

Media Release

23 March 2023

Mayor repeats call for fleet to be based in Gladstone

Gladstone Region Mayor Matt Burnett has reiterated his call for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Defence Minister Richard Marles to visit Gladstone and consider the role Central Queensland could play in the nation's maritime defence.

"Last week, I invited the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, and Vice Admiral Mead AO, RAN, Chief Nuclear-Powered Submarine Task Force, and their staff to visit Gladstone to consider how the region can support Australia's nuclear submarine fleet and the Australian Defence Force more broadly," Mayor Burnett said.

With protests planned and opposition to Australia's new submarines being located at Port Kembla growing louder, Mayor Burnett pointed to the strong regional collaboration in support of a greater Defence presence among Central Queensland's elected leadership.

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

"Central Queensland leaders share an ambition to grow a Defence Force and Defence Industry presence in the region. We have been working together on it for some time, and recently partnered to prepare a detailed regional submission to the Defence Strategic Review.

"Defence analysis has shown basing at Gladstone could 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 New South Wales 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."

Mayor Burnett added that Gladstone has plenty of affordable industrial land to support Defence and Defence Industry growth and excellent links to major rail networks and Australia's national highway.

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.

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“Central Queensland also offers extensive regional expertise in chemical production, explosives and munitions manufacture; an existing skilled workforce specialising in heavy vehicle servicing repair; significant civil construction capability; access to large-scale energy resources; and, vitally, an attractive lifestyle and employment opportunities for military partners and families,” Mayor Burnett said.

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

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