

Issues and Conclusions

Planning and Design Concepts

- 3.1 The Public Works Committee *Manual of Procedures for Departments and Agencies* specifies that submissions should include planning and design concepts. However, ANSTO's main submission to the Committee did not include any plans for the design and/or construction of the new main entrance facility.
- 3.2 The Sutherland Shire Council, speaking to the submission made by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), commented on this lack of detail in their evidence to the Committee and suggested that this indicated a lack of accountability on ANSTO's part.¹
- 3.3 The Committee questioned ANSTO as to why members were not provided with drawings. ANSTO's response was, that while a detailed design process with an architect had been completed, some information relating to layout was yet to be confirmed. ANSTO added that any information pertaining to security matters would not be made generally known.² ANSTO subsequently provided the Committee with an outline of the structure envisaged for the new gatehouse complex.³

1 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, pp. 11- 12

2 ib id, page 4

3 ib id

Commissioning of the New Main Entrance Facility

- 3.4 With a view to minimising disruption at the site, the Committee enquired about the coordination process for the commissioning of the new main entrance facility. ANSTO assured members that coordination will be managed appropriately throughout construction and that there will be no changeover to the new entrance until it is ready to accommodate traffic and security operations.⁴

Consultation

- 3.5 In its main submission, ANSTO stated that a security review of the LHSTC was undertaken by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in November 2002, and that ANSTO continued to consult with ASIO on security matters in relation to the proposed works.⁵
- 3.6 ANSTO explained that, together with ASIO, it had worked closely with the engineering company hired to develop plans for a high-security facility design.⁶
- 3.7 In addition, ANSTO signalled its intention to consult with the Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office (ASNO) and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) with regard to safety matters.⁷
- 3.8 The Committee was interested to know what, if any, other organisations ANSTO had consulted in relation to the proposed works. The Committee asked if contact had been made with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure that international standards were being met, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) regarding the intended works to the New Illawarra Road, the Sutherland Shire Council, and ANSTO employees.⁸
- 3.9 ANSTO explained that whilst the IAEA was not consulted directly, Australia had certain agreements with the IAEA which are overseen by ASNO. ANSTO emphasised that:

4 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 4

5 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 15

6 *ib id*

7 *ib id*, paragraph 16

8 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 5

“ASNO’s role will be to ensure that anything we do in terms of construction does not affect those agreements that we have in place.”⁹

- 3.10 ANSTO informed the Committee that proposed works to the access road joining New Illawarra Road involved only an internal road. ANSTO added that it had, over the years, consulted with the RTA in general terms regarding traffic arrangements on the main highway, and that the suggestions of an ANSTO working group to reduce speed limits on the approaches to ANSTO’s existing main entrance had previously been accepted by the RTA.¹⁰
- 3.11 Furthermore, ANSTO assured the Committee that there would be adequate ongoing consultation with employees. ANSTO has a number of occupational health and safety workplace committees and various mechanisms for consultation with unions, including a ‘peak council’ on which management and union representatives meet to discuss issues.¹¹

Traffic Congestion on New Illawarra Road

- 3.12 One of the reasons given for the need for the work was traffic build-up on New Illawarra Road. The Committee was therefore curious to learn more about the nature of these traffic problems.
- 3.13 ANSTO described safety concerns for motorists on New Illawarra Road, particularly during peak hours. Inefficient security processing of visitors and staff has meant that dangerous traffic build-ups occur at the T-intersection outside the LHSTC.¹²
- 3.14 ANSTO believes that the proposed road works will provide more space for motorists and that the flow of traffic into the site will be aided by a parallel approach to the site. Employees with registered and authorised vehicles will have swipecard access to allow uninterrupted entry to the site. Visitors without authorisation will be diverted into a separate car park in the gatehouse area, where they can be checked and processed.¹³

9 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 5

10 ib id

11 ib id, page 6

12 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 5

13 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 8

- 3.15 The Committee also enquired whether the development of the new entrance might impact upon traffic to and from the RRR construction site. ANSTO answered that the interim entrance servicing the RRR site was completely independent of the new entrance project.¹⁴
- 3.16 The Sutherland Shire Council expressed concern that a traffic study had not been conducted and that it had not been consulted about traffic issues.¹⁵
- 3.17 ANSTO replied that a full traffic study had been conducted as part of the RRR proposal and presented to the RTA. ANSTO said that while the RTA were of the opinion that the traffic problems did not warrant any changes or upgrades to the highway, ANSTO, out of a duty of care to its staff, believed a solution to traffic issues was required.¹⁶

Improved Security

- 3.18 The ACF, in its submission, whilst supportive of the need to enhance security at the LHSTC, was concerned that the construction of the new entrance was not adequate to address the increased threat of a terrorist attack.¹⁷
- 3.19 Given that the purpose of the new main entrance facility is to improve security at the LHSTC,¹⁸ the Committee sought assurance that the new security measures will be sufficient to accommodate the present security climate and will be flexible enough to incorporate any further increased threat level.
- 3.20 The Committee noted that plastic bollards ('Lego barriers') form part of the security arrangements at the existing LHSTC main entrance and wished to know whether ANSTO intended to use such barriers at the new main gate. ANSTO told the Committee that the bollards would be replaced by a combination of boom gates and rapid response technology to prevent unauthorised access to the site.¹⁹
- 3.21 The Committee was also interested to discover the extent to which people and vehicles are checked upon exiting the site. ANSTO stated

