



Australian Government  
Department of Defence

# Environmental Strategy

2016 – 2036







An M1A1 Abrams tank keeps pace with a kangaroo during Exercise CHONG JU, Puckapunyal Military Area, Vic.

Front and rear cover image: Exercise Kowari, Northern Australia.



# Defence Environmental Vision

Defence will be a leader in sustainable environmental management to support the ADF capability to defend Australia and its national interests.

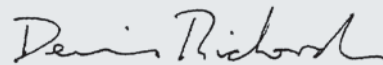
## Foreword

The Defence mission is to defend Australia and its national interests. The environment and its ongoing sustainable management is a critical enabler to ADF capability. We are custodians of our environment, and it is critical that we maintain the trust granted to us by the Australian community to deliver our mission and ensure the environment that we manage can sustain our activities into the future.

The 2016-2036 Defence Environmental Strategy builds on the knowledge Defence has gathered in managing the environment whilst enabling our mission. While our vision and commitment has not changed since the first strategy in 2002, our operating environment is constantly evolving. We need to recognise this in the way we deliver sustainable environmental management. Our vision is underpinned by four pillars of compliance, efficiency, trust and accountability that will guide our actions, decisions and behaviours.

This strategy focuses the whole of Defence on five strategic aims to manage present and emerging environmental challenges and opportunities.

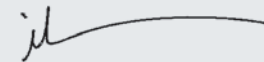
Under Commonwealth environmental legislation and the Defence Environmental Policy, every person in Defence is responsible for environmental management in the conduct of their duties. Successful implementation of this strategy requires us to understand and accept our environmental responsibilities.



**Dennis Richardson**

Secretary

June 2016



**MD Binskin, AC**

Air Chief Marshal  
Chief of the Defence Force

June 2016



Point Perpendicular at sunset from HMAS *Warramunga*, Beecroft Weapons Range, Jervis Bay, NSW.

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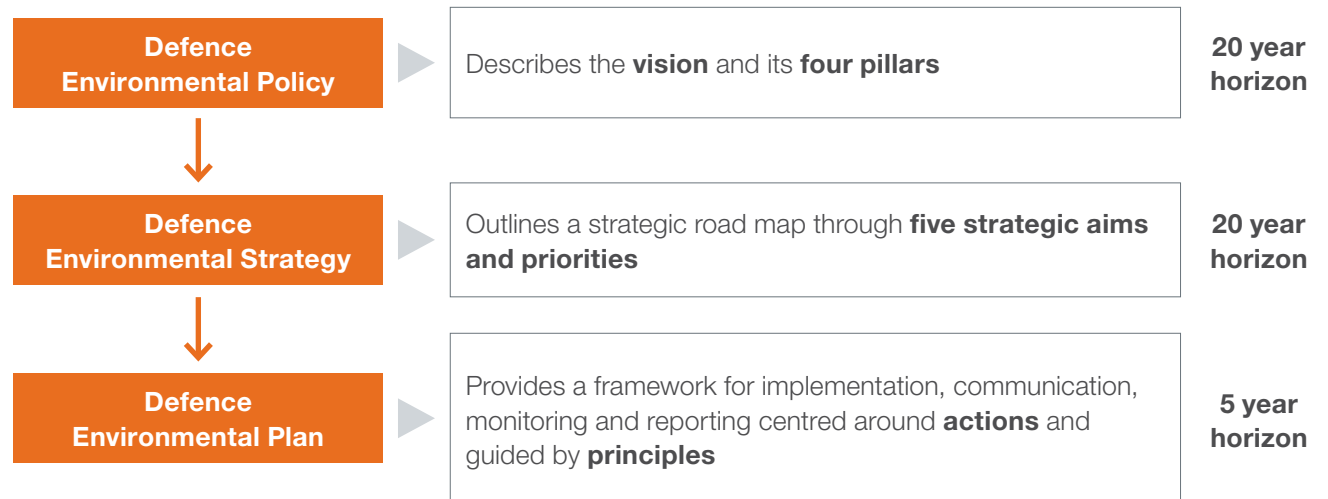
# How to use this strategy



The Bungaree Navy indigenous dance group perform aboard HMAS Adelaide.

The Defence Environmental Strategy provides a roadmap for the achievement of the Defence Environmental Vision, as stated in the Defence Environmental Policy. It supports broader Defence policy and provides all Defence personnel with a unified approach to environmental management.

