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ARMY BATTALION BRINGS JOBS, FAMILIES AND INVESTMENT

Premier Mike Rann says that more than 1200 jobs will be created this year as construction peaks on more than **\$620 million** worth of capital facilities at the Edinburgh Defence Precinct in the city's north.

Mr Rann accompanied Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to Edinburgh today to turn the first sod on the next stage of the base development, being built in preparation for the arrival of the Army's new 7RAR mechanised battalion.

"Work began on these state-of-the-art facilities late last year so that 1200 troops, along with 380 partners and 435 children, can be relocated to Adelaide in 2011.

"The Commonwealth's Defence Housing Authority is spending a **further \$90 million** on securing houses in the northern region for troops and their families.

"There are already about 300 workers on site building common user facilities for both the Army and Air Force, including a new combined mess, medical, fitness and community facilities.

"The presence of the new Army Battalion should generate about \$100 million into the South Australian economy every year and about 1600 jobs."

Mr Rann says that in June 2005, the State Government, fresh from its victory of winning the bulk of the \$8 billion Air Warfare Destroyer contract, wasted no time in setting its sights on pitching for this new Army battalion to be located in Adelaide.

"Having consolidated our defence industry for the long term by winning the AWD contract, we stuck to our plan of building on it, in the areas of land, aerospace, maritime and electronics and weapons systems, as outlined our State Defence Strategy.

"We mounted a very good case to the Army to have the battalion located here - given that this was a cost-effective place to live, had great education facilities and high quality of living, and importantly, was located near the Cultana Training Range between Whyalla and Port Augusta and the Adelaide to Darwin rail line.

"The railway offers a critical advantage because it provides a cost effective and timely means of rapidly deploying troops to the north.

"Adelaide is also centrally located - around three hours flight time from any other Australian location - and our regional geography mimics the terrain of existing areas of operation in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

“I look forward to welcoming some of the 7RAR battalion’s troops to Adelaide later this year when they plan to hold their Presentation of Colours.

This will provide the people of South Australia with their first real opportunity to welcome the troops to their new home State,” Mr Rann said.