

Issues and Conclusions

Options Considered

Lease Arrangements

- 3.1 DEWR states in its main submission that it currently occupies 13 buildings across the ACT, located in Civic, Turner and BBP.¹ Whilst the project allows DEWR to co-locate some workgroups rather than create more small tenancies, it will still have offices scattered around the ACT. The Committee enquired whether DEWR considered a larger building tenancy that could accommodate the whole department; and what the leasing arrangements were in place for the remaining DEWR office locations.
- 3.2 DEWR responded that it considered various accommodation options, including buildings that could accommodate as many staff as possible. However, DEWR's investigations concluded that vacancies to accommodate the entire department are not currently available.² Subsequent to the hearing the Committee was provided with DEWR's report analysing the accommodation options, and was satisfied with the report's conclusions.

1 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1.1.5

2 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 4

- 3.3 DEWR explained that with regard to its leasing arrangements for remaining properties,

...we [DEWR] have tried to ensure that they all coincide and end in 2011 so that we can look at a longer term strategy.³

DEWR conceded that recent machinery of government changes and new policy announcements were made quickly, and DEWR was required to adapt accordingly. As a result, DEWR's long-term planing is dependent on the government of the day.

- 3.4 At the public hearing DEWR informed the Committee that United Services Group is DEWR's national property service provider. All of DEWR's property arrangements including lease management for all DEWR properties are managed by United Services Group.⁴

Future Requirements

- 3.5 In its main submission, DEWR noted that the Canberra Airport Group (CAG) had made provision for an additional five buildings⁵, that would potentially meet any future requirements the Department might have.

Consultation

- 3.6 DEWR states in its main submission that it sought input into the project from ACT and Federal Government agencies including the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) and the Department of Finance and Administration (Finance).⁶ The Committee requested further information on the external consultation undertaken and any issues arising from the consultation.
- 3.7 DEWR provided examples of its consultation processes through contact with the Department of Transport as well as ACTION buses with regards to traffic considerations at BBP. However DEWR added that it is the building owners at the Canberra Airport that have the primary responsibility for consulting with the ACT government and those bodies responsible for planning of the ACT.⁷

3 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 4

4 *ibid*, page 5

5 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.9.1

6 *ibid*, paragraph 1.9.2

7 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 6

Staff Consultation

- 3.8 DEWR's staff consultation has been conducted via:
- staff consultative forum;
 - administration officers monthly meetings;
 - a dedicated webpage as part of the DEWR intranet;
 - a dedicated email inbox to field questions relating to the project; and
 - an open forum for all staff to attend.⁸
- 3.9 In its main submission DEWR confirmed that staff consultation included consultation with user groups, relevant union and industrial groups as had been proposed⁹. The Committee sought an update of the staff consultation process, and whether any issues had been raised.
- 3.10 DEWR responded that the Community Public Sector Union (CPSU) had been consulted through representation at the staff consultative forum. In addition to the staff consultation processes outlined in DEWR's main submission, staff who will be relocating to the new premises have been consulted on a weekly basis. Major issues raised during the consultation process have been related to accommodation conditions and transport. Providing the project is approved by parliament, DEWR will engage in further detailed discussions with staff affected by the move to BBP.¹⁰

Fit-out Design

Workstation Configuration

- 3.11 Conceptual floor plans included in DEWR's main submission¹¹ provides a layout of a typical floor, including the configuration of the proposed 120 degree modular workstation design. At the public hearing, the Committee sought further detail on specifications for workstation and office areas.
- 3.12 DEWR stated that each workstation is based on approximately 6.8 to 7.2 square metres, translating to approximately 18 square metres which takes into account building amenities such as kitchens, meeting and conference

8 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1.9.3.4

9 *ibid*, paragraph 1.9.3.3

10 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 7

11 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, Appendix E, Conceptual Floor Plans

rooms, break-out areas. Internal offices are approximately 14 square meters in area.¹²

