



# PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

WEDNESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 1982

## OPENING OF DARWIN PATROL BOAT BASE

The opening of this base is a significant event. We are all delighted, Your Majesty, that you are able to perform the task.

In recent years your Australian Government has added considerably to the effectiveness of the Australian Defence Force. Major new equipment are being introduced into that Force, and the numbers of our reserves have expanded.

This base is part of that expansion. It will add very significantly to the effectiveness of the new Fremantle Class Patrol Boat and reduce the need to visit Cairns for refitting.

Today, the Minister for Defence, Ian Sinclair, will be announcing that a new Royal Australian Naval Reserve Port Division is to be established in Darwin, the first new port division to be created in over 30 years.

The defences in our north will be further strengthened by the stationing of the FA/18 fighters in Darwin or in Tindal, a little to the south.

In Townsville, we have set up the Operational Deployment Force which is designed to be able to mobilise, at very short notice, to respond to those threats to our security which might appear without warning. In addition, Darwin is the headquarters of the Norforce, the small, well-equipped, highly mobile force designed for strategic surveillance and reconnaissance in northern Australia.

All the arrangements are now complete for work to go ahead at the RAAF facility at Derby South, which will give the RAAF's operational flexibility in northern Australian an enormous boost.

The range and endurance of our strike force and our fighters will be even greater with the acquisition of an in-flight refuelling capability which Cabinet agreed to recently. We are also looking at the development of another naval patrol boat facility near Port Hedland, and new ships have entered the service. The strength and capability of the Australian Defence Force is greater than it has ever been in peacetime.

I would like to take this opportunity, Your Majesty, to say how much we all admire the determination of the British Government to protect the Falklands and the skill of the British armed forces in that campaign. The manner in which the United Kingdom forces mounted a very considerable task group, and undertook effective operations 8,000 miles from Britain so successfully, has won the admiration of all of us.

It has done much more than that. It also reminds us that we live in an unpredictable and unsettled world. The best guarantors of the security and the peace that we all want are effective defence forces to undertake our separate national responsibilities, and proper alliances between like minded nations.

Our forces maintain their traditional links with those of the United Kingdom. We have the five power defence arrangements which involve Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and the United Kingdom. The ANZUS Alliance with the United States is also critical for the defence of our region.

But these arrangements do much more than simply provide for the defence of the region. They make their own effective contribution to the broad Western Alliance and to the defence of the free world.

Your Majesty, we all welcome you here very warmly. I have very great pleasure in asking you to declare this patrol base open.