Earlier in this session I introduced a major defence programme for the Australian Armed Forces.

The roles and capabilities of the Forces are determined by a number of factors. By our geographic position, by our view of the changing events in the world in which we live, by the actions and the assessed intentions of other countries. What we do must also be related to our economic capacity. We need to take into account British withdrawal from our North, American reappraisal and increasing Russian activity in the Indian Ocean. When we look at the unsettled state of South East Asia and couple it with these other events, it is quite clear that Australia will be required to undertake a greater effort in the future.

In addition, we are firmly committed to regional defence. We believe there is no security in isolation and that we can do more to maintain peace, and to establish the conditions that will lead to sensible economic development and progress in the countries of our region, by being involved in the region. We provide economic aid and technical assistance on quite a large scale. It would be illogical to do this and to make no contribution to security, without which civil aid cannot be effective.

For these and a number of other reasons, we see Australian security as being tied to regional security.

Our Forces, therefore, have to be organised and equipped and trained so that they can be effectively deployed in the region of which Australia is a part. We want them to be capable of a rapid response. We want them to be more self-contained with a high degree of mobility. We are committed to regional defence.

We are committed to the maintenance, under present circumstances, of forces overseas. We are committed to the protection of the Australian mainland and Territories. In conjunction with our friends and allies we must contribute to the security of our trade routes and our lines of communication. These commitments require that we pay particular regard to the development of certain areas of our overall defence capability. While these point to certain roles for all three Services, they are better viewed in a functional setting.
because the roles of the individual Services are seldom exclusive; generally any function involves more than one Service.

To start with, we need a greater maritime capability in the waters around Australia, the Pacific and Indian Oceans and the seas to our north. This involves both the Navy and the Air Force.

We need greater strategic and tactical mobility, the capability to move forces quickly with adequate logistic support, the capability to bring to bear maximum fire power. We need to be able to maintain forces that we deploy abroad. We need the capacity for emergency air-lift of troops and reinforcements and for subsequent support by sea. We have made much progress in this area and the new programmes that I announced in my Defence Statement to the Parliament recently will add to it. It does not mean that this capability should be exclusively Service provided. It includes making provision for harnessing commercial transport, maritime and air, if ever the need arises.

Let me now mention the new decisions that we have announced.

We are pushing ahead with the detailed design of the light destroyers. It is the first time we have attempted to undertake this task in Australia. We are purchasing 84 Observation Helicopters, 42 Utility Helicopters, which are of the Iroquois type which have already proved so successful in our Air Force, and 11 Helicopter Gunships. We are improving naval communication facilities at Darwin to give us better communication to our ships in the waters to our north. The gun mounts on the Guided Missile Destroyers have had the equivalent to 10 years peace time use in the Vietnamese waters and they require overhauling. We are going to purchase two additional Oberon Class Submarines, six Low Cover Radars to give added protection, construct a Logistic Cargo Ship to support the Armed forces overseas and buy additional Skyhawk aircraft to embark on HMAS Melbourne. We will also be obtaining additional support and training aircraft for the Navy. The items I have mentioned will cost just under $166 million over a period of years and they will add significantly to the capability of our Services in a number of important directions. We have also authorised the Army to order up to $60m. worth of capital equipment to improve equipment in the Regular Army and the CMF.
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In a later talk I want to mention in particular, how the capacity of our forces will be increased by these purchases and how our forces have been greatly improved over the last 10 years.