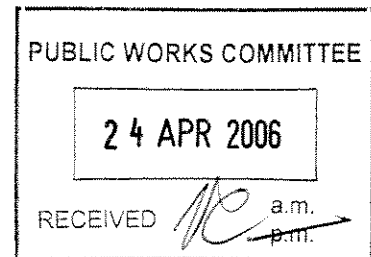




SUBMISSION12.....

Australian Government
Department of Finance and Administration

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The Hon Judi Moylan (MP)
Chair
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
House of Representatives
Parliament of Australia
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Moylan

**Villawood Immigration Detention Centre Redevelopment
Response to Submission by Mr Jozefa Sobski**

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) and the Department of Finance and Administration (Finance) would like to take the opportunity to reply to the submission from Mr Jozefa Sobski dated 27 March 2006 concerning the redevelopment of Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (VIDC) at Villawood, New South Wales.

The submission from Mr Jozefa Sobski raises a number of issues relating to the potential redevelopment, these being:

- i. Scope and intensity;
- ii. Environmental Impact regarding removal of trees;
- iii. Design features;
- iv. The appropriateness of the projections into the future of resident numbers for the facility;
- v. The impact on the surrounding community during the construction phase and ongoing operations;
- vi. The potential to contribute to migration history and heritage in NSW; and
- vii. The opportunity to build a more positive profile of VIDC in the community and enhance community understanding of the migration experience.

The issues raised by Mr Jozefa Sobski for consideration in the preparation of further design are responded to in this letter.

1. Scope and Intensity:

The scope of the redevelopment is required to enable replacement of the ageing infrastructure, provide facilities that meet general community standards, improve the living conditions for detainees, improve operational efficiency and modernise security. The size of the accommodation and central facilities reflects the current and future operational capacity of 800 beds.

The intensity of the design (i.e. layout of the facilities and open spaces) is due to the site constraints (i.e. size and slope), security requirements and the need to balance disabled access and management requirements against the desirability for additional open space.

2. Environmental Impact Regarding Removal of Trees:

It is acknowledged that as a result of the need to undertake cut and fill earthworks across a large area of the site (except the Stage 2 and 3 accommodation compounds), the majority of mature trees will be removed. The proposed earthworks is in response to the need to provide disabled access in accordance with the Australian Standards throughout the site and the security separation of the buildings.

Through appropriate planning of the new car park area at the southern end of the site, it is intended that as many as of the mature trees in the existing remnant bushland area will be retained. The mature trees within the Stage 2 and 3 accommodation compounds will also be retained.

A landscape master plan will be developed for the site in consultation with the Bankstown City Council's (Council) Landscape Architect and Bushland Officer and where appropriate indigenous natives sourced from local provenance will be used. It should be noted however that the proposed landscape master plan can not compromise the security of the facility.

3. Design Features:

The design features of the proposed redevelopment are described within the Technical Information section of the Statement of Evidence (pages 11 to 19).

The nature of detention unfortunately requires the provision of appropriate security systems. The proposed development will endeavour to minimise the institutional feel by use of less intrusive technology, freer movement of detainees within the security perimeter, improved accommodation, appropriate landscaping and provision of facilities that support a normal community lifestyle (i.e. recreation, education facilities etc).

Multiple perimeter fences are required to separate various levels of security needs. Landscaping will be undertaken to provide appropriate screening from adjoining properties. Flood lighting provided on the perimeter security fence will be designed to minimise the light spill onto adjoining properties.

The redevelopment is cost effective in that it maximizes the use of existing infrastructure to minimize capital facilities costs and will utilise readily available and durable materials that combine long life with minimum maintenance.

4. Appropriateness of the Projections into the Future of Resident Numbers for the Facility:

The current capacity of the VIDC is 800 beds. The need to maintain this capacity for the proposed redevelopment reflects the projections prepared by DIMA for the forecast number of detainees as explained in paragraph 27 (3) of the Statement of Evidence.

5. Impact on the Surrounding Community during the Construction Phase and Ongoing Operations:

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be prepared by the building contractor which will identify all the management measures to be undertaken to control and mitigate the impact of construction, including noise, dust and vibration. The building contract will require that the management plan needs to be developed in consultation with the Council.

A Facility Operations Management Plan will be prepared by DIMA to establish processes and practices that manage those aspects of the facilities ongoing operation that will impact on the surrounding neighbourhood. This plan should be commenced during the design of the proposed facility and should be finalised at the completion of the redevelopment.

6. Potential to Contribute to Migration History and Heritage in NSW:

6.1 Retention of Heritage Buildings on Site:

Three separate heritage assessments of the VIDC have been formally undertaken by Graham Brooks (2001), Godden Mackay Logan (2001) and Environmental Resources Management (2005). Each of these assessments has been undertaken in accordance with Australian Government legislation and relevant Australian Government heritage assessment criteria.

Each of the assessments, as well as the current Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL) citation, has considered all aspects of VIDC including location, landscaping, topography, deliberate plantings (i.e. vegetation) and site layout. None of the assessments to date have found the VIDC has sufficient Commonwealth heritage value under these criteria to cross the significance threshold. This is reflected in the CHL citation.

The proposed redevelopment includes the establishment of a heritage precinct on the Western edge of the site. This would contain the most valuable, in a historical and social sense, buildings identified in the CHL. Active, adaptive re-use of the buildings in their current locations is not possible due to the constraints of the site on the design of the new facilities. The only building that it is possible to retain in situ is the former magazine hut.

6.2 Heritage Precinct Accessibility:

It is proposed as a minimum, that static storyboards will be displayed for the public to view from Miowera Road adjacent to the proposed heritage precinct without the public entering

the VIDC site. The ability to allow public access onto the site raises both liability and security concerns for DIMA.

It is proposed that further discussions be held between Finance, DIMA and the Council to agree what can reasonably be done to address the BCC's and your requests for ongoing public access to the heritage precinct.

6.3 On-Going Maintenance Plan:

The heritage buildings being located to the heritage precinct will be restored and an ongoing maintenance plan (as part of a Heritage Management Plan) will be prepared to ensure that their condition is appropriately preserved. This plan will be in accordance with sections 341S and 341ZA of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

7. Opportunity to build a more positive profile of VIDC in the community and enhance community understanding of the migration experience:

Current planning to date for the proposed redevelopment has taken into consideration the objective to provide a positive impact on the local community. The forthcoming proposed redevelopment design phases will continue to consider this objective and look to enhance community understanding of the need for the redevelopment through appropriate consultation.

Yours sincerely



Rodney Bray
Acting Branch Manager
Major Projects Branch - Immigration
5 April 2006