The Defence Environmental Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Defence Environmental Policy and the Defence Environmental Plan. The Defence Environmental Policy and Defence Environmental Strategy have a 20 year horizon. The Defence Environmental Plan is an operational document with a five year horizon and an annual review. This review will inform updates of Policy and Strategy.





# How does this strategy fit into the strategic Defence context?

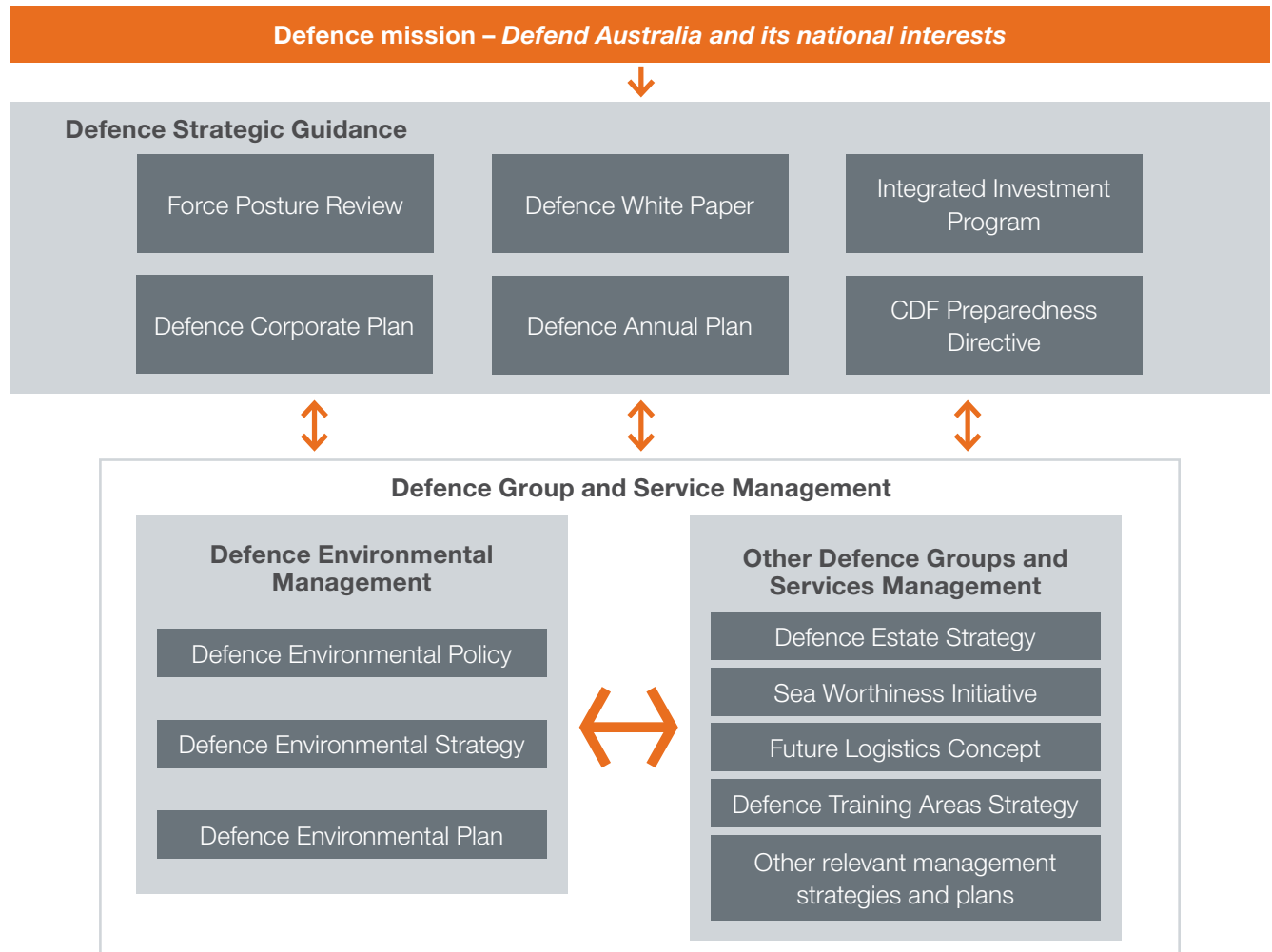
Alignment with both Australian government direction and Defence-wide strategic guidance and corporate planning is provided through enterprise-level documents such as the Defence White Paper and Defence Corporate Plan. The Defence Environmental Policy, Strategy and Plan form an environmental management framework to support Defence strategic direction.

