



Submission to the Joint Standing Commission on Treaties

Military Training - Singapore

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rockhampton Regional Council (RRC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Standing Commission on Treaties into the 'Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Singapore concerning Military Training and Training Area Development in Australia' signed on 23 March 2020 (the Agreement).

RRC recognises the close and comprehensive bilateral relationship with Singapore as one of Australia's closest and most comprehensive in Southeast Asia. Based on long-standing Commonwealth, defence, education, political, trade and tourism links, as well as on the two countries' similar strategic outlook, the relationship was elevated through the Joint declaration by the Prime Ministers of Australia and Singapore on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), signed on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The Rockhampton Region is proud and committed to continue its integral role in the defence of the nation through the provision of goods and services in support of Australia's defence posture and the training activities conducted at the Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA) for over 50 years.

It is equally proud of its role in supporting the annual military exercises undertaken at SWBTA since 1990 by the SAF personnel which has contributed to the comprehensive and longstanding defence and security partnership between the two countries and which has been strengthened by strong patterns of joint exercises and training and close collaboration in operational environments.

The unique ties and relationships that have been established between the people and business community of Rockhampton and those in Singapore have deepened over the period of this longstanding relationship, benefitting our two countries and contributing to regional economic growth. The Rockhampton community warmly welcomes the annual presence of SAF personnel to the region for the longstanding annual unilateral military training activities.

As a result of this long history, RRC is strongly committed to reinforcing and building on Rockhampton's reputation and capabilities as a logistics, maintenance and forward deployment base for major national, multi-lateral combined arms exercises and unilateral military training activities conducted at SWBTA, including those military training activities that Singapore conduct in Australia.

The Agreement promises to build on the long history of military training activities at SWBTA of both the ADF and SAF through the development of land areas, facilities and infrastructure to support future increased training unilateral military training activities by both countries. RRC fully supports and commends the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Singapore to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT).

This submission outlines a range of matters for consideration by the JSCOT in its review of the Agreement and seeks to provide the Rockhampton Region's unique perspective as a long-term regional partner and supporter in furtherance of the complementary strategic objectives and benefits offered through the implementation of the CSP, the Australian Singapore Military Training Initiative (ASMTI) and the Agreement.

Of specific note, RRC seeks to reinforce the commitment and capabilities of both RRC and the Rockhampton Region community to deepen existing areas of cooperation, activate new areas of collaboration and partnership and significantly expand its role in support of the implementation of the Agreement, particularly as the frequency and scale of the training activities increases during the Main Training Period.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Located approximately 80 kilometres to the north of Rockhampton, the SWBTA has been one of Australia's primary strategic military training areas since 1965 and from that time the Rockhampton Region has cemented its role as the main service and logistical hub in support of the critical unilateral and multilateral training activities undertaken on site.

First used by troops who were deployed to the Vietnam War, the SWBTA has become Australia's largest 'Category 1' military training area and provides a highly effective location for the ADF's three services.

Training cycles in SWBTA are of varying scales and frequency, and most weapons systems can be employed and integrated using live ammunition. The ADF is the principal user of SWBTA. Training units can however operate singularly, jointly and combined with military forces of other nations.

The SWBTA is commonly a focal point for the culmination of major national and multilateral combined arms exercises, such as those in the Talisman Sabre and Exercise Wallaby series. These exercises commonly involve defence forces of the United States, New Zealand, Republic of Singapore and others. These activities are critical to the development and sustainability of key ADF capabilities and to facilitate strategic alliances and multilateral Defence agreements.

The SAF has conducted an annual military training exercise in SWBTA for 29 years¹. The SWBTA has previously hosted SAF personnel for up to 45 days between August and December each year to conduct the unilateral military training exercises known as 'Exercise Wallaby'.

Prior to the CSP and implementation of the Australian Singapore Military Training Initiative (ASMTI), the SWBTA footprint has comprised approximately 453,700 hectares (ha) with 289,700ha occupied by terrestrial environments and the remaining area 164,000ha occupied by marine environments.

