

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 1 March 2006 the proposal to redevelop HMAS *Cairns* at Cairns, Qld, was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the Parliament in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ The proponent agency for this work is the Department of Defence (Defence) and the estimated cost of the project is \$76.3 million.

Background

- 1.2 HMAS *Cairns* was established in 1971 at Grafton Street, Cairns as a non-commissioned patrol boat facility providing support to three Attack Class patrol boats, which were berthed at Trinity Wharf. The facility became a naval establishment in 1974.² In 1982 the facility relocated to its present site, with purpose-built facilities to accommodate four FREMANTLE Class Patrol Boats (FCPBs), the hydrographic ship HMAS *Flinders* and several

1 Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 88, Wednesday, 1 March 2006

2 Appendix C, Department of Defence, Submission No.1, paragraph 6

small support vessels; and serviced by some 100 personnel. By the mid 1990s HMAS *Cairns* provided accommodation for 15 vessels:

- five FCPBs;
- four Landing Heavy Craft;
- four Survey Motor Launches; and
- two Leeuwin Class Hydrographic Ships.³

1.3 Following the replacement of the five FCPBs with four new ARMIDALE Class Patrol Boats (ACPBs), the number of vessels home-ported at the Base will be reduced to 14.⁴

1.4 The Base presently has a population of 783 personnel and provides health and dental services for an additional 99 personnel from the Army's 51st Battalion Far North Queensland Regiment.⁵

Location

1.5 HMAS *Cairns* is located some two kilometres south of the Cairns central business district (CBD) on the western side of Trinity Inlet.⁶

Inquiry Process

1.6 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁷ and report to Parliament on:

- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
- the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
- whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
- the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
- the present and prospective public value of the work.⁸

3 Appendix C, Submission No.1, paragraph 7

4 *ibid*

5 *ibid*, paragraph 8

6 *ibid*, paragraph 5

7 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

- 1.7 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in the *Cairns Post* on Saturday, 25 March 2006. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

Public Hearing

- 1.8 On Monday, 15 May 2006 the Committee visited HMAS *Cairns* and inspected at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. Later that day, the Committee received a commercial-in-confidence briefing on project costs from Defence, and held a public hearing at the Civic Reception Room, Cairns City Council.⁹

8 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17

9 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing held on Monday, 15 May 2006 in Cairns