- 3.13 The open office floor plan of workstation clusters, which is proposed by DEWR, is already in use in building fit-outs in Canberra and Sydney, and proven to be a functional use of available space. Another advantage of the proposed workstation configuration is that it allows for the bundling of cabling such as for the provision of IT and power services to a workstation.¹³

Sound Attenuation

- 3.14 During the site inspection the Committee noted the proximity of the site to the Canberra Airport and the associated sound issues that the location presented. In its main submission DEWR states that 29-31 BBP has been designed to conform with acoustic requirements of AS2107, and that an acoustic engineer will be engaged to ensure noise levels are adequately attenuated.¹⁴ The Committee sought further detail on the sound attenuation strategies DEWR has proposed for the fit-out.
- 3.15 DEWR responded that the building will incorporate same sound attenuation measures, such as double glazed windows, as other DEWR tenancies already at BBP. Furthermore,

The building has been designed and constructed in accordance with the BCA and relevant Australian standards to meet the acoustic integrity of the building.¹⁵

Sound attenuation concerns regarding the location of critical office areas, and the selection of appropriate construction materials have also been taken into account with internal fit-out design.

Access Equity

- 3.16 DEWR's accessibility objective is total workplace equity of access and amenity.¹⁶ The Committee sought further details on the proposed access equity measures incorporated into the fit-out design to ensure access equity to staff and members of the public.

12 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

13 *ibid*

14 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.11.1 and 2.11.2

15 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

16 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.14.3

3.17 In response, DEWR listed access equity initiatives including:

- ramps;
- the height of lift operation buttons;
- voice annunciation in the lifts;
- automatic sliding doors to each part of the tenancy;
- delay action doors;
- appropriate door handle height and design (lever design at 900-1110 millimetres above floor level);
- adequate circulation for wheelchairs;
- adequate width of corridors and aisles to allow for wheelchair access;
- accessible toilets at each level;
- adjustable workstations, tables and desks;
- adequate provision of seating and rest points
- accessible kitchenettes;
- non-slip floors and short-level carpet pile; and
- adequate lighting and low brightness diffuser light fittings to minimise glare.¹⁷

3.18 Furthermore, DEWR assured the Committee that in case of emergency, appropriate evacuation procedures for persons with a disability will be undertaken. These procedures are already utilised in DEWR's Civic tenancies.¹⁸

Staff Amenities

Kitchenette

3.19 The conceptual floor plans included in DEWR's main submission show two kitchens on each floor at the outer edges of the buildings.¹⁹ The

17 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, pages 11 and 12

18 *ibid*, page 12

19 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, Appendix E, Conceptual Floor Plan

Committee queried why the staff kitchens were not located more centrally on each floor.

- 3.20 DEWR clarified that there are three kitchens proposed per floor: the two specifically labelled in the conceptual floor plans and a third kitchen in the centre of the building near the lift well and labelled as “staff amenities”. The staff amenities area provides a central break-out point for staff.²⁰

Carers, First Aid and Prayer Rooms

- 3.21 DEWR states in its main submission that the dispersion of carers, first aid and prayer rooms will be in accordance with legislation and/or DEWR internal policy, whichever is more stringent.²¹ The Committee commended DEWR on the provision of carers, first aid and prayer rooms into the fit-out proposal. However the Committee expressed concern that only first aid rooms are identified on DEWR’s conceptual floor plans.²²
- 3.22 DEWR clarified that the one room included on the conceptual floor plans labelled as first aid room are proposed to be utilised as carer and prayer rooms also.²³

Childcare Services

- 3.23 There is an existing childcare facility at BBP, the “Parkes School of Early Learning”, which accommodates 86 placements.²⁴ The Committee asked DEWR for further detail regarding the childcare facilities, and whether it believed childcare facilities would be sufficient for its staff requirements.
- 3.24 DEWR informed the Committee that additional childcare facilities are currently being constructed, and will increase the capacity to 174 placements. Preference for placements for the childcare facility is provided for persons who work within the airport precinct. However according to DEWR, the current capacity is not fully utilised.²⁵

20 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 10

21 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.7.12.1

22 *ibid*, Appendix E, Conceptual Floor Plans

23 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 10

24 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.15.1

25 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 11

Building Services

Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning

3.25 DEWR submits that it will utilise, where possible, the existing base building heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) system. Where additional HVAC is required, "DEWR will make best endeavours to ensure systems are in keeping with environmental goals of the building".²⁶ The Committee requested more information on the proposed HVAC system.

