

# Media Release

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## Central Queensland primed to support Australia's new submarine fleet

Gladstone Region Mayor Matt Burnett is urging Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Defence Minister Richard Marles to consider the role Central Queensland could play in the nation's maritime defence following today's announcement that Australia will buy eight nuclear submarines, and that more US and UK submarines visits will begin from this year.

With speculation Port Kembla is the favoured option for a new east coast base for the submarines, Mayor Burnett said Central Queensland's strategic location, coupled with its natural and man-made assets and strong regional cooperation mean Gladstone could play a vital role in the AUKUS nuclear submarine program and its hardening of Australia's borders.

"Gladstone is ideally placed to support Australian and allied operations, and we are primed for an increased cycle of visits of Naval vessels," Mayor Burnett said.

"It makes sense to prioritise Gladstone as a north-eastern port. It's around 800 nautical miles (1500km) closer than Fleet Base East to potential northern operational areas, yet far enough away to offer force protection.

"Defence analysis has shown basing at Gladstone can cut as much as a week off key naval vessel turnaround times if they could replenish in Central Queensland instead of having to return to southern NSW for their needs.

"Gladstone has excellent maritime access via deep, dual shipping lanes plus eight main wharf centres, with 20 wharves.

"It's the ideal location for rapid resupply, and the only Australian port between Brisbane and Darwin currently certified by the inter-departmental Visiting Ships Panel (Nuclear) to host nuclear powered surface ships.

"There's also plenty of affordable industrial land to support Defence and Defence Industry growth and excellent links to major rail networks and Australia's national highway."

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the new AUKUS submarine deal in San Diego early this morning alongside US President Joe Biden and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Mayor Burnett extended an invitation to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, and Vice Admiral Mead AO, RAN, Chief Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force, and his staff to visit Gladstone to see how the region can support Australia's nuclear submarine fleet and Defence in general.

"I'd also like to show the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Marles and Vice Admiral Mead the strong cooperation that binds our region," Mayor Burnett said.

**MORE**

With the upcoming release of Australia's Defence Strategic Review (DSR), Central Queensland has many of the necessary assets to play a central role in addressing Australia's multi domain defence challenges.

"Central Queensland leaders worked together to prepare a detailed submission to the DSR," explained Mayor Burnett.

In addition to Gladstone's excellent maritime infrastructure, Central Queensland has many critical assets that would enable Defence to address multiple strategic challenges.

These include Port Alma, the principal Australian port for handling large quantities of Class 1 explosives; the world-class and recently upgraded Shoalwater Bay Training Area; Rockhampton Airport, which accepts B737 and A320 Airbus Aircraft and hosts an Alliance Maintenance Facility; and the Bajool Explosives Reserve with its established storage, testing and disposal capabilities.

**ENDS**