



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC  
WORKS

**Reference: Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley,  
Queensland**

WEDNESDAY, 20 AUGUST 2008

IPSWICH

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**PARLIAMENTARY STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS**

**Wednesday, 20 August 2008**

**Members:** Mr Butler (*Chair*), Senator Troeth (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Mark Bishop and Forshaw and Mr Champion, Mr Forrest, Mr Hale, Mr Lindsay and Mr Slipper

**Members in attendance:** Senator Troeth, Mr Butler and Mr Slipper

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland

**WITNESSES**

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**Committee met at 12.53 pm**

**CAIE, Mr William Gordon, Base Support Manager, Defence Support—Amberley, Department of Defence**

**GRICE, Brigadier William Alfred, Director General, Infrastructure Asset Development, Department of Defence**

**OLESEN, Mr Benjamin Peter, Project Director—Amberley, Infrastructure Asset Development, Department of Defence**

**ROBERTON, Group Captain Steven Peter, Head, Air Combat Transition Office, Department of Defence**

**TRINDER, Mr Colin, Director, Environmental Impact Management, Department of Defence**

**PULLMAN, Mr Peter Harry, Associate, Defence Business, Connell Wagner Pty Ltd**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and, consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. I remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Brigadier, will you or the Group Captain start?

**Brig. Grice**—Thank you. This proposal seeks approval for the Australian Super Hornet facilities project at RAAF Base Amberley for the Department of Defence. The Australian Super Hornet facilities project will deliver the necessary facilities and infrastructure to support No. 82 Wing operations through the introduction of the F18F Super Hornet. The F18F Super Hornet will give Australia an ungraded air combat capability until the introduction of the new air combat capability. RAAF Base Amberley is currently the home base for No. 82 Wing's F111 aircraft fleet operated by Nos 1 and 6 squadron.

To support the F111 aircraft fleet, there are significant existing operational maintenance and support facilities at RAAF Base Amberley. From 2010, No. 82 Wing will transition from F111 to FA18F operations. The existing operational, maintenance and support facilities require modification, extension or reconstruction to support the new FA18F platform effectively. The facility's works are geared at providing increased levels of security and communications for the modern FA18F Super Hornet fleet and safer, more productive working accommodation for 1 and 6 Squadron maintenance staff and flight crews.

The project's scope involves 11 discrete elements, these being: new accommodation for 1 Squadron; modification and upgrades to existing accommodation for 6 Squadron; expansion of the existing common use operational level maintenance facility; new shelters for ground support equipment and external fuel tank storage; a new flight training simulator facility and reconfiguration of the existing F111 technical training facility; modification of the existing F111 aircraft shelters, including the provision of fire detection and environmental upgrades; minor modifications of the existing 82 Wing headquarters building and operational maintenance store

warehouse; upgrading of the existing engine run-up and testing facilities to meet the requirements of the new aircraft type; an upgraded aircraft wash facility; new and refurbished maintenance facilities for immediate-level maintenance; and upgrade to associated site works and engineering services.

This project is estimated to cost \$117.1 million excluding GST. This cost estimate includes the construction costs; management and design fees; furniture, fittings and equipment; and the necessary contingencies. Subject to parliamentary clearance, it is intended to commence construction works late in 2008, with the works being completed late in 2010. Members of Defence are ready to answer any questions that the committee may have.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Senator TROETH**—I would like to ask about the scope of the works that we saw this morning that obviously take place around the base. How do you plan to manage the impact of construction on existing operations?