The size and nature of training exercises previously undertaken at SWBTA varies from less than 1,000 personnel to more than 20,000 personnel with associated vehicles, aircraft and ships.

The SWBTA and the Agreement under consideration by the JSCOT allows Singapore to develop its military capabilities which benefits Australia by making Singapore an effective defence partner and contributor to regional security.

ROCKHAMPTON REGION OVERVIEW

Rockhampton is centrally located in Queensland, 40 kilometres inland of the Capricorn Coast, 620 kilometres North of Brisbane and 720 kilometres South of Townsville.

Rockhampton is strategically positioned within Northern Australia (as defined by the Office of Northern Australia). Our geographic position is particularly significant to the defence posture of Australia as Rockhampton is the gateway to the North and is the government and business hub of the broader Central Queensland Region and Central Western Queensland.

¹ The 2020 planned SAF military exercises were cancelled as a result of COVID-19 which otherwise would have represented the 30 year anniversary of annual visitation by SAF personnel to the Rockhampton Region.

With a population of approximately 81,512 people², the Rockhampton Region provides higher order retail, health, education, business and community services to a regional population of over 230,000 people. Rockhampton is also the headquarters for CQUniversity, Queensland's only dual sector university and TAFE, and is a regional hub for government services.

Connecting Central Queensland's goods and services to the nation and beyond, Rockhampton is positioned on key intrastate road and rail networks and has an international standard airport catering for regular passenger services, international military charter flights and both general and specialised heavy lift air freight. These networks also provide good access to sea ports including Gladstone as well as to Brisbane and South East Queensland.

Rockhampton Airport

Rockhampton Airport is a commercialised business unit of RRC, supporting the region's broader economy and community as a substantial regional gateway airport. As the second largest local government owned and operated airport in Australia, after the Sunshine Coast Airport and servicing more than 600,000 passengers annually, the Rockhampton Airport has a strong, established leadership presence within the Australia Aviation Industry.

The airport's 2,568 metre high strength (ACN72/C/1400mpa) main runway is the third longest in Queensland and fifth longest in Regional Australia. The runway width is 60 metres with grooving throughout the runway surface to 45 metres and state of the art LED runway ground lighting system. It also has a cross runway at a length of 1,645 metre, allowing smaller aircraft to land in prevailing wind conditions.

Airside infrastructure, taxiway and aprons support all categories of Aircraft and as result Rockhampton Airport is an alternate destination for larger aircraft including the A380 aircraft type, the only airport capable of receiving this aircraft type on the Queensland Coast between Cairns and Brisbane.

The Rockhampton Airport was opened in 1930 as the Connor Park Aerodrome, which became Rockhampton Aerodrome later that year. Since opening, the airport has expanded its site area and infrastructure upgrades have been made over the years, including extensions to the two runways in 2000 and a \$12.6 million project completed in 2019 deliver asphalt resurfacing to the main runway plus surface enrichment to the taxiways, runway shoulders, and both the military and regular public transport aprons.

The Rockhampton Airport terminal is currently undergoing a staged \$41 million redevelopment to turn it into a world-class regional airport.

Functioning as a mainline regional airport for Queensland, the Rockhampton Airport offers Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) jet services to Brisbane and regionally, to Mackay, Townsville and onwards to Cairns.

Besides providing critical air transport connectivity for Rockhampton and its dependent hinterland, the airport functions in a significant way to support the ADF, particularly in supporting military training activities at the SWBTA, and serving as a training base for the SAF. The airport is also an important regional base for commercial general aviation operators based on the airport and a service centre for general aviation users across the Rockhampton Region and neighbouring communities.

