



1/158 Lawrence St
(TAFEspace)
Wodonga VIC 3690
Phone 02 6056 8302
Fax 02 6056 9301
www.wodongachamber.com.au

Senate Inquiry

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

Impact of Defence training activities and facilities on rural and regional communities

Business Wodonga Submission

Neil Aird
Business Manager

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

On 8 February 2017 the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2017: Impact of Defence training activities and facilities on rural and regional communities with reference to:

- a. economic, social and environmental impacts;
- b. consultation and communication with local government and community organisations;
- c. investments in new facilities, infrastructure and operations;
- d. utilisation of local suppliers and service providers to achieve value for money;
- e. encouraging awareness of tendering opportunities for rural and regional businesses; and
- f. any other related matters.

2. INTRODUCTION

Wodonga is a progressive, large regional city in North East Victoria. It is currently experiencing substantial growth. Many exciting developments are occurring and are planned for Wodonga. Wodonga Chamber of Commerce trading as Business Wodonga sees it's vital for businesses to work together to maximise the opportunities presented through these developments. Business Wodonga's main purpose is to encourage this collaborative approach and **'to foster the development of a world class business community right.'** (Business Wodonga Core Purpose)

Business Wodonga is a not-for-profit business service organisation with a three-person operations team; Neil Aird – Business Manager, vacant – Membership Manager and Sophia Feeney-Nesire – Administrative Officer. This team is governed by a Board of nine of Wodonga's most influential business people. Business Wodonga has around 400 businesses as members involving over 1000 staff and works with businesses, peak business organisations, and educational and government organisations throughout Albury, Wodonga and surrounds.

Defence has a long history of involvement in the Wodonga region and is a part of the fabric of what Wodonga is and so continued involvement and expansion of Defence in our city is encouraged and supported by Business Wodonga. Currently, Defence has Latchford Barracks in Bonegilla, Gaza Ridge Barracks at Bandiana and the Army Logistic Training Centre also at Bandiana. It is estimated Defence contributes \$536 million into the Albury Wodonga economy annually (plus indirect effects) and provides employment for over 2,500 people.

3. SUPPORT

- a. Business Wodonga sees the vital role Defence plays and has played in our community and the economic benefits its presence provides to many businesses including education and training providers in Wodonga and surrounds. Hence Business Wodonga supports the retention of Defence's existing presence in the region and encourages Defence to consider opportunities for expansion. Wodonga is well placed for expanded operational and training activities.
- b. Business Wodonga supports continued input of Defence in regional growth strategies through effective and ongoing communication and consultation with local planning and governing bodies such as Albury and Wodonga Councils for the benefits of all. This will assist the Councils and other key bodies with their operations and long-term planning.
- c. Business Wodonga supports Wodonga TAFE in their past and current provision of quality education and training services to Defence and their endeavour to secure future Defence training contracts. Business Wodonga would like to see training contracts be awarded to a local Wodonga training provider especially one with a strong track record such as Wodonga TAFE.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Business Wodonga recommends Defence retains existing operations including training in Wodonga and researches the viability of expanding these operations and training - in recognition of the vital economic role Defence plays to our region.
- ii. Business Wodonga recommends Defence sources a local training provider for all its training services where practical and seriously view applications provided by Wodonga TAFE for the provision of education and training services.
- iii. More generally and where practical, Business Wodonga recommends Defence source local goods and services from the Albury Wodonga region for its operations at the three Defence sites.
- iv. Business Wodonga recommends communicating regularly with Wodonga TAFE for the provision of future education and training to assist with long term planning by the TAFE.
- v. Business Wodonga recommends communicating regularly to key organisations such as the Albury and Wodonga Council's especially Defence's planning for infrastructure and other developments.