

MEDIA RELEASE

Central Queensland primed for Defence Future

Boosting Defence Force presence in Central Queensland would provide maximum capability gains for Australia's Defence Forces while remaining substantially out of range for the most likely enemy long-range weapon systems.

That's the finding of a compelling submission to the Federal Government's [Defence Strategic Review](#) compiled by independent defence consultants commissioned by key local government and regional development authorities in Central Queensland.

Regional Development Australia – Central and Western Queensland (RDACWQ) partnered with Rockhampton and Gladstone Regional councils and Livingstone Shire Council to produce the submission.

Key delegates from the partnership are in Canberra this week to meet with ministers and members of parliament responsible for defending the nation to brief them on the critical details of the submission.

Delegates include Grant Cassidy, Chair, Regional Development Australia - Central and Western Queensland; Mayor Tony Williams, Rockhampton Regional Council; Mayor Matt Burnett, Gladstone Regional Council; and Mayor Andy Ireland, Livingstone Shire Council.

RDACWQ Chair Grant Cassidy will tell MPs and senators that the submission identifies crucial advantages Central Queensland provides for Defence planners.

"As the national security landscape changes, Central Queensland can play a decisive role in helping Defence meet global and regional security challenges.

"We are primed to help Defence achieve maximum advantage for minimal investment," he said.

"We have geographic, infrastructure and human advantages that can help address challenges the DSR team faces related to readiness, operational reach, resilience, reception and resupply of Australian or allied forces."

"Crucially, the region is also close enough to likely contested areas to receive, prepare, launch and support Australian and allied forces," he said.

Mr Cassidy said the delegation would brief key decision makers on how Central Queensland's existing facilities and capabilities can be leveraged to help the ADF respond to current and future challenges.

One of the region's immutable strengths is its central location. Add to this its excellent road, rail, air and sea access, and Central Queensland is ripe for expansion as a major logistics hub.

Rockhampton Regional Council Mayor Tony Williams said the submission identified Rockhampton Airport as an ideal location for existing and future manned and unmanned aircraft. It also noted the airport's excellent existing facilities and the ability to easily upgrade them for major exercises.

"In addition to our long, 2,628-metre runway, Rockhampton airport also has available land for development plus the opportunity to leverage aviation deep maintenance facilities currently being developed by an Authorised Maintenance Organisation."

Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Matt Burnett said Central Queensland's two exceptional ports could also offer vital support for Defence operations.

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“Gladstone’s deep-water, dual-lane port is very well suited to naval operations,” he said. “Slightly further north, Port Alma’s unsurpassed ability to handle large quantities of Class 1 explosives means it could easily resupply Australian and allied forces in a location that’s close to, but not in, potentially contested zones,” Mayor Burnett said.

The world-class Shoalwater Bay Training Facility in Livingston Shire is also another key asset in Central Queensland’s arsenal.

“The Shoalwater Bay Training Area covers almost 500,000 hectares and is one of the best and most versatile military training areas in the world,” explained **Livingston Shire Mayor Andy Ireland**.

“It’s undergoing a \$2bn expansion as part of its long-standing relationship with the Singapore Armed Forces, and it’s the only facility in Australia where the army, air force, and navy are able to be fully deployed and engage in joint military training exercises.”

Over the past 50 years, the Shoalwater Bay Training Facility has hosted large, complex operations across land, air and sea, including the massive biennial Exercise Talisman Sabre with Australian and American troops.”

“Central Queensland has a long and proud history of supporting Defence when in matters most,” said **RDACWQ’s Chair Grant Cassidy**. “In World War II we hosted tens of thousands of allied and US troops as they prepared to do battle in the Pacific.”

Beyond military engagement, Central Queensland’s hard assets also equip the region to contribute to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief nationally and regionally.

“Add the region’s attractive climate and lifestyle plus its skilled workforce into the equation, and we think Central Queensland is a highly advantageous location for Defence investment,” Mr Cassidy concluded.

Submissions to the Defence Strategic Review closed on 30 October. Professor Smith and Sir Angus will deliver the Review and its recommendations to Government in early 2023.

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Background Information

Defence Strategic Review (DSR)

The DSR is an independent review of Defence’s force structure, force posture and preparedness, and its investment prioritisation. It aims to ensure Australia is well positioned to meet its national security challenges over the next decade and beyond.

The review is being conducted by former Minister for Defence Professor the Hon Stephen Smith and former Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston AK AFC (Ret’d).

<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>