

Chief of the Defence Force Opening Statement to Senate Estimates – 11 February 2026

Good morning Chair and Senators,

The ADF has hit the ground running this year, staying operationally active and ready in our region and at home.

Through the end-of-year period approximately 450 people were assigned to operations at home and abroad.

In our region, Army has deployed personnel to the Joint Australian Training Team – Philippines, reinforcing our defence ties with one of our close regional partners. Two Navy Anzac-class frigates – HMA Ships *Toowoomba* and *Warramunga* – have departed Australia on deployments across Asia. Additionally, two P-8A Poseidon aircraft are currently conducting operations based in the Philippines, including joint support to HMAS *Toowoomba*.

Toowoomba and *Warramunga* will maintain Australia's -maritime presence in our region. This is a clear signal of our commitment to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, where sovereignty is respected.

This matters greatly in a region where great power competition is evident and increasing.

While it remained more than 200 nautical miles from Australian territory, the deployment of a *People's Liberation*

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Army – Navy- Amphibious Task Group in the Southwest Pacific at the end of last year was a notable example of China’s growing willingness to project its military power in the Pacific, and closer to our shores.

As the Secretary pointed out, we expect deployments like this will continue.

I want to reassure you: we are alert to this reality. Along with our allies and partners, the ADF continues to monitor military activity in our region. We are ready to respond when required.

Here at home, we have responded to requests from the National Emergency Management Agency to help states and territories during disasters and emergencies.

Our people have supported both the Victorian Emergency Services and the South Australian Emergency Services to respond to the recent bushfires, providing access to our bases and facilities, as well as provisions to keep our first responders on their feet.

We also supported the New South Wales Police Force after the tragic Bondi Beach terrorist attack, with counter--uncrewed aerial systems equipment and training, and specialist planning support.

The ADF continues to support the Australian community when needed.

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Looking ahead, this year brings with it a calendar of large-scale exercises where we will put our alliances and partnerships into action.

Both Navy and Air Force will host their flagship international exercises: Exercise *Kakadu* in March and Exercise *Pitch Black* in July. Following the success of our largest ever exercise - *Talisman Sabre* - we expect *Kakadu* and *Pitch Black* will draw a significant turnout of countries, their people and capabilities.

We will once again participate in Exercise *Rim of the Pacific*, the world's largest international maritime exercise hosted by the United States; Exercise *Keris Woomera*, our largest bilateral exercise with Indonesia, and Exercise *Yama Sakura* with both the United States and Japan.

As the Secretary said, all of this will take place in the same year as our second National Defence Strategy and next Integrated Investment Program.

When our first NDS was released, it set a challenge for the next two years: enhance our integrated, focused force.

We have responded to that challenge, and along the way reflected on—and learnt from—conflicts, changes and developments both regionally and globally.

Thank you Chair.