

# Defence cools talk of Cabarlah closure

Posted Thu May 7, 2009 7:45am AEST

The Defence Department secretary says the suggested relocation of the Army's Electronic Warfare Unit does not necessarily mean the closure of the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah.

- [Map: Cabarlah 4352](#)

The unit is based at Cabarlah, north of Toowoomba. However, the recent Defence white paper has recommended moving all units of its type to Adelaide.

Dr Mike Kelly has told ABC Southern Queensland's Morning Program that no decision has been made about the future of Borneo Barracks.

"We are basically working on the principle that no bases have been identified for closure," he said.

"We're looking particularly at bases that are running as efficiently and effectively as possible.

"We'll certainly be looking at any recommendations Defence has for closures and assessing those in relation to the impact they have on local communities."

**Tags:** [defence-and-national-security](#), [army](#), [qld](#), [cabarlah-4352](#), [crows-nest-4355](#), [highfields-4352](#), [oakey-4401](#), [toowoomba-4350](#)



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11<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**FILE COPY**

Hon. Dr. Mike Kelly AM MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mike

**RE: Possible Closure of Borneo Barracks**

Thank you for your letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 (copy enclosed) in reply to our letter to Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP and to the Prime Minister concerning the possible closure of Borneo Barracks. (BB)

We note in your reply that the process of review of the Defence bases is ongoing to ensure that they meet developing strategies and that because the White Paper for Defence (Defending Australia In The Asia Pacific Century: **Force 2030**) was not released at that time, that it would be inappropriate for the Government to comment on the future of Borneo Barracks or any other base.

Now that the White Paper has been released we note that there is no direct comment with regard to the future of Borneo Barracks but we do note the following:

- **Under Chapter 9:** Capability Priorities for Force 2030, **Section 9.92 Electronic Warfare**, that Defence will establish a joint EW (Electronic Warfare) Centre which ... **“Subject to further evaluation, the new centre will probably be located in Adelaide”** (p 84 ) Seeing that BB currently has a EW component we assume that this is a significant statement?
- **Under Chapter 15:** Supporting The ADF, **Section 15.6 The Defence Estate**. The Government has established a 5 dot point **“strategic basing principals to meet the future needs of Defence”** (p121) We assume that the future of bases such as Borneo Barracks will be assessed against these 5 criteria?

**We and our community still remain VERY concerned with the possible future closure of the Borneo Barracks base and the resultant 845 job losses, \$105m ripped from the Toowoomba regions economy (2% of the economy) and over 200 houses being sold or not rented to Defence or allied personnel. (2 years housing supply in Toowoomba).** (Ref. SGS Report)

**If we apply the above criteria to BB then with at least some of them, a strong argument could be mounted for the retention of Defence activities at BB?**


The Highfields and effected Toowoomba community have put together a petition objecting to the possible closure of Borneo Barracks with over 2000 signatures which has been provided to the Government through the Highfields Better Business Group via the local member Ian Macfarlane MP. Furthermore there has been strong local support to oppose any closure of Borneo Barracks from the broader community through public meetings, the RSL, elected QLD state government members, the Local Authority - Mayor and Councillors, Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce and many others.

While we remain opposed to any moves to close Borneo Barracks our concern also relates to Defence's timing of any intended closure and the actual date proposed for the bases closure? Our own research by Urban Economics Pty. Ltd. (who have conducted detail Market Research for Lauder Pty. Ltd. in the Highfields area for over a decade), tells us that if the current rate of community growth was maintained (approx 6%) in the area, then an announcement circa 2015 with actual closure by circa 2020 would result in a seamless transition between the current Defence activities and the other- then- Defence uses for Borneo Barracks.(please see our web site [www.highfieldsvillage.com.au](http://www.highfieldsvillage.com.au) and click on Borneo Barracks and then go to Urban Economics assessment) **Any other date proposed prior to this time frame would result in serious economic losses and social disruption for the Toowoomba region.**

**Uncertainty as to the bases future is causing community concern and economic instability for the region by where business owners and indeed financiers are asking what the bases future is before investing into the region.**

**We therefore seek the immediate clarification of the Government's and Defences position with respect to the future of Borneo Barracks?**

Yours sincerely



Mac Stirling  
Managing Director  
Lauder Pty. Ltd.

Cc. Dep. Mayor Toowoomba Regional Council Cr. Paul Antonio  
Member for Toowoomba North Kerry Shine MP.



COPY

THE HON DR MIKE KELLY AM MP  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE SUPPORT

- 3 APR 2009

Mr Mac Stirling  
Managing Director  
Lauder Pty Ltd  
PO Box 764  
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

Dear Mr Stirling

Thank you for your letters of 5 February 2009 to the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP, and 25 February 2009 to the Prime Minister concerning the future of Borneo Barracks, Cabarlah, Queensland. As this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities, your correspondence has been passed to me for response. A copy of this letter will be passed to the Prime Minister.

