

Conclusions and Recommendations

Need for the work

- 6.1 The Committee has found that there are three main factors, which provide a basis for redevelopment of the Army Aviation Centre at Oakey to proceed. They are:
- the closure of the ADF Helicopter School at RAAF Fairbairn and the decision to relocate the Army element to the Army Aviation Training Centre based at Oakey;
 - strategic considerations which lead to the decision to retain Oakey in the longer term for helicopter training and also the decision to provide the Australian Defence Force with armed reconnaissance helicopters with training of personnel to be provided at Oakey; and
 - the inadequacies of existing facilities at Oakey both in terms of operational efficiency and also to meet the requirements of the larger and more sophisticated armed reconnaissance helicopters.
- 6.2 The Committee is convinced, on the basis of evidence presented to it, that it makes economic sense for the work to proceed at Oakey. To rebuild elsewhere would not only incur the proposed cost of \$76.2m but also additional expenditure to replace existing suitable infrastructure. There would also be significant costs associated with the relocation of personnel.

Scope of the work

- 6.3 The primary aim of the proposal is the provision of facilities capable of supporting Army Aviation Training. The scope of the work includes both

the construction of new facilities and the refurbishment and reuse of existing facilities were appropriate. Within the context of a mix of refurbishment and new construction, there exist some siting options as well as options relating to the degree of refurbishment.

- 6.4 The Committee notes that these options will be subjected to comprehensive examination during the detailed design phase and the most cost-effective solution will be adopted by Defence.

Heritage issues

- 6.5 The Committee notes that, while Defence does not believe that there are heritage issues associated with any element of the project, the Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) is of the view that the Army Aviation Centre at Oakey has potential cultural heritage significance and may contain a threatened bluegrass community.
- 6.6 The Committee notes that Defence has indicated its willingness to continue to consult with the AHC in relation to heritage issues and has agreed to put in place procedures to protect sites of both cultural and ecological significance during the design and construction phase of the project.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that Defence continue to consult with the Australian Heritage Commission regarding heritage issues at the Army Aviation Centre and as part of this process ensure procedures to protect sites of both cultural and ecological significance are agreed between Defence and the Australian Heritage Commission.

Energy Conservation Issues

- 6.7 The Committee notes Defence's advice that, in accordance with the Commonwealth's commitment to improve energy management and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency is a key objective in the design, development and delivery of Defence facilities. However, the Committee is also mindful that the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) has expressed concern about the extent to which energy efficiency issues will be appropriately addressed in this project.
- 6.8 In this context the Committee welcomes Defence's commitment to consult with AGO on energy efficiency matters on all future major Defence and its agreement to engage an expert energy adviser for the Oakey project to achieve maximum possible energy efficiency wherever possible. An energy efficiency target will be set for the design and operation of the facility.
- 6.9 The Committee endorses Defence's decision to examine the possible use of alternative energy sources such as solar and geothermal in comparison with conventional systems during the detailed design stage.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that Defence ensure energy efficiency and the possible use of alternative energy sources as key objectives in the design and delivery of Defence facilities projects.

- 6.10 The Committee notes that the objectives of the AGO are highly relevant to most, if not all, works referred to the Committee for inquiry and report under the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*. The Committee foresees an ongoing involvement of the AGO in its inquiries and welcomes this development.

Jondaryan Shire Council

- 6.11 An important part of the Committee's inquiry process is the consideration of the views of all stakeholders in a proposed public work.
- 6.12 In this context, the Committee was interested in issues raised by the Jondaryan Shire Council relating to the proposal and in particular, the Council's concerns relating to the proposed new civil terminal, the impact of Base traffic on local roads and the need for additional sewage treatment or water supplies. Mr Peter Taylor, the Mayor of Jondaryan Shire Council, made the point that while the Council was concerned regarding these issues, he believed that all could be satisfactorily resolved. The Committee is encouraged by this evidence. It points to a mutually beneficial outcome for the Council and Defence.
- 6.13 The Committee notes that Defence will consult with the Council regarding the design of a new terminal and that it will build and maintain it. The Council will have a lease on the facility.
- 6.14 The Committee recognises that Defence makes a financial contribution to the maintenance of local roads and endorses its willingness to consult with the Council regarding road access to the new terminal.
- 6.15 In relation to the concern expressed regarding the adequacy of water supply and sewage treatment the Committee notes that Defence considers both to be adequate with no significant increase in demand envisaged as a result of this proposal. However the Committee believes that Defence should monitor the situation and to consult with the Jondaryan Shire Council regarding the adequacy of water supply and sewage treatment at the Army Aviation Centre.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that Defence continue to consult with the Jondaryan Shire Council regarding the design of the new civil terminal, the location and standard of road access to the proposed terminal and the adequacy of water supply and sewage treatment at the Army Aviation Centre.

Conclusion

The Committee has concluded that, on the basis of the evidence presented to it and the findings from its inspection of the existing facilities at Oakey that the redevelopment of the Army Aviation Centre should proceed.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the proposed redevelopment of the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey proceed at a cost of \$76.2 million.

Hon Judi Moylan MP

Chair

30 August 2001