

Chair, Senators,

I will provide a short update on Defence developments since we appeared before you two months ago.

Since we last met, Defence has delivered the final tranche of M1A1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, and the Government announced a further \$95 million of military support including a \$50 million contribution to the Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List. This brings Australia's total military support to Ukraine to more than \$1.5 billion.

In December last year, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister committed to deepening bilateral cooperation with the United States during the 40th Australia-US Ministerial Consultations in Washington DC. In Washington, the Deputy Prime Minister also met with the US Secretary of War and UK Secretary for State for Defence for an AUKUS Defence Ministers Meeting, where they discussed ways to further strengthen AUKUS and reiterated their shared commitment to the long-term success of the partnership.

The Deputy Prime Minister also travelled to Japan where he met with his counterpart, and announced the new 'Framework

for Strategic Defence Coordination', which will ensure greater defence alignment between Australia and Japan.

And closer to home, the Deputy Prime Minister participated in the first-ever Australia – Indonesia – Papua New Guinea Defence Ministers' Meeting, an important forum that will boost our regional security cooperation with two key Indo-Pacific partners.

In our immediate region, we have seen a greater People's Liberation Army - Navy (PLA-N) presence than in recent years. We expect this to continue. We have consistently raised the importance of China providing greater strategic transparency and reassurance about its activities in our region.

These developments emphasise again the need to safeguard Australia's security and national interests by strengthening our own sovereign capability.

To achieve this, the Government announced reforms to strengthen and streamline future acquisition and sustainment activities through the creation of the Defence Delivery Agency.

Since the announcement, the whole-of-government Defence Reform Taskforce has been engaging with staff, industry,

international partners and union representatives as it prepares a detailed implementation plan for Government consideration.

Last week, the Government announced its response to the independent Defence Estate Audit. The Audit provides a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment that demonstrates the scale of renewal required to ensure the Defence estate can meet our operational and capability requirements, now and into the future.

Importantly, the Audit presents an opportunity to rebalance the estate and prioritise resources in supporting efforts in the north.

Divestment of sites identified in the Audit will occur in a manner that is sensitive to our people and their families, and to the organisations and community who support us.

Implementing this program of consolidation and divestment of Defence properties will ensure that our people and critical capabilities are where they need to be to defend Australia and our national interests.

We have also seen significant progress on boosting ADF capability here at home. Since the last hearing, Defence, with Lockheed Martin Australia, has begun producing Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System missiles at the new facility at

Port Wakefield in South Australia. This is the first and only facility of its kind to produce these missiles outside Lockheed Martin's US facility.

Late last year saw the MQ-28A Ghost Bat successfully engage an aerial target with a live weapon. A further investment of \$1.4 billion has been announced to bring Ghost Bat into service.

Looking forward, the 2026 iteration of the National Defence Strategy and Defence Integrated Investment Program is well underway. These strategies will build on the 2024 National Defence Strategy, taking a structured approach to considering the risk in our strategic environment and the capabilities required to respond to them.

I thank the Committee for your time and will pass to the CDF.