**Brig. Grice**—I will pass to Mr Olesen to give you an answer.

**Mr Olesen**—The managing contractor form of delivery is quite fluid and flexible. We can tackle elements one at a time. We can change the sequence of the works and move around the operational requirements of the squadron as we go forward. Fundamentally, we set up a site compound in the vicinity of the works. It will be the same compound that we use for the MRTT facilities under stage 2. The contractor has spent almost the last 12 months with the project manager and with representatives of 82 Wing and the transition office, establishing transition arrangements. As the group captain said this morning, there is quite a complicated process to transition the workforce from one aircraft platform to the next. We are able to work with them to sequence the program and the construction activities. By virtue of the major components of the works being the new 1 Squadron facilities and the simulator—a new build a on discrete site—that helps us somewhat. By retaining the existing 1 Squadron building until the new one is complete, commissioned and occupied, we are also able to avoid temporary works and smooth that transition arrangement between the two areas. I think maybe it is worthwhile if the group captain speaks a little to the transitional arrangements and how the workforce is going flow.

**Senator TROETH**—That would be helpful; thank you.

**Brig. Grice**—Just before we go there, could you give some indications of access for construction traffic?

**Mr Olesen**—At the start of the stage 2 redevelopment, we set up a contractors' gate to segregate construction traffic away from the rest of the base traffic. They have different types of vehicles, and that just complicates things. Because of the medical centre expansion, we had to relocate that. At the start of the year, we opened up a new gate on the bottom of John Ward Way, which is a discrete contractors' gate. It allows construction traffic to move through an area of the base that is largely unoccupied and to transit to and from the construction site. It improves road safety around the base and it keeps those heavy vehicles away from the domestic traffic.

**Senator TROETH**—How many construction personnel will be involved in the base at any one time?

**Mr Olesen**—I will just check that answer while the group captain speaks a little more, if that is okay.

**Senator TROETH**—Thank you.

**Group Capt. Robertson**—As I mention this morning, the current proposal is that, in the last three weeks, 1 and 6 Squadrons—in fact, the maintenance workforce of those squadrons, which represents the entire F111 technical workforce, has amalgamated—will be working out of the existing 6 Squadron facilities. As you saw this morning, that building requires very little modification. At the end of this year, 1 Squadron will cease F111 operations entirely and, over the next two years, begin its transition to the Super Hornet. No. 6 Squadron will remain the sole operators of F111 through to the end of 2010, when the F111 will be withdrawn from service. That coincides with the declaration of an initial operational capability for the Super Hornet through 1 Squadron, and 6 Squadron then begins its training role for the Super Hornet.

I guess the easiest way to break down that amalgamation and those transitional arrangements is by the facilities themselves. Building No. 373, which you saw this morning—that is the current 6 Squadron headquarters and building—is being utilised from now right through until the end of F111 withdrawal. All 250 personnel on the maintenance side—the maintenance personnel—will be housed within that building as well as some of the outstation buildings on that existing No. 1 Squadron. So that is not scheduled for demolition until 2010. A lot of the roles and functions of maintenance coordination and armament and maintenance control sections are coordinated and funnelled through there for a super-sized squadron.

Building 363—that is the No. 1 Squadron hanger and building—needs to be available for 6 Squadron maintenance personnel from now right through until April 2010. Although they are all working through that amalgamated 6 Squadron—they are right next to each other, as you have seen—extra command and control arrangements have been put in place by the Air Force to make sure that the workforce is fairly cohesive and still efficient. But it is working through a single flight line and maintenance team and a single operational planning area.

There are several other outstations as well that are still required for F111 support. For instance, we saw this morning the operational maintenance store. That will still maintain F111 sparring requirements, as it slowly builds up Super Hornet requirements. That has been built into the plan and is going to be controlled by our RAAF personnel as those extensions are made.

Overall, it is a reasonably complex transition. The most important aspect for us is that the personnel that we have working are able to work in clean, compliant areas and they have clear lines. With the slow evolution over the next 12 months—it will be March-April 2010 before the first Super Hornet aircraft arrive—we believe that there is sufficient planning in place for the 100 personnel that will be out of that F111 force by that time to accommodate that transition arrangement.

**Mr SLIPPER**—If you have already given the committee the information I am about to ask for, let me apologise in advance. What will the alteration in staff numbers be to service the Super

Hornet at Amberley compared with the staff numbers you need to service the F111? Could you break those figures up into uniformed personnel and civilian support personnel?

