

# BEERSHEBA'S BATTLE PLAN

An ambitious restructure of the three manoeuvre brigades and a focus on amphibious capability are keys to the Army's future, CA Lt-Gen David Morrison tells **John Wellfare**.

**T**here's not going to be a light brigade or a mechanised brigade or a motorised brigade – they are going to have component parts that look very much like each other." That's how CA Lt-Gen David Morrison explains the force restructure at the core of Plan Beersheba, which he says will make the Army more deployable.

In 1999 Lt-Gen Morrison was the operations colonel for Interfet, the groundbreaking East Timor deployment that kick started more than a decade of high operational tempo for the ADF, so he knows how far the Army has come in its ability to train and deploy troops during the past 13 years. Plan Beersheba, he says, is about maintaining current operations and being prepared for the future.

**An Army has got to be able to provide the government of the day with a broad range of options to meet military contingencies ...**

Lt-Gen David Morrison, CA

Although Middle East operations may represent the highest intensity warfighting Australian troops have experienced in recent decades, "we can't benchmark ourselves against the Taliban", Lt-Gen Morrison says. "An Army has got to be able to provide the government of the day with the broadest range of options to meet military contingencies – everything from contributing to humanitarian disaster relief operations through to fighting against a peer or near-peer adversary, beyond what we're doing in Afghanistan."

Restructuring the Army's three regular brigades to be more similar and self-sufficient is only one, albeit keystone, part of Plan Beersheba.

Lt-Gen Morrison says the past decade has demonstrated the value of a capable reserve force and the need to deploy reservists when a high operational tempo has full-time troops heavily committed. "We're going to make our reserve brigades adhere to a force generation cycle and we're going to link them to our regular brigades," he says. "There are six Army reserve brigades, there are three manoeuvre brigades in the ARA. We're going to link two reserve brigades to each regular brigade and they will travel through a force generation cycle alongside their ARA counterparts."

"That allows us to choose if we require reservists to either supplement the commitment to a particular operational theatre in the future, or indeed, as we've seen in Solomon Islands, to commit reserve forces to hold the full operational commitment." Linking the reserve and regular brigades will also improve the part-time soldiers' access to equipment and training opportunities with their full-time counterparts, Lt-Gen Morrison says. Reservists will more easily be able to join major exercises and gain experience working as part of a larger force than has previously been possible. The ability to deploy offshore is crucial and Plan Beersheba will tie in with existing programs to improve the ADF's amphibious capability. With new amphibious ships already in the pipeline, Lt-Gen Morrison says it's time for the Army to "make a very significant buy in". When the soldiers of 2RAR return from post-deployment leave later this

year, they'll take on the job of developing a skill and knowledge base in amphibious operations with support from other key Army stakeholders, particularly air and intelligence assets. "Over the course of about five years we're going to let 2RAR develop that capability as we bring these ships into service and we start to understand what it means to be an amphibious ready element," Lt-Gen Morrison says. "Then we're going to make some decisions about how we spread that capability across more than just 3 Bde, but we're going to learn that as we go." The Chief is keen to emphasise that the specifics of Plan Beersheba are not etched in stone and he's calling on the whole Army to take part in the fine-tuning process. "I know the Army's going to need to change shape to remain relevant in the third decade of this century, I know we've got to be able to provide a broad

range of options for the government in the future, as we do now, and we need to change our force structure to do that, but I don't have all the answers," he says. "Indeed, much of the planning around Beersheba at the moment has been done by a relatively small number of people. "What I want to do now is give soldiers the chance to have a look at this and start to provide some of the answers they have. "We're going to set up a forum on the Army website, there will be teams going out to ask questions and seek feedback about what structures should look like, how training should be, what facilities are required and how we best use these capabilities that are coming through the Defence capability program. "We know the broad issues that have to be addressed and that's what Plan Beersheba has been all about, but now we've got to seek the subject matter



**Underway:** CA Lt-Gen David Morrison addresses the media at the official launch of Plan Beersheba in December last year. Photo by LS Phillip Cullinan

expertise resident in Army and draw on that to really nail down the detail."

New equipment due to enter service over the next 10 years will both support Plan Beersheba and influence it.

Major upgrades to the Army's intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities are entering service in the near future, including new digital radios, a battlefield management system similar to the US blue-force tracker, major upgrades to electronic warfare capability and the Shadow 200 unmanned aerial system.

As well as the Landing Helicopter Dock ships at the centre of the amphibious capability upgrade, two massive vehicle replacement projects will have a significant impact – Land 121 will replace all light-skinned vehicles throughout this year and next, while Land 400 will introduce a new armoured vehicle to eventually replace the ASLAV and M113 near the end of this decade.

"You need to have the right force structure to take these capabilities and do something with them and that's where Beersheba is going," Lt-Gen Morrison says.

There's still a lot of work to be done before soldiers start to see major changes taking effect and the next year or so will be spent laying the groundwork.

"There won't be demonstrative change this year because we're still busy doing what we've got to do in Afghanistan, East Timor and Solomon Islands.

"I know full well how busy the Army is and the last thing I will be trying to do is ratchet up the tempo.

"We'll consult and take feedback, we'll make decisions, we'll put things in place and we'll be starting to move by the end of 2013."

Given those timeframes, Lt-Gen Morrison isn't likely to experience many of the affects of Plan Beersheba by the time his tenure as Chief winds up in 2014.

"My job is to leave an Army in the best shape it can possibly be," he says.

"What Beersheba is doing is giving the government and the ADF a wider range of options when they look at the Army.

"Everything from humanitarian assistance through to warfighting, the Army can do it. The Army can get to that operational area with the right capabilities in the right timeframe and do something about the situation when they get there."

**Looking forward:** A key part of Plan Beersheba includes developing the Army's amphibious capability before the Landing Helicopter Dock ships, one of which is pictured here under construction in Spain, come into service in 2014-15.



**Force generation focus:** Major force preparation exercises such as Ex Hamel will be an important part of the force generation cycle under Plan Beersheba. Photo by LCpl Mark Doran



## READYING PHASE

- Develop collective competencies
- Prepare personnel and equipment
- Train for missions
- Governance

Multi-role manoeuvre brigade

Reserve battalion group

Reserve brigade

## SUPPORTING SPECIALISTS



## RESET PHASE

- Personnel leave
- Personnel training
- Equipment remediation
- Introducing new systems
- Governance

Multi-role manoeuvre brigade

Reserve battalion group

Reserve brigade

## READY PHASE

- Maintain collective competencies
- Provide forces for operations
- Provide contingency forces

## Multi-role manoeuvre brigade



Reserve battalion group

Reserve brigade

Reserve brigade

## New structure in action

How the Australian Army of tomorrow will look when the new force structure is combined with the force generation cycle.