



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

NAVY TO RECEIVE LARGER AND MORE CAPABLE ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE FRIGATES

The 2009 Defence White Paper sets out a new capability direction with a significant focus on enhancing our maritime capabilities for the 21st century, the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP announced today.

"The Government will significantly enhance Australia's naval capability, with plans to acquire a more capable fleet of eight larger and more versatile new warships to replace the current ANZAC class frigates," Mr Fitzgibbon announced.

"This enhanced naval capability will greatly boost Australia's ability to protect our maritime region and vital trade routes and ultimately provide the Navy with greater flexibility to deter potential maritime threats to our national sovereignty," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"The planned purchase of these new frigates is a key component of Australia's new force structure to meet the strategic requirements described in the new Defence White Paper," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The sheer size of Australia's area of maritime interest, coupled with the complexity of likely maritime tasks and potential threats, creates particular challenges for Australia's surface combatant fleet.

"We need highly capable ships that can network together and defeat the range of threats they may encounter in order to deliver the strategic effect that can only be delivered by a surface combatant task force. This project will deliver a class of ships able to respond to the range of challenges we are likely to face in our area of strategic maritime interest," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

While they will be able to defeat threats in the air and on the sea surface, as well as provide fire support to forces ashore, these frigates will have a specific capability focus on anti-submarine warfare (ASW). They will also allow for greater range and endurance, will support naval helicopters, and will have a sophisticated integrated sonar suite,

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“We need the ability to protect our forces when operating in the surrounding maritime region to Australia from a potential submarine threat. The ASW capability of these new frigates will enhance the capabilities of the Navy’s fleet of surface combatants. When operating in conjunction with the new class of Air Warfare Destroyers, the Navy will have a highly capable and versatile force package capable of deterring and defeating any challenge to our maritime interests in even the highest threat environment.” Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government’s commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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