23 September 2014

Defence White Paper 2015
R1-3-A135
Russell Offices
Department Of Defence
PO Box 7901
CANBERRA BC ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

DEFENCE WHITE PAPER 2015 - SUBMISSION BY SHIRE OF EXMOUTH

Please find enclosed the Shire of Exmouth’s submission to the 2015 Defence White Paper announced by the Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Minister for Defence, Hon. David Johnston in April 2014.

Council believe that the content of our submission demonstrates strongly that Exmouth offers the Department a strategic location for future Defence strategies and investment for North West Australia.

The Exmouth community are extremely supportive of the initiative for an increased defence presence locally and have identified this strategy as critical to the long term sustainability of the town.

The Council and the community would be committed to according future Defence proposals for the Exmouth Peninsula priority attention and would demonstrate a willingness to work closely with relevant officials to ensure the complete success of any new Defence investments in the region.

Council hope that the committee gives our submission due consideration and if you have any further enquiries relating to Council’s commitment please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

Bill Price
Chief Executive Officer
2015 Defence White Paper

SUBMISSION BY

SHIRE OF EXMOUTH

September 2014
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*The Shire of Exmouth hereby expresses consent for the publication of this submission by the Department of Defence.*
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Executive Summary

The Exmouth Shire Council welcomes the 2015 Defence White Paper and the opportunity to provide a submission to the Review Secretariat.

The Exmouth region is proud of its long and very positive relationship with the ADF. This submission argues that there is a strong case for building on this track record by expanding the Defence Force presence in the area. The Exmouth Shire and the broader Exmouth community is prepared to work closely and very cooperatively with the Department of Defence to ensure that the ADF’s future requirements are fully met.

In acknowledging the strategic priorities highlighted in the 2009 Defence White Paper and with particular emphasis on the topic of ‘Force Posture & Bases’, this submission has been prepared on the understanding that Defence requires expanded facilities in North-West Australia that are strategically located, that are available at modest cost, that offer superior working and lifestyle environments for Defence personnel and their families, and that are demonstrably viable for the very long term. In consequence, this submission argues that Exmouth offers Defence:

- Superior air and sea access to priority operational areas in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.
- Close proximity to the primary offshore oil and gas fields off the North-West Coast.
- Shorter and more reliable all-weather lines of logistic support from Perth and the eastern states.
- Substantial and fully proven Naval communications facilities. Within the protected waters of Exmouth Gulf there is also a large-capacity Naval fuel and general cargo wharf, modern facilities for the berthing and support of small ships and opportunities for comparatively low cost construction of expanded Naval support facilities.
- A major RAAF air base and an air weapons range with few noise and other operating constraints either now or foreseeably. These facilities could readily be expanded at modest cost.
- A sophisticated Solar Observatory with a skills base for space support operations.
- Existing relations with the American Defence Force with partnerships with the existing HEH Naval Communications Facility, Space Surveillance and the Solar Observatory.
- Cost and operating efficiencies from locating new Defence and Defence-related activities in close proximity to existing Defence facilities.
- A modern town that is well placed to support Defence personnel and their families with a range of employment opportunities, quality primary and secondary schools, a technical college, a well-equipped and staffed hospital, a modern retail centre and truly exceptional recreational facilities.
- The ready availability of land for both residential and industrial purposes, the ease of supply from the South and other factors make the Exmouth Peninsula a relatively low-cost region for the construction and long term operation of multi-user Defence facilities. Defence facilities developed on the Exmouth Peninsula can be readily protected from encroachment for many decades into the future.
- The Exmouth Shire and the local community would welcome an expanded Defence presence most warmly and would work hard to ensure that it was very successful.
Geo-Strategic Factors

Operational Reach from Exmouth
Figure 1 highlights an enduring feature of Northern Australian geography. Exmouth is the location on the Australian mainland that is closest to the key operating areas of the South China Sea and to all areas of significance in the Indian Ocean. The proscribed arc of approximately 5,000km shown in this figure highlights the fact that no other part of the Australian mainland is closer to these key operational areas.