**Group Capt. Robertson**—There is very little planned change for the overall uniform numbers at Amberley. The shape and nature of the work performed by RAAF personnel in uniform though is going to change slightly. The contracted support and the deeper maintenance support for the F111s is largely done by contractors at the moment and on base. The intermediate-level maintenance model currently in work for Super Hornet is the same—that will be contractor based. So there will be moving of personnel in and around different units. We mentioned extensively the changing nature of multi-role operations and higher security this morning, and that will drive a change in tasking for some of those uniform personnel but no great change in numbers. I am unable to give you an accurate breakdown at the moment, because, frankly, there are still being refined accurately.

**Mr SLIPPER**—I will ask a question that some may think is silly and it relates to what you are going to do with the soon to be retired F111s. It seems to me that this aircraft has served our country very well for a very long period of time and it would be a pity if they were to end up as scrap to be reused in other ways. I imagine that some of the air museums, like the Queensland Air Museum at Caloundra in my electorate could be a candidate for an F111. But the bigger issue is: has the Air Force looked at using them perhaps in museums, as dive wrecks or for some other purpose other than simply treating them with contempt and as though they are the bits of metal they originally were?

**Group Capt. Robertson**—The disposing of aircraft is actually a very complex task. At the moment, the planning for that has really only just begun. I understand that already some aircraft have been potentially identified for different museums or to be put on show or still held in inventory; however, most of that work has not yet been done. The Strike Reconnaissance Systems Program Office is responsible for the development of that plan. At our last manning check, in the order of 30 of our personnel were identified, for 2011 and 2012, for being solely attributed to accounting for all the F111 parts and for that disposal activity.

**Mr SLIPPER**—We only have about 24 of them left, having retired the other model we got from America. It seems to me that there would be a lot of RSLs out there who failed in their bids to get Leopard tanks. If they perhaps could have an F111 at a local museum in regional communities, that would be something that would be in the interests of the Air Force, the interests of the country and also in the interests of these local communities. I wonder whether you might take that on board and feed it up the system. If you were to ask RSLs to put their hands up for any surplus that you have not otherwise identified for productive use, I am sure that you would be able to place them without difficulty. In that way, they would not be required to be melted down.

**Group Capt. Robertson**—I will ensure that that word is passed up; yes, that is well noted.

**Mr Olesen**—We think, with this project, the construction personnel on site will peak in order of 200 persons per day. We expect that to occur in November next year.

**Senator TROETH**—Thank you. The Public Works Committee has already looked at Amberley redevelopment stage 2 in 2005 and Amberley redevelopment stage 3 in 2007. Does this proposal amend any of those works?

**Brig. Grice**—No. These works are unrelated to the works being undertaken under Amberley stage 2 and stage 3. However, the base infrastructure upgrade work, which was a portion of the Amberley stage 2 project, put in place the trunk engineering services which this project will hang off. But there has been no change.

**Senator TROETH**—I assume that the building construction works, the diagrams of which we looked at this morning, will be adaptable to further development, if and when that is needed?

**Brig. Grice**—That is correct. The design of the facilities has been done, taking into account that this may be an interim aircraft. They are sized and designed to cater for possible replacements which may come in at a later date. For example, the simulator building has been designed and sized so that the simulator suites from contenders to replace the Super Hornet would actually fit in there without having to modify doors, windows and that type of thing. To the full extent that we can, we have made them as flexible as possible to support a different airframe.

**CHAIR**—We have received a submission from the local council, which I think is called the Ipswich City Council. It is very supportive of the operational change at the base and the facilities that are proposed to be constructed to support that change. Obviously, there has been a level of discussion between the department and that council. Can you give us a brief snapshot of other consultations that the department has held in the lead-up to this project being proposed?