As part of the Defence White Paper, Defence is conducting a series of reviews. One of these is a review of all Defence bases. This review is developing strategies to ensure that our Defence base locations and capabilities reflect clear strategic guidance and provide value for money. This process is ongoing and no decisions have yet been made on the future of Borneo Barracks or any other Defence base. It would therefore be inappropriate to comment on the future of Borneo Barracks or any other base at this time.

I hope this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Kelly', written over a light blue horizontal line.

MIKE KELLY



## Senator the Hon. Ian Macdonald

Liberal - Queensland

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Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Opposition - Opposition Spokesman on Northern Australia

IDM:ai

Mr Mac Stirling  
Managing Director  
Lauder Pty Ltd  
PO Box 764  
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

Dear Mr Stirling

I refer to my letter of 20 March 2009 making representations on your behalf to the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP regarding possible closure of Borneo Barracks in Carbarlah in Queensland.

I have recently received a response from the Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP on behalf of the Minister and note that he has also responded to you directly.

I enclose a copy for your information.

Thank you again for writing to me on the matter.

Yours sincerely

Ian Macdonald

5 May 2009

Enc



The Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support

Senator the Hon Ian Macdonald  
Senator for Queensland  
PO Box 2185  
TOWNSVILLE QLD 4810

22 APR 2009

Dear Senator ~~Ian~~ Ian

Thank you for your representation of 20 March 2009 to the Minister for Defence, the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP, on behalf of Mr Close, Mr Stirling and Mr and Mrs Taylor concerning the future of Borneo Barracks, Cabarlah, Queensland. As this matter falls within my portfolio responsibilities, your correspondence has been passed to me for response.

As part of the Defence White Paper, Defence is conducting a series of reviews. One of these is a review of all Defence bases. This review is developing strategies to ensure that our base locations and capabilities reflect clear strategic guidance and provide value for money. This process is ongoing and no decisions have yet been made on the future of Borneo Barracks or any other Defence base. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to comment on the future of Borneo Barracks at this time.

Mr Close, Mr Stirling and Mr and Mrs Taylor have separately written to the Minister for Defence and copies of these responses are enclosed.

I hope this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

MIKE KELLY  
Encl





THE HON DR MIKE KELLY AM MP  
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR DEFENCE SUPPORT

- 3 APR 2009

Mr Mac Stirling  
Managing Director  
Lauder Pty Ltd  
PO Box 764  
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

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I hope this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Kelly'.

MIKE KELLY

# Defence expert calls for barracks' closure

## Military base is no longer 'justified'

By MADELEINE LOGAN

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THE closure of the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah was inevitable, a defence expert warned yesterday.

Australia Defence Association executive director Neil James said the costs of keeping the small base open could "no longer be justified" and it would likely be moved in five years.

"It makes sense for the electronic warfare unit from

Cabarlah to be located with like units and the Defence Science and Technology organisation in Edinburgh in South Australia," he said.

"The defence white paper (released last week) stressed the need to rationalise bases. There is a big economic imperative to have a smaller number of larger bases.

"And it's in the national interest."

It's not in Toowoomba's interest. A Department of Defence study found 845 jobs would vanish, 260 homes would empty and \$105.3 million would

be lost from the local economy if the 7th Signals Regiment was moved.

But Mr James, an army officer with 31 years experience, including a stint at Cabarlah, said the painful relocation was necessary.

"I have happy memories (at Borneo). I love the area. But it should be closed. As tragic as it is for the Toowoomba economy it's better based somewhere else for operational and strategic efficiencies."

Highfields developer Mac Stirling is one person who disagrees.

'I have happy memories (at Borneo). I love the area. But it should be closed.'

— Neil James

"The Defence Association is one thing, but they don't make decisions nor do they have the economic and social interests of the community in mind.

"There is a lot of fight left to maintain this base."

Mr Stirling said Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon should end the impasse.

"We were told in writing that they can't comment on any strategic measures until the release of the white paper. Now it's been released they have no comment."

"The government needs to come clean on their plans."

# Big family fights for right to rent

By MADELEINE LOGAN

madeleine.logan@thechronicle.com.au

A TENT is what seven-year-old Kiara O'Brien calls home.

Bed is a thin foam mattress shared with three brothers.

She shivers herself to sleep every night.

Welcome to the grim life of this little Toowoomba girl; one which will not brighten until her family of eight finds a place they can call their own.

For the past month, the O'Briens have slept in a Wilsonton back yard. They say they can't get a rental property and, with winter approaching, they are desperate for shelter.

Blankets can only do so much.

Freezing wind blasts through any small gap in the tent walls. Ty, 3, and Lachlan, 2, have asthma and the children, including 10-month-old Preston, are getting colds.

Dad David, who works full-time as a casual truck driver, moved his family out of a two-and-a-half bedroom rental house which was infested with cockroaches and "the occasional rat" nearly a month ago.

"Health wise we had to get out. The kids kept getting sick," he said. "We'd been there six years. We got our bond back and we don't owe anything."

They have been rejected for four



# Cyclist smashes vehicle's