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Australian Government
Department of Defence

DEPSEC CASG/OUT/2026/290

The Hon. Paul Scully, MP
NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attention:

NSW Independent Planning Commission
submission@ipcn.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister Scully

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW OF PROPOSED NSW
GOVERNMENT HERITAGE ORDER – LITHGOW SMALL ARMS FACTORY**

I understand that a review of the recommendations from the Heritage Council of NSW to list the Lithgow Small Arms Factory on the State Heritage Register pursuant to section 32(2) of the Heritage Act 1977 is now underway. In July 2025, I wrote to your colleague, The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for Heritage, outlining the Department of Defence's interest in the Lithgow Small Arms Factory, our long term capability contracts with Thales Australia at the facility, and the strategic importance of this sovereign industrial capability for Australia.

The Department of Defence has a number of significant concerns should the proposed listing proceed, as it may:

- 1) Impact the ability to supply weapons to the Australian Defence Force;
- 2) Impose constraints that inhibit or delay the activities contractually obligated under contract with Thales;
- 3) Detrimentially impact existing planning and operational requirements that align with our national security interests, including any future work to be conducted at the site by Defence or Thales; and
- 4) Affect the Commonwealth's rights for the protection of technology, and the ability to remediate any environmental concerns.

Consequently, the Department of Defence does not support the proposed heritage listing of the Lithgow Small Arms Factory.

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Since my last correspondence, on 20 October 2025, the Australian Government announced we would provide 3,500 rifles to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, along with other initiatives in support of our mutual defence agreement under the Pukpuk Treaty. These rifles will be produced in the Lithgow Small Arms Factory with economic benefit to the local community.

Defence has also commenced negotiations with Thales to industrialise machine gun manufacture at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory to improve supply chain resilience and assure this capability for the Australian Defence Force. This significant investment in Australian industry supports our Sovereign Defence Industrial Priorities.

No other manufacturer or facility in Australia has the capability to produce military weapons of the grade and scale required by Defence. For this reason, Defence maintains a Deed with Thales that reserves certain rights to take control of sovereign weapons manufacturing should it be determined that it is in the national interest. Any limitation or constraint on Defence's ability to exercise its rights due to any increase in compliance or other requirements, as a consequence of any heritage listing, would come with significant risk to delivering essential capability to the Australian Defence Force.

You may be aware that there are several areas of the site which may indicate signs of environmental contamination from over 100 years of continual use. Thales is currently conducting an environmental site survey to better understand the nature of any contamination, and any actions required for remediation and compliance with contemporary standards for Commonwealth consideration. Any heritage listing that limits the ability of Defence and Thales to safely maintain, operate and change the factory or progress environmental compliance would be of significant concern, and I ask that this please be considered as part of the Commission's review.


Thank you in advance for consideration of our request, and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Chris Deeble
Deputy Secretary

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6 March 2026

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