



Foreword

Upon re-establishment in the 39th Parliament, the Defence Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade agreed to conduct a tour of Defence establishments in northern Australia. The visit provided an excellent opportunity for Members to familiarise themselves with the Australian Defence Force presence in the north. The tour was a particularly valuable activity for those Members who had not previously been associated with the Sub-Committee but it provided an excellent forum for all Members to acquaint themselves with the current disposition on the Australian Defence Force in northern Australia.

Although brief, the tour covered a considerable amount of territory encompassing visits to a number of Australian Defence Force establishments. The Sub-Committee was exposed to a wide range of Defence capabilities and a large variety of issues. Unfortunately, the busy schedule did not allow the Sub-Committee to explore all issues presented in depth. Accordingly this report is not an exhaustive examination of the establishments visited and the range of issues canvassed during the tour. Rather the report outlines the extent and nature of the activities of the Committee during the tour and the main issues that were presented.

The Sub-Committee was particularly interested in the readiness of the 1st Brigade in Darwin. The formation has enthusiastically and successfully undertaken the formidable task of increasing readiness over a short time frame. All personnel in the Brigade are to be commended on their efforts in this regard. In particular, the Sub-Committee was impressed with the attitude and professionalism of those 1st Brigade personnel encountered during the visit.

The Sub-Committee is most appreciative of the efforts of the many people who contributed to the success of the tour. The Sub-Committee would like to extend its thanks to all personnel who were involved in the tour but especially to those who provided briefings or demonstrations for the Members. Throughout the tour the Sub-Committee was impressed by the quality of the presentations provided by members of the Australian Defence Force. Indeed the general impression gained by the Sub-Committee from the tour was that the Australian Defence Force presence in northern Australia is, in relative terms, quite significant. Moreover, that presence is provided by a professional body of personnel operating in difficult environmental circumstances.

In particular, the Committee is grateful to the Minister of Defence for making available the Falcon aircraft from No 34 Squadron that transported the Members from Sydney to Tindal, Darwin and Townsville. To the flight crew, the Sub-Committee extends its appreciation for their unfailing cooperation and assistance in ensuring the travel arrangements proceeded smoothly.

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Chairman