Rockhampton Airport is an important element of the regional transport system, through its air service connections to relatively nearby regional locations, as well as through its longer-haul connections to southeast Queensland. In addition, the airport facilitates other transportation services through its home-based 'general aviation' operators,

² ABS Region Data Summary, Estimated Resident Population as at 30 June 2019.

which include charter flights, patient transfer, MEDEVAC and rescue services, the regional operations of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and support to general aviation through provision of aircraft maintenance and flying training.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The 2016 Defence White Paper identifies military training, including SWBTA, as key enablers to sustaining national defence capabilities by providing opportunities for ADF forces to train and to help build the capacity of regional countries to respond effectively to security challenges through contributions to bilateral and multilateral activities such as exercises, training activities and the Defence Cooperation Program.

The Strategic Policy Review commissioned in 2019 by the Department of Defence to re-assess the strategic underpinnings of the 2016 Defence White Paper and the resulting 2020 Defence Strategic Update and 2020 Force Structure Plan, released on 1 July 2020, outlines a range of relevant strategic areas of alignment with the Agreement subject to the current JSCOT inquiry.

In this regard RRC notes specifically the Australian Government's commitments contained in the recent Defence Strategic Update to:

- continue to strengthen its engagement with Australia's international partners in support of shared regional security interests and its commitment to strengthening the Defence estate and infrastructure (reference - section 2.3).
- increase sustainment funding to increase the ADF's preparedness to provide faster responses, longer duration assistance and more flexibility to the Australian Government in support of operations in Australia or overseas with preparedness increased through enhancements to Defence training areas and facilities both live and simulated (reference - section 3.31).
- strengthen the Defence estate and Infrastructure such as bases, ports, airfields, training areas and logistics facilities which underpin the ADF's ability to prepare for, conduct and sustain military operations including in response to disasters (reference - section 3.42).
- maximise opportunities for Australian industry, including in regional areas, to participate in Defence projects through the establishment of an independent audit program to ensure that prime contractors deliver on their contracted obligations to support Australian industry and that commitments to Australian businesses are honoured (reference - section 4.6).
- grow regional military capabilities, and the speed at which they can be deployed, in recognition that Australia can no longer rely on a timely warning ahead of conflict occurring (reference - section 1.13).

At a State Government level, it is noted that the 2018 'Queensland Defence Industries 10-year Roadmap and Action Plan' (Roadmap) includes three key strategies namely:

- Grow Queensland defence industry capability;
- Significant increase Queensland's defence industry contribution to the national and global market; and
- Promote Queensland's defence industry capabilities.

Rockhampton is noted as one of eight key locations under the Roadmap for defence industry capability in support of the ADF and references the investment by Singapore under the CSP at SWBTA. The establishment of a new Trade and Investment Queensland office in Singapore in 2018 to assist in facilitating these and broader objectives are recognised.

Recognising its important role as a contributing enabler to the national defence posture and strategic national, state and regional objectives, RRC has over a number of years adopted a number of strategies and action plans in pursuit of defence opportunities including:

- reinforcing and building Rockhampton's role and capacity as a logistics and forward deployment base for SWBTA;

- working with the ADF, State and Australian Government agencies and business to maximise the supply chain benefits from the impending upgrade to SWBTA's infrastructure and facilities;
- identifying on-going supply chain gaps and opportunities and work with defence prime contractors and local business to meet these needs;
- developing a military aviation precinct at the Rockhampton Airport;
- transitioning and linking high level METS businesses in the region to provide services to the defence industry.

RRC's actions to support and complement the overarching strategic framework and objectives of the Federal and State Governments, (including current and future military training exercises, industry growth and wider mutual benefits) should be read in conjunction with this submission and the objectives of the Agreement.

PART I: TRAINING ACTIVITIES

RRC welcomes the investment by Singapore in Australia's development and enhancement of training areas to meet the future needs of the ADF and facilitate an increased presence of SAF personnel training in Australia under the ASMTI and the Agreement.

Central Queensland provides a comprehensive package of labour, logistics, and infrastructure required in the undertaking of military training activities at SWBTA. As noted previously, Rockhampton's strategic location in proximity to major road, rail, air and port infrastructure is of significant importance. Port Alma (located 65 kilometres South East of Rockhampton) permits ammunition and explosives to be off-loaded. Gladstone (located 105 kilometres South East of Rockhampton) provide ports infrastructure, through which the SAF transport critical training equipment as required.

