

Our Ref: D24/139526
Enquiries to: Ms Melissa James and Mr Tristan Fernandes



4 July 2024

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission on Department of Defence - Submarine Rotational Force - West, Priority Works, HMAS Stirling, Western Australia

As home to HMAS Stirling, the City of Rockingham (the City) has a positive relationship with the Department of Defence and acknowledges the significant infrastructure upgrades required at HMAS Stirling to prepare for the AUKUS partnership.

With consideration to the infrastructure upgrades outlined in the Submission, the City's role is to provide services and amenities to our diverse population of almost 150,000 residents, and advocate on their behalf.

Whilst the City notes that issues located outside of HMAS Stirling do not fall within the scope of the Submission, there are a range of matters that transfer to the 'mainland' and directly impact the function of the base and its workforce. These include:

1. The growth of traffic congestion to the local road network and the lack of suitable transport infrastructure to meet projected demand;
2. A lack of available housing to accommodate workers, Australian Defence personnel and international Defence personnel at HMAS Stirling along with traditional, domestic requirements; and
3. A lack of consideration for the expansion of education and training facilities, necessary to train a workforce in advanced manufacturing and defence-industries, needed to facilitate the AUKUS agreement and Defence administration generally.

In relation to the matters raised, the following further information is provided:

1. Transport Issues

The growing issues of traffic congestion within the local road network need to be urgently addressed. HMAS Stirling has not had satisfactory access, for freight and general traffic, since it was built. As a result, local roads have been required to perform a regional road function which has caused significant traffic congestion and damage to road infrastructure assets within the connecting local network. Heavy traffic congestion in relation to development on HMAS Stirling is adversely impacting local residents and needs to be addressed to accommodate proposed expansion on the base.



The City has commissioned an independent Transport Needs Study (completed in June 2024) which considers the Department of Defence requirements for AUKUS and projected traffic impacts associated with the increased construction and expansion of HMAS Stirling to the year 2040. Department of Defence officers fed into the Study and are aware of its findings.

The Study identifies that the local road network is already operating above an appropriate level of service during peak periods. Based on traffic projections that consider the growth associated with AUKUS, the local road network will experience significant congestion and will fail by 2030. This is projected to impact access to HMAS Stirling from the mainland if no intervention is undertaken.

In order to resolve latent and future traffic impacts anticipated with increased activity at HMAS Stirling, the City is seeking a commitment from the Department of Defence and State Government to fund and undertake the necessary feasibility studies to determine the viability of constructing the Garden Island Highway (GIH) over its established reservation. There is also a need to upgrade local roads within, and connecting Cape Peron (i.e. Point Peron Road, Lease Road and Memorial Drive), and the City will also be seeking a contribution from the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries, including the Department of Defence, to allow for such.

The GIH is the regional road connection to HMAS Stirling that has been reserved for decades, however, there has never been appropriate investigation conducted to determine if its full extent can be built. The Council has an advocacy position for Government to undertake this feasibility investigation to determine whether the GIH can be built, and if not, then what the alternative options are. The City has regularly sought support for this to occur.

The upgrade of the road network, to meet the increase activity at HMAS Stirling, is considered to be a matter of State and National significance. As such, the delivery of a regional transport solution requires both State and Commonwealth investment.

Similarly, supporting transport infrastructure, such as bike and walk paths, to link the base with key transport connections would also enhance the accessibility and safety for pedestrians and cyclists who frequent the area, including Defence personnel.

The City is available to brief the Department of Defence and State Government on the specific outcomes of the Cape Peron Transport Study and work proactively to address these urgent transport issues.

2. Accommodation

The City is very aware of the need to urgently plan and facilitate development of housing to accommodate up to 2,000 international maintenance and support personnel associated with AUKUS.

The City has committed significant resources to improve its planning framework, to ensure that it enables the construction of new dwellings (at a range of densities) and infrastructure within its City Centre; a location that is in close proximity to HMAS Stirling. The Rockingham City Centre also contains a range of existing services and amenities that are well suited to accommodate Defence personnel.

The City's population is forecast to increase by 64% over the next 23 years, increasing to almost 245,000 by 2046. It is important to note that these figures do not take into account the Department of Defence base population modelling, which will further add to the forecast population growth.

As such, the number of UK and US Defence personnel who will be relocating to Rockingham and surrounding Local Government areas will require housing, services and amenities in support of the rotational workforce. Bearing in mind the existing housing supply issues, the need to provide housing within a short timeframe presents challenges. The City is always open to discussing housing and investment opportunities, whether it be on land under the City's ownership or management, or more generally.

3. Administration, Education and Training Facilities

The City recognises the opportunity to enhance the Department of Defence's presence within Rockingham. In this regard, the enhancement of education and training facilities within Rockingham, to expand the region's workforce capabilities in advanced manufacturing and defence relating industries, is a critical consideration.

Rockingham's location provides natural advantages for the establishment of facilities to meet Defence requirements. The City's education precinct contains a campus of Murdoch University and a South West Metropolitan TAFE facility that lends itself to becoming a Defence/Defence Industry educational hub.

The City is actively seeking to facilitate an outcome where Defence related education, research and development, and administration can come together for collective benefit. As this concept progresses, the City will engage with the Department of Defence and other stakeholders.

The local Rockingham community has a strong connection with Defence and HMAS Stirling, but the opportunity and implications of AUKUS are largely not appreciated or understood by the community. As such, the City strongly encourages that Defence engage with the local community and businesses to maintain the strong connections that have been established over many years.

The City welcomes further discussion on the matters raised above, and looks forward to a continued partnership approach with the Department of Defence.

Yours faithfully



PETER RICCI
DIRECTOR PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES