

News Release **Minister Martin Hamilton-Smith**

Minister for Investment and Trade
Minister for Defence Industries
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Cultana Training Area Expansion to boost regional economy

Minister for Defence Industries Martin Hamilton-Smith said today the five-fold expansion of the Australia Defence Force's Cultana Training Area in the Upper Spencer Gulf will boost South Australia's regional economy.

Attending a ceremony in Whyalla to mark the granting of a lease by the South Australian Government to the ADF, Mr Hamilton-Smith said the much-anticipated expansion will increase troop numbers in the State and boost the defence sector's contribution to the economy.

"Defence is expected to spend up to \$50 million to develop the expanded training area near Whyalla," Mr Hamilton-Smith, who joins Commonwealth Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Darren Chester at today's ceremony, said.

"Defence has undertaken to use local businesses wherever possible for construction activities, upgrading of essential infrastructure and services ongoing maintenance, environmental management, and provision of supplies.

"As the training area is developed it is likely that a small army of contractors and consultants will transit or stay overnight in Whyalla. They'll hire equipment and use local retail outlets, restaurants and shops.

"That is spending in our regional economy that will help to support jobs and small businesses.

"Increased use of the training area will also have a positive economic impact on local communities."

Mr Hamilton-Smith congratulated the Federal Government on the conclusion of the lease arrangements which comes almost a decade after former Defence Minister Robert Hill announced the proposed expansion in 2005.

The Cultana Training Area is about 370km north-west of Adelaide on the Spencer Gulf between Port Augusta and Whyalla. The unique area offers ideal terrain for armoured, mechanised and cavalry forces training and provides a year-round training arena for both local and interstate defence units.

The major expansion of the Cultana facility has increased the area from 500km² to 2300km² and will form a key part of the Commonwealth's plans for the future of the Defence Force.

"The South Australian Government has worked closely with the Department of Defence to deliver this expanded facility that will be critical to meeting ongoing training requirements of our Defence Forces.

"Cultana will give Australian troops the best possible preparation to carry out their roles both here and abroad."

The expanded training area will provide important support to Army's 1st Brigade, particularly the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (7 RAR) Battle Group based at RAAF Edinburgh in Adelaide's north. The expansion was a key element in Defence's decision to relocate the 1100-strong battle group to Adelaide in 2011.