Distance in comparison to Darwin
The table below indicates clearly that Exmouth is closer to key operational areas of enduring importance to the ADF than Darwin and it has an even stronger proximity advantage over Tindal and all other locations on the Australian mainland. This proximity advantage equates to easier air and naval reach, shorter deployment times, higher sortie rates and greater operational effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To Exmouth</th>
<th>To Darwin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
<td>3706</td>
<td>3705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>3089</td>
<td>3657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2802</td>
<td>3347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocos Islands</td>
<td>2143</td>
<td>3697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>6855</td>
<td>7343</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Primary Minerals and Energy Projects in Northern Australia

The images below highlight another key aspect of Exmouth's geo-strategic location: it is positioned exceptionally close to the primary mineral and energy developments in Northern Australia. Especially notable is Exmouth's very close proximity to the primary offshore oil and gas facilities - those on the Northwest Shelf. These offshore reserves and their associated facilities are those most deserving of closer surveillance and, in the event of heightened tensions, more intense patrolling and protection. Exmouth is ideally placed to support such operations.
Detection of Unauthorised Vessels

The below image shows that Exmouth is also exceptionally well located to support air and surface patrolling to detect and apprehend unauthorised vessels approaching Australia from or through most of the Indonesian archipelago, such as vessels carrying asylum-seekers.

Logistic Supply

The below image highlights another geo-strategic advantage that greatly favours military operations from Exmouth. This location offers the shortest, most direct and most reliable all-weather supply lines from Perth and from the eastern states. The primary overland supply line from Perth is the all-weather, high-capacity Northwest Coastal Highway, which can be supplemented, when required, by a network of lesser capacity roads that mostly run further inland. Fuel and other supplies can also be delivered reliably to Exmouth via shorter and less exposed sea routes than is the case with locations further north. In brief, military operations of nearly every type can be undertaken from Exmouth with fewer logistic challenges and at lower cost than from any other location in the northwest.
Space Surveillance

Another important geo-strategic advantage of Exmouth is its proximity to the normal trajectories of certain space vehicles. This, when combined with Exmouth’s exceptionally clear weather (an average of 9 hours of sunshine per day and 320 days of clear skies per year), makes this location ideal for space surveillance and similar activities.

Learmonth Solar Observatory

There is also a quasi-military Solar Observatory at Exmouth that is jointly managed by the IPS Radio and Space Services (part of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology) and the United States Air Force Weather Agency (AFWA). This observatory is part of a global network of solar observatories (the Solar Electro-Optical Network, SEON) established by the USAF, and one of two solar patrol observatories in Australia. Observatory staff include analysts (to monitor and interpret observations), maintenance technicians, scientists and administrators.

US C-Band Radar

A US C-Band radar has recently been relocated from Antigua in the Caribbean and installed within the Harold E Holt Naval Communications Station, Exmouth. Its new home in Exmouth allows it to track objects above the southern hemisphere, plugging a blind spot in the Space Situational Awareness Partnership between Australia and the United States. The US tracks about 16,000 objects in orbit, ranging from the International Space Station to scrap metal.

It is feared the chance of collision has steadily increased, following decades of orbital launches and space exploration. The new system will help track and catalogue orbital debris, allowing future missions to plot courses to avoid it, and hopefully one day provide targets for missions to clean the place up a bit.

The entire project cost for the relocation was $30million with the operation of it expecting to cost $10million per year.
Defence Space Surveillance Telescope

The relocation of a highly advanced US space surveillance telescope to the Harold E Holt Naval Communication Facility in Exmouth is proposed. The telescope is expected to operate from 2016 and will be operated by Australia in partnership with the US, Britain and Canadian Governments. It will contribute to the Global Space Surveillance Network, which provides warnings to all satellite operators of potential collisions with other satellites or debris.

The space surveillance telescope will assist in addressing the risk of collision of space debris by improving the ability to monitor space over the southern hemisphere. The highly advanced technology of the telescope will enable it to observe objects in space out to 36,000km above the earth.

It is estimated that the project will cost between $50 - $60M.

History

The geo-strategic advantages of Exmouth’s position were primary drivers of its use for military purposes in the past. During the Second World War, Exmouth was used, under Operation Potshot, as a forward base for United States submarines. Exmouth was, in addition, a major RAAF fighter and long-range surveillance aircraft base and also a radar and communications site. Exmouth was also the mainland jumping-off point for military and Qantas flights across the Indian Ocean to Sri Lanka and thence to the Middle East and Europe.

The air and communications facilities were greatly modernised and extended in the 1970s during the final stages of Indonesian Confrontation, again largely because of the geo-strategic advantages afforded by the location. These enduring features could readily be exploited again to enhance Australia’s security.
Current Defence Facilities in Exmouth

RAAF Base Learmonth

RAAF Base Learmonth is a joint military/civil facility located 34km south of the town. This airfield has an asphalt/concrete main runway 3,047 metres long together with associated taxiways and aircraft hardstands. RAAF Learmonth can support all RAAF aircraft operating at full loads. This airfield also offers regular commercial flights to Perth and north to Karratha and other destinations.