**Brig. Grice**—I will pass to Mr Caie in due course to give a summary of the ongoing consultations with local community groups that he is involved with in his position as the base services manager for Amberley. But I will pass to Mr Olesen, to start off with, to give an indication of the specific consultations that have been undertaken just for this project.

**Mr Olesen**—I think we should go around the table a bit. Starting with the statutory bodies, we had regular ongoing consultation with Energex, the Department of Main Roads and Ipswich Water, regarding the services and infrastructure for Amberley. You saw the new Energex substation there today. Recently we had \$1.7 million of additional road works approved—to deliver on behalf of the Department of Main Roads. Also, we work with Ipswich Water regularly for both water supply and the future sewerage connection. We had a trip with Group Captain Robertson and Wing Commander Braz to talk to some of the other local councils in the area, the state member and the federal member, in the lead-up to this. I also understand that the base support manager has an ongoing dialogue with the federal member. We have corresponded also with the Australian Koala Foundation, which we do for each of our jobs at Amberley. Amberley has a significant koala population and it has a koala management strategy in place which requires ongoing dialogue. I will pass to Group Captain Robertson to talk about some of the other members he briefed.

**Group Capt. Robertson**—As part of the initial consultation for this committee and the Super Hornet changes, we also met with the local federal member, the member for Blair, Shayne Neumann; the Ipswich City Council; and the Somerset Regional Council. A lot of the profiling

for the Somerset Regional Council, like for the Scenic Rim Regional Council—that is not adjacent to the base, but F111 operations are currently conducted over that land—will change, but we have consulted with those members also. We have also consulted with the member for West Ipswich, the honourable Wayne Wendt, the member for Lockyer and the member for Ryan, given that many of the members who serve on RAAF Base Amberley and who will continue to serve under our proposal for the Super Hornet are accommodated in their councils.

**Brig. Grice**—I will pass to Mr Caie to give you an indication of other ongoing interaction with the community.

**Mr Caie**—The consultation that we have on the base is not specific for this project; we have a history of ongoing consultation with the community—and I might say that we have a very good relationship with the community in the district. Some of that is driven through our relationship with the Ipswich City Council. We have meeting arrangements with them through a group that we call the Amberley strategic advisory group, which includes uniform members from the base, members of the council, professional members from the council staff and me. Those meetings usually occur about once every two months. They allow us to exchange what we are doing on the base and how that might affect the community and what the council is doing and how that might affect the base. So there is an exchange of information there that allows each of us to know what the other is doing.

From time to time, other groups come along to those meetings. For instance, on several occasions we have had members from state government attend those meetings to tell us what they are doing in particular with the planned aerospace park at Amberley and how that may fit in with what we are doing on the base. Because of some of the development of stage 3—we may put a fence around some of the community groups at Amberley—we have met more recently with those groups to explain to them why we have to do this. We are working with them now, particularly the Guides group that is on Defence property at Amberley, on how we may help them in the future. Each of those groups has a licence with Defence to be in the buildings that they occupy. From a legal point of view, all those licences are due to come to a close before those buildings will be required to be vacated. But, from a community spirited point of view, we are trying to work with those groups about what we may be able to do to help them after they have to move on. Those buildings are being used not only by Defence personnel but also by members of the local community and, once the fence goes around, members of the local community who do not have access to the base will no longer be able to use those facilities. So we are working with those groups now.

**CHAIR**—Group Captain—tell me if you are not able to tell us this—is the Super Hornet going to be a noisier or a quieter aircraft than the F111?

**Group Capt. Roberton**—As indicated earlier, the initial analysis for Super Hornet profiling is still in work and has been referred. The initial indications are that the Super Hornet engine compared to an F111 engine is at least as loud on take-off, but it is significantly quieter on landing. What is more, the operational profile of the aircraft—its proximity to the ground, how often it flies and how long it spends flying low to the ground—is significantly different from an F111; therefore, the overall study on that aircraft is still in its initial stages. Air Force is very confident that profiles of not just Super Hornet aircraft but all aircraft at RAAF Base Amberley

and so forth are able to be modified to make sure that we accommodate the needs of the local community.