14 ib id, page 4

15 ib id, page 17

16 ib id, page 20

17 Submission No. 2, page 1

18 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 5

19 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 8

that exit procedures mirrored entrance procedures in that employees are required to show a pass and visitors must return temporary passes to the reception area before exiting through the gate.²⁰

- 3.22 In light of a previous breach of security at the LHSTC, the Committee asked ANSTO to comment on whether the new entrance facilities and associated security enhancements will make unauthorised entry to the site virtually impossible. ANSTO responded that prevention of such breaches was a prime objective, and that mechanisms at the new main gate should ensure that such breaches do not occur again.²¹ ANSTO added that the new security measures will be 'scaleable', so that further levels of security can be employed if necessary.²²

Environmental Concerns

- 3.23 Under the *Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation Act 1987* (Cwlth), ANSTO is exempt from State or Territory laws where those laws relate to the use of land or the environmental consequences of the use of land.²³
- 3.24 The Sutherland Shire Council conveyed its concern to the Committee that the environmental impacts of the proposed works had never been subject to a public inquiry process.²⁴
- 3.25 The Committee invited ANSTO to comment on whether the works proposal gave due consideration to potential negative environmental impacts.
- 3.26 ANSTO told the Committee that the LHSTC site had been subject to an extensive environmental impact statement process for the RRR project.²⁵ As a result of this process, 29 environmental management conditions had been imposed on the organisation and it was required to report on these matters to the environment minister.²⁶

20 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 8

21 ib id, page 9

22 ib id, page 8

23 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 53

24 Appendix D, Transcript of Evidence, page 15

25 ib id, page 3

26 ib id, page 20

- 3.27 ANSTO stated that while construction of the new gatehouse facility would result in some small localised impacts on soil and air quality,²⁷ appropriate measures would be instigated to mitigate any impact on the environment.²⁸ ANSTO also noted its commitment to international standards of environmental management.²⁹
- 3.28 The Committee commented on the fact that some trees would have to be removed to facilitate the new entry. ANSTO stated that new trees would be planted to compensate for those lost.³⁰

Costs and Public Accountability

- 3.29 The Sutherland Shire Council expressed concern at potential cost escalation caused by poor planning of projects undertaken at the LHSTC; specifically the RRR, the proposed new main entrance, and the proposed redevelopment of Radiopharmaceutical Building No. 23.³¹ The Council stated that ANSTO should be made more accountable to the public for its project costs or plans. The Council endorsed the ACF's recommendation that all works proposals at Lucas Heights be subject to an independent audit.³²
- 3.30 ANSTO informed the Committee that it was subject to annual scrutiny by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), and that it was "quizzed extensively on expenditure"³³ twice yearly through the Senates Estimates process.

Community Right to Know Charter

- 3.31 The Sutherland Shire Council described ANSTO as having a "1950s style of secrecy".³⁴ The Sutherland Shire Council advised the Committee that efforts to negotiate a 'Community Right to Know Charter' with ANSTO, first advocated in the mid-nineties, had been

27 Appendix D, Transcript of Evidence, page 3

28 ib id, page 9

29 ib id

30 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 13

31 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 11

32 ib id, page 12

33 ib id, page 21

34 ib id, page 12

unsuccessful, and that freedom of information legislation was not an adequate alternative.³⁵

- 3.32 ANSTO acknowledged that there had been a number of difficulties in negotiating the ‘Community Right to Know Charter’ with the Council. Nonetheless, ANSTO said it was able to make some information available to the public, and that access details for these documents are displayed on its website.³⁶

Public Gatherings

- 3.33 The Sutherland Shire Council also commented that the grassed area across from the car park at the LHSTC had traditionally been made available by ANSTO for public protests. The Council expressed its hope that the proposed works will provide a similar space to allow public gatherings to continue at the LHSTC.³⁷

Quality of Evidence

- 3.34 The Committee expressed its concern at the limited amount of information provided in ANSTO’s written submissions regarding the project design and costings. The Chair stated that:

“... we do not have the details of the project and its costings so I think it is not a particularly satisfactory situation. Neither the Committee nor the public actually has access to the detail that is important to proceeding to make a decision about the public value of this project.”³⁸

- 3.35 ANSTO subsequently provided supplementary designs and cost break-downs to the Committee.

35 Appendix D, Official Transcript, page 12

36 ib, page 21

37 ib id, page 13

38 ib id, page 21

Conclusion

- 3.36 While the Committee was concerned at the lack of design and cost detail originally supplied by ANSTO, the Committee acknowledges the need to improve security and traffic conditions at the LHSTC and believes that the new main entrance facility at the LHSTC should proceed.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the proposed new main entrance facility at the Lucas Heights Science and Technology Centre, Lucas Heights, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$10.366 million.

Hon Judi Moylan MP

Chair

26 November 2003