Existing Operational Support

In terms of facilitating and supporting training activity requirements set out under the Agreement (Article 3, Part I of the Annex and Article 7), the Rockhampton Airport is already an important logistics hub for the SAF during their annual unilateral military exercises. For the duration of these exercises, the airport becomes home to many different types of fighter jets, helicopters and support vehicles within the airport precinct. The airport also regularly caters for the Antonov aircraft (An-124) which facilitates the transportation and delivery of SAF rotary wing aircraft to Rockhampton during the course of the annual exercises.

During the course of previous annual training exercises, the airport terminal is reconfigured to accommodate international charter flights for incoming and departing SAF personnel with a dedicated arrivals and departure lounge and Customs and Quarantine Screening. The \$41 million redevelopment of the airport terminal currently under construction has been designed to increase the capacity to accommodate additional passenger movements generated as a result of the increased number of SAF personnel participating in training activities at SWBTA, during both the Initial Training and Main Training Periods.

Although Rockhampton Airport is not a designated military airfield it has all the necessary infrastructure and facilities to accommodate the needs of long term military exercises onsite and has suitable land within the airport precinct to be able to cater for any requirements for expansion. As a local government owned and operated airport, Rockhampton is ideally placed to partner with contracted logistical suppliers, ADF and other stakeholders to provide end-to-end support for the future military exercises at an expanded SWBTA.

Furthermore, Rockhampton Airport is not subject to any legislated restriction on aircraft operations, or other restrictions/curfews, during specified periods of time and as it is not a permanent military airfield or base for Royal Australian Air Force activities, any capacity constraints and associated issues that may otherwise arise do not exist at the airport.

RRC has a longstanding relationship with Primary Industries (QLD) Pty Ltd (trading as PIQ Logistics) and its parent companies based in Singapore which leases land within the Rockhampton Airport precinct.

Since 2001, PIQ Logistics has provided a permanent staging base for a full range of logistics and support services including catering, supplies support and transportation, maintenance of vehicles and equipment, and shipment support for the SAF's training requirements at SWBTA. It was established for the sole purpose of supporting the SAF and its facility is situated within the Rockhampton Airport precinct.

RRC continues to engage with PIQ, its parent companies, the SAF and local defence industry stakeholders to ascertain both its current and future needs to ensure that critical logistical support to facilitate military training exercises by SAF can be accommodated.

The existing and longstanding operational support capacity noted immediately above places Rockhampton in an ideal position to meet the requirements of the SAF during military exercises undertaken during the Initial Training Period, noting Singapore's 'preference for training to be undertaken at SWBTA' (Annex – Section 2 (1)) prior to completion of the GVTA and commencement of the Main Training Period.

Future Operational Support

RRC, has over many years, actively engaged with ADF and the SAF with the objective of taking a proactive and cooperative approach in order to understand the current and future needs and intentions of both parties to support mutually beneficial outcomes.

As the frequency and scale of the training activities increases under the Agreement, the Rockhampton Region has the necessary capacity and infrastructure to support and facilitate any requirements for additional facilities to accommodate accordingly. RRC supports increased involvement by the SAF in implementation of the Agreement via value-added activities that include the greater use of local suppliers, increased equipment maintenance undertaken locally, housing to accommodate additional permanent personnel, and activities during scheduled local leave/R&R is also available.

It is noted from Section 3 of the Annex to the Agreement that the increase in the number of training windows, SAF personnel and assets involved in the training activities shall occur at SWBTA and/or GVTA, as determined by Australia. It is recognised that there are a range of benefits and management requirements whereby distributing the exercises and number of personnel involved over multiple locations is desired to give full efficacy to the Agreement.