**Brig. Grice**—I may pass to Mr Trinder to give perhaps an indication of the process that we will go through with the referral of the operational aspects of this aircraft under the EPBC Act.

**Mr Trinder**—The issue here is that we are replacing one aircraft type with another aircraft type. They operate differently. They have different sorts of engines that have different noise signatures; therefore, the community will perceive that the noise impacts that arise from the operation of the aircraft are going to be different. Therefore, we have concluded that it would be prudent to refer the noise impacts that are likely to arise from the operation of the aircraft to the Department of Environment and Heritage to consider those impacts through the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. That referral has been lodged in the last day or so, as I understand it, and a comprehensive environmental impact assessment process will look at that.

As the group captain has said, looking at the raw noise that comes out of the engine, they are very similar sorts of aircraft, as is the noise that they generate. But, because of the change in the way that the aircraft is operated, we think that it is reasonable that there be a comprehensive impact assessment undertaken. The end state that we want to get to is to ensure that we mitigate the noise impacts on the community that arise from all aircraft operating from Amberley as much as we possibly can, and that will inform base operations on other sorts of issues.

**CHAIR**—Is there anything else, Brigadier?

**Brig. Grice**—No.

[1.17 pm]

**SMAHA, Mr Stephen, Principal Advisor, Development Control, Queensland Department of Main Roads**

**CHAIR**—Welcome.

**Mr Smaha**—Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and to comment on this project.

**CHAIR**—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and, consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the parliament itself. I remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament.

Although, ordinarily, I would ask you to make some introductory remarks, given the correspondence that we have received from Mr Peters, I thought it would be useful for me to outline the scope of this inquiry. The scope of the inquiry that this committee is conducting at the moment relates only to the operational changeover at Amberley from the F111 aircraft to the FA18F Super Hornets and a number of facilities that need to be constructed to support that change. The evidence, which you may have heard—I think you were in the room—that we have elicited from the department, specifically from the group captain, is that no significant change in personnel numbers arises from this. There might be from other aspects of changes over the years at Amberley; there might not be. But, either way, that is not part of the scope of this inquiry.

I note that, in your department's correspondence, Mr Peters has said that any development which significantly increases traffic volumes on our roads network is of concern. We understand that concern—it arises from time to time in this committee's inquiries—but it does not appear to me to arise from the project we are currently inquiring into it. It may well be that your department has a significant issue to raise with another committee of this parliament or an arm of the executive government of the Commonwealth, but it seems to me that, unless I have missed something, you are going to need to satisfy us that there is some traffic issue that arises specifically from the changeover from F111s to the FA18F Super Hornets for us to have a discussion today.

**Mr Smaha**—I accept that. The issue that really I seek to bring forward before the committee is basically one of cumulative impact, in the sense that this project, along with several others, does add to that traffic component along the national land transport network.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Is that during construction?

**Mr Smaha**—The overall expansion of the air base.

**Mr SLIPPER**—When the same number of people and the same amount of activity will be there—even though that activity will be slightly different, given that it is a different plane—I do not know how that will increase stress on your road network.

**Mr Smaha**—Only in the sense that there will be construction activity. If I limit myself to the scope of this particular project itself, it is hard to see, on the evidence that has been given, there would be that impact. Generally the department is supportive of this project along with the expansion of the air base, but it really seeks to be kept in the loop and consulted with regard to projects like this and others that do put a stress or strain on a network that is constrained already.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Would you like to talk about the Ipswich motorway?

**Mr Smaha**—No. Actually, I was going to talk about the Warrego and the Cunningham. I simply draw to the attention of the committee that there is a bilateral agreement with the department that used to be DOTARS—and forgive me if I do not use its current acronym. Under that bilateral agreement, projects like this are to be referred to the department. We appreciate that that has happened in this case. All I would be submitting is that there is a cumulative impact. This project, along with many others, does put additional strain on a network. Although it is a small expansion, it is an expansion.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Perhaps I could just say how much I personally appreciate your appearing. Where were in the Northern Territory and I believe that significant public sector organisations just did not front up. The fact that you have fronted up when it is not necessary is appreciated. Thank you.

