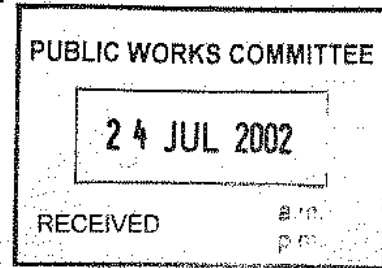


AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE
COMMISSION

SUBMISSION 3

File No: 1/9/64/28
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22 July 2002

Ms Marie Kawaja
Inquiry Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee
On Public Works
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Kawaja

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2002 requesting comment on a proposal for the Redevelopment Stage 1 and Facilities for the Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) Aircraft at RAAF Base Williamtown, NSW.

The Commission understands that the proposal involves the provision of new accommodation for:

- Squadron headquarters,
- AEW&C support centre,
- aircraft maintenance facility,
- ordnance loading complex,
- student accommodation,
- aircraft parking and associated taxiways for four aircraft and
- security measures and engineering services including a central emergency power station.

The proposal also involves the construction of a new fuel farm, the refurbishment of an existing fuel farm, and demolition of an existing fuel farm.

RAAF Base Williamtown is a place nominated for entry in the Register of the National Estate and the Commission is currently assessing its historic, natural and Indigenous heritage significance. A recent Non-Indigenous heritage assessment of RAAF Base Williamtown, undertaken by Department of Defence consultants, found a range of important historic heritage values.

The Commission is also aware that the Worromi Local Aboriginal Land Council has conducted cultural heritage surveys on RAAF Base Williamtown over recent years. They have indicated that while sites have been found, they have not been of great significance.

However, approximately a quarter of the Base is uncleared and the remnant vegetation of dry sclerophyll forest includes habitat for NSW threatened species listed koalas. It also contains the drooping red gum *E. parramattensis* spp. *decadens* which occurs in the ephemeral wetlands of the areas dunes. This species is listed as vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Drooping red gum is also a prime koala feed tree.

Part of the Stage 1 Redevelopment involves the construction of a new ordinance loading complex, which is likely to impact on about 12 hectares of woodland containing Drooping red gum species. The Commission understands that further environmental studies are in train and that a referral under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* may be required. The Commission urges that Defence include consideration of alternatives to clearing vulnerable vegetation, if the proposed work is likely to have a significant effect on natural heritage values.

The Commission advises that the Stage 1 proposals for RAAF Base Williamtown Redevelopment is unlikely to have any effect on Indigenous or historic heritage values and although part of the proposal may impact on natural heritage values, does not intend to attend the public hearing.

Yours sincerely



Dr Barry Reville
Deputy Executive Director