



Australian Government

Defence

ARMY AVIATION OMNIBUS PROGRAM OF WORKS

RAAF Base Townsville, Queensland

Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE TO THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

August 2024

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Army Aviation Omnibus Program of Works

1. The purpose of this Statement of Evidence is to provide information to the Australian public to comment on, and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works to enquire into, proposed works under the Army Aviation Omnibus Program of Works (the Project).

Executive Summary

2. The aim of the Project is to provide new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure at RAAF Base Townsville and the Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland, to support the introduction into service of the Apache helicopter capability.

3. The Project will deliver new and upgraded facilities and infrastructure for working accommodation, training, logistics, maintenance, car parking, and engineering services.

4. The estimated total capital out-turned cost of the Project is \$518.3 million (excluding Goods and Services Tax). The cost estimate includes management and design fees, construction, information and communications technology, furniture, fittings, equipment, contingencies and a provision for escalation. There will be ongoing operating costs as a result of the Project. No revenue is expected to be generated by the works.

5. Defence, together with the Managing Contractor, will promote opportunities for small and medium local enterprises through construction trade packages, providing employment opportunities in the North Queensland region. There will also be opportunities for Indigenous business involvement in accordance with the Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy.

6. All works will be designed and constructed in accordance with relevant legislation, standards, codes, guidelines and Defence policy. Accredited building certifiers will certify the compliance of the design and completed works.

7. Environmental and heritage investigations have been completed and the Project will not have a significant impact on existing environmental and heritage values.

Purpose of the Works

Aim of the Project

8. The aim of the Project is to provide critical facilities and infrastructure required to support the introduction into service of the Apache helicopter capability.

Location of the Project

9. The Project will be delivered in two locations:
 - a. RAAF Base Townsville, located in Garbutt, Queensland, approximately six kilometres west of the Townsville Central Business District; and
 - b. Townsville Field Training Area, located approximately 60 kilometres south-west of Townsville.

Need for the Project

10. In March 2022, Government approved the acquisition of 29 Boeing AH-64E Apache attack helicopters as a replacement for the Tiger fleet operated by the 1st Aviation Regiment. The 1st Aviation Regiment will operate the new capability from RAAF Base Townsville. Government also approved the relocation of the Headquarters 16th Aviation Brigade from Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera in Brisbane to RAAF Base Townsville. This approval sought to further support the broader Army Aviation Command strategy of establishing a centre of excellence. The centre of excellence model will co-locate Army Aviation's operational, training, maintenance and sustainment elements with key elements of industry that directly support the capability. The relocation of Headquarters 16th Aviation Brigade to RAAF Base Townsville was completed in January 2024. The Headquarters is currently accommodated in temporary facilities until permanent facilities can be constructed.

11. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review set the agenda for force posture and structural reform to meet Defence's strategic objectives. It endorsed the priority acquisition of the UH-60M Black Hawk and AH-64E Apache helicopters to enhance Army Aviation's helicopter capability. Further, the acquisition and basing of AH-64E in the North provides *'the opportunity to posture the majority of Defence's battlefield aviation in Townsville to enable a robust air-mobile capability. This includes basing the AH-64E Apache capability in Townsville'*¹.

12. The 2024 National Defence Strategy reaffirmed the priority for acquisition of the Apache helicopter capability as part of the continued investment in the combined-arms land system. Additionally, the companion 2024 Integrated Investment Program included an *'investment of \$9 to 10 billion to recapitalise Army's battlefield aviation capabilities'*². This investment included the acquisition of 29 AH-64E Apache attack helicopters.

¹ 2023 Defence Strategic Review, para 8.38

² 2024 Integrated Investment Program, para 7.12.

13. This Project will provide the facilities required to support the introduction into service of the Apache helicopter capability, and is consistent with the 2024 National Defence Strategy's priority for infrastructure investment for '*northern bases to ensure the ADF can project deployed forces and continue to operate through disruption*'³.