**Mr Smaha**—That is all right. Thank you.

**Senator TROETH**—In the event of feeling obliged to making any future representations, how would you separate the amount of traffic generated by the roads with their being in a growth corridor and the growth of the base? How would you calculate that? If you were going to put before the committee the fact that over time the base had generated a lot more traffic, how would you separate that from what is obviously going to be much more traffic anyway along that growth corridor?

**Mr Smaha**—The department, in its development assessment process, has traffic generation tables and manuals that you can assign to expansion of developments. In the case of office space, you can assign a particular growth rate—100 metres of office space might generate one trip a peak hour—in that way. That is based on empirical data that has been collected over time.

**Senator TROETH**—So you would be able to calculate that?

**Mr Smaha**—We believe that we could. If this were a normal private development, under the provisions that exist under the bilateral agreement and state legislation, we would normally do an assessment and seek a contribution or some form of mitigation.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Mr Smaha**—Thank you.

[1.24 pm]

**HATCHMAN, Mr George, President, Willowbank Area Group**

**CHAIR**—This public hearing has been advertised broadly in the local media. Members of the local community have been invited to attend the hearing to listen to the evidence provided by witnesses who had indicated beforehand that they would be attending. We are also able to take statements from any member of the community who wishes to place issues about this proposal on the record. I invite anyone in the room who would like to do that to come forward and to make a statement up to three minutes long about this proposal. In doing so, you do not need to identify yourself fully if you do not wish to. You can just identify yourself for the *Hansard* record by way of your first name. Mr Hatchman, I invite you to come forward. Have you been here throughout this public hearing?

**Mr Hatchman**—No. I have come here at short notice. I am the President of the Willowbank Area Group.

**CHAIR**—Before you proceed, Mr Hatchman, I take it you have been here long enough to hear the warnings I have given about the nature of the evidence given before these committees?

**Mr Hatchman**—Yes, I have.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. You may proceed.

**Mr Hatchman**—Regarding the public notification, information was hand-delivered to me earlier today by another member of the community and, with that, I have put together a draft statement for today's hearing. Before I commence reading—obviously there has been great difficulty with time—I want to say that, collectively, we give full support to the Defence developments at Amberley. I guess in ways I have some ownership of the term 'super base' at Amberley as a consequence of my correspondence with the Minister for Defence back in 1977. In a letter to that minister, I put forward a proposition that Amberley be a super base, incorporating both Army and Air Force elements and all the demographics that support that ideal. As history might relate, I was involved in a similar project back in 1968. As a matter of fact, it was 12 January 1968 when we passed from Canberras to F111s. I was part of that transition period, which is occurring again with the Super Hornets. I have been a uniformed member for 45 years, so I have a full appreciation of the ideals of service; but, in my current capacity, I act for the community where I reside.

I will read out the statement as quickly as I can and if time allows. It does not totally communicate the significant intent of the discussions of the community, but what it does relate has consequence to these discussions. It is titled 'The RAAF Base Amberley Community Partnerships Considerations'. The coming of the FA18 Super Hornet to RAAF Base Amberley will have an impact on local communities surrounding Amberley Defence land holdings. This letter is directed to explain the concerns of the Willowbank Amberley residents. Willowbank village exists as a closed residential community adjoining the south-west perimeter of RAAF Base Amberley. Indeed, we lie under the western approach from the cross-runway. This

community recognises the economic value of the activities of RAAF Amberley Air Base to our region. We reside in Willowbank with the knowledge and acceptance of aircraft flying operations, including further base developments and their concomitant effect on our residential amenity.

