



Office of the Mayor

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29 October 2019

The Hon Dr John McVeigh MP
Chair
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
c/-Committee Secretary
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: psc@aph.gov.au

John
Dear Dr McVeigh

Navy Capability Infrastructure Sub-program: Facilities to Support New Navy Capabilities Planned upgrades to HMAS Cairns

I was recently provided with a briefing by Lieutenant Colonel Peter Sims (Project Director Northern Australia with the Department of Defence) regarding the above program. In particular, I note the proposed upgrades to wharf and land side facilities at the HMAS Cairns base to accommodate the planned introduction of the new Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs).

As well as strengthening Australia's defence capabilities, the planned upgrades to the HMAS Cairns facilities will deliver local employment and economic benefits to our region during the construction phase. In addition, the increased crew numbers based in Cairns as a result of homeporting a number of the new OPVs in our city will also provide ongoing benefits to our economy and our community.

I strongly believe that Cairns' physical proximity to PNG, Asia and the Pacific makes it a base of strategic importance to Australia's future defence capabilities and we welcome continued investment in the base's expansion.

This strategic importance was underlined in the Australian Government's *Australian Defence Force Posture Review (March 2012)* which recommended the upgrade or expansion of the Cairns naval base. The recent special report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) *Strong and Free? The Future Security of Australia's North (August 2019)* further supports this position proposing a concept of the North of Australia becoming the Australian Defence Force's 'Forward Operating Base' (FOB North).



To quote the ASPI report:

'In the context of this report, FOB North conceives of the north of Australia and its defence infrastructure being in a state of readiness to support a range of defence contingencies with little advance warning.

The northern Australian industrial and logistical base would need to be enhanced to be able to provide a permanent and scalable civilianised replenishment and depot repair capacity for defence capabilities deployed across the various physical nodes of FOB North.'

Once again, I appreciated the briefing provided by Lieutenant Colonel Sims and am proud to offer my wholehearted support for the Navy Capability Infrastructure Sub-program and the planned works for HMAS Cairns.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely



Cr Bob Manning
Mayor