Proposed Facilities Solution

14. The Department of Defence undertook comprehensive master planning, site investigations, stakeholder consultation, whole-of-life cost analysis and design development, to establish the facilities and infrastructure requirements to address the Project need.

15. The essential requirements of the Project include:

- a. command and management facilities;
- b. training facilities;
- c. logistics facilities;
- d. maintenance facilities;
- e. airfield infrastructure; and
- f. engineering services infrastructure.

Options Considered

16. Defence has developed the following three options:

- a. **Option 1 – Do nothing.** This option will not provide any investment in facilities or infrastructure to support the introduction into service of the Apache helicopter capability.
- b. **Option 2 – Minimum Viable Capability.** This option includes the delivery of the highest priority functional requirements within the Government approved budget. The proposed scope includes a combination of new construction and adaptive reuse of existing facilities and infrastructure to meet command, management, training, logistics and maintenance requirements.
- c. **Option 3 – Full Capability.** This option includes all the scope in Option 2, with some elements enhanced to achieve workforce efficiencies and to meet all the functional requirements identified by Army Aviation.

³ 2024 National Defence Strategy, para 6.7

17. **Preferred option.** Option 2 is the preferred option as it meets Defence's minimum viable capability requirements and represents the best value for money for the Commonwealth, as it addresses Project requirements from a whole of life perspective.

Scope of Project Works for the Preferred Option

18. The recommended Option 2 includes the following two Project elements:

a. **Project Element 1 – RAAF Base Townsville**

- i. **Project Element 1.1: Command and Management Facilities.** This element includes:
 - (a) construction of a new facility for Headquarters 1st Aviation Regiment, two Apache flying squadrons and Headquarters 16th Aviation Brigade;
 - (b) refurbishment of Building 802 to provide working accommodation for Headquarters 5th Aviation Regiment and one flying squadron; and
 - (c) refurbishment of Building 280 to provide working accommodation for 16th Aviation Support Battalion.
- ii. **Project Element 1.2: Training Facilities.** This element includes refurbishment of Building 808 to accommodate Apache Pilot Simulation Training and the Army Aviation Training Centre Attack Helicopter Wing.
- iii. **Project Element 1.3: Logistics Facilities.** This element includes:
 - (a) construction of a new multi-purpose facility to provide working accommodation, training and maintenance facilities for the Operational Support Squadron;
 - (b) construction of a new facility for parking bulk fuel vehicles and fuel equipment maintenance; and
 - (c) refurbishment of Building 273 to provide a workshop for general support equipment.
- iv. **Project Element 1.4: Maintenance Facilities.** This element includes:
 - (a) construction of a new multi-purpose facility to provide a two bay deep maintenance hangar, special repair activity workshop and repair parts store (warehouse);
 - (b) refurbishment of four hangar bays in Building 295 for deep maintenance;

- (c) construction of a two bay hangar extension to Building 274 for line maintenance;
 - (d) refurbishment of all 19 hangar bays in Buildings 273, 274 and 275 by upgrading the building services and providing a de-humification system to the aircraft in each bay;
 - (e) extension of Buildings 272 and 273 to provide an aircraft wash bay suitable for both Apache and Chinook helicopters; and
 - (f) refurbishment of mechanical services in Buildings 287 and 238 to provide working accommodation for the Systems Program Office.
- v. **Project Element 1.5: Airfield Infrastructure.** This element includes construction of new traverses at Ordnance Loading Aprons 12, 13 and 14.
- vi. **Project Element 1.6: Engineering Services Infrastructure and Contamination Remediation.** This element includes:
 - (a) upgrade of electrical, potable water, firefighting water, wastewater and communications infrastructure;
 - (b) construction of a multi-storey carpark and a new on-grade carpark; and
 - (c) remediation of contamination.
- b. **Project Element 2 –Townsville Field Training Area**
 - i. **Project Element 2.1: Airfield Infrastructure.** This element includes construction of a new landing lane and three new Ordnance Loading Aprons at Townsville Field Training Area.

