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## Chair Persons Report

It has certainly been a big year of accomplishments for the Alliance, after adopting our new terms of reference and shifting focus from primarily advocacy, to engagement with the ADF.

The North West Defence Alliance is now recognised in most Defence circles in conversation, and feedback that both myself and the Deputy Chair have received is all positive.

There is currently a distinct push by all levels of government to further enhance the Defence capability in Western Australia, with particular focus on the lack of presence in the North.

The WA Minister for Defence Industry, the Hon Paul Papalia MLA, was recently quoted about the need for further expansion in this state, and the key role that mining towns can play.

Past Federal Defence Minister, the Hon Kim Beazley publicly stated that the West is the new front line, particularly the North West of WA. Resource Rich and Defence Poor.

This is exactly the position that our Alliance has held since its inception and it is refreshing to see such key figures on the same page.

So far this year, as Chair, I have attended Defence summits in Darwin and Perth, meetings with the Federal Ministers for Defence and Defence Industries, presented at the "Developing Northern Australia Conference" and met with Defence West to discuss how we can best work together going forward.

We have retained the services of Michael Hadlow from Amcer Consulting, who has a wealth of knowledge and contacts in the sector. He has produced a slide pack highlighting our ambitions, strengths and required resourcing.

The NWDA, made up of Local Governments, is strategically placed to assist the State in delivering outcomes for our Northern Communities. We understand our towns, our capabilities and our offerings. We are united in the belief that further Defence investment and presence in the north not only acts as a deterrent, but will strengthen and diversify our local economies, supply chains, education and training.

Our next steps are:

- Grow our membership to 12 Local Governments and 3 RDA's
- Officially partner with Defence West, assisting them to deliver favourable outcomes in the North of the State
- Engage with Defence NT to discuss opportunities across the border
- Gain funding for an Executive officer on a 3 year contract - State / Federal or a mix of both
- Invite our local Chambers of Commerce as strategic partners
- Seek external Industry support
- Continue our advocacy for greater investment in our region

The AUKUS agreement has resulted in a huge investment to Western Australia, which will underwrite a generation of build, supply and maintenance for the Navy, mostly based at the Henderson Strip, south of Perth. We will continue to advocate for a much higher level of investment in the Airforce and Army right through the Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberly.

I am happy with the traction we have gained so far, and excited for the next 12 months of Defence Announcements and outcomes for our Alliance.

Kindest Regards



**Matthew Niikkula**  
**Shire President Shire of Exmouth, Chair North West Defence Alliance**