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Talking Points

AUKUS Review & Benefits of AUKUS

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- Aware that the Pentagon is conducting a review of AUKUS.
 - The US has advised Australia and the UK of this review.
- It is natural that any incoming Administration would want to examine progress against milestones.
 - Just as the new UK government recently concluded an AUKUS review and appointed Sir Stephen Lovegrove as its AUKUS Special Representative.
- All three countries are committed to ensuring AUKUS meets national and trilateral objectives.
 - We welcome opportunities to review progress and identify where further improvements can be made.
- Our engagement with the Trump Administration has shown clear and consistent support for AUKUS.
 - The Prime Minister has discussed AUKUS in a phone call with President Trump [11 February and 5 May 2025].
 - The Deputy Prime Minister discussed AUKUS with Secretary of Defense Hegseth [7 Feb and 30 May 2025].
 - The Foreign Minister discussed AUKUS with Secretary of State Rubio [21 January 2025].
- The AUKUS partnership is a great deal for all three countries, which is why it continues to enjoy strong bipartisan support in the US and UK.
 - As evidenced by the passage of important provisions in the 2024 National Defence Authorization Act to enable the transfer of US Virginia class submarines to Australia and to enable Australians to work on maintenance activities of US Virginia class submarine; and
 - the appointment of Sir Stephen Lovegrove as the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on AUKUS.
- AUKUS makes a substantial contribution to allied deterrence in the Indo-Pacific.
 - Including through the development of enhanced defence capabilities and greater regional presence of allied assets.
- Importantly, AUKUS will also grow both the US, UK and Australian defence industries as well as generating thousands of new manufacturing jobs.
- We look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the Trump Administration and the Starmer Government on this historic project.

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If asked: is AUKUS a good deal for the United States?

- AUKUS is a good deal for all three nations.
- **AUKUS complicates any potential adversary's strategic and operational planning.**
 - It provides the US access to an Australian port for repair and resupply of US nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs).
- **It increases US operational capability**
 - Submarine Rotational Force-West (SRF-West) provides the US with closer port to critical parts of the Indo-Pacific; and
 - an additional facility capable of conducting intermediate maintenance on US SSNs, reducing pressure on US shipyards for maintenance and construction; and
 - by working to integrate Australia, UK and US autonomous and uncrewed systems across the globe.
- **AUKUS will grow the US, UK and Australian defence industries.**
 - Australia is making a fair and proportionate contribution of US\$3 billion over ten years to uplift the US submarine industrial base and accelerate production rates and maintenance capacity.
 - Australia is investing over AUD 30 billion in Australian workforce, industry and infrastructure to support Australian and allied SSN capability, including AUD 1.5 billion already approved for priority SRF-West works.
- **AUKUS is generating thousands of new manufacturing jobs**, which will expand the workforce to maintain US submarines
 - There are over 150 Australians at Pearl Harbour Naval Shipyard to train and bolster US maintenance capacity.
 - At its peak, SRF-West will see 500 Australians providing support for sustainment activities of US and UK SSNs.
- **AUKUS builds resilience in US supply chains**
 - AUKUS will see Australia add a fourth production line to allied SSN construction.
 - Australia is targeting the manufacture of critical components to relieve pressure on US supply chains, including AUD 250 million to support qualification and industry uplift.

If asked: why is AUKUS of benefit to Australia?

- Australia's acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines is a prudent response to the increasingly challenging strategic circumstances our region faces.

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- Through AUKUS, we are investing in the necessary capabilities that bolster our ability to preserve our own security and the collective security of the Indo-Pacific.
- Through AUKUS, Australia's acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines will make Australia a more capable security partner, better able to respond to our changing strategic environment.
 - Conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines will deter conflict and put adversaries at risk at the greatest distance from our shores, while enhancing our contribution to preserving regional security and stability.
- Through AUKUS we are developing military capabilities more quickly than Australia, the UK and US could by working alone.
 - We are amplifying our collective strengths and accelerating capability acquisition for shared strategic benefit.

If asked: US requests to increase Australia's defence spending

- Australia and the US have a shared view of challenges facing the Indo-Pacific, and we take seriously our role as a trusted and capable ally.
- The US has requested allies and partners around the world increase their defence spending, from Europe to the Indo-Pacific. This is not unique to Australia.
 - We agree that we find ourselves in challenging strategic circumstances that demand unprecedented investments.
- Which is why we have engaged in the single biggest peace time increase in defence expenditure in Australia's history.
 - Over the current decade, Australia's annual defence spending will almost double from around \$59 billion in 2025-26 to an estimated \$104 billion by 2034-35.
- Through the 2024 National Defence Strategy, the Government committed to a generational reinvestment in the ADF posture, capability and structure.
 - This will deliver \$330 billion across the decade to 2033-34, to increase the range and lethality of the ADF, strengthening Australia's national resilience and focusing our international engagement on enhancing interoperability and collective deterrence.

If asked: Does Australia have a 'Plan B'?

- Australia remains committed to the acquisition of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines through AUKUS.
 - We remain focused on AUKUS – this is how we will deliver the capability Australia needs.
- There are risks and challenges ahead – but this is the right plan for Australia.

