

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Defence Inquiry a positive for the Upper Spencer Gulf**

The Upper Spencer Gulf Mayors have applauded the recent announcement of a Senate Inquiry into the impact of Defence training activities and facilities on rural and regional communities.

The inquiry was introduced by South Australian Senator and Chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, Alex Gallacher, following a meeting with the three Mayors in December.

During the December meeting, the Mayors highlighted the positive impact of last year's 'Exercise Hamel' for local businesses, but that earlier engagement for future exercises would be valuable so businesses could plan ahead for the influx.

Port Augusta Mayor and Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities, Sam Johnson, praised the efforts of Senator Gallacher in instigating the inquiry, saying the potential for Defence to become a significant economic driver in the Upper Spencer Gulf could not be under-estimated.

"Over the past two years we have identified a number of growth areas that build on our region's competitive strengths, with Defence certainly a substantial opportunity", explained Mayor Johnson.

"What may not be realised is that the expansion of Cultana will see the Upper Spencer Gulf become home to one of the Australian Defence Force's largest training areas", he added.

"The site provides ideal terrain and climate for year-round armoured, mechanised and cavalry forces training and is capable of supporting more major joint combined exercises, like exercise Hamel."

Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer and Port Pirie Mayor John Rohde both agree, saying Cultana will also be used for future air to ground, ground to air and ship to shore training activities, meaning all three cities will have a role to play and see potential benefits from the Defence presence in the region.

"We are looking forward to discussion with the Senate Committee about opportunities for Defence to better utilise our local suppliers and service providers to support their activities", said Mayor Breuer and Mayor Rohde. "The recent changes to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules also provide a good opportunity to revisit how our businesses might be able to get involved in Defence contracts into the future."

"As the Defence presence in the region grows, we need to make sure we build a strong, positive and ongoing relationship with the Department to ensure our communities can really maximise the benefit."

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Contact:

- Pt Augusta Mayor Sam Johnson - Mob: 0423 291 127
- Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer - Mob: 0419 806 415
- Pt Pirie Mayor John Rohde - Mob: 0417 080 961