



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID MORRISON, AO
CHIEF OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: THE WEST AUSTRALIAN,
10 MAY 2012

To the Editor,

Your paper published an article on 10 May 2012 which offered a range of ill informed views on the budget measures and the decision taken to place a quantity of the Australian Army's M1A1 Abrams Tanks and M113AS4 Armoured Personnel Carriers into temporary storage. As the Chief of the Army and as the Capability Manager of these vehicle fleets, I write to you in order to correct the record.

Firstly, on the conjecture that there is a connection between Army's view of the vehicle capability and performance and the recent Budget decisions - this is absolutely wrong. I have a high degree of confidence in this vehicle and it represents a substantial capability improvement for our soldiers. The decision to place a quantity of vehicles into temporary storage is not connected in any way to my confidence in the capability and performance of the vehicle. Rather, my decision to move a number of M113AS4 Armoured Personnel Carriers and Abrams Tanks into temporary storage is informed solely by a need to reduce operating costs in order to focus key resources to operational priorities and linked training support.

Second, the temporary storage of up to fifteen M1A1 Abrams Tanks and one hundred M113AS4 Armoured Personnel Carriers will be conducted in such a way that will enable Army to rapidly return them to service if required. This will be achieved without impacting on Army capability in the short term, or compromising our training and skills.

Third, Army will also see a reduced need for the M113AS4 vehicles as the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR) prepares for deployment to Afghanistan and 5th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) will be the Ready Battalion Group. There will be a reduced need for the M113AS4 over the next 12 months as the vehicles are not required for 7RAR and 5RAR's light infantry roles.

Finally, the number of vehicles being laid up is only a fraction of the fleet. If there was any doubt that this measure to reduce our operating costs could not be managed without impact, I would have not advised the Chief of the Defence Force or Government that this was possible.

I have full confidence in the effectiveness and combat capabilities of the Abrams tank and the upgraded M113AS4 APC. I stand by my decisions.

D.L Morrison
LTGEN
Chief of Army

10 May 2012