



## **THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP Minister for Defence**

Saturday, 2 May 2009

### **AIR FORCE TO ACQUIRE ADVANCED NEW MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT**

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 Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP today announced that the Government will acquire eight advanced new maritime patrol aircraft to enhance the future anti-submarine warfare capability of Air Force.

"The new aircraft will have a significant surface-search capability that will be further complimented by the planned acquisition of seven high-altitude, long-endurance uninhabited aerial vehicles,"

"Together these two new systems will replace the current AP-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft and ultimately provide greater maritime surveillance coverage for the ADF." Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"The sheer size of the air and sea space within the Australian operational environment presents particular challenges for surveillance and maritime response across such a vast area. The acquisition of a new range of maritime patrol aircraft will address these strategic challenges and provide the Air Force with a superior capability for rapid area search and identification tasks," said Mr Fitzgibbon.

"The first of the new maritime patrol aircraft will be equipped with highly advanced new sensors, including surface search radar and optical, infra-red and electronic surveillance systems,"

This project is one of several providing enhancements to the ADF's anti-submarine warfare capability to collectively enhance the Australian Defence Force's ability to counter the growing threat posed by submarines.

"The new maritime patrol aircraft will provide a highly advanced anti-submarine warfare capability, able to detect, categorise and track submarines using advanced sonobuoys and on-board systems and engage threats using air-launched torpedoes."

### **A Defence Force for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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“With high transit speeds and increased network capability, these new aircraft will provide the Air Force with a rapid military response option to identify and prosecute any suspicious activity in our maritime approaches,” 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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