



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12 1983

ASSEMBLY OF LIGHT FIELD GUN AT BENDIGO

I am pleased to announce that Bendigo is to become the lead factory for the manufacture of parts for, and assembly of, the Army's new Light Field Gun - Project Hamel.

Hamel involves production of a towed field gun - and is the largest project since Australian manufacture of the 25 pounder during the 1940s. It involves the manufacture under licence of a British designed light gun to replace the existing 1930 vintage 105 mm Howitzer.

The Minister for Defence Support, Mr Ian Viner, recently announced that the Ordnance Factory in Bendigo would establish the capability to manufacture major sub assemblies of the gun and would build and test two pre-production weapons. That work is already in hand.

As the lead factor for Hamel, Bendigo will arrange the assembly of 73 guns for the Australian Army from parts made here and by sub-contractors.

As significant as this project may be, my Government has other plans for the Bendigo factory.

Ian Viner recently announced that the Naval Dockyard at Williamstown had been invited to tender for the construction of two follow-on destroyers of the FFG class.

As part of the Government's policy to maximise Australian content, the Ordnance Factory at Bendigo will have the opportunity to become heavily involved in sub-contract work.

Some of the special items of equipment which would involve the Ordnance Factory are machining of the propeller shaft and hub. This shaft work will be identical with previous shafts made at Bendigo for installation in earlier vessels of this type.

Negotiations with Oto Melara of Italy for a licence to build the 76 mm gun mounts for the follow-on destroyers are close to finality. These mounts would be manufactured here in Bendigo. Negotiations are also proceeding with a number of United States companies to obtain offset work against equipment which would be supplied by those firms.

It is also expected that this work would include parts for the guided missile launching system, handling and support equipment for gas turbine engines and ships generators - as well as parts for small calibre weapon systems. Some of this work would come to

Bendigo.

Bendigo would also become involved as a sub-contractor to the Naval Dockyard in fabricating and machining work directly associated with ship construction. This commitment of the Government to the Ordnance Factory not only helps ensure its future and the jobs of the people working here, but facilitates up-grading of a number of areas of defence technology.

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