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- Significant work is underway to manage the risks and meet ambitious timeframes – we are confident in Australia and our AUKUS partners' ability to deliver.

If asked: are you concerned the review will recommend that the US should pull out of AUKUS?

- Australia is confident that AUKUS will proceed.
- The US review is a natural step for any incoming government to take.
- We welcome it and we will work with the US to support in any way we can.
- It is exactly what the Starmer Government did when it came to office and similar to what the Albanese Government undertook through the Defence Strategic Review.
- We are confident the US review will find that AUKUS is deeply beneficial to the United States, just as it is to Australia and the UK.

If asked: has Defence had any engagement with US Undersecretary for Policy Elbridge Colby on AUKUS.

- Defence engages widely and routinely with US department of Defense officials on AUKUS and Alliance issues.
- Defence officials have engaged with Elbridge Colby since his commencement in the Pentagon and we look forward to continued productive engagement.

If asked: did DPM Marles and Secretary Hegseth discuss AUKUS during their recent bilateral meeting?

- The Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary Hegseth met in the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore [30 May].
- As the Deputy Prime Minister has said, they in the sidelines of the Shangri-La where they discussed a range of issues.
- I would defer any further questions to the Deputy Prime Minister.

If asked: will Australia provide an assurance to the US that it would commit its SSNs in a conflict over Taiwan.

- As the government has made clear, Australia will always make sovereign, independent decisions on how our capabilities are employed

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If asked: Australian investment in the US submarine industrial base

- Australia is making a fair and proportionate contribution of US\$3 billion over ten years to help uplift the US submarine industrial base to accelerate production rates and maintenance capacity.
 - The first tranche of this contribution, valued at US\$500 million, was transferred to the US in February and is a testament to our commitment to the successful delivery of AUKUS Pillar I outcomes.
 - We understand that the US plans to spend Australia's contribution on recruiting, training and retaining the submarine industrial base workforce at US shipyards, and upgrading facilities, equipment and infrastructure needed to repair and maintain submarines at US shipyards.

If asked: how can you be sure the US will follow through given the concerns it has raised including on the submarine industrial base?

- There are risks and challenges ahead – but this is the right plan for Australia.
 - All three AUKUS partners are investing significantly in our respective industrial bases to ensure the success of AUKUS, and to meet respective requirements and AUKUS commitments on time.
 - Significant work is underway to manage the risks and meet ambitious timeframes – we are confident in AUKUS partners' ability to deliver.

If asked: AUKUS Pillar II

- AUKUS Advanced Capabilities (Pillar II) is focused on translating cutting-edge advanced technology into timely, relevant military capabilities.
- Pillar II pools our resources and leverages national comparative advantages in the capabilities that matter most to our shared strategic interests and contemporary and future warfighting.
- Pillar II is focused on those military requirements that our joint operational commanders have told us are necessary to decisively fight together and win a potential military contest in the Indo-Pacific. AUKUS partners seek:
 - An enhanced multi-domain long-range strike capability that incorporates asymmetric capabilities and integrated targeting;
 - Strengthened multi-domain integrated air and missile defence capability;
 - Resilient command and control systems that maintain a diverse range of information; and
 - Enhanced logistical networks that are able to deliver persistent support and sustainment for operations in contested environments.

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If asked: Pillar II Capability Achievements

- AUKUS Pillar II is achieving capability development faster than any one of our nations could achieve alone.
- It is delivering capability benefits now and in the near and long-term future.
- AUKUS Pillar II is the epitome of Australia, the UK and US working together to develop world leading capabilities:
 - Our navies are delivering enhanced undersea strike and reconnaissance by integrating the ability to launch and recover undersea vehicles from submarine torpedo tubes.
 - We are deploying common advanced artificial intelligence algorithms on P8-A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft to process data from each nations' sonobuoys, which assists our anti-submarine operators to make superior decisions in near real time.
 - We are strengthening maritime autonomy through a series of joint exercises and experimentations known as the Maritime Big Play, by conducting ground-breaking tests on the joint deployment of autonomous and un-crewed systems in joint maritime warfare operations.
 - We are supporting our critical suppliers in the naval supply chain to uplift their cyber security and strengthen their defences against cyber espionage, sabotage and criminals.
 - Under the Hypersonic Flight Test and Experimentation (HyFlITE) Project Arrangement, AUKUS partners are accelerating the testing of hypersonic vehicles and related technologies.
 - Collectively, these capabilities make our militaries more resilient, able to communicate, navigate and fight together decisively.
 - They assist our forces to see further, better and sooner.

If asked: Does the UK Strategic Defence Review (SDR) raise questions about the UK's commitment to AUKUS and as a security partner for Australia?

- Australia and the UK have a dynamic and enduring strategic partnership
 - underpinned by our shared history, people-to-people connections, and strong security, trade, and investment links
 - and strengthened through AUKUS.
- The SDR reinforces the UK's commitment to AUKUS
 - as does Prime Minister Starmer's appointment of Sir Stephen Lovegrove as the UK's Special Representative on AUKUS [8 April, 2025].
- We are confident that the UK will deliver the SSN-AUKUS program on time, in partnership with Australia and the United States.