



MEDIA RELEASE

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Defence a positive for the Upper Spencer Gulf

The expansion of the Cultana defence training facility and construction of new military vehicles and vessels are opportunities to grow the involvement and capabilities of the Upper Spencer Gulf in Defence Industries.

This was the view of the Spencer Gulf Cities Association, which presented to a recent hearing of the 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 last year.

Port Augusta Mayor and Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities, Sam Johnson, said the potential for Defence to become a significant economic driver in the Upper Spencer Gulf could not be under-estimated.

“Maximising local business participation in Cultana’s expansion – be it through the initial construction phase or ongoing range maintenance and servicing – is a real opportunity for the Upper Spencer Gulf”, explained Mayor Johnson.

However, Mayor Johnson explained there were some challenges to overcome.

“We have had consistent feedback from local businesses that contracting with Defence has traditionally been a highly prescribed and notoriously difficult process to navigate. If there a way to simplify this or to provide more Government support to assist at a local level, it would certainly help”.

Port Pirie Mayor John Rohde also presented to the Inquiry hearing, saying the three cities can really benefit from the periods of troop rest and recreation.

“Experiences from across the three cities during the recent ‘Exercise Hamel’, for example, demonstrated a substantial injection into the local economy during this military exercise. We really need to make sure we can plan ahead with the Department of Defence to be able to maximise local business activity during future exercises”, said Mayor Rohde.

Whyalla Mayor Lyn Breuer also highlighted opportunities for businesses in the Upper Spencer Gulf to become involved in manufacturing of accessories and components as part of construction of the Australian Government’s commitment to a continuous shipbuilding program for major surface combatants and minor war vessels and to the construction of the new submarines.

“This would build on the region’s history of shipbuilding and Defence operations and assist in generating local employment and business opportunities”, said Mayor Breuer.

“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 harness the benefits.”

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Photo: From left – South Australian Senator and committee chair Alex Gallacher, Victorian Senator Kimberley Kitching, Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities Mayor Sam Johnson, SA Senator David Fawcett and WA Senator Chris Back at the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee's public hearing in Port Augusta into the impact of Defence's training activities and facilities on rural and regional communities

