



Parliamentary Committee recommends changes at Villawood

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works tabled its 6th report of 2009, *Redevelopment of the Villawood Immigration Detention Facility*. While the Committee has found an urgent and critical need for the works, it has attached several conditions to its recommendation that the project proceed.

In particular, the Committee has recommended that the existing high-security 'Stage 1' be demolished. 'Overall, the Villawood Immigration and Detention Centre looks and feels like an antiquated prison,' Chair of the Committee Senator the Hon Jan McLucas said, 'Stage 1 is in particularly poor condition and once new facilities are built, these buildings should never be used again.'

The Committee has made recommendations about individual aspects of Villawood to be undertaken immediately, including the need for a paging system that respects detainees' privacy and the provision of a lockable space for each detainee. The Committee has also recommended that the Department of Finance and Deregulation, and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), who are jointly undertaking the project, return to the Committee with detailed designs and associated costings of the project before commencing construction.

Members of the Committee conducted a site inspection and spoke with detainees at Villawood, in order to get an understanding of the existing problems at the Centre. The Committee is confident that the redevelopment will, subject to its recommendations, address the problems identified throughout the inquiry process.

"The Villawood Immigration Detention Facility is an important part of Australia's migration system, and the Committee was concerned to ensure that the redeveloped centre would be both operationally effective and respect the rights of detainees," said Senator McLucas. "The Committee is pleased to note that DIAC has written standards for the design of immigration facilities, and it has recommended that the standards be accredited by Standards Australia to ensure that all future facilities are of the highest possible standard."

The House of Representatives is expected to vote on a motion to approve the works on Wednesday, 25 November 2009.

For interview: Contact the Committee Chair, Senator the Hon Jan McLucas's media advisor, Derek Tipper on 0434 663 757.

For copies of the report, please visit the Committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/pwc> or contact the Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4636.