



THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence

Saturday, 2 May 2009

ENHANCED CAPABILITY FOR SUPER HORNETS

The 2009 Defence White Paper, released today, delivers an Air Force for the 21st century that will be better equipped, fully networked and better prepared to meet Australia's air power requirements.

The Rudd Government has made an initial investment of \$35 million to wire 12 of Australia's fleet of 24 F/A-18F Super Hornet aircraft for potential future conversion to EA-18G Growler configuration, following detailed analysis of future electronic threats as part of the Defence White Paper review.

"Wiring part of the Super Hornet fleet provides Australia with an important strategic option. It is a prudent and cost effective way of future proofing our air combat capability and providing a vital step in meeting the force level electronic warfare demands of the future battle-space," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The option to fit-out 12 of the Super Hornet fleet while still at the aircraft manufacturing stage greatly reduces the cost of acquiring an electronic attack capability at a later date. If it was decided to proceed with this capability enhancement it would require some additional investment.

Ultimately, if pursued, this investment will significantly enhance the Super Hornet's capability, by giving electronic attack capacity and therefore the ability to nullify the electronic systems of opposing aircraft as well as land and maritime radars and communication systems.

"Australia's first Super Hornet is currently on the production line at Boeing's facility in St Louis and will be completed by July this year," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"Air Force is looking forward to the enhanced air combat capability that the Super Hornet will provide and on current schedule the new aircraft will begin arriving in Australia in the first half of next year".

Australia is purchasing 24 F/A-18F Block II Super Hornets to maintain Air Force's combat capability edge and allow the F-111 aircraft at Number 6 Squadron to be withdrawn from service by the end of 2010.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government's

A Defence Force for the 21st Century

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commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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