

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON R J L HAWKE, AC MP
AND THE PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES, THE HON N K WRAN, QC MLA

SYDNEY, 17 NOVEMBER 1985

NAVY TO MOVE FROM PRIME SYDNEY WATERFRONT SITE

The largest waterfront site occupied by the Defence Force in Sydney is to be relinquished by the Commonwealth for civilian use in the early 1990s.

This was announced jointly by the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, and the NSW Premier, Mr Wran, at a news conference on board HMAS Adelaide in Sydney today.

The site, which covers about 260 hectares on the Parramatta River at Silverwater, presently houses the Navy's Newington Ammunition Depot which is to be moved to the Jervis Bay area.

Mr Hawke and Mr Wran said the site would be redeveloped under arrangements jointly agreed by the Commonwealth and NSW Governments. Possible uses for the site included a riverfront park and residential and commercial development. A small area on the western fringe of the site of less than 1.5 hectares would be retained for use by the Army.

As a result of nearly 90 years occupation by the RAN, Newington was a rare green oasis in the centre of the inner western suburbs. It was unlikely that such a site would ever again become available for redevelopment.

The decision to move the depot to Jervis Bay offered an unparalleled opportunity and challenge to the two Governments to contribute to the development of Sydney, they said.

The ammunition depot, located on the southern side of the Parramatta River, was first used as a storage area for explosives in 1896 and was expanded during World War II. It is now mainly used for storing gun and small arms ammunition and as a staging point for other munitions being moved to and from ships in Sydney Harbour.

"The Federal Government has decided that the depot must be moved because of the increasing environmental problems associated with it," Mr Hawke said. "Civilian development in the surrounding areas and increased traffic both on the roads around the depot and on the harbour are making it increasingly difficult for the Navy to maintain the necessary high safety standards.

"The Commonwealth proposes to build a new depot on a far larger site in the Jervis Bay area at a cost of more than \$100 million. The new depot should be operational by 1992."

Mr Hawke said the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism, and Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence, Mr John Brown, would begin consultations with the NSW Government almost immediately to prepare a joint land use plan.

Mr Wran welcomed the Commonwealth's decision to make the land available for civil use.

"A thoughtful and sensitive mix of development on the site will benefit all the citizens of Sydney," he said.

"In return the State Government has undertaken to assist the Commonwealth in assessing the environmental impact of the proposed relocation of Defence facilities to the Jervis Bay area. The State Government recognizes that a new depot must be operational before the land at Homebush Bay can be released by the Commonwealth Government."

Mr Hawke said the decision to relocate the ammunition depot raised the prospect that nearby Spectacle Island, which is used by the RAN in connection with the ammunitioning of warships, could be opened to public use.

Spectacle Island, which covers about two hectares, is one of the oldest naval shore establishments in Australia. In 1883 NSW made it available to the British Admiralty to store explosives. The island contains several buildings dating back to last century and is the repository for many historic naval relics.

Mr Brown would discuss with the NSW Government the extent to which the Island could be used by the public in a way consistent with the Commonwealth's requirement to use the Island for the emergency removal of ammunition from RAN ships.

Mr Hawke also announced that options for the relocation of the naval supply facility at Rydalmere would be examined by the two governments. Its transfer to another suitable site in the Sydney area would make available for development about 21 hectares of riverfront land on the northern side of the Parramatta River near the Newington site.

Mr Hawke said that, beside returning the Silverwater site to civil use and the prospect of other moves, the Government was considering relocation of other naval facilities away from Sydney.

The Minister for Defence, Mr Kim Beazley, had established a study group in the Department of Defence under the Ministerial direction of Mr Brown to examine all significant issues and options associated with a relocation of other naval facilities in Sydney, including its possible timing.

In particular the study would examine:

- . options for relocating the present Fleet Base facilities at Woolloomooloo and Garden Island (excluding the dockyard), the submarine base, HMAS Platypus, at Neutral Bay and the patrol boat base, HMAS Waterhen, at Waverton, including the prospects for increased ship basing at HMAS Stirling in Western Australia;
- . strategic, operational, cost and social, environmental and other public implications of the relocation options, including implications for the Jervis Bay region, and
- . potential offsets to relocation costs from the disposal of land, particularly in the Sydney metropolitan area.

"The study group is to present its final report by the end of June next year," he said. "The move could take up to 15 to 20 years to accomplish."

Mr Hawke said if all the facilities under study were to be relocated, the total cost of the move was likely to be in the vicinity of \$1000 million, including naval facilities, housing and community services.

Mr Hawke said that if the relocation went ahead it would provide a major boost to the South Coast with significant and lasting economic benefits in the long term for the Shoalhaven region.

Mr Hawke said that before detailed planning for the first stage move of the ammunition depot began the Commonwealth would commission a major environmental study which would report on the likely impact of the whole proposal on both the physical and human environment of the Jervis Bay region.

"While the Government is anxious that this major relocation go ahead we wish to be reassured that it will produce no harmful side effects," Mr Hawke said.

"All interested community groups will have the opportunity to contribute to this study and comment on its findings.

"The broad study will be followed by detailed environmental impact studies for particular projects. The first of these studies will relate to the relocation of the ammunition depot."

* * * * *

Further Enquiries:

Navy: Reg McDonald (062) 65 5170 (b)
(062) 31 8192 (h)

Prime Minister:

Paul Ellercamp: (062) 73 1210

Premier:

David Hurley: (02) 270 5239