



Official Opening of ASC West

ASC West, 30 April 2008

Speech by ASC Chairman Mr John Prescott AC

It gives me great pleasure to stand before you here today at the beginning of a new era for the operations of ASC in Western Australia.

It's a very significant day for ASC, both in terms of our commitment to sustaining the submarine fleet at the Australian Marine Complex, and to our future in Western Australia.

But before we launch into that future, it's worth reflecting on just what has already been achieved here in WA.

Over the past twelve years, our operations in the west have helped keep the Collins Class submarines at the forefront of Australia's naval defences.

It has been a vital base in the ongoing operations of the Collins Class, with intermediate and mid-cycle docking programs and maintenance availabilities – critical maintenance that has helped ensure these boats remain the most lethal conventional submarines in the world.

That's some achievement.

And it's all the more remarkable when you consider the difficult conditions under which this has been achieved.

The committed professionals who have worked tirelessly to undertake these vital tasks have done so despite numerous obstacles and hardships.

They have had to contend with being dispersed across three separate sites. They've had to contend with the elements – the heat, sand and the Fremantle Doctor, which motivates the sand in annoying ways.

And they've done so cheerfully and without complaint; mostly (*pause for laughter*).

But I am delighted to be able to state unequivocally that they're now getting the site that they – and the Collins Class submarines – need and deserve.

Welcome – to ASC West.

ASC West represents a 35 million dollar investment in the future and a permanent commitment to the State of Western Australia.



But apart from the symbolism of such an investment, this facility brings with it real benefits and great opportunities for further growth and expansion.

The statistics themselves are impressive – more than 41-thousand square metres in total, the site includes this undercover maintenance hall of two-thousand six hundred square metres, a warehouse with associated facilities of two-thousand one hundred square metres and modern office space of three-thousand six hundred square metres.

The lessons learned from our 20 years' of activities in Osborne in South Australia, and twelve years of maintenance here in WA, have been applied to the design of this new facility.

The underlying premise behind the design of ASC West is ease of access and proximity – as access and proximity together improve efficiency.

Production and engineering support will now have easy access to the submarine, and the larger warehouse will enable us to maintain a much better store, which gives us the potential to become more efficient.

This new facility will grant ASC more control over work, quality, schedule and costs. Importantly, our employees and the submarines will no longer be exposed to the elements while in maintenance.

Also, this new facility gives us the ability to support a second submarine on site.

In addition to the many operational advantages this new site affords us, we now also have modern office accommodation for up to 185 staff and dedicated facilities for Royal Australian Navy boat crews and Defence Materiel Organisation personnel.

This will not only improve working conditions for submariners and COLSPO, but it also positions ASC West more favourably in the ongoing quest to attract and retain quality staff in the face of the skills shortage facing all employers in Western Australia.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the enormous commitment of the Western Australian Government.

It is developing key infrastructure at the Australian Marine Complex – without which ASC West simply could not exist.

That infrastructure includes a floating dock, a transfer system and an extended wharf.

The foresight of the State Government – and of ministers such as Francis Logan – is to be admired and commended. And ASC, for one, will ensure we maximise the opportunities this infrastructure affords us.



Conclusion

I would like to conclude by thanking Greg Combet, Francis Logan and Commodore Longbottom for being here today to help us officially open the facility ASC West.

I would also like to recognise the DMO and the Royal Australian Navy's submarine community for their ongoing support.

But I would also like to thank each and every one of the personnel of ASC West.

You have been through much to help get us to this point. Now, together, we will build an even better future here in Western Australia.