Planning and Design Concepts

- 19. The general philosophy for the design of the proposed works is based on:
 - a. providing cost-effective, functional, low maintenance, energy efficient design options compatible with proposed functions and existing aesthetics;
 - b. adopting where possible, conventional construction techniques and materials commonly used by the construction industry and consistent with those already used;
 - c. applying appropriate durability measures to reduce ongoing maintenance and achieve the proposed design life; and
 - d. providing flexible services and infrastructure to accommodate an appropriate level of growth.

Relevant Legislation, Codes and Standards

20. The following legislation, standards, codes and guidelines are applicable:
- a. *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*;
 - b. *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*;
 - c. *Fair Work (Building Industry) Act 2012 (Cth)*;
 - d. *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)*;
 - e. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*;
 - f. Australian Skills Guarantee Procurement Connected Policy;
 - g. Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy;
 - h. Indigenous Procurement Policy;
 - i. Commonwealth Supplier Code of Conduct;
 - j. National Construction Code;
 - k. Manual for Infrastructure Engineering Electrical;
 - l. Smart Infrastructure Manual;
 - m. Defence Manual of Fire Protection Engineering;
 - n. Defence Security Principals Framework;
 - o. Defence Pollution Prevention Management Manual;
 - p. Defence PFAS Construction and Maintenance Manual;
 - q. Defence Contamination Management Manual; and
 - r. Defence Environment and Heritage Manual.
21. An accredited building certifier will certify the compliance of the design and the compliance of the completed works. Construction compliance with the design will be assured by using approved quality management systems that will implement processes, including independent inspections, audits and testing.

Land and Zoning

22. The proposed works are consistent with uses prescribed in relevant Defence zoning instruments. These instruments include:
- a. North Queensland Training Areas Training Area Capability Board;
 - b. Townsville Area Zone Plan;
 - c. RAAF Base Townsville Estate Base Plan, including the accompanying Zone Master Plan and Flight line Master Plan;, and
 - d. the Defence Estate Principles of Development.

Structure

23. The structures have been designed according to their functional requirements and the local geotechnical and climatic profile:
- a. The proposed command and management facilities will be reinforced concrete framed structures with post-tensioned upper-level floor slabs and a post-tensioned concrete roof. Internal walls will be non-load bearing frames, lined with plasterboard to provide maximum flexibility in accommodating changes in functional needs.
 - b. The proposed maintenance facilities will be a combination of reinforced concrete framed structures, constructed to provide individual fire compartments for each shelter, blockwork walls and portal frame structures. Roofing will be structural steel portal frames, stepped to facilitate natural ventilation.
 - c. The proposed logistics facilities will be reinforced concrete framed structures with post-tensioned upper-level floor slabs and a post-tensioned concrete waterproofed roof appropriate to the environment. Internal walls are non-load bearing frames, lined with plasterboard to provide maximum flexibility in accommodating changes in functional needs.
 - d. The proposed bulk fuel tanker parking area will be an open, framed structural steel design to maximise the clear space for the parking and movement of the vehicles.

Mechanical Services

24. The mechanical services have been designed according to the function and needs of each building. The proposed mechanical services will meet specific user needs, relevant ventilation, thermal comfort, air quality requirements and the mandatory requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

Hydraulic Services

25. Existing sewerage and storm water services are proposed to be extended to each facility to suit design requirements. Potable water will be connected to the existing supply via sub-metering to each new building.

Electrical Services

26. Lighting, power and lightning protection will be provided in accordance with Australian Standards and Defence engineering requirements. Electrical infrastructure, including new substations, and switchboards will have spare capacity to allow for future growth. Sub-metering will be included to each re-used and new building. The meters will

be monitored through a new Building Management System, which will support an active energy management program on the site.

Fire Protection

27. Fire Protection has been addressed through compliance with the Manual of Fire Protection Engineering. The Project has assessed the asset classification and criticality in order to determine the fire protection systems to be implemented in all facilities. Minor upgrades to the fire systems within existing facilities have been included.