Environmental management underpins and directly contributes to key elements of the Defence White Paper, including capability acquisitions, estate consolidation, training area availability and joint operations. Environmental compliance and performance is further endorsed as a critical control and a priority within the Defence Corporate Plan.

The Defence Environmental Strategy informs and provides guidance to a range of Group and Service strategic documents designed to enable Defence capability.

The Defence Environmental Policy, Strategy and Plan are supported by a range of subordinate environmental

strategies, programs, plans, systems and procedures. These have been developed and implemented by Defence Groups and Services to cover specific activities and environmental issues.



# Governance and accountability



Australian Army soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment during a training exercise, Townsville Field Training Area, Qld.

Personal and corporate accountability are critical to creating leadership behaviours that are consistent with the Defence Environmental Policy and Strategy, and driving the successful delivery of the Defence Environmental Plan actions.

Clear and transparent actions are guided by the environmental principles and require appropriate ownership and responsibility. This drives accountability, supports legislative compliance and maintains the trust of the Australian community.





# Opportunities and challenges over the next 20 years

Defence operates in an uncertain and constantly changing strategic context. Over the next 20 years, Defence will face a range of opportunities and challenges, including some that are environmental in nature and others that require an environmental management response.

Many of the opportunities and challenges are obvious now, some are emerging and others will not be identified for many years. Given this context, Defence must identify and address the opportunities and challenges in a proactive and informed manner to adapt or evolve as the need arises.

The following opportunities and challenges are current or emerging, and will continually evolve over the life of this strategy.

## Key opportunities

Key opportunities include:

- using Defence size and experience to drive resource efficiency in collaboration with industry and other service providers;
- pursuing closer collaboration with other Commonwealth agencies, Defence trilateral partners and industry to share innovation and lessons learned and implement best practice;
- building on positive experiences and achievements to maintain strong relationships with the community and regulators;
- empowering Defence personnel to actively contribute to improving Defence environmental performance;
- promoting risk-based approaches with demonstrated environmental and economic benefits to drive efficiency; and
- capitalising on the introduction of new estate and operational tools and approaches to improve environmental management and monitoring.

## Key challenges

Key challenges include:

- greater and more varied environmental impact profiles due to increased operational tempo, increased involvement of foreign military forces, and larger activity footprints;
- uncertainty in military training requirements competing with environmental management obligations;
- encroachment from urban development and adjacent private land use, and growing public expectations regarding environmental outcomes;
- climate change pressure on Defence activities, personnel, built and natural assets in Australia through sea level rise and more extreme weather events;
- countries in Australia's immediate region will be challenged by the impacts of climate change combining with existing challenges around population growth and environmental degradation; and
- continuing to be a leader in responding to regional requirements for humanitarian and disaster relief.





Air Weapons Target, Bradshaw Field Training Area, NT.



# Strategic aims

Five strategic aims represent Defence focus areas. They guide the level of resources and effort directed to environmental management issues.



An integrated environment for delivery of new development, RAAF Base Tindal, NT.

**Strategic aim 1:** Defence will deliver a sustainable estate across Defence maritime, land and aerospace areas, activities and operations.

**Strategic aim 2:** Defence will understand and manage its environmental impacts.

**Strategic aim 3:** Defence will minimise future pollution risks and manage existing contamination risks.

**Strategic aim 4:** Defence will improve the efficiency of its resource consumption and strengthen resource security.

**Strategic aim 5:** Defence will recognise and manage the Defence estate heritage values.

The following sections provide greater details on the context and priorities for each strategic aim.

Defence Groups and Services have already developed thematic strategies, programs, tools and systems to manage environmental factors such as water, energy, biodiversity, pollution, contamination and heritage. The Defence Environmental Strategy and Plan do not replace these, but instead provide the overarching direction, priorities and actions for Defence environmental management.





Discovery of the Canberra spider orchid, Majura Training Area, ACT.



Soil sample collection, Tarin Kot, Afghanistan.



## Strategic aim 1:

Defence will deliver a sustainable estate across Defence maritime, land and aerospace areas, activities and operations

This strategic aim covers biodiversity conservation, biosecurity, feral animals, weeds, overabundant species, bushfire management, soil conservation, climate change and disaster management.

## Context

Defence is one of the largest landholders in Australia and has the responsibility to sustainably manage vast tracts of diverse and geographically dispersed maritime, land and aerospace areas. These areas are a fundamental input into Defence capability, supporting facilities, training areas and training activities. They also are a significant national asset, comprising important environmental values and ecological systems. As the custodian of the environment upon which it operates, Defence is committed to responsibly managing its natural assets and meeting its environmental obligations.

