

The Year in Review

Overview of Activities

2.1 Committee activities during 2006 comprised:

- 19 private meetings;
- 17 public hearings; and
- 18 inspections.

2.1 Members of the Committee also attended the National Conference of Public Works and Environment Committees in Brisbane and Cairns, Qld. The Conference is discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.

Committee Inquiries

2.2 During 2006 the Committee completed inquiries into 19 public works to the value of \$969.314 million. Summaries of the issues raised and conclusions reached during the Committee's investigations are provided in Chapter 3.

Works Exempt from Committee Scrutiny

- 2.3 The Act provides that certain works and organisations may be exempt from scrutiny by the Committee.¹ Such exemption may be granted because:
- the work is urgent;
 - the work is being undertaken for defence purposes and scrutiny of the work would be contrary to the public interest;
 - the Governor-General is satisfied that the proponent agency is engaged in trading or competition with another body; or
 - the work is repetitive; that is, substantially similar to other works that have been, or are being, carried out.
- 2.4 In 2006 one work was exempt from Committee scrutiny. The circumstances of the exemption are briefly outlined below.

Construction of a New Building for the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organisation (DIGO) in Bendigo, Victoria

- 2.5 On 12 September 2006, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, notified the Committee of the recommendation that the Governor-General issue an Order declaring that the proposed construction of a new building for DIGO in Bendigo, Victoria is for defence purposes and that reference to the Committee would be contrary to the public interest.
- 2.6 On 21 September 2006 the Administrator in Council ordered that as the proposed works were for defence purposes, reference to the Committee would be contrary to the public interest.

Concurrent Documentation

- 2.7 Concurrent documentation is the preparation of contract documentation before the Committee has completed its inquiry and reported to Parliament.
- 2.8 In 2006 requests for concurrent documentation were made in respect of three of the nineteen works reported upon by the Committee. Details of

1 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Section 18 (8)

the works for which concurrent documentation was granted in 2006 are provided below.

Redevelopment of Post 1945 Conflicts Galleries and Discovery Room for the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, ACT

- 2.9 On 10 February 2006 the Australian War Memorial (AWM) requested the Committee's approval for design documentation to be completed and for the project to proceed to expression of interest for the primary works building contractor. The AWM noted that the expression of interest documentation would be appropriately qualified so that it is clearly stated that tender documentation being contingent upon parliamentary approval. Contracts would not be entered into with a tenderer until the Committee's report had been tabled and received parliamentary approval.
- 2.10 The Committee considered the AWM's request and granted approval for concurrent documentation on 17 February 2006.

Development of Canine Kennelling and Training Facilities for the Australian Federal Police at Majura, ACT

- 2.11 In a letter to the Committee dated 8 September 2006 the Australian Federal Police (AFP) sought the Committee's agreement for the AFP to progress certain elements of the work that are required to be completed and available early in the construction program to provide kennels as early as possible in 2007. The request was made in view of AFP policing commitments in 2007.
- 2.12 The Committee considered the AFP's request and granted approval for concurrent documentation on 14 September 2006.

Fit-out of New Leased Premises for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations at 29-31 Brindabella Business Park, ACT

- 2.13 On 11 September 2006 the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) requested the Committee's approval to commence the tender process for a construction manager, security services, and for the provision of workstations and loose furniture. DEWR's request was made with regards to the expiration of its existing sublease arrangements.
- 2.14 The Committee considered DEWR's request and granted approval for concurrent documentation on 14 September 2006.