Security Measures

28. The security arrangements are a suite of measures based on the Defence-in-Depth principles. Security measures are compliant with statutory requirements and address all requirements identified by the Protective Security Working Group. The security design of the site will ensure that any new facilities conform to the existing security system employed by the base and the field training area.

Acoustics

29. The new facilities will comply with the National Construction Code and Australian Standards for noise and acoustics. Aircraft noise impacts have been considered in the design of working accommodation. Acoustic separation has been considered in construction elements, while surface finishes are being designed to meet user requirements.

Work Health and Safety

30. The Project will comply with the *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011 (Cth)*, Work Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment – National Standards) Regulations, and relevant Defence policies. In accordance with Section 35 (4) of the *Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Act 2016 (Cth)*, contractors will also be required to hold full work health and safety accreditation from the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner under the Australian Government Building and Construction Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme.

31. Safety aspects of the Project have been addressed during the design development process and have been documented in a safety in design report. A work health safety plan will be developed for the construction phase prior to the commencement of any construction activities.

Materials and Furnishings

32. External walls for new buildings will be a mixture of concrete panels and metal cladding with curtain wall glazing. A metal louvre sun screening system will be installed to improve environmental performance of the buildings. Where required, pre-finished steel roofing and rainwater fittings have also been selected for their resilience to a marine environment.

Landscaping

33. The proposed landscape works will complement and enhance the character of each site. The landscape design will focus on a functional, low maintenance, water sensitive approach with the use of Indigenous plants. Precautions will be taken to adhere to environmental requirements by adopting landscaping practices in accordance with local environmental conditions and the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Childcare Provisions

34. There is no requirement for childcare facilities under the Project.

Provisions for People with Disabilities

35. Access for people with disabilities will be provided in accordance with the National Construction Code, Australian Standard 1428 and the *Disability and Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.

Environmental Sustainability

36. Defence is committed to ecologically sustainable development and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Project has adopted cost effective measures as a key objective in the design and development of the proposed works. These include:

- a. **Energy targets.** The Project will meet the requirements of the Defence Smart Infrastructure Manual where applicable.
- b. **Measures to reduce energy and water use.** Measures proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use include adopting passive building design principles for new facilities; using energy efficient heating ventilation and air conditioning systems, maximising natural ventilation and installing energy management systems; installing energy efficient lighting and intelligent control systems; and selecting sustainable materials. Measures proposed to reduce water use include specifying water efficient fixtures and fittings, adopting water

sensitive urban design principles and selecting native, low-water usage plant species in the proposed landscaping works.

- c. **Re-use of existing structures.** Several buildings will be retained, adapted and refurbished to meet Project requirements.
- d. **Demolition and disposal of existing structures.** Material from demolished buildings and construction waste will be diverted to established recycling industries in the region.

Potential Impacts

37. Defence has conducted rigorous assessments to identify potential environmental and local community impacts, and propose suitable mitigation measures. These include:

- a. **Visual Impacts.** There will be no material visual impact to the local communities as the proposed facilities at both establishments are a significant distance from the closest residential and commercial developments.
- b. **Noise Impacts.** There will be no material noise impacts to the local communities or existing nearby Defence facilities from the operation of the proposed facilities at both establishments.
- c. **Heritage Impacts.** The proposed development is not anticipated to have any material impacts on any known area of Indigenous cultural significance at RAAF Base Townsville or the Townsville Field Training Area. Local Indigenous groups will continue to be consulted throughout the development of the Project.
- d. **Traffic, Transportation and Road Impacts.** The proposed developments at both establishments are not expected to have any long-term material impacts on local traffic from construction or operation of the proposed facilities. During construction there will be an increase in the number of large vehicles entering RAAF Base Townsville. Management controls will be implemented to mitigate the effects of this increased traffic on local road networks.
- e. **Relevant Local Facilities.** No material impacts on the demand for, or use of local facilities.

38. Based on the findings of the assessments undertaken by the Project, Defence has determined that existing environmental and heritage values will not be significantly impacted by the Project. Therefore, the Project is not required to be referred to the Minister for the Environment and Water under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*.