We in Willowbank enjoy regional community amenities, including local shops, the location of the Amberley State School, the Amberley community kindergarten, the Amberley child-care facilities, the Amberley toy hire assembly centre, the Amberley playgroup centre and the Amberley post office. We choose to live here knowing the nuisance aspect of aircraft and expanding base operations and realise that these are integral to the economics of our community.

However, the current expansion programs undertaken by the Department of Defence on the RAAF base are undermining the very heart of our community. By taking away the amenities we have or come to rely on they will have a significant impact on us—through placing economic hardship on our local shop traders and denying residents and parents convenient access to our local school, kindergarten and childcare facilities. Closure of the Amberley school and retaining other facilities within Defence boundaries and forcing a relocation of schoolchildren to other areas will directly affect our community as it will unfairly lock us out of these localised community facilities and utilise them for Defence personnel only.

The petrol-dollar impact forced on our families through further travel to relocate at other facilities would place hardships on those families. We at Willowbank would cease to be an integrated community and simply become fringe area dwellers and our property values could be impacted. Indeed, the Willowbank Area Group has inaugurated a community grants scheme over the past several years and has granted close to \$30,000 of community moneys to community organisations for social, environment and structural improvements. These substantial investments we have as a community will be lost to our residential use once Defence boundaries change. In this respect, Defence as a reasonable corporate citizen and community neighbour needs to accept that it has responsibility for ensuring that we maintain the current status quo of the community. We are going to be permanent neighbours, so Defence, with good will, should be actively consulting with this community through the Ipswich City Council and other government sectors to see what reasonable and practical measures can be implemented to ensure the viability of our community and to minimise further impacts, where possible and where that does not compromise essential aircraft operations and flight safety.

We, therefore, implore federal departments—Defence; Education, Science and Training; and Family Community Services and Indigenous Affairs—to ensure that all facilities currently under threat by the expansion of Amberley Air Force base are to be taken into consideration and are relocated at Commonwealth expense for common access convenient to Willowbank village residents for their entire community, both Defence and civilian.

There are also housekeeping issues. Currently, the RAAF base estate signage—there is a sign on the particular estate that I am talking about—aligns O’Neils Road Willowbank, on the opposite side of Willowbank residential housing. O’Neils Road is a principal entrance road for Willowbank residents and, with its presentation on both sides, defines a statement about the quality of our community. While it is envisaged that this RAAF property will remain in a natural bushland state to maintain a safety buffer for overflying aircraft on the south-west departure from the RAAF Amberley cross-runway, it has in recent years been poorly maintained

considering its proximity to residential housing, with vegetation overgrowth et cetera, and there has been a deterioration in the rural barbwire boundary fence and adjacent broken and unfinished road surface and kerbing. This community requests that Defence maintain a clean-up of this Commonwealth of Australia land by establishing and maintaining a mown firebreak along the boundary fence and refurbishment of the fence to a presentable residential standard.

This community additionally seeks a Commonwealth government contribution to the funding of the asphalt sealing of the RAAF side of the road, inclusive of appropriate kerbing and channelling, and the establishment of an open landscaped area on the corner of O'Neils Road and Ipswich Road opposite the Willowbank shops, for Willowbank's entrance presentation and also to allow for passing traffic visibility. While I do not doubt that there are budgetary considerations to funding such a request, I believe that the amount needed to be appropriated for the continuation of the Commonwealth of Australia's property maintenance and contribution to road works along O'Neils Road, Willowbank, would be extremely minimal in relation to the overall spending allocated to the proposed base infrastructure developments and construction. I also believe that RAAF Amberley air base expansion planning should have included consideration of associated impacts on adjoining civil communities and some funding targeted to the Ipswich City Council to maintain the quality of our residential amenity, as local governments do not receive GST contributions and the Commonwealth does not pay rates on land assets.

