

HMAS *Penguin* and Pittwater Annexe Redevelopment, Mosman and Clareville, New South Wales

- 2.1 The proposed redevelopment of HMAS *Penguin* and the Pittwater Annexe in Mosman and Clareville, New South Wales, by the Department of Defence (Defence), aims to provide modern working and training space for the Royal Australian Navy Dive School, as well as updating base infrastructure. The estimated cost of the project is \$63.3 million (excluding GST).
- 2.2 The proposal was referred to the Committee on 28 October 2010.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 2.3 The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* newspaper and submissions sought from those with a direct interest in the project. The Committee received fourteen submissions and one confidential supplementary submission detailing the project costs. A list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.4 The Committee undertook a site inspection, public hearing and an in-camera hearing on the project costs on 8 November 2010 in Sydney.
- 2.5 The transcript of the public hearing as well as the submissions to the inquiry are available on the Committee's website.¹ Plans for the proposed works are detailed in Submission 1: Department of Defence.

1 <www.aph.gov.au/pwc>

Need for works

- 2.6 The Defence submission states that the works are needed because:
- most of the existing facilities were constructed for other purposes than their current use, and inefficient ‘workarounds’ are currently necessary;
 - engineering services infrastructure dates from the 1940s, and is beyond capacity and design life;
 - the gatehouse does not cope with daily traffic flows; and
 - existing waterfront areas are uneven and partially contaminated, and storm water drains unfiltered into the harbour.
- 2.7 During the site inspection, it was plainly clear that the current facilities are unsuitable. The Royal Australian Navy Dive School has made do with very limited space, and ageing buildings, and the Committee fully supports purpose-designed accommodation for the School. The Committee is particularly concerned about the current accommodation for the Submarine and Underwater Medicine unit, which is entirely unsuitable for its purpose.
- 2.8 The Committee finds that there is a need for the proposed works.

Scope of works

- 2.9 The proposed scope of the works is detailed in Submission 1: Defence. In short the project proposes the following:

Royal Australian Navy Dive School

- refurbishment of two waterfront buildings (numbers 47 & 48), including equipment rooms, drying rooms, direct access to water, change facilities, waterfront classroom, store rooms and workshops;
- demolition of two existing buildings (numbers 50 & 51);
- construction of new East Building (three storeys), including training space, support facilities for the dive training pool, training rooms, a library, administrative and support facilities for instructors, and pedestrian access from adjacent cliff-top;

Submarine and Underwater Medicine Unit

- demolition of two existing buildings (numbers 45 & 46);

- construction of new building (two storeys), including medical treatment facilities, consulting rooms, offices, medical workshops and pedestrian access from adjacent cliff-top;

Re-Compression Chamber Facility

- refurbishment and extension of existing facilities, providing offices and staff amenities;

Waterfront Civil Works

- demolition, re-grading and re-laying of existing pavements in the waterfront precinct, using reinforced concrete;
- construction of storm water gross pollutant trap, including diversion and processing of water before discharge into Sydney Harbour;
- stabilisation of seawall, replacement of pavement, construction of new retaining walls, new landscaping and modifications to access road;
- removal of unused underground fuel storage tank, and remediation of in-ground contamination;

Entry and Gatehouse

- reconfiguration of gatehouse precinct providing a single entry point for all vehicles, additional queuing and lay-by parking;
- construction of a new roundabout on Middle Head Road and relocation of existing flagpole;
- upgrade of carparking areas, including new boom gate;

Infrastructure

- upgrade of infrastructure, including high voltage electricity, voice communications, fire and security alarms, fire hydrant and sprinkler water supply, natural gas network, potable water, trunk sewerage drainage and stormwater drainage;

Pittwater Annexe

- refurbishment of existing building, including new mezzanine floor within existing building envelope;
- new covered entry, new highlight windows and a new ambulance bay.

2.10 Works are expected to commence in mid 2011, and to be completed by late 2013.

- 2.11 The Committee finds that the proposed scope of works is suitable to meet the needs of the project.

Cost of works

- 2.12 The total estimated out-turn cost for this project is \$63.3 million (excluding GST). The Committee received a confidential supplementary submission detailing the project costs and held an in-camera hearing with Defence on those costs.
- 2.13 The Committee is satisfied that the costings for the project provided to it are adequate.

Project issues

Consultation

- 2.14 A number of submissions to the inquiry raised concerns about consultation conducted by Defence with local residents.² As a result of a previous recommendation by this Committee (report 7/2009), Defence has developed a consultation protocol for use in all future infrastructure projects.³
- 2.15 In the present case, Defence has conducted discussions with interested groups, as well as briefings with members of the public, advertised in local newspapers. Defence considers that it has good relationships with local residents in both project locations.
- 2.16 The Commanding Officer of HMAS *Penguin*, Commander Baker, indicated that he receives direct correspondence and telephone calls from members of the public regarding the impact of the base on local communities. Commander Baker further stated that 'I am fairly confident that if somebody wanted to get hold of me they would not experience more than about five minutes delay in doing so through either the RSL or a direct directory assistance inquiry.'⁴
- 2.17 The Committee is pleased to note that both Defence and the HMAS *Penguin* leadership welcomes consultation with local residents, and adopts

2 Submission 10, Name Withheld, p. 1; Submission 11, Mr Richard & Ms Meredith Rasdall p. 2.

3 Brigadier D. Naumann, Defence, *Proof Transcript of Evidence*, 8 November 2010, p. 3-4.

4 Commander G. Baker, Defence, *Proof Transcript of Evidence*, 8 November 2010, p. 13.

in some cases suggestions for project improvements. The Committee commends Defence for its consultation, and encourages local residents to approach the Commanding Officer of HMAS *Penguin* with any concerns they might have, regarding this project or any other matter.

Middle Head road

- 2.18 During its site inspection, the Committee was made aware of the possibility of base security controls disrupting the flow of traffic on Middle Head road. A single large vehicle waiting at the base gates can prevent all other vehicles continuing down the road. In order to remedy this situation, Defence proposes to pay for and construct a new roundabout on this road, in order to enhance base security and ensure that vehicles waiting at the base entrance do not block the road.
- 2.19 The Committee commends Defence for contributing to the local road infrastructure in a way that accounts for its impact on local traffic, whilst improving general road safety. As Defence noted, it will improve general road safety for pedestrians and cyclists, frequent road users in the area. Defence assured the Committee that it will undertake construction works in a way which will create as little disruption to road users as possible.⁵

Committee comment

- 2.20 Overall, the Committee is satisfied that this project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 2.21 Having examined the purpose, need, use, revenue and public value of the work, the Committee considers that it is expedient that the proposed works proceed.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18 (7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: HMAS *Penguin* and Pittwater Annexe Redevelopment, Mosman and Clareville, New South Wales.

5 Mr K. Gomez, Defence, *Proof Transcript of Evidence*, 8 November 2010, p. 4-5.