The RAAF also operates an 18,954 hectare Air Weapons Range some 30km south-west of the air base.

When the Department of Defence reviews the forty year-old concept of RAAF ‘bare bases’ in northern Australia it may make sense to expand the range of facilities at Learmonth so that this base can be used more extensively and for a wider range of purposes.

Harold E Holt Naval Communications Station

Another important Defence installation at Exmouth is the Harold E Holt very low frequency and high frequency communications station. The primary role of this facility is to relay signals to Australian and allied submarines and other Naval vessels that are operating in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific regions.
Adjacent to the Harold E Holt facility in Exmouth Gulf is a large deep water Navy fuel wharf. This wharf is designed to handle fuel transfers from large ships and also to handle modest quantities of general purpose cargo.
Current Civilian Facilities in Exmouth

Primary Features of the Exmouth Peninsula

Exmouth is a modern town located 1,270km north of Perth. It is currently a permanent home to 2,600 people, although for seven months of the year this figure swells to some 7,000. Large numbers of people are attracted by the superb climate and the exceptional recreational opportunities.

Boasting a secure and friendly atmosphere, Exmouth is the ideal location and ultimate lifestyle choice. With minimal criminal and anti-social behaviour issues, a highly developed sporting culture and a genuine sense of community rarely found, Exmouth has it all.

The primary local industries on the Exmouth Peninsula are tourism, fishing, defence, light engineering, building & construction, oil & gas, and pastoral. The Exmouth region offers a wide range of employment opportunities to the partners of Defence personnel.
Health
Exmouth District Hospital is the central health facility for the Exmouth community which offers a range of inpatient and outpatient services from emergency care to home and community care. The Exmouth Hospital is scheduled for an $8.1M upgrade which will consist of an expansion and complete refurbishment of the reception area and expansion and upgrade of services and facilities throughout.

The services currently provided by Exmouth Hospital include Admissions, Pathology, Radiography, Ultrasonography and Outpatient services. Aged Care and Mental Health Services are also made accessible. Exmouth Hospital provides a number of General Practitioners and ensures at least one is available at all times for Emergency Services. The Hospital facility also accommodates Exmouth's Dental Clinic.

Visiting Specialists include Ear, Nose and Throat, Audiologist, Gynaecologist, Dermatologist, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Dietician, Ophthalmologist, Psychiatrist, Physician, Paediatrician, Podiatrist.

Ningaloo Centre
The Ningaloo Centre will be a modern, iconic, multipurpose facility creating a landmark Community Hub for Exmouth, incorporating spaces for Community, Visitors, Education & Research and Gallery & Exhibition. The centre will include the Exmouth Visitor Centre, Exmouth Library, café, community hall and meeting rooms, exhibition space to showcase Exmouth’s rich natural and historical cultural values.

Exmouth’s Tafe, Durack Institute of Technology, will relocate to the centre with state of the art facilities with potential for future expansion. Currently the institute delivers a number of courses from a variety of industries including Marine, Horticulture, Education, Retail, Business, IT, Hospitality, Tourism and The Arts.

The Ningaloo Centre will also play host to a collaboration of researchers and research institutes including UWA Oceans Institute and CSIRO. The centre will provide the opportune space to support and communicate research outcomes derived from the Ningaloo Reef, the Exmouth Gulf and other unique ecosystems, marine and terrestrial, around Exmouth and relay that information to locals and visitors to the region.
The Ningaloo Centre has been in planning for many years, has now progressed to Construction Phase and is scheduled to be completed by July 2016.

**Education**

Exmouth District High School (EDHS) incorporates Kindergarten through to Year 12. With over 30 teaching staff appointed by the Department of Education and Training, the specialised needs of the various year levels and secondary subject areas are ably covered.

Exmouth District High School has recently undergone an extensive $17 million upgrade. The upgrade included new classrooms, library, Art/Drama/Music centre and expansive undercover court area. Exmouth District High School has an exciting future.

**Recreational Facilities**

Exmouth has numerous recreational facilities including a 50 metre swimming pool, ovals, 18 hole golf course, multi-purpose undercover hard courts, tennis courts, squash courts, netball courts, cricket nets, 2 synthetic bowling greens, arts centre, state of the art Skate Park, water spray park, pistol & rifle shooting range, motorcross track and an extensive network of walk/cycle paths. Exmouth is also the gateway to the World Heritage Listed Ningaloo Marine Park and the Cape Range National Park which provides endless outdoor activities for all ages and physical capabilities including diving, snorkelling, yachting, surfing, kite surfing, kayaking and bushwalking. In addition Exmouth boasts 3 advanced boat launching facilities. In addition to recreational facilities and activities the local RSL Branch offers a great support network to past and present defence personnel.
Exmouth Marina Development

Exmouth Boat Harbour shown in the image below, has been designed primarily to support recreational vessels and medium-sized commercial vessels, such as those supporting nearby offshore oil and gas developments.

