

Retaining Borneo Barracks is in the local and national interest

Federal Member for Groom Ian Macfarlane has rejected suggestions from the Australian Defence Association executive director Neil James that it would be in the national interest to close the Borneo Barracks.

"The Borneo Barracks makes an important and valuable contribution to national defence from its current location," Mr Macfarlane said.

"This is not simply an issue of parochialism. There is a clear argument that maintaining a Defence presence in various regions is in Australia's interest.

"The Federal Government's Defence White Paper – the blueprint for future planning and development of the Australian Defence Force – stated 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.

"On this basis, there is a strong and logical case for retaining the Borneo Barracks at Cabarlah.

"The Defence Department's 2007 socio-economic report on the barracks estimated that the total economic benefit of the base to the local community was \$92.6 million.

"However, this is not the only consideration in arguing the barracks should remain.

"Bases such as the Borneo Barracks play an important role in integrating the Defence Force with the local community and attracting and retaining skilled employees.

"The Borneo Barracks should stay at Cabarlah, not just in the interests of the local community, but to the ongoing benefit of the Australian Defence Force.

"The Coalition recognises the important role the base plays from its current location. The Coalition will continue the call for a commitment from the Rudd Government to retain the Borneo Barracks."