

## **Submission for ADF Posture Review**

Summary: The recently announced basing review must consider the negative effect of remote locality postings on the welfare of defence families and the detrimental effects on recruitment and retention.

Moving more ADF bases away from the major population centres of Australia will increase stresses on both defence families and defence personnel. Defence families already suffer increased stress from regular postings and deployment of their loved ones. This should not be another sacrifice they need to make.

Moving defence families away from the major population centres of Australia moves them away from their main support networks. Defence families, while diverse, are likely to originate in these main population centres. The majority of defence families' support networks are also likely to be based in their home town. These main support networks include extended family, close friends and colleagues. The Defence Family Association 2011 Strengthening the Defence Family Survey Report finds that defence family members are "most likely to utilise informal networks" when dealing with the stress of operational deployments. Dislocating families from these networks by remote basing will lead to increased emotional strain and poorer mental health.

Remote localities also have limited employment and educational opportunities for partners. This will likely have a negative impact on their careers. Educational opportunities for defence children will also be further reduced. The stresses of remote locality postings will lead to many defence members placing their family's needs first and leaving the ADF. The 2009 Defence White Paper acknowledges the importance of retention when it said "Attracting and retaining the future workforce will be one of the most significant challenges facing Defence". Positioning bases in remote localities will only increase recruitment and retention issues.

The positioning of bases in Australia should reflect the Australian community and should therefore be based around major population centres so defence members have the opportunity of living close to their support networks. In my view, recruitment and retention would be much improved if this was the case.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.