RRC submits that in recognition of the Rockhampton Region's substantial role in supporting military training activities at SWBTA since 1965, its 30 year strong relationship with Singapore and SAF and its significant capabilities and capacity to support future training activities, that due consideration should be given by the Department of Defence to facilitate an increase in the frequency and scale of these activities undertaken at SWBTA after commencement of the Main Training Period. It is further submitted that a minimum of one training window/rotation of military training exercises involving SAF personnel as specified under the Agreement be undertaken at SWBTA in each calendar year upon commencement of the Main Training Period.

As this activity increases, sufficient land and associated infrastructure exists within the Rockhampton Airport precinct for the Rockhampton Region to expand as a central procurement and maintenance hub for the SAF in support of exercises undertaken at SWBTA under the Agreement. As the owner and operator of Rockhampton Airport and in consideration of its past support and commitment (financial and otherwise) to military training activities at SWBTA, RRC is uniquely positioned in its ability to partner with other levels of government, ADF, SAF and local business to deliver required infrastructure and facilities to achieve broader regional economic opportunities for mutual benefit.

Once constructed the jointly funded \$1 billion Rockhampton Ring Road project will provide key links into Rockhampton and will improve connectivity to the Rockhampton Airport and the Department of Defence Western Street Depot in the transportation of equipment and personnel to support future military training activities.

RRC has been a committed and long-term supporter of military training activities at SWBTA and future defence opportunities, frequently advocating for the Rockhampton Region to be further developed and utilised as a geographically, strategic military hub. For example, in its submission to the 2016 Defence White Paper³, RRC first formally sought consideration of the development of a military precinct at the Rockhampton Airport and basing of an armoured cavalry regiment to Rockhampton. Further and as noted earlier in this submission, previous and current investment at Rockhampton Airport has been made with a view to supporting current and future defence industry opportunities. RRC and the wider community stands as willing partners to work with representatives of all levels of Government, the ADF and the SAF to ensure that the intent of the CSP and the Agreement are realised as intended.

Article 7(1)

In reference to Article 7(1)(c) of the Agreement it is noted that Singapore may enter into commercial arrangements for the procurement of goods and services in support of Training Activities on the basis that ‘Singapore shall demonstrate a practical commitment to the use of Australian Commercial Enterprises, *with priority given to Australian Commercial Enterprises in the locality of Training Areas and Facilities where Training Activities occur* [emphasis added], taking into account the capability of Australian Commercial Enterprises to deliver the goods or services to the quality standards required by Singapore on a commercially competitive basis.’

In terms of existing arrangements during the annual training exercises undertaken by SAF, local businesses within the Rockhampton Local Government Area receive economic benefit from already significant SAF local procurement associated with their annual military training activities at the SWBTA and via PIQ Logistics. These benefits extend to neighbouring local government areas, including those located in the Livingstone Shire Council boundaries where the SWBTA is located.

RRC notes from the Socio-Economic Impact of the ASMTI, undertaken by KPMG for the Department of Defence where it was estimated that the ‘ASMTI could provide up to \$7.3 million in additional GRP for the Fitzroy⁴ regional economy and up to 68 additional jobs, on average each year, during the operational phase compared to a baseline without the ASMTI⁵’.

RRC notes that a narrow interpretation of Article 7(1)(c) whereby local procurement by Singapore to support future training activities must be prioritised in the locality or local government area where the training activities are situated may lead to unintended consequences including supply chain inefficiencies, capacity constraints and negative financial impacts to local businesses in the Rockhampton Local Government Area which have pre-existing contractual arrangements with SAF. Implications from a narrow interpretation of this particular article would be compounded as the training activities at SWBTA increase in size and scale.

RRC submits that in light of the close proximity between the Rockhampton Local Government Area and Livingstone Shire Local Government Area and the Rockhampton Region’s role as the primary service hub for neighbouring centres that a broad interpretation of this article to include prioritisation of local procurement from Australian Commercial Enterprises located in the Rockhampton Region is required. This will ensure that the requirements of the SAF in the provision of goods and services to support the training activities are met. It also would recognise the

³ [Rockhampton Regional Council Submission](#), Submission 178.

