

RAAF TINDAL

- 4.1 The final Defence establishment visited by the Defence Sub-Committee was RAAF Tindal which is located some 320 km south-east of Darwin by road, and about 17 km from Katherine. On arrival, the sub-committee was met by Group Captain Corrie Metz who subsequently briefed the members on the role, capabilities and current operations at RAAF Tindal. The briefing was followed by a tour of the Base, in particular the current Flying Fox infestation and its impact on the living areas of the Base, following which the members were given a static demonstration and inspection of a No. 75 Squadron F/A-18 'Hornet'. The visit concluded with an afternoon tea with some of the ADF personnel and their families.

Figure 4.1 Members inspecting an F/A 18 Hornet fighter aircraft with veteran combat pilot from Iraq



- 4.2 Tindal was built during World War 2 as one of several of airfields in the Northern Territory to support allied bomber operations. It was extensively redeveloped in the 1980s to accommodate the F/A-18 fighter aircraft and support facilities, as well as the infrastructure and accommodation for ADF personnel, and has been fully operational since 1989. RAAF Tindal is permanently staffed and operated by 322 Combat Support Wing and is home to No. 75 Squadron.
- 4.3 RAAF Tindal is also intended to act as a forward base for deployed forces and provides a secure entry point into the northern region of Australia. In this role, RAAF Tindal provides both security and a strategic airhead for the logistic support of deployed forces in the north of Australia.
- 4.4 RAAF Tindal is Australia's largest air base covering some 30,000 acres. In addition, Delamere Air Weapons Range is in close proximity providing an impressive air training facility and is one of only a few air weapons ranges in the world able to accommodate training with all conventional weapons.
- 4.5 Group Captain Metz briefed the Sub-Committee on the continuing development of the Base, the challenges provided by the 'tyranny of distance' and the remoteness of the Base. He also provided the members with an opportunity to inspect his nearly complete 'Command Bunker', and to see its extensive 'high tech' command and control equipment and IT systems in action.
- 4.6 During the brief and tour of the Base, the sub-committee discussed a number of issues including:
- the critical nature of Base security, and the proposed fitment of 'smart fences';
 - the Flying Fox plague that had infested the Base, in particular its impact on the living areas and members;
 - the poor local amenities in Katherine;
 - lack of Public transport;
 - serious demand for child care facilities for Base staff;
 - poor overall family support services;
 - limited spouse employment opportunities;
 - motor vehicle accidents;
 - lack of emergency air transport; and
 - the Base's general remoteness.

Figure 4.2 RAAF Tindal flying fox infestation



Senator Alan Ferguson
Chairman
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