In recent years, demand has grown strongly for an even bigger port facility, primarily to support larger offshore oil and gas industry vessels and also the much larger cruise ships and recreational vessels wishing to visit, largely to experience the world-class fishing and diving that are available in Exmouth waters. In consequence, serious consideration is being given to a substantial further expansion of Exmouth Port. Engineering advice is that further port development would not be excessively expensive to build and could readily be designed to accommodate not only the growing demands of commercial and recreational users but also the requirements of Navy and Customs.

Projected Future Exmouth Port Development
Tourism Developments

In recent years Exmouth has seen a major expansion of marine tourism and quality tourist accommodation facilities.

Exmouth boasts a beautiful climate, World Heritage listed Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park providing exceptional fishing, magnificent diving and snorkelling, canoeing, surfing, kite-surfing, walking trails, it's a paradise for both land based tourists as well as ocean enthusiasts.

Exmouth has a number of accommodation providers including the world class Novotel Ningaloo Resort, a 4 ½ star resort on the water front, with spectacular views, elegant rooms and décor.
Land Availability

The Shire of Exmouth together with LandCorp have approved a 394 Lot Subdivision on Nimitz Street. The development will be delivered in 3 stages over the next 5 years.

LandCorp has advised that it will progress subdivision of the land on a staged basis taking into account, among other things, prevailing market conditions. It is anticipated that the first stage of development will involve the creation of approximately 50 lots at the northern end of the subject land.

The development will consist of a mixture of varying densities of residential and mixed use commercial with adequate and aesthetically pleasing Public Open Space. The subdivision design has been prepared in accordance with the design requirements established by Liveable Neighbourhoods which represents a logical and coordinated expansion of the existing residential areas of the Exmouth Townsite.
Defence Development Potential

Current Defence Presence

One of the distinguishing features of Exmouth is that it already hosts a significant Defence and Defence-related presence. Moreover, this Defence presence periodically swells when major exercises are undertaken or when other events trigger a surge of ADF activity in the northwest. The table below details the mix of Defence and security-related personnel who are permanently employed in Exmouth.

Estimated Number of People Employed in Defence and Defence-Related Activities in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Defence (DMO)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raytheon</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Federal Police (AFP)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilbara Regiment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAAF Learmonth</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Observatory</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Defence-related Jobs in Exmouth</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total permanent wage and salary earners in Exmouth</strong></td>
<td><strong>1261</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defence workers as % of permanent Exmouth earners</strong></td>
<td><strong>11.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the perspective of the Department of Defence and the Australian taxpayer there would seem to be considerable advantages in building on the well-established Defence and Defence-related presence on the Exmouth Peninsula. There are many synergies to be won from expanding the multi-use Defence and related facilities that operate in close proximity in this region. Peacetime efficiencies should be available in fields as diverse as administrative overheads and transport through to housing and staff support services. In defence contingencies a further range of qualitative and quantitative efficiencies should be available from factors such as command proximity and both joint and combined communications.

Inquiry into Developing Northern Australia

The Australian Government, through a Joint Select Committee, have recently carried out an Inquiry into ‘Developing Northern Australia’. Council provided a submission to the Inquiry promoting amongst other things, the opportunity of a greater defence presence in Exmouth. The Final Report on Developing Northern Australia was recently released with one of the key recommendations relating to Exmouth being, and I quote;

“Recommendation 19

5.61 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government consider relocating additional defence assets to Northern Australia in accordance with the recommendations of the Defence White Paper.
5.62 The evidence received by the Committee indicates that there is considerable scope to significantly increase the Defence presence in Northern Australia. Naval assets in particular could be better located in Northern Australia closer to the locations where they might be required to promote national security or provide humanitarian aid. For example, the Committee notes the location of, and existing and potential capabilities of, Exmouth as a base for air and sea operations. The Committee believes that a long-term northern focus for the defence force is both appropriate to national defence and beneficial for northern development.

