

# Australia – New Zealand Joint Statement on Closer Defence Relations

**6 December 2024**

The alliance between Australia and New Zealand remains closer than ever, tightly bound by our shared history, deep people-to-people links, and common values. Our security partnership was founded in the days of the first ANZACs, with this spirit continuing to enliven our modern alliance. The formal expression of our alliance is found in the 1944 Canberra Pact, the 1951 ANZUS Treaty and through various Australia – New Zealand Joint Statements on Closer Defence Relations, instigated in 1991 and last updated in 2018.

As friends, family and formal allies, we have a mutual commitment to support each other's security, and to act together to advance the security of our region. History proves we are more resilient when we stand side by side, including fighting alongside each other in conflicts close to home and further afield.

To that end, Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Richard Marles, and New Zealand Minister of Defence Judith Collins KC today reaffirm their commitment to modernise our alliance and further strengthen our bilateral defence relationship. The heart of this endeavour will be an increasingly integrated 'Anzac' force. This means we will be more prepared, exercised and ready to combine our military forces in defence of our shared interests, our common values, and our territory. By doing so, we will effectively contribute to strategic balance, deter actions inimical to our interests, and be able to respond with decisive force if necessary.

Beyond the pathway toward an integrated 'Anzac' force, we also commit to increase coordination, alignment, and interoperability<sup>1</sup> between our defence forces. We will step up our operations and activities together in the Indo-Pacific. We will introduce more common, complementary and increasingly interoperable capability, further enhancing our ability to act together in support of shared interests. We will enhance information sharing and improve policy, diplomatic and industrial coordination.

This Joint Statement sets out the strategic context of our defence relationship, its underpinning principles, and the practical outcomes we seek.

## **Strategic context**

Australia and New Zealand face an increasingly competitive world. Our strategic environment is more complex than it has been since the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>1</sup> Interoperability is the ability of the forces of two or more nations to train, exercise and operate effectively together in the execution of assigned missions and tasks.

This is playing out in military and non-military ways. The Indo-Pacific is the locus for an intense contest of narratives, values, and ambitions for regional and global influence. We are witnessing unprecedented military build-up, often without reassurance or transparency, with the uncertainty this generates exacerbated by hybrid or grey-zone<sup>2</sup> threats – especially in the maritime and cyber domains. The risk of military miscalculation and escalation is on the rise.

Insecurity is amplified by the non-traditional security challenge of climate change. Pacific leaders have recognised climate change as the single-greatest threat to the security of the region. Climate impacts, including climate-induced disasters and extreme weather events pose an existential threat to our neighbours, exacerbating risks to food security and generating economic instability. Our defence forces will be increasingly called on to respond to the more frequent and severe climate-related events in our region, a demand that we will meet through Pacific-led mechanisms, in partnership with the broader Pacific defence community.

In a more uncertain world, Australia and New Zealand must work together to maintain a region where sovereignty is protected, international law is paramount, and states have agency to make decisions free from coercion.

## **Strengthening our alliance**

Against this context, our alliance has never been more important to our shared security. Today we reaffirm our commitment to one another under the 1951 ANZUS Treaty; should either nation find itself under attack within the Pacific region, we will act to meet the common danger in accordance with our respective constitutional processes.

The heart of our security partnership remains our intent to bring together our forces to promote and protect our shared interests, and to respond to contingencies across the spectrum of competition, crisis and conflict. Our alliance is evolving to meet modern threats, with Prime Ministers recently affirming that a cyber-attack on either nation could constitute an armed attack under the ANZUS Treaty.

At such a consequential time for our shared security, our alliance will serve as a force multiplier. We will pursue ever-greater integration between our defence forces, operating and understanding each other seamlessly at all levels.

Our deeper collaboration and integration will be achieved through actions against five Shared Defence Objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> Grey-zone refers to activities designed to coerce countries in ways short of conflict. This includes but is not limited to propaganda, sabotage, clandestine military actions and foreign interference.

## **Shared Defence Objective 1: Contribute to collective security and maintenance of the global rules based order**

We respond to our evolving strategic environment by investing in our defence capability and by combining resources to deter aggressive and coercive behaviours in our immediate region.

Our strategic and operational planning, defence diplomacy, regional capacity building efforts, and policy approaches are aligned, enhancing our collective capacity to respond to security threats.