⁴ Fitzroy Statistical Area Level 4

⁵ [Socio-Economic Impact of the Australia Singapore Military Training Initiative – June 2017](#), KPMG, page 27.

critical role the region and its businesses play in supporting the training activities and broaden the economic benefits across a broader area.

This proposed broad interpretation of Article 7(1) is consistent with the approach undertaken by the Department of Defence in its procurement policies and actions with respect to the commencement of the Development Activities under the Agreement as noted further in this submission.

Article 7(3)

In reference to Article 7(3)(b) of the Agreement it is noted that in undertaking any procurement of goods and services from Australian Commercial Enterprises that Singapore shall 'provide Australia with a breakdown of yearly expenditure on goods and services that were procured from Australian Commercial Enterprises, as well as all enterprises'.

RRC and its economic development arm 'Advance Rockhampton' places particular efforts into developing strong relationships with ADF, SAF, other defence industry stakeholders and local businesses to identify and fill any supply chain gaps through the maximum use of Rockhampton Region businesses and workers.

As noted previously in this submission, the local procurement practices associated with SAF's annual military training activities at the SWBTA and via PIQ Logistics provide valued benefits for the local economy. In its submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade in its Inquiry into the Impact of Defence Training Activities and Facilities on Rural and Regional Communities, the Department of Defence reported that 'Singapore currently spends in excess of \$20 million annually through Australian commercial enterprises in the central Queensland region, particularly the Rockhampton area.'⁶

RRC seeks to work collaboratively with the Department of Defence and the SAF on the sharing of information on local procurement from Australian Commercial Enterprises based in proximity to SWBTA in order to reinforce and demonstrate the economic benefits to the broader region of the military training activities at SWBTA and assist in expanding local procurement and identification of supply efficiencies for goods and services available locally.

PART III: DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

RRC welcomes the investment by Singapore under the ASMTI of around A\$2.25 billion for Australia to purchase land and develop and enhance training areas to meet the future needs of the ADF and an increased presence of SAF personnel training in Australia (Article 13 and Part II of the Annex to the Agreement).

It also commends the Australian Government and the Managing Contractor, Laing O'Rourke, for their commitment to maximising economic benefits for communities and opportunities for local industry in Central and North Queensland across the life of the ASMTI by giving priority to local Australian Commercial Enterprises as noted in Article 11(2)(a) of the Agreement.

With approximately 80 per cent of the value of the subcontracted works earmarked to be procured from Central Queensland, RRC and Advance Rockhampton have developed close contacts with Laing O'Rourke and principal sub-contractors regarding the delivery of the development activities at SWBTA as detailed in Article 9 and Part II of the Annex to the Agreement while assisting in identifying suitability of prospective sub-contractors in an endeavour to maximise the contribution to the project from the Rockhampton Region.

⁶ [Department of Defence, Submission 9](#), page 9.

In terms of current status of the development activities at SWBTA, RRC notes the recent joint public release from The Hon Melissa Price MP, Minister for Defence Industry and The Hon Michelle Landry MP, Member for Capricornia where it was confirmed that *'the training initiative is already delivering significant economic benefits for Queensland, with 23 businesses based in the Rockhampton and Livingstone Shire regions sharing close to \$79 million of work⁷.'*

The continued utilisation of local businesses operating in a low-cost environment in the implementation of the ASMTI and the Agreement will allow the Rockhampton Region to continue to grow and build their capacity and skills in support of defence industry projects into the future.

RRC notes that the Rockhampton Region has been a long term supplier of goods and services to the resource sector and is a major regional services hub with supply chains throughout the Bowen, Galilee and Surat Basins. With a significant number of businesses involved in the mining equipment, technology and services (METS) sector, the Rockhampton Region has the capacity and capabilities in both experience and labour force to support the development activities under the Agreement.

RRC and Advance Rockhampton continues to work with high level Rockhampton Region METS business, to provide services to the Department of Defence through projects such as Project LAND 400 while providing support to those businesses seeking entry into the defence supply chain. The ability to maximise opportunities for local businesses to diversify their activities is of critical importance in terms of their future individual growth and sustainability which benefits not only the wider regional community, but also facilitate growth of Australian military capability.

