

**Submission to the Public Works Inquiry into the National Towers Program, Stage 1 for Airservices Australia at Adelaide, Canberra, Melbourne and Rockhampton Airports**

1. I note with interest this inquiry and question how it can be a National Towers Program if Department of Defence airport towers are not included. The age of most Defence towers is similar to that of Rockhampton and Canberra towers (old Defence airports) and the state of deterioration of the structures would also be similar.

2. Australia has two air traffic control systems, one managed by Defence and the other by Airservices Australia. Each organisation services the same customer. There are operational reasons for the personnel in each organisation to be different but there is no reason for the structures and air traffic systems to be different.

3. Defence is required to submit its works programs through your committee. It would seem reasonable that the inquiry should be expanded to include all control towers servicing both civil and military airports. This would allow for a coordinated, cost-effective major infrastructure project to replace all the old and deteriorating control towers. This would also avoid the on-going disconnect between Defence and Airservices as far as air traffic control infrastructure and service projects are concerned.

4. I have, in the past, been involved in such a disconnect project and in my opinion it is indefensible that Australia should be supporting two different air traffic control systems. A classic disconnect between Defence and Airservices was the introduction of two different air traffic operating systems at virtually the same time in the late 1990's. Defence evaluated and selected the Australian Defence Air Traffic System (ADATS) whilst Airservices at the same time evaluated and introduced TAAATS (The Australian Automated Air Traffic System). Defence was invited to join Airservices in their project but declined as it wished to manage its own project. This resulted in two very

expensive systems that to date have problems interacting. Australia cannot afford these expensive mistakes and these two organisations should be made to cooperate on national assets.

5. All air traffic control infrastructure and services should be managed as a national asset and parliamentary committees should advise the Department of Defence and Airservices accordingly.

6. Before I retired as a Defence air traffic controller I worked in most of the Defence towers. I joined the Air Force in 1977 and the towers I subsequently served in were already old and were most probably constructed in the 1950's or before. I don't have access to their history. Suffice it to say they were all dilapidated. Defence was loathed to spend any money on them and they seldom did except as a patch up. Since 1977, to my knowledge, only three new towers have been constructed at military establishments (Nowra, Darwin and Tindal). The only reason these were replaced or built was to support expansion of aircraft manoeuvring areas. Replacement, simply because of age or dilapidation, has never been seen by Defence as a justification for a new tower.

7. The introduction of the new Australian Defence Air Traffic System (ADATS) initiated modifications to the cabin of some Defence towers to fit in the modules for ADATS. This project did not alter or improve the basic structure and infrastructure of the building.

### **What needs replacing?**

8. Which Defence control towers need replacing? I submit the following need to be assessed for replacement: East Sale (Vic), Richmond (NSW), Williamstown (NSW), Amberley (Qld), Townsville (QLD), Pearce (WA) and Edinburgh (SA). I would also submit that all the old civil control towers be assessed for replacement. As a guide I suggest that the design and architect's

plan for Nowra's new tower would be a good start and such a structure could suffice for not only the Defence towers but also the civil towers.

9. This is an opportunity for the PWC to be proactive and to look to the future and in this instance assess all military and civil towers for replacement or refurbishment. Such a project could in the long term be more cost effective than a piece meal approach. For example, why was the Amberley control tower not included in the Stage 2 redevelopment of RAAF Base Amberley - PWC Report 18/2005?

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