

2nd August 2021

Defence Projects Report

The committee has an important role in reviewing the reports of the Auditor-General, which in turn provides accountability and reviews of defence projects and associated expenditure. Given the connection to Australian security and strategic interests, it is critical to ensure that defence projects are being handled efficiently and on schedule - and within budgeted expenditure (apart from reasonable changes). The defence projects report by the Auditor-General is a good overview of major defence projects. The review by the Auditor-General indicates that the Defence Projects report is accurate and, moreover, that nearly all the projects are proceeding as planned. This is good to see and shows that having strong accountability (as indicated by the AG's report and this Inquiry) is beneficial to ensuring efficient project delivery.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is facing many challenges in ensuring Australian security, including natural disasters (such as the 2019-2020 Black Summer Bushfire season) and the COVID-19 Pandemic. These pressures place greater demand on the services of the ADF, while also potentially impacting on defence project delivery. The projects outlined in the report have various important roles in enhancing the land, sea and air capabilities of the ADF in ensuring Australian security and strategic or humanitarian aims during various global challenges.

Of note is the Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement program included vessels given to our regional Pacific island nations Samoa, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Palau and Tonga. This is a key program to enhance our security cooperation with our regional neighbours – both engendering good will while enhancing their security capability (including to patrol illegal fishing, respond to natural disasters and so on). This is a program that I am particularly interested and supportive of and wanted to highlight.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Benjamin Cronshaw.