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Defence White Paper 2015
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Russell Offices
Department of Defence
PO Box 7901
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

To Whom It May Concern

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Gippsland
Response to Defence White Paper

RDA Gippsland

RDA Gippsland is a regionally based, not for profit body which aims to facilitate regional thought leadership to ensure sustainable economic and social growth for Gippsland. RDA Gippsland is part of a nationwide network of 55 regional bodies that provide a conduit between governments and communities. The Committee is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian State Governments.

Committee members are drawn from across Gippsland and comprise ten members appointed by the Australian and Victorian Governments, and supported by an executive officer and a small team of staff. The Committee works with all levels of government, industry groups, businesses, research development, education and training providers and community members. More information about our committee can be found here http://rdagippsland.com.au/about-us/our-committee/

RDA Gippsland also supports ‘One Gippsland’ - a collaborative advocacy network which brings the region’s peak stakeholder groups together to form one united voice, on behalf of the region. The One Gippsland campaign was launched in March 2013 to pursue funding and support required to implement the initiatives of the Gippsland Regional Plan—a joint initiative of the Gippsland Local Government Network, RDA Gippsland and Committee for Gippsland.

This brief submission addresses two key elements of the White Paper around defence capability and investment.
Defence Capabilities for the Future

Defence is a critically important industry sector for Gippsland. The Department of Defence has had a close relationship with Gippsland for over seventy years. Indeed, the Victorian Government has committed significant support for the growth of the sector in this region and the wider State.

RDA Gippsland supports a vision for Victoria to cement its place as the training ‘arm’ of Defence in Australia. Army training is undertaken at the Puckapunyal Army Base, Navy training at HMAS Cerberus and Air Force training has been consolidated at East Sale RAAF Base.

RDA Gippsland draws the Expert Panel’s attention to Project Air 5428 as a clear opportunity for the Australian Defence Force to be provided with a new fixed wing Pilot Training System (PTS). In our view, there are considerable capability-based merits in establishing the PTS at Sale.

We are aware that the Victorian Government has committed financial assistance of up to $5 million should the East Sale ‘on-base’ option be selected by the Commonwealth as the preferred location for the establishment of the PTS. Financial assistance of up to $20 million has been committed should a West Sale ‘off-base’ option be selected by the Commonwealth. This builds on investments already made including the State’s previous contribution to upgrades at the West Sale facility through a $5.2 million assistance package provided in support of the Interim Basic Flying Training capability bid for Gippsland.

RDA Gippsland supports the Victorian Government’s view that Sale and the wider Gippsland region represents a natural fit for Defence’s current and future aviation training requirements. Sale is already the base for the Central Flying School and initial officer training for the RAAF, and serves as the central location for other aviation training.

There are significant current and future operational advantages in the existing fifty nautical miles of military controlled airspace, and Department of Defence access to municipal controlled aerodromes across Gippsland. The region’s weather patterns are also suited to enabling optimum rates of flying training hours. This is evidenced by the current training of qualified flying instructors at the Central Flying School and Air Combat Officers at the School of Air Warfare.

Investing in People through Regional Communities

RDA Gippsland takes the view that when Defence invests in regional communities that investment is highly visible, has high return and creates supportive environments for Defence personnel and for achieving Defence objectives.

Defence requires a first rate training infrastructure for the next decades, and Victoria provides this with Australia’s highest concentration of aviation and aerospace education and training facilities.
The sector is supported by a considerable cluster of research institutes, nine universities, numerous technology parks and the nation’s largest share of university graduates capable of sustaining a strong defence industry.

Gippsland provides a significant slice of this infrastructure through excellent higher education facilities, transport infrastructure (including direct access to the M1 Freeway and Melbourne) and growth industries that will support employment of family members of Defence staff.

**Project Air 5428** will bring significant and lasting economic benefits to the community of Sale and the wider region. In addition to the construction of facilities, the instruction of pilots and aircraft maintenance, the project will also generate demand for goods and services in the local economy, and the employment of personnel will deliver further consumption related benefits.

The *Air 5428 Economic Impact Analysis Report* (November 2013) undertaken by REMPLAN for Wellington Shire Council found that the “…construction phase of the project will generate demand for goods and services sourced from within Wellington Shire”, and that “in addition to the direct jobs created during the construction phase, indirect employment in local companies that supply intermediate goods and services to the construction sector will also be generated.”

RDA Gippsland observes that the establishment of the Basic Flying Training School in Sale would provide the Department of Defence and Air Force with the valuable opportunity to further consolidate its operational and aviation training functions. By doing so, the Department of Defence would realise significant capability and training synergies, along with resourcing and operating efficiencies, resulting in critical long-term value-for-money outcomes and further rationalisation of Defence basing locations.

**Conclusion**

RDA Gippsland commends our region to the Defence White Paper Expert Panel for our strategic alignment with Defence capability objectives and future investment. We thank the Expert Panel for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely

Richard Elkington
Chair