Defence land, maritime and aerospace areas allow Defence to train in environments that mirror as closely as possible the range of potential operational environments it may encounter when deployed. Defence capability relies on consistent access to specific training areas and facilities, many of which would not be possible to replace. Defence aims to manage an environmentally sustainable estate through a proactive, risk-based approach to sustainable environmental management.

## Priorities

To achieve this strategic aim, Defence will:

- 1.1** meet its environmental stewardship and legislative obligations with respect to natural values, across its activities;
- 1.2** train in a sustainable manner to ensure ongoing and reliable access to facilities and training areas of the required training quality;
- 1.3** minimise and manage adverse consequences (e.g. from bushfire and biosecurity risks) for external parties (communities, businesses and adjacent landholders) as a result of Defence activities;
- 1.4** manage current and future risks associated with natural hazards and climate change;
- 1.5** manage biosecurity risks when operating and training in Australia and overseas; and
- 1.6** build strategic partnerships to identify innovative and more efficient ways to enhance sustainability outcomes.

The Defence Environmental Plan details strategic actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the achievement of these priorities.





Special forces soldiers from 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment conduct a sniper stalk, Majura Training Area, ACT.



## Strategic aim 2:

Defence will understand and manage its environmental impacts

This strategic aim covers environmental impact assessment and approval.

### Context

Defence is required to meet the obligations of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) in the conduct of activities which have potential environmental impacts. The EPBC Act sets thresholds for environmental assessment and approval based on the potential for an activity to have a significant impact on the environment or matters of national environmental significance.

The process for assessing environmental impacts and developing mitigation measures under the EPBC Act framework has been continually improved. This enables the efficient management of environmental risks through a consistent and robust process that provides Defence with the flexibility to train when, where and how it needs to train to achieve optimal preparedness.

Under this process, planning starts as early as possible to develop a preliminary concept of a proposed activity, its timing, location, potential environmental issues and required capability outcome. Establishing a plan early is critical, as it allows Defence to tailor a cost-effective approach by narrowing the focus to key issues, gathering the right data and consulting key stakeholders where required. Through the ongoing refinement of this process, Defence is able to identify the most important risks early, allowing planners to factor environmental matters into their activities, and enabling sensible and cost-efficient mitigation measures to be developed.

### Priorities

To achieve this strategic aim, Defence will:

- 2.1** manage its activities to meet its environmental and heritage legislative obligations;
- 2.2** maintain positive and proactive relationships with environmental regulators and other key stakeholder groups; and
- 2.3** improve the consistent application and ownership of the environmental impact assessment process across Defence Groups and Services.

The Defence Environmental Plan details strategic actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the achievement of these priorities.



1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment conduct a gun line during weapon trials, Townsville Field Training Area, Qld.



## Strategic aim 3:

Defence will  
minimise future  
pollution risks and  
manage existing  
contamination  
risks

This strategic aim covers pollution prevention, contamination management and site remediation.

### Context

There is a wide range of potential pollution sources across the complex and varied life cycle and geographies of Defence activities, each with varying hazards to human health and the natural environment.

Understanding pollution sources, their potential pathways to people and the natural environment, the environmental implications of Defence activities, and the most efficient and effective way to avoid or eliminate this risk is a strategic priority for Defence.

Defence manages a large number of contaminated sites as a legacy of past industrial and military activities and practices. Contamination of soil, water and air has the potential to cause harmful effects on human and environmental health, reduce land capability for Defence purposes, create large contingent cost liabilities, and breach legislative obligations. Management of Defence activities by proactively eliminating, substituting or controlling sources of pollution, and achieving legislative compliance, will minimise the occurrence of these issues.

Where legacy contamination issues are identified, Defence is committed to investigating the nature, extent and consequences of contamination, and developing cost-effective, risk-based management responses.

Effective management of pollution will enable Defence to avoid creating future contamination issues, while improving health and safety performance, capability, environmental quality and reputation.

### Priorities

To achieve this strategic aim, Defence will:

- 3.1** minimise future pollution and contamination risks both in Australia and overseas operations;
- 3.2** understand emerging contamination risks and advances in remediation and management approaches;
- 3.3** apply a risk-based approach to managing contaminated sites, including unexploded ordnance, to reduce impacts on human health and the natural environment and maintain public access to key information about these risks; and
- 3.4** manage contaminated sites and potential pollutants in accordance with relevant legislative obligations and standards.

