

ARMY RE-ORGANISATION

Statement by the Prime Minister the Right Honourable  
William McMahon, CH, MP.

The Prime Minister, Mr. McMahon, announced today that Cabinet had approved extensive changes in the command and organisational structure of the Australian Army. The changes, which will come into effect over the next three to five years, follow consideration of the Report of the Army Review Committee under the Chairmanship of Major-General F.G. Hassett.

The "Hassett Committee" was established by the Minister for the Army, Mr. Peacock, in April 1970, and included representatives of the Army and the Defence Departments.

The reorganisation of the Army is in keeping with the Government's policy of modernising Australian Defence to meet future contingencies. The experience the Army has gained from Vietnam, the rapid advances in the field of communications and changing strategic circumstances all indicate that reorganisation will be necessary to meet defence tasks in the seventies and eighties.

The changes in organisation are designed to produce an Army to meet these future needs.

They involve a reorganisation of the Australian Army along functional lines in three broad areas:

- . A change from a geographic system of command to a functional system.
- . A rationalization of logistic tasks.
- . A reorganization at Army Headquarters.

It is by far the biggest peace time change since Federation and will result in an Army better organized to fulfil its essential role in national defence.

One aspect of the reorganization requires emphasis. It does not, in itself, involve any reduction or re-location of units. It is essentially concerned with command and control and does not affect the number and location of the Australian Regular Army or the Citizen Military Force units. It has been designed amongst other things to avoid morale problems or posting turbulence in the Army.

The field force and logistic elements of the Army will be grouped into Commonwealth-wide functional commands instead of the present geographical command system. Army schools and training establishments will also be centralized under one command to ensure uniformity of standards and methods and to avoid duplication.

Under the new organization Army Headquarters will be relieved of its present responsibility for direct command of a large number of units.

The new command system will bring about a greater compatibility of functional organisation between the three Services and will facilitate any future developments in rationalization of these Services.

The basis of the reorganization will be three new functional commands concerned with the three principal functions of an Army. A functional headquarters will have responsibility

on a Commonwealth wide basis as opposed to geographic headquarters concerned with all functions within the area of the State in which they are located. The three functional commands will be:

Field Force Command, with its headquarters in Sydney, will consist of all Regular field force units and initially all the CMF. HQ 1st Division as a part of Field Force Command will be located in Brisbane to command field force units in Queensland.

With this command in Sydney, the operational Headquarters of the Army will be in the same areas as the operational Headquarters of the Navy and the Air Force.

Logistic Command, with its headquarters in Melbourne, will consist of Regular base units concerned with transport, supply and repair.

Training Command, with its headquarters also in Sydney, will consist of Army schools and training centres and the Australian Cadet Corps. The headquarters will be concerned with individual training and the development of Army Headquarters.

As most CMF units are field force units, the whole of the CMF will be placed initially under Field Force Command. As the new system develops, CMF units will also take their place in Logistic Command and Training Command to both of which the CMF can bring a good deal of experience and knowledge in specialist fields.

A military District Headquarters in each State will replace the present geographic Command Headquarters to handle those matters which are best dealt with on a geographic basis.

Logistic functions within the Army will be rationalized. The principal logistic tasks which, at present, are the responsibility of seven corps will be re-allotted and carried out by three corps concerned with transport, supply and repair.

Major changes will also take place at Army Headquarters. Initially the present four main military branches will be retained, with some re-allotment of responsibilities. These branches will be renamed Operations, Personnel, Logistics and Material Branches. In time, when Logistic Command is established, the number of main branches will be reduced to three by amalgamating the interim Material and Logistics Branches into a final phase Logistics Branch.

Mr. McMahon emphasised that the reorganized Army would be better prepared to carry out its role in the defence of Australia and its Territories and said that there would be a more efficient and economic use made of manpower and funds available to the Army.

26 January 1972.