

19 October 2022

Professor the Honourable Stephen Smith
and
Air Chief Marshall Sir Angus Houston AK, AFC (Ret'd)
Defence Strategic Review

Email – review.submissions@defence.gov.au

Dear Sirs,

Submission regarding Defence Strategic Review

Outdoors Queensland is the peak body for the outdoor recreation sector in Queensland. We represent outdoor recreation organisations and individuals in Queensland, consisting of a range of outdoor industry stakeholders, including local governments, schools with outdoor education programs, small businesses and commercial operators, activity-focused peak bodies, clubs and community organisations.

The mission of Outdoors Queensland is to ensure that all people have opportunities to create connections with Queensland's outdoors. Our vision is to create a world where the outdoors is a vital part of every healthy life - a healthy world comes from a balanced life, incorporating outdoor activities for all people.

Outdoors Queensland is pleased to make a submission to the Australian Government Defence Strategic Review process that is currently underway. We acknowledge that the purpose of this review is to consider the priority of investment in Defence capabilities and assess the Australian Defence Force's structure, posture and preparedness in order to optimise Defence capability and posture.

Participation in outdoor activities necessarily requires access to land and water where those activities can take place. Recent years have seen a significant increase in participation in outdoor activities, which has led to increased pressure on areas like National Parks and Conservation Parks. All government agencies which control land-holdings need to consider appropriate access to that land for appropriate outdoor activities.

The Australian Department of Defence manages an estate which comprises significant land-holdings across Australia, including in Queensland. Much of this Defence managed land is not available for public access. We acknowledge that there may be operational reasons, including safety and security, for restricting public access to areas, however it is suggested that some properties are controlled by Defence to the exclusion of the public may be remnants of past decisions that should be reviewed.

Appropriate sections of Defence land could be opened up for outdoor recreation, outdoor education, adventure therapy, and adventure tourism.

Example – Back Creek Gorge within Canungra Field Training Area

Canungra Field Training Area (also known as Canungra Land Warfare Centre) includes Back Creek Gorge which links the Scenic Rim and Gold Coast local government areas. Public access to Back Creek Gorge has been blocked by Defence since 2016. Prior to 2016, Back Creek Gorge had been accessed for swimming, bushwalking and sight-

seeing by the community for many years, even though the Killarney Glen property had been compulsorily acquired by the government as a buffer zone adjoining the Canungra Field Training Area.

Although Canungra Field Training Area may still be required by Defence for training activities, it is suggested that Defence should consider ways to facilitate public access to Back Creek Gorge, as a way of contributing to the local community and unlocking an area that has potential to be a real asset to south-east Queensland.

We understand that the significance of the Back Creek Gorge to the Traditional Owners has not yet been documented in modern times. Defence could take the opportunity to engage with Traditional Owners regarding appropriate access to this area.

Back Creek Gorge is just one example of the potential that could be unlocked by Defence. It is submitted that this review should include an assessment of the land holdings of Defence, as part of the review of ongoing investment by Defence in land management.

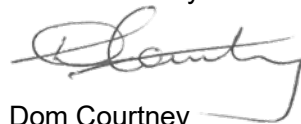
Land that is considered surplus to requirements could be transferred to the management of other arms of government, which would remove the costs of land management (including fire, pest and security) from Defence, while allowing those locations to be opened for community access.

Other areas of land may be considered as possibly required for future use, but not currently required – in that situation, it is suggested that public access for outdoor activities should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the circumstances, access could be restricted to approved permit holders or access could be managed for all members of the public.

Once Defence personnel have completed their careers within Defence, there are opportunities for employment across the Australian outdoors sectors, in outdoor recreation, outdoor education, adventure tourism or adventure therapy. A stronger alignment between Defence and the outdoor sectors could lead to improved transitions to civilian life for former Defence personnel, while providing outdoor employers with access to well-trained employees with relevant experience.

We welcome discussion on any points raised in this submission. Outdoors Queensland understands that this submission may be published by Defence as part of the consultation process. Outdoors Queensland looks forward to ongoing involvement this process, and trusts that the outcomes will be positive.

Yours sincerely



Dom Courtney
Executive Officer