3.26 DEWR responded that the HVAC system proposed will be:

...state-of-the-art and very contemporary in its design and technical performance.²⁷

Such a system is in compliments the design of a building that takes into account energy management and usage. DEWR continued that with regard to the energy management design initiatives, the building design

...is probably achieving beyond its performance benchmarks.²⁸

3.27 Subsequent to the hearing, DEWR provided the Committee with the specifications relating to the proposed air-conditioning system as follows:

- base building cooling load is 850kw, installed capacity 1200kw;
- base building heating load is 440kw, installed capacity 610kw;
- supplementary cooling capacity of 20 watts per square metre on all floors with any one floor capable of 50 watts per square metre;
- air quality is ensured by continuous outside air into all air-handling units which vary the rate from minimum BCA requirements to 100% outside air (should ambient temperature allow);
- all pumping and air-handling units have variable speed motors; and
- natural gas fired boilers are high efficiency.²⁹

26 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.7.11.1

27 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

28 *ibid*, page 10

29 Letter and supplementary information from Michael Barlow, Director, Property and Facilities Management Team, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 8 September 2006

Australian Building Greenhouse Rating

- 3.28 The Committee was interested to know whether DEWR had consulted the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) with regards to the project, and what Australian Building Greenhouse Rating (ABGR) DEWR had proposed to achieve. DEWR responded that the AGO was consulted with regard to this project and is currently in negotiations with the building owner to attach a Green Lease Schedule allowing for building owner and tenant to achieve 4.5 star ABGR.³⁰
- 3.29 DEWR added that its environmental management strategy at its 64 Northbourne Avenue tenancy has gained certification, and DEWR proposes to implement the same strategy at 29-31 BBP.³¹

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that DEWR advise the Committee of the progress regarding the Green Lease Schedule.

Traffic Considerations

Shuttle Bus

- 3.30 In its main submission, DEWR explains that it currently provides, through Deane's Bus Lines (DBL), a shuttle bus linking its Civic tenancies to BBP tenancies. The service runs every hour and is free of charge to DEWR staff upon presentation of their DEWR identification pass.³² At the public hearing the Committee enquired as to the level of usage of the bus service.
- 3.31 DEWR informed that approximately 40 people a day use the shuttle bus service between Civic and BBP. As there is no ACTION bus service to the airport, the shuttle bus provides DEWR staff with a link to ACTION bus services from the Civic bus interchange.³³ DEWR initiated the shuttle bus service to ensure that staff were not adversely inconvenienced by working at BBP as opposed to DEWR's Civic offices.

30 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 13

31 *ibid*

32 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.20.4

33 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 7

Car Parking

- 3.32 In its main submission DEWR indicates that there is parking available within the BBP precinct and parking rates are cheaper than in Civic.³⁴ Whilst on the site inspection the Committee observed some of the available parking, and asked DEWR for clarification of the proposed car parking arrangements for staff of its new premises.
- 3.33 DEWR assured the Committee that the current car parking arrangements is sufficient for the existing DEWR tenancies, and a multi-storey car park is proposed for the precinct to cater for new buildings. According to DEWR calculations,
- ...there will be 1,200 car parking spaces in 12months.³⁵
- 3.34 DEWR added that the exact number of car parking spaces within the precinct allocated for people with a disability, was determined by the airport authority. However, DEWR was confident that there would be adequate provision of car parking for people with a disability within the BBP area.³⁶

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations at 29-31 Brindabella Business Park, ACT, proceed at the estimated cost of \$15.1 million.

Hon Judi Moylan MP

Chair

18 October 2006

34 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 2.20.9

35 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 10

36 *ibid*, page 12