The current outlook for the Rockhampton Region is positive with a number of major projects and infrastructure developments either committed or nearing commitment in the local area and wider region, leading to a growth in companies establishing offices in Rockhampton to service the future pipeline of projects. These projects are anticipated to have a positive short and long term impact on the region's economy. Local industry has consistently demonstrated the ability to meet demand with a skilled and experience workforce capable for delivery of the development activities specified in the Agreement.

OTHER

The Rockhampton community has benefited from a long relationship with Defence since the ADF first started training at SWBTA in the 1960's. That relationship has matured over the years and has been enhanced by interactions with the SAF and personnel from other countries including the United States.

These relationships have matured and extended beyond those formed during the course of the annual military training exercises by the SAF to include the building of trade and investment ties and other people-to-people links which has contributed to the strong and vibrant bilateral relationship between Singapore Australia and Singapore.

As noted previously in this submission, the local community warmly welcomes the presence of SAF personnel to our community on an annual basis and during allocated local leave for SAF personnel, organised visits to local tourist attractions in the Rockhampton Region are undertaken and facilitated. Other measures undertaken by the SAF include the periodic scheduling of visits during the SAF training exercise by the SAF Music and Drama Company to conduct community concerts that provide an insight to Singaporean music and culture. RRC works with SAF to help coordinate these interactions which are highly valued by the local community.

⁷ Minister for Defence Industry and Member for Capricornia, ['Regional Queensland gets boost from military training area works'](#) (Media Release, 8 September 2020).

RRC participates and hosts regular trade and investment missions involving key government agencies, business and educational representatives to explore mutual potential development opportunities and exchanges. Each delegation builds upon the previous foundations that have been laid by RRC working towards an ultimate goal of increasing mutual trade and investment between the Rockhampton Region and Singapore.

In recent years, RRC has also developed a close connection with the North West Community Development Council in Singapore with a number of reciprocal delegations since 2015. The North West Community Development Council is a local authority of the North West District, Singapore. It is one of five Community Development Councils set up across the Republic of Singapore to aid in local administration of government policies and schemes. RRC and the North West Community Development Council relationship has focused on a range of areas and exchanges of information and programs including community health, volunteerism, social infrastructure and the environment.

CONCLUSION

RRC reinforces its full support of the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Singapore and commends the same to the JSCOT. Further, RRC fully supports the actions undertaken by the Australian Government in strengthening the longstanding bilateral relationship between Australia and Singapore via the CSP, the ASMTI and implementation of the Agreement.

As outlined in this submission, the Rockhampton Region has a range of natural and unique advantages in which to contribute not only to the successful implementation of the Agreement, but in strengthening this critical bilateral relationship in other areas of mutual collaboration.

The strong relationship that exists between Rockhampton and Singapore was originally underpinned as a result of the defence cooperation between Australia and Singapore and the military training activities at SWBTA. This enduring relationship, now in its thirtieth year, has however matured over time and is now multi-dimensional and time-tested. RRC is committed to deepening existing areas of cooperation and activate new areas of collaboration and partnership into the future and the CSP together with the ASMTI and implementation of the Agreement.

RRC and the Rockhampton community have been steadfast in its support of both the military training exercises at SWBTA and the SAF personnel who visit the region annually. The ensuing relationships that have been developed have in turn become an integral part of the fabric of our community and its identity. In recognition of this support and the significant business and industry capabilities that exists across the Rockhampton Region to support the successful implementation of the Agreement, RRC submits that an increase in the frequency and scale of these activities undertaken at SWBTA after commencement of the Main Training Period is appropriate.

We welcome the interest from the Joint Standing Commission on Treaties in relation to the Agreement and appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission for its consideration. Any queries in relation to the same can be directed to the Chief Executive Officer of RRC, Mr Evan Pardon, either by telephone, (07) 4936 8278, or email, ceo@rrc.qld.gov.au.