Contamination

39. Appropriate measures to manage contamination or hazardous materials will be addressed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan. This plan will be implemented during construction phase of the Project to ensure compliance with the Defence Pollution Prevention Management Manual and Defence Contamination Management Manual and applicable State Legislation.

40. **Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination.** A preliminary desktop review identified the potential presence of PFAS impacted soil and groundwater in the proposed development area at RAAF Base Townsville. Subsequent site investigations have been completed and identified that concrete and soil material tested was generally suitable for beneficial re-use on site. A re-use strategy has been recommended as part of the environmental assessment and the contractor will be required to test excavated materials to ensure these materials are managed in accordance with the Defence PFAS Construction and Maintenance Framework. Where off-site disposal is required for PFAS impacted soils, this must be undertaken in accordance with Queensland waste disposal guidelines (2018) and test results will be provided to Townsville City Council Waste Services to confirm their acceptance prior to transport for off-site disposal to Stuart Landfill.

Consultation with Key Stakeholders

41. Defence has developed a community consultation and communications strategy that recognises the importance of providing local residents and other interested stakeholders an opportunity to provide input into, or raise concerns relating to, the proposed works.

42. Defence has, and continues to, engage with a variety of internal and external stakeholders during Project development to date. These include:

- a. RAAF Base Townsville:
 - i. Federal Member for Herbert, Mr Phillip Thompson, OAM, MP;
 - ii. State Member for Townsville, Mr Scott Stewart, MP;
 - iii. City of Townsville, Mayor Troy Thompson;
 - iv. Airservices Australia;
 - v. Civil Aviation Safety Authority;
 - vi. Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development;
 - vii. Department of Transport and Main Roads;

- viii. Queensland Airports Limited;
 - ix. Townsville Airport Pty Limited;
 - x. Townsville Chamber of Commerce;
 - xi. Townsville Community Aviation Consultation Group;
 - xii. Townsville Enterprise;
 - xiii. North Queensland Conservation Council;
 - xiv. Local Indigenous Groups, including Elders of the Bindal, Gudjala and Wilgurukaba peoples;
 - xv. Utility service providers of electricity, gas, sewer and stormwater; and
 - xvi. Local community, business groups and businesses including the Master Builders Queensland.
- b. Townsville Field Training Area:
- i. Federal Member for Kennedy, Hon Bob Katter MP;
 - ii. State Member for Traeger, Mr Robert Katter; and
 - iii. Charters Towers Regional Council, Councillor Liz Schmidt.

Related Projects

43. The following projects relate to the Project:
- a. **North Queensland Mid-Term Refresh Program.** This project is delivering vital estate maintenance and upgrades to support Defence capability in the North Queensland Region, including RAAF Base Townsville. Coordination with this project has ensured that lessons learnt and key infrastructure upgrades have been captured during the design development process to avoid duplication of effort.
 - b. **Facilities to Support Land 4507 UH-60M Black Hawk Utility Helicopter.** This project will deliver fit-for-purpose infrastructure and facilities at Holsworthy, NSW, to support introduction and long-term sustainment of the UH-60M Black Hawk capability. Coordination with this project provides ongoing lessons learnt during the design development process.
 - c. **Land 4502 Phase 1 Additional CH-47F Chinook Facilities Project.** This project has delivered fit-for-purpose infrastructure and facilities at RAAF Base Townsville to support the long-term sustainment of the Chinook helicopter capability. Coordination with this project captured lessons learnt and infrastructure upgrades have been captured throughout design development to avoid duplication of effort.

- d. **P0012 National Airfields Works – RAAF Base Townsville.** This project will deliver aircraft pavement, airfield lighting and associated drainage works at RAAF Base Townsville. Coordination with this project has commenced to ensure that the scopes of both projects are deconflicted to avoid any abortive works.
- e. **AIR555 Phase 1 Airborne Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Electronic Warfare Capability Facilities Works.** This project is delivering a facility at RAAF Base Townsville as a forward operating base for the Peregrine capability. Coordination with this project has commenced to ensure both project teams are fully aware of intended scopes for delivery, with deconfliction activities conducted to avoid any abortive or duplicative works.