Community Support
One indicator of community support for further Defence developments in the region is recent local public opinion polling. During June-July 2011, the Exmouth Shire Council conducted a community survey in which business personnel and residents were asked to state their preferences concerning those sectors they would prefer to drive future economic and employment growth in the region. The outcome, displayed in the below graph, shows that overall the community favours a balanced expansion of all of the sectors currently present in the region; industry, service industry, defence, oil & gas and tourism. Importantly, this survey and related informal consultations have highlighted the community's acute appreciation of the importance of the Defence presence and strong support for its further development, diversification and growth.

Survey Question: How strongly you think the following economic drivers should change over the next 10-15 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Driver</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services...</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and Gas Industry</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Encroachment Issues
Exmouth offers another substantial advantage to Defence planners. In contrast to Dampier, Karratha, Broome and Darwin, land is plentiful, readily developed and relatively inexpensive. Development and construction costs in Exmouth are not artificially inflated by the feverish pace of minerals and tourist developments that are evident elsewhere. Further Defence developments on the Exmouth Peninsula would be undertaken with the strong support of the Exmouth Shire Council. Their complete success would be a first priority for the local community, not a background supplement to other activities.
Moreover, because most of the land-based minerals developments in northwest Australia are located elsewhere, the potential for encroachment on priority Defence facilities on the Exmouth Peninsula is far lower than in other locations, even in the very long term future. In consequence, Exmouth and its surrounds offers Defence an unusual combination of circumstances that should be highly attractive. On the Exmouth Peninsula Defence would receive local government and community development priority, a high quality living and working environment for Defence personnel and their dependents, comparatively low costs of development, operating cost and efficiency synergies from collocating several Defence activities and assured long-term viability with minimal, if any, encroachment.
Summary

This submission has been prepared on the understanding that Defence requires expanded facilities in North-West Australia that are strategically located, that are available at modest cost, that offer superior working and lifestyle environments for Defence personnel and their families, and that are demonstrably viable for the very long term. In consequence, this submission recommends that the Department of Defence consider carefully the advantages of extending the multi-user facilities Defence already holds on the Exmouth Peninsula. Supplementing these existing facilities would offer:

- Superior air and sea access to priority operational areas in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.
- Close proximity to the primary offshore oil and gas fields off the North-West Coast.
- Shorter and more reliable all-weather lines of logistic support from Perth and the eastern states.
- Substantial and fully proven Naval communications facilities. Within the protected waters of Exmouth Gulf there is also a large-capacity Naval fuel and general cargo wharf, modern facilities for the berthing and support of small ships and opportunities for comparatively low cost construction of expanded Naval support facilities.
- A major RAAF air base and an air weapons range with few noise and other operating constraints either now or foreseeably. These facilities could readily be expanded at modest cost.
- A sophisticated Solar Observatory with a skills base for space support operations.
- Existing relations with the American Defence Force with partnerships with the existing HEH Naval Communications Facility, Space Surveillance and the Solar Observatory.
- Cost and operating efficiencies from locating new Defence and Defence-related activities in close proximity to existing Defence facilities.
- A modern town that is well placed to support Defence personnel and their families with a range of employment opportunities, quality primary and secondary schools, a technical college, a well-equipped and staffed hospital, a modern retail centre and truly exceptional recreational facilities.
- The ready availability of land for both residential and industrial purposes, the ease of supply from the South and other factors make the Exmouth Peninsula a relatively low-cost region for the construction and long term operation of multi-user Defence facilities. Defence facilities developed on the Exmouth Peninsula can be readily protected from encroachment for many decades into the future.
- The Exmouth Shire and the local community would welcome an expanded Defence presence most warmly and would work hard to ensure that it was very successful.
ATTACHMENT A: A Summary of Exmouth’s Defence History

1618 First sighting of the North West Cape was by Dutch sailors. The ship’s crews most likely included Naval personnel.

1940’s World War II sees more Australian and United States defence activities at the North-West Cape. Navy, Air Force and Army contingents were all deployed to the Exmouth Peninsula.

1940’s An airfield (now RAAF Learmonth) was constructed to provide fighter defence for the defence facilities in the region and also to facilitate the staging of reconnaissance and bomber aircraft in the event of a Japanese invasion fleet approaching the north-west coast.

1942 Operation Potshot launched with the US Navy establishing a submarine base in the Exmouth Gulf.

1967 Harold E Holt Naval Communication Station officially opened.

1971 Redevelopment of RAAF Base Learmonth as a ‘bare base’, due to its proximity to Indonesia and other locations of enduring strategic importance.

1979 Learmonth Solar Observatory commences operation, managed by Aust Bureau of Meteorology and USA Air Force Weather Agency.