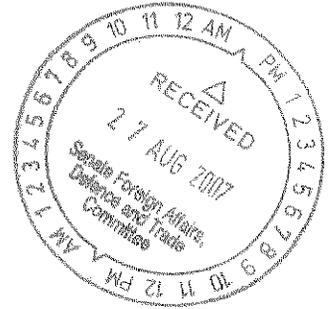




**AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS**  
Office of Chief of Air Force  
Department of Defence, R1-6-C001, CANBERRA ACT 2600

CAF DO 1532/2007



**Doctor Kathleen Dermody**

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

*Kathleen Dermody*

This letter of support is made on behalf of the Royal Australian Air Force in response to Senator Payne's recent correspondence which invited written submissions from the Department of Defence in respect of the provisions of Defence Legislation Amendment Bill 2007 (the Bill). The Bill makes significant further amendments to the Australian Defence Force military justice system, in particular through the reform of summary trial procedures.

Air Force has been involved in the development of the policy proposals that are given legislative effect in the Bill. As a result, I am able to provide my agreement and support for the initiatives in the draft legislation. In particular, I can confirm that the changes will, if enacted, meet the operational and discipline requirements of the Royal Australian Air Force. Indeed, the Bill's main initiative in simplifying and reforming aspects of the summary system of justice will enhance the Air Force's ability to maintain the high standard of discipline that is essential to the conduct and support of aerospace operations, both in times of peace and armed conflict.

Equally importantly, the proposed Bill will ensure that the rights of Air Force members are not only recognised but protected by legislation. This will be achieved through the adoption of numerous safeguards such as a right of appeal in all cases to the Australian Military Court (AMC), the right for members to elect (except in the case of a some lesser disciplinary infringements that must be dealt with immediately) trial by the statutorily independent AMC, a comprehensive system of reviews of summary proceedings and retention of the requirement for more severe punishments that are awarded by summary authorities to be confirmed on review.

Along with the Chief of the Defence Force and the other Service Chiefs I remain committed to ensuring that the Australian Defence Force's military justice system is fair, transparent and accountable. The provisions in the Bill significantly contribute to these principles while appropriately balancing the unique discipline needs of an armed force with the requirement to protect and promote member's rights and interests.

*Yours sincerely*  
*J.N. Blackburn*

**J.N. BLACKBURN, AO**  
Air Vice-Marshal  
Acting Chief of Air Force

3 August 2007