

Borneo Barracks petition sends a message to Canberra

The campaign to keep the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah has gathered more momentum, after Federal Member for Groom Ian Macfarlane received a petition for presentation to the Federal Parliament calling for the base to remain on the Darling Downs.

Mr Macfarlane accepted the petition from Toowoomba Regional Councillor Bill Cahill and Highfields businessman Ash Heckles.

"The future of the Borneo Barracks is an important issue for the people of Toowoomba, Highfields, Cabarlah and the Darling Downs and I am determined to ensure the Rudd Government understands its significance both to our region and the Australian Defence Force," Mr Macfarlane said.

"It is clear from the response to this petition that local community members are adamant that the base should stay in our region.

"Losing the base would come at a substantial cost to the local economy as it is one of our most significant local employers, supporting hundreds of jobs both directly and indirectly. It also makes a critical contribution to the Australian Defence Force," Mr Macfarlane said.

The petition was organised by the Highfields Better Business Group in response to concerns raised at a meeting of local business operators, then further discussed at a community forum facilitated by Mr Macfarlane.



Ian discusses the significance of the Borneo Barracks with Cr Bill Cahill from Toowoomba Regional Council and Ash Heckles, Chairman of the Highfields Better Business Group.

Toowoomba Regional Councillor Bill Cahill said, "This petition sends a strong message and gives the community a voice in addition to the formal process. The Toowoomba Regional Council is right behind the campaign to keep the Barracks and we see clearly the benefits to the region not only in terms of jobs, but also in terms of local infrastructure."

The chairman of the Highfields Better Business Group, Ash Heckles, said the number of signatures collected was impressive, given the petition had been in circulation for only a few weeks.

"We've had a great

response since the very first day the petition was open for signature," Mr Heckles said.

"It's not just the business community that has come out in force to support the petition, there's also been overwhelming interest from local residents in Highfields and further into Toowoomba."

Unfortunately the Rudd Government's Defence White Paper has created more questions than answers about the Barracks," Mr Macfarlane said.

"I know this will be disappointing to the residents and business operators in our community who have rallied to show their support for retaining the Barracks.

"However, on the Government's own criteria for Defence facilities laid out in the White Paper a strong case can be made in favour of retaining the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah.

"The White Paper states that key principles for deciding the future needs for Defence facilities include ensuring those facilities are dispersed for security reasons, ensuring facilities are in family-friendly and well-resourced locations and ensuring both an urban and regional presence.

The petition will also leave the Minister in no doubt about how important the Borneo Barracks is for our region."

TOOWOOMBA BYPASS A GLARING OMISSION IN RUDD'S NATION WRECKING BUDGET

Toowoomba and Darling Downs residents are paying the price for the Rudd Government's reckless spending after the Government failed to include the Toowoomba Bypass in a national infrastructure program in this year's Budget, Federal Member for Groom Ian Macfarlane said.

"This will be a bitter blow for the people of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs who, for the second year in a row, have been denied answers about why the Rudd

Government reneged on the previous Government's allocation of \$700 million to begin construction work," Mr Macfarlane said.