We uphold rights and obligations under international law in the maritime domain, particularly under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including freedom of navigation and overflight by increasing our combined operational tempo and presence together, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific.

We commit to continued close cooperation and coordination with Indo-Pacific partners to enhance interoperability and build sovereign capability. With these partners we enhance collective deterrence and ensure regional peace and stability.

## **Shared Defence Objective 2: Effectiveness in combined operations**

Remaining respectful of sovereignty, we increase our combined activities and operations in the Indo-Pacific and, where feasible, expanding rotations of New Zealand force elements in Australia.

We embed units, including through integrating a New Zealand Motorised Infantry Battle Group in an Australian-led Brigade - as well as a New Zealand Special Operations Taskgroup alongside an Australian Special Operations Taskforce - as outlined in our Armies' Plan ANZAC.

Our navy cooperation is underpinned by complementary strategies. We maximise operation of common or complementary systems to optimise combined training and interoperability of our maritime capabilities.

We collaborate on common air force capabilities, including training, personnel exchanges, operations and other information sharing activities, to enhance interoperability. We deepen cooperation on aircrews and platform maintenance to better enable interchangeability between our Air Forces. We coordinate air operations in the region including non-combatant evacuation operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to further demonstrate the complementary approach of our respective air forces.

Our logistics support and sustainment arrangements enhance our ability to deploy as long as required.

Our approaches to operations and exercises are coordinated and complementary. Maritime and littoral operations are important priorities, where our forces can be integrated, interoperable and complement each other.

Our command, control and communications arrangements deliver timely coordination between our defence organisations.

### **Shared Defence Objective 3: Enhance interoperability**

Interoperability is entrenched through greater common procurement of platforms and systems. Our personnel undertake bilateral training, education, exchanges and attachments to help enhance mutual understanding at all levels and across the five domains: land, air, sea, space and cyber. Our embed exchange of senior military officers in key leadership positions is enduring.

Respective force design, joint experimentation, approaches to planning, and capability procurement decisions take into account our desire to operate together as allies and the ability to come together as an integrated 'Anzac' force.

We seek opportunities to test our interoperability, including integrated joint support, through major air, maritime and land domain exercises, and large scale joint exercises including Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.

We remove tactical, technical and procedural information-sharing barriers where they impinge on our ability to operate as an integrated 'Anzac' force.

### **Shared Defence Objective 4: Supporting Pacific sovereign security**

As members of the Pacific defence community, we strive to become more interoperable with the militaries of the Pacific, enhance our shared capability, and enable Pacific-led security responses to both the traditional and non-traditional security challenges of greatest regional concern. We maximise the potential for the militaries of the Pacific to work together as an asset for a resilient region.

We commit to transformative initiatives such as the Pacific Response Group in order to provide more rapid and effective humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in an increasingly disaster-prone region. We work with the members of the Pacific Response Group to respond to the needs of affected communities and nest assistance within civilian-led mechanisms.

Our approaches to climate security, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, stability and peace operations support Pacific resilience and capacity building.

## **Shared Defence Objective 5: Effective defence industry collaboration**

Ongoing defence industry collaboration drives cost effective solutions to our evolving security needs, builds resilience into our supply chains, and unlocks cutting-edge technologies. We work to remove barriers to defence industry involvement in materiel contracts and capability acquisition and sustainment.

Our domestic industries are complementary in critical growth areas, including naval shipbuilding. They harness respective strengths to provide key capabilities to our warfighters.

## **Implementation and Monitoring**

This Joint Statement on Closer Defence Relations and our defence dialogue architecture provide the policy framework to regularly review, update and adapt our alliance. The Shared Defence Objectives ensure our relationship remains contemporary through a programme of practical, cooperative activities in areas such as strategic assessments and planning, capability development and industry collaboration, combined operations and logistics coordination, personnel, education, and training. Such activities will be conducted pursuant to separate agreements and arrangements as applicable.

Under our defence dialogue architecture, we will maintain a close dialogue on security and defence issues with Ministers and senior defence officials meeting at least annually. Subordinate working groups will take forward practical implementation initiatives against each of the Shared Defence Objectives above.

We commit to reviewing this Joint Statement at least every two years.

Signed in Auckland, New Zealand on 6 December 2024.