



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

GREATER STRATEGIC SEALIFT FOR AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

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 today announced plans to acquire a new strategic sealift ship based on a proven design displacing between 10,000 and 15,000 tonnes to complete Australia's amphibious deployment and sustainment needs.

The new Defence White Paper highlights that Australia's unique strategic geography requires the Australian Defence Force to have the ability to lodge and support an amphibious force.

"The new strategic sealift ship will provide the Australian Defence Force with the capacity to insert remaining elements of a large protected land force after the initial tactical lodgement has been made from the Navy's two new *Canberra* class Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) amphibious ships," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

To undertake this complementary task, the new ship will be able to embark a number of helicopters as well as unload its vehicles and other cargo without requiring port infrastructure.

"This new ship will also support the LHDs by taking on the key role of logistically supporting deployed forces by transiting between the forwarded support base and the area of operations, thereby allowing the LHDs to remain in the area of operations supporting combat and aviation operations and providing the shorter-term logistic requirements of the force," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Importantly, the characteristics of the ship will also allow it to be employed in a wide range of non-combat operations such as evacuating Australian citizens from areas of trouble or providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance after natural or man-made crises.

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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“This third ship will provide the Government with a greater versatility to respond to incidents in our region while providing a further layer of capability to the ADF’s ability to deploy and sustain deployed forces. This third ship will also provide the Australian Defence Force with greater response options for short notice tasks when one or both of the LHDs might be in deep maintenance, deployed on concurrent tasks or otherwise unavailable for strategic sealift operations,” 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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