses the Woomera Prohibited Area, to ensure there are no negative impacts on existing access arrangements.