

Media Statement

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Landry says discussions continue over greater defence role for Capricornia

Federal Member for Capricornia says discussions are continuing in Canberra over the prospect of a greater role for defence in Central Queensland to further bolster our local economy.

Ms Landry said Shoalwater Bay, north of Rockhampton, was Australia's most capable training area for international defence training and presented an opportunity for increased local military presence.

The MP's comments come as the region gears up to welcome the joint US-Australian exercise Talisman Sabre which will involve 30,000 troops allocated between Shoalwater Bay and Darwin.

"There is a local push to investigate the feasibility of an increased permanent or semi-permanent presence for Australian defence troops in Capricornia – particularly at Shoalwater Bay close to Rockhampton," Ms Landry said.

"I have spoken to the Assistant Defence Minister Stuart Robert and senior defence advisors on several occasions about the concept of basing a contingent of army tanks or other heavy equipment here which would help to provide increased economic benefits to the Capricorn region.

"For example, a permanent contingent of 14 tanks would carry with it a team of about 100 defence personnel, plus their families, who would live, spend and take part in our local community."

Ms Landry said: "Discussions have been based around the fact that it would make sense to base this equipment at Shoalwater Bay which is strategically located part-way between Brisbane and Darwin – the two cities to which this equipment is often transported.

"Senior military and defence advisors tell me there is no other facility like Shoalwater Bay in the Pacific - and that there is an opportunity for even more army training exercises to be held there."

Ms Landry and Rockhampton Senator Matthew Canavan have been working on the subject at various levels in Parliament House. Senator Canavan asked questions in Senate estimates recently about the subject to gauge further information from defence departments.

Ms Landry said federal government defence activity in Capricornia was worth tens of millions of dollars to the local economy – especially Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast.

"The economic benefit to Capricornia from military exercises with Singapore (Wallaby) and the United States (Talisman Sabre) is worth \$42.1 million in direct business such as transport, accommodation and other requirements. Not to mention personal spending by each soldier," Ms Landry said.

"Over the next month, Australian Defence will spend over \$5.2 million alone in Capricornia on Exercise Talisman Sabre. On top of this army, navy and airforce officers will spend millions more in our retail and tourism sectors when they take their recreation leave."

The USS Washington, containing 6000 personnel, will anchor off the Capricorn Coast for Talisman Sabre. Ms Landry will host Assistant Defence Minister Stuart Robert at some of the military activities.

Photo: Michelle Landry MP will host Assistant Defence Minister (both pictured) for a visit to Exercise Talisman Sabre near Rockhampton.

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