



Community and Public Sector Union

Rebecca Fawcett – A/g Deputy Secretary

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

5 July 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to the inquiry into the proposed Base Infrastructure Works Project under the Base Security Improvement Program

The PSU Group of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is an active and progressive union with approximately 60,000 members. The CPSU represents Commonwealth employees, including civilian defence employees and Protective Services Officers (PSOs) in the Australian Federal Police.

The CPSU would like to make a short submission to the inquiry. This submission is not intended to be comprehensive, but is limited to making a suggestion about the use of Protective Services Officers (PSOs) on Defence bases.

The CPSU is concerned about the identification of Defence bases as potential targets by politically motivated groups and various activists and is pleased to see that the Base Security Improvement Program is working to manage such risks.

As the principal union covering Commonwealth employees, the CPSU has a strong interest in the provision of security at Defence bases. It is our strong view that this work is best done by direct employees of the Commonwealth. Where employees of the Commonwealth are used, there is greater accountability and greater control. Both of these factors are critical to security at Defence bases.

For a number of reasons, Australian Federal Police PSOs have a valuable role to place in Defence security upgrades. PSOs currently provide the Counter Terrorism – First Response role at Defence bases in the following locations:

- Joint Defence Facility, Pine Gap NT;
- Russell Defence Offices, Australian Capital Territory;
- Joint Operations Centre Headquarters, Bungendore;
- Harold E. Holt Satellite Naval Communications Facility, Exmouth WA;
- Australian Defence Satellite Communications Station, Geraldton WA;
- Woomera Prohibited Area; and
- Holsworthy Barracks, NSW
- Garden Island Naval Base, Sydney NSW
- Victoria Barracks, Sydney NSW
- Victoria Barracks, Melbourne VIC

PSOs bring a level of expertise that would assist in the upgrade of security arrangements at Defence Force bases. PSOs are able to bring a specialist skill set to Defence in that PSOs train as Bomb Appraisal Officers and Firearm Explosive Detection Dog Handlers. In addition, PSOs are able to perform foot patrols, mobile vehicle patrols and hi-visibility bike patrols. This enables a rapid response to any threat or breach to security. PSOs are also able to perform Alarm Monitoring and a Static Guarding function.

PSOs are subject to a high level of security vetting prior to employment with regular checks and updates on their status undertaken during their employment.

Due to the implementation of the Beale Audit within the AFP, the nature of work undertaken by PSOs at the 11 major airports is changing dramatically. At the end of the period of transition to one sworn federal policing command at airports, none of the 430 PSOs who were formerly working at airports will still have jobs there. Those PSOs who do not wish to transition to become sworn police at airports under this process have expressed concern about their job security as the Beale Audit is implemented.

Many PSOs in New South Wales and Victoria have already been transitioned to Defence bases. The CPSU supports this transition and would like to see it continue as part of security upgrades at Defence Force establishments as it may provide alternate avenues of employment for this cohort of PSOs.

These current circumstances provide an opportunity for the Commonwealth to continue and expand the redeployment PSOs to secure Defence premises. This is a cost effective way for the Government to improve Defence Security.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Fawcett
CPSU A/g Deputy Secretary