

The Secretary of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
House of Representatives,
PO Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

I write in relation to the proposed new Defence Housing proposed for Larrakeyah Barracks, Darwin.

As a long term Larrakeyah resident I have had a longstanding relationship with the Base, with residents of the base, and with persons residing at the base.

I wish to take this opportunity to discuss the potential impact on traffic conditions in the streets that access the base, in particular Packard, Mitchell and Morella Streets.

I note that the DHA submission at Point 29.1 makes the comment:

Off-Base. The project will create 36 more dwellings than currently exist on Larrakeyah Barracks, an increase of 27 per cent. However, in terms of the relative increase to the local civilian community in the suburb of Larrakeyah, the increase is small. Therefore no ongoing effects on the local community are expected in terms of traffic and population. Some increase in traffic will occur during construction.

What the DHA submission does not discuss is the fact that there is only one access point to the base, that is, via Packard Street. At the immediate point of egress is Larrakeyah Primary School and further along Packard Street is the Silas Roberts Hostel, which whilst well run by Aboriginal Hostels, regularly has small children, unsupervised with free access to the street. Immediately around the corner from Packard Street is the Mitchell St Child Care Centre.

Traffic levels associated with the base have been an ongoing source of concern for local residents and have led to approaches being made to the Commanding Officer NORCOM about the impact on local residents (with a positive response).

- The speed limit in Packard St is already limited to 40 kph however there is scant respect for that rating.
- Local MLA John Elferink has made representation to the NT Government about the traffic issues.
- Darwin Police Station has designated Packard St and Mitchell St as traffic "hotspots".
- Pedestrian traffic, particularly late at night with seriously intoxicated persons returning to base, is an issue with consequent vandalism (note the broken bottles following the Officers Mess Ball).

- The sad fact is that the majority of vehicles breaching the Traffic laws are associated with the base whether they are Defense Personnel, Defense families or other persons accessing the base. It appears that young males (in the main) are fundamentally incapable of observing the prevailing speed limits.
- At peak traffic times (about 8.00 am) the traffic has been backed up from the school to Mitchell St. This is also a period of high pedestrian traffic (some families still walk their children to school).
- There have been cases of driver bullying by drivers of vehicles entering the base to local residents (females)

The simple reality is that there will be an increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic albeit the increase in residential population is only 27%. Packard Street and Morella Streets in particular are only residential streets and do not have the physical capacity for an increased traffic load.

At the heart of the traffic issue is Larrakeyah School, which itself is a major contributor to traffic congestion at peak hours. It is not unreasonable to expect that 36 new families might result in an increase of perhaps 30 students for the primary school which is already at capacity. Does this then result in a further 20 – 20 vehicles doing drop offs at 8 am?

I understand that Traffic issues on the streets surrounding the base are not the responsibility of the ADF but more those of the Darwin City Council and the NT Government. I suggest however that the DHA proposal should be more cognizant of the impact of the proposed housing development on the local area both during and after construction.

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