

Savings drive will hit all ranks

# Defence to close bases

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HUNDREDS of jobs will be lost and tens of millions of dollars will flow to the Government when dozens of military properties fall victim to cost cutting.

Military base and depot closures form a key part of a \$20 billion savings push.

It also includes deep cuts ranging from first-class travel for the top brass to bullets for army cadets, who have been banned from wasting expensive ammunition on training ranges.

The razor gang hit list includes the School of Military Engineering at Moorebank in Sydney's west, the School of Signals at Watsonia, north of Melbourne, Keswick Barracks in Adelaide and a raft of Reserve depots and bases from Cairns and Townsville to Dubbo and Wagga.

There are 135 Reserve

properties nationwide and 85 of them account for just 10 per cent of troops.

All base functions will be absorbed into "super bases" at places such as Puckapunyal in Victoria, Amberley in Queensland, Edinburgh near Adelaide, and Darwin.

Funds from the land sales will supplement Defence's \$20 billion savings target over 10 years.

The loudest opponents of past base closures have been politicians in affected seats and the new hit list is dominated by Coalition seats.

Most federal electorates benefit from the "pork barrel" effect of local military facilities, but some of the biggest barrels of all, such as Richmond RAAF base near Sydney, will be safe.

In a major backflip, the Government is set to release a detailed property plan drawn up by high-profile accountant George Pappas as part of the

Defence White Paper process. The Pappas Review has been a closely guarded secret within Defence and the Government, but pressure from the departments of Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet to release more detail about the plan has forced the Government to act.

Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon would not comment on proposed closures yesterday, but he has signalled his intention to take the tough decisions. "Some re-adjustment in job locations will be necessary," he said earlier this year.

Defence manages hundreds of properties within the \$12 billion estate, including some of the nation's best real estate.

Defence Secretary Nick Warner has put his job on the line if the savings targets are not met and he and Chief of the Defence Force Angus Houston have warned senior staff to "get on board or get out".



SWEARING allegiance ... Todd Hayes, left

## Many call but

AT 39, Todd Hayes was one of the oldest yesterday to pledge to defend Australia.

"Instead of getting a sports-car for my mid-life crisis, I've joined the army," joked the Gold Coast postie of 15 years.

For Michael Evola, 18, of Ipswich, enlisting was "a big jump" after three years cooking popcorn for a cinema and girlfriend Elouise Madden, 15, was in tears.

And Frenchwoman-turned-Australian Cendrine Roberts-

Spring was and 18-month while she initial to Folbigg, the army knee after in 2004.

If the people answers 90 Quee up in a B to b Defence

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