The Defence Environmental Plan details strategic actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the achievement of these priorities.





32 kilowatt solar photovoltaic array, Bathurst Island, NT.



## Strategic aim 4:

Defence will improve the efficiency of its resource consumption and strengthen resource security

This strategic aim covers energy efficiency, ecologically sustainable development, sustainable procurement, waste minimisation and water management.

### Context

Having a reliable and continuous supply of energy and water is critical to sustaining Defence capability. Energy and water are integral to most Defence activities, from powering aircraft, ships and vehicles to sustaining accommodation, offices and personnel.

Defence is the largest consumer of energy and water and the largest generator of waste within the Australian Government. Defence aims to improve energy and water efficiency and minimise waste generation. Due to its size, even modest improvements made by Defence can deliver substantial cost savings and environmental outcomes.

Since the mid-2000s, Defence has measured energy and water consumption at an estate level and implemented initiatives to reduce consumption on a return-on-investment basis. Efficiency in energy, water and waste management, coupled with forward-looking management of key supply assets, will ensure that Defence has a secure and continuous supply of critical resources well into the future.

### Priorities

To achieve this strategic aim, Defence will:

- 4.1** minimise operational costs by using less energy and water;
- 4.2** transition toward cleaner energy and integrated water management (with greater use of fit-for-purpose water);
- 4.3** improve monitoring of energy and water to meet government reporting requirements and drive further reduction in energy and water consumption;
- 4.4** obtain a robust understanding of its energy and water consumption to meet to critical capability needs;
- 4.5** improve waste disposal options and product stewardship (reducing the impacts throughout the product lifecycle); and
- 4.6** drive behavioural change in relation to energy and water consumption, waste disposal and product stewardship.

The Defence Environmental Plan details strategic actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the achievement of these priorities.





HMAS Creswell, Jervis Bay Territory.



## Strategic aim 5:

Defence will recognise and manage the Defence estate heritage values

This strategic aim covers heritage management.

### Context

Defence has a long and proud history of valuing its heritage places, including the important military traditions and culture that these values represent. Although the estate is managed primarily for military purposes, Defence manages its heritage values consistent with heritage obligations of the EPBC Act. This includes maintaining a current understanding of the heritage values across the Defence estate and acknowledging, managing and preserving these values where appropriate.

The Defence estate and other areas where Defence conducts its activities contain significant indigenous, historic and natural values. This includes places rich in nationally and internationally significant biodiversity; buildings, items and places of military historical importance; and sites of significant importance to indigenous Australians.

Defence identifies and manages heritage risks through a range of activities at all life-cycle stages, incorporating heritage considerations into planning for training, operations, property redevelopments, maintenance and disposals and a range of other activities.

### Priorities

To achieve this strategic aim, Defence will:

- 5.1** comply with legal requirements for management of indigenous, historic and natural heritage;
- 5.2** continue to learn from and improve its engagement with local communities;
- 5.3** continue to seek opportunities to adaptively re-use heritage buildings where this can provide a safe and efficient facilities solution;
- 5.4** increase understanding of the heritage values on the defence estate; and
- 5.5** further build and maintain relationships with government, heritage organisations, and other custodians of large heritage portfolios.

The Defence Environmental Plan details strategic actions, accountabilities and timeframes to support the achievement of these priorities.



HMAS *Choules* at sea, Operation RESOLUTE.



# Implementation, monitoring and reporting framework

The Defence Environmental Plan provides the implementation, monitoring and reporting framework in support of this Defence Environmental Strategy by laying out specific actions, timeframes and responsibilities.



Live missile fire by 16<sup>th</sup> Air Land Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, Woomera, SA.

The Defence Environmental Policy and Strategy set the direction for sustainable environmental management in the medium to long term (20 years) and will be reviewed 5 yearly. The Defence Environmental Plan is an operational document that has been developed for a five year period from 2016 to 2020 inclusive, with annual review. These reviews will inform potential updates to the Defence Environmental Policy and Environmental Strategy and inform the next five year Environment Plan.

This approach enables Defence to ensure continual improvement in the approach to achieving the vision.

Each environmental action is supported by clear accountabilities for implementation along with a milestone for completion. A monitoring and reporting framework centred on performance measures is also presented in the plan.

A progress report on implementation will be developed on an annual basis.

## Further Information:

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