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Army Budget boost

Radical reserve plan funded

THE Army will receive \$1.5 billion in funding under the Hardened and Networked Army (HNA) initiative, announced in the May 9 Federal Budget.

That was just one of several budget initiatives Army will benefit from, including the allocation of \$194 million to recruit and retain ADF personnel and \$181.6 million for a more capable High Readiness Reserve.

Defence Minister Brendan Nelson said a well-equipped and resourced Army was essential to the defence of Australia.

"In this Budget the Government has provided the Army with an additional \$1.5 billion funding over the next decade," Dr Nelson said.

"This will ensure the Army is of sufficient size and strength and has the right equipment to meet the challenges of an increasingly demanding strategic environment."

The HNA initiative would improve combat power, sustainability and survivability of the Army in operational conditions. Consequently, the Army would be able to perform in more diverse roles and environments with increased flexibility and a greater range of response options.

- ▶ The \$1.5 billion will allow the Army to: restructure the Army, based on combined-arms battle-groups with increased protection and firepower;
- ▶ increase the Army's strength by 1485 men and women to improve the sustainability of deployed forces;
- ▶ re-role 3RAR to a mechanised battle-group and relocate it from Sydney to Adelaide;
- ▶ optimise the use of equipment being delivered through the Defence Capability Plan; and
- ▶ re-role, re-train and re-task the Army Reserve to provide direct support to Army's operational units.

Reservists will receive enhanced pay and conditions.

\$194 million will be spent over four years on measures to expand military workforce numbers.

The measures are designed to address shortages in 25 critical trades across the ADF and to provide temporary relief through the backfilling of vacant military positions.

The recruitment and retention package includes retention and completion bonuses.

There will be a strong focus on Holsworthy, with funds set aside for SF training facilities, stage one of Special

Operations working accommodation and base redevelopment, and the relocation of 171 Avn Sqn.

Civil works, building construction and base infrastructure upgrades at Holsworthy will provide working accommodation and upgrades to support SF units at a cost of \$62.4 million. Another \$11.1 has been allocated to continuing construction of ranges and supporting infrastructure to provide specialised training ranges and training facilities to support SF units.

Stage 1 of the Special Operations working accommodation and base redevelopment will provide facilities to support a full-time commando capability, including TAG (East), the IRR and Special Operations Command elements, along with the upgrade of base infrastructure.

Kokoda Barracks will receive \$45 million for supporting base infrastructure upgrades and working accommodation construction.

The project to relocate 1 Avn Regt to Robertson Barracks has been allocated \$82 million and will include purpose-built working, training and domestic accommodation facilities.

There has also been a 40 per cent boost to funding for Army networking projects as part of the HNA initiative.

RESERVISTS will receive a range of new benefits and incentives worth up to \$7500 a year under a radical new plan announced in the 2006 Budget.

The new measures are intended to attract Active Army and Air Force Reserves into a new High Readiness Reserve (HRR), which over time will comprise 2800 Army and 1400 Air Force personnel. The Army HRR component will stand up from July 1.

Wg-Cmdr Tom Buckham, Defence Reserve Policy, said that at the end of their commitment, HRR personnel would receive \$5000 for each year's service and would receive an annual health support allowance (HSA) of \$2500.

"Army HRR members will have an initial two-year contract," Wg-Cmdr Buckham said.

"Those who sign up will only need to prove they have private top-level hospital and ancillary benefits to qualify."

The HSA cover is based on an average annual cost for private health insurance of \$1200 per year, with the remainder intended to cover the costs of keeping fit and incidentals such as optical and dental needs.

In addition to the allowances for the HRR, a Reserves Service Allowance of \$10 a day will be paid to all personnel up to the rank of major, while lieutenant colonels and above will have their salary adjusted to ensure commonality with permanent force pay rates.

The new measures are also intended to attract more personnel into the Active Reserves.

Active reservists who meet individual readiness status and complete 20 reserve days annually will receive an additional annual \$600 HSA.

The HRR will comprise personnel who volunteer to transfer from their existing reserve band, commit to fulfil their HRR obligation and are fully trained.

AMTG3 preparations complete

Next rotation to Al Muthanna Province

Speak to the CA

EARLIER this year, much media attention was paid to the RODUM system.