

# First woman to lead Aussie army

**Sydney:** Australia on Monday said a woman would lead its army for the first time in history, as part of a reshuffle of the country's defence force leadership.

Lieutenant general Susan Coyle, the current chief of joint capabilities, will become chief of army in July, the government said in a statement. She will replace lieutenant general Simon Stuart.

Coyle's appointment comes as Australia's military seeks to boost the number of female officers in its ranks. It faces a wave of allegations of systematic sexual harassment and discrimination.

"From July, we will have the first ever female chief of army in the Australian Army's 125-year history," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in a statement.

Defence minister Richard Marles called Coyle's appointment a "deeply historic moment".

"As Susan said to me, you cannot be what you cannot see," he said.

"Susan's achievement will be deeply significant to women who are serving in the Australian Defence Force today and women who are thinking about serving in the Australian De-



**Lieutenant general Susan Coyle in Canberra on Monday. (Reuters)**

fence Force in the future."

Coyle, 55, enlisted in the military in 1987 and has held a number of senior command roles. She will be the first woman to lead any service branch of the military, Marles said.

Women currently make up around 21 per cent of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and 18.5 per cent of senior leadership roles. The ADF has set a target of 25 per cent of overall participation for women by 2030.

Last October, a class action lawsuit was filed against the ADF alleging it failed to protect thousands of female officers from systematic sexual assault, harassment and discrimination.