Northern Territory to reap rewards of increased Defence spending

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The Federal Government’s 2016 Defence White Paper highlights significant job and business opportunities for the Northern Territory with $20 billion to be spent on new and improved infrastructure here over the next two decades, Chief Minister Adam Giles said today.

Mr Giles said the Defence White Paper complemented the Country Liberals Government’s Economic Development Strategy, which identified defence and the supply and services sector as priority areas to drive future growth opportunities in the Territory.

“Defence in the Northern Territory is strategically and economically vital for the Northern Territory with about a tenth of Australia’s permanent defence personnel based here,” he said.

“I’ve been lobbying hard for increased Defence spending here so I’m delighted the White Paper outlines major investments at facilities such as Robertson Barracks, HMAS Coonawarra, Larrakeyah Barracks, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin and RAAF Base Tindal over the next 20 years.

“In the decade to 2025-26, around $8 billion will be spent upgrading Defence facilities in the Northern Territory, with a further $12.2 billion to be invested in the decade between 2025-26 and 2035-36.

“That’s an enormous investment that will deliver thousands of jobs and is close to what the Northern Territory Government spends in total on infrastructure each year.

“The scale and stability of the defence presence offers enormous opportunities for local businesses to develop the capabilities to supply goods and services, and to partner with defence prime contractors to deliver projects and services.

“The Northern Territory Government has been working with industry to ensure we have the technical capacity to support current and future Navy fleets.

“Defence’s intent to base offshore patrol vessels in Darwin from 2020 underlines the importance of the Northern Territory Government’s ship lift facility and our plans to establish Darwin as a prime location for marine maintenance.”
Some key highlights for the Northern Territory outlined in the Defence White Paper’s Integrated Investment Program include:

- HMAS Coonawarra will be upgraded to support the existing maritime force and a new wharf will be built to support Canberra class Landing Helicopter Docks;
- RAAF bases in Darwin and Tindal will be upgraded to support the new F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters and the new P8-A Poseidon maritime surveillance and response aircraft;
- A Northern Explosive Ordnance storage facility will be established at or near Tindal and purpose built facilities will be established at the Delamere Air Weapons Range to support personnel training on the EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft;
- Twelve new offshore patrol vessels will begin service from the early 2020s and some of those will be homeported in Darwin;
- Bradshaw Field Training Area and Robertson and Larrakeyah Barracks in Darwin will be upgraded; and
- Longer term consideration to establish larger capacity naval and air bases.

Mr Giles said while the Northern Territory already hosts significant Defence training exercises, the White Paper points to an increase in multi-national training exercises over the coming decade.

“These exercises are important for our military to improve their combat training and readiness, but they are also important for local businesses and relations between the Territory and its neighbours,” he said.

“Military exercises can inject millions of dollars into the Territory economy as large volumes of fuel, supplies and support are required, while troops spend money in local shops, cafes, restaurants, tourist attractions and other businesses while on rest and recuperation.

“The Defence presence in Northern Australia has underpinned the Northern Territory economy for the last century and the future investment in Northern Australia through the Defence White Paper recognises the importance of our strategic position.”

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