Cost Effectiveness and Public Value

Project Costs

44. The estimated total capital out-turned cost of the Project is \$518.3 million (excluding Goods and Services Tax). This includes management and design fees, construction, information and communications technology, furniture, fittings, equipment, contingencies and a provision for escalation.

45. There will be ongoing operating and sustainment costs resulting from the proposed works at both RAAF Base Townsville and the Townsville Field Training Area. This is due to the additional maintenance, cleaning and utilities costs associated with operating the new facilities.

Project Delivery System

46. A Project Manager / Contract Administrator will be appointed to manage the delivery phase of the works.

47. A Managing Contractor Contract is planned to deliver the work, and will be appointed to procure trade sub-contractors and manage the construction works. The Managing Contractor form of delivery provides the Commonwealth with buildability input into the design while promoting opportunities for small to medium enterprises by sub-contracting construction trade packages. This form of contract is the most suitable for large, complex projects with multiple stakeholders and inter-dependencies.

Construction Program

48. Subject to Parliamentary approval, design activities are scheduled to be completed by mid-2025. Construction is scheduled to commence in early 2025 and completion by late 2028.

Public Value

49. Defence has comprehensively assessed public value, opportunities and benefit to the community as a result of the proposed works:

- a. **Economic impacts.** The Project expenditure will support the Australian economy, in particular in the construction and professional services sectors in Townsville and surrounding regions.
- b. **Employment opportunities.** The Project will employ a diverse range of consultants, contractors and construction workers, and is expected to generate opportunities for up-skilling and job training to improve individual skills and employability on future projects. Defence anticipates approximately 275 full-time equivalent jobs will be filled during the peak construction period of the Project.
- c. **Local industry and Indigenous business involvement opportunities.** Defence and the Managing Contractor anticipates providing local businesses with opportunities, including Indigenous businesses, to supply construction materials and labour. This is expected to boost local economies. Defence and the Managing Contractor will actively promote opportunities for small to medium local enterprises through construction trade packages, and there may be opportunities for Indigenous business involvements in accordance with the Government's Indigenous Procurement Policy. Works to be undertaken must comply with the Government's Policy for Local Industry Participation, which requires successful tenderers to provide detailed commitments on how they will utilise and develop Australian industry. These commitments will become contract deliverables and successful tenderers will be required to report on their performance against them. While the policy does not mandate or preference local suppliers, it is expected there will be opportunities to engage local suppliers on the Project.
- d. **Meeting capability needs.** The 2024 National Defence Strategy reaffirmed the high priority for acquisition of the Apache helicopter capability as part of the continued investment in Defence capability. The Project will provide facilities and infrastructure to support the introduction into service of the Apache helicopter capability.

Below the Line Items

50. The Project has identified and prioritised below-the-line scope items that are currently unable to be funded within the Project's approved budget. In the event the Project experiences trade savings through tendering or retirement of risk provision during delivery, the following additional scope items may be delivered:

- a. demolish Building 280 and construct a new facility for 16th Aviation Support Battalion;
- b. extend Building 808 to provide a second simulator hall for pilot simulation training;
- c. construct a second landing lane and a crew rest facility at Townsville Field Training Area; and
- d. install a system capable of de-humidifying all 19 bays in the line maintenance hangars.

Revenue

51. No revenue is expected to be derived from the Project.

Attachments

1. Locality Plan
2. Scope Overview

Attachment 1

Location of the Project



Figure 1 – Map of Queensland

Attachment 1



Figure 2 – Project Locations within Townsville Region

Attachment 2

Scope Overview



Figure 1 – Project Scope Overview



Figure 2 – Combined Headquarters

Attachment 2



Figure 3 – Deep Maintenance Hangars, Warehouse and Special Repair Activity Workshop



Figure 4 – Hangars and Washbay

Attachment 2



Figure 5 – Multistorey Carpark