We as a community share a joint concern for the adequate capability and safety of the highway and road systems that support egress to our area—especially since the Army have moved in with the 9 Battalion. They need immediate upgrading with an injection of Commonwealth funds to ensure the duplication of the Cunningham Highway to Amberley air base, better traffic management at this turn off and improvement to local road infrastructure—that is, Rosewood, Amberley and Walloon roads—or, in lieu, acceleration of the planned Western Ipswich Bypass highway. Acceptance and incorporation of the above request would provide immense value in consolidating recognition of the Australian Defence Force as a responsible neighbour within our community.

While this relates to community issues, I have to look at the overall situation. This is just an inquiry on the FA18 maintenance issues but I see that these maintenance facilities are being improved to accept the FA18 Hornet. As I said, we as a community accept that. We are part of the scheme and we do not want to detract from that movement forward in the defence of our nation. But, as part of that over all, we expect consideration—because these things do add to and complement the base developments—through Defence looking past the boundary.

I know that integration of the local council and communities has been spoken of here, but there does not seem to be a direct relationship. In other words, we need to have some bonding. We do not want to have an insulated Defence community and an insulated residential community. We want a homogenised community where we all work together for the same cause but we have respect for each other—each other's needs are respected and conveyed.

I do see issues with the road, even though this is just a transition for the maintenance issue of the F18s. To back up the main roads issues, any activity there does increase the pressure on that corner. My wife was almost killed there many years ago in a traffic accident at the turn-off to Amberley—especially entry into the southern Amberley road. It needs a wider apron because there are a lot of car movements there. A lot of us duck in there quickly to beat oncoming traffic

from Rosewood. The actual heavy truck movement that passes down the Cunningham Highway, especially to the south, coming behind RAAF members that are parked there, is almost like that of Ipswich Road. It is like peak hour in the morning, coming into Amberley. There is a lot of danger of being impacted in the rear. I think there is even the possibility that an accident has happened there in the last couple of days. It is serious stuff at that corner. And this is a matter of national pride—Amberley. We need to have that respected and the moneys spent to give us that egress.

**Mr SLIPPER**—It does seem to me that one could almost feel sorry for the RAAF because they came out here 60 years ago, when there was no-one here, with a view to removing themselves from residential areas. Then, of course, there is residential encroachment around the perimeter of the base and thus we have the sorts of problems that you quite reasonably have outlined for us. How many people are there at Willowbank? Willowbank Village is a mobile-home park, isn't it?

**Mr Hatchman**—No. That is only a private entity to the west. I might take you back. Many years ago, we had a residential estate at Amberley supporting the Defence—and it was the Amberley married quarters. It consisted of about 300 homes. Through Defence's need to upgrade housing for Defence members—and that housing could not be upgraded as standard, plus there was an appreciation that they would need that land for other Defence issues later—the Defence community were dispersed out through housing provided through DHA in the greater Ipswich region. But that denied members of Defence and us some closeness to the base—because the petrodollar is a real thing. People have to pay to go to and from work. While Defence provides housing, there are Defence people who like to buy their own properties. Willowbank is only two kilometres from the very corner that we have our signpost from the entrance to Amberley Air Force Base. So it makes it a convenient location for people at Willowbank to access the base—even by walking, by cycle or whatever. So it increasingly becomes popular with Defence members to settle there.

**Mr SLIPPER**—Maybe you could drop the committee a line setting out in detail the concerns that you have. I am sure that, as a committee, once we have received that, we would be happy to look at it so that we can properly record what the community is saying.

**Mr Hatchman**—I have a tabled a copy of this letter with the committee secretary. Most of those elements will be covered there.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much, Mr Hatchman.

**Mr Hatchman**—Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Do any other members of the public wish to make a statement? It is usual in these hearings that, where a statement like this has been made, the proponent agency, which in this case is the Department of Defence, is given the opportunity to place any response on the record. Brigadier? Nothing. Thank you very much.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Slipper**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**CHAIR**—I thank everyone for their attendance today, particularly members of the public who have taken the time to come and hear the proceedings of this inquiry.

**Committee adjourned at 1.39 pm**