

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 21 August 2003 the proposal to construct a community recreation centre on Christmas Island 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 Transport and Regional Services (DoTaRS).
- 1.2 The Hon. Peter Slipper MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the proposed works was \$8 million.
- 1.3 Subject to parliamentary approval, it is envisaged that construction will commence in February 2004 with a view to completion in the latter part of 2004.²

1 Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives, No. 114, Thursday, 21 August 2003

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 95 and 96

Background

Existing Sport and Recreational Facilities

- 1.4 The Commonwealth is responsible for providing community infrastructure to 1, 500 residents on Christmas Island. Facilities for casual and organised sports and recreational activities on the island include:
- swimming pool;
 - gymnasium;
 - outdoor basketball courts;
 - community hall;
 - school site, including soccer pitch, tennis courts and covered sports arena;
 - golf club;
 - dive club;
 - cricket club;
 - and oval.³

Site of the Proposed Works

- 1.5 The proposed multi-purpose recreation facility will be located in the top north-eastern part of Christmas Island, at the former go-kart track on Phosphate Hill (an area of approximately 1.1 hectares). Phosphate Hill currently accommodates the temporary Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC), the temporary construction centre and the cricket club and oval.⁴
- 1.6 Phosphate Hill is designated Crown Land. In the Christmas Island Town Planning Scheme the former go-kart track is described as “Unallocated Crown Land”. The temporary construction camp, and the cricket club and oval are identified as “Public Purpose – Cricket Ground”.⁵
- 1.7 The proposed site is located close to existing infrastructure services, namely water, power and sewerage.⁶

3 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 12 and 36

4 ib id, paragraphs 53 - 55

5 ib id, paragraphs 56 - 58

6 ib id, paragraph 59

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 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
- 1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in the *Australian* on Wednesday 3 September and Wednesday, 17 September and in the *Weekend Australian* on Saturday, 13 September 2003. In order to encourage comment from Christmas Island residents, an advertisement was also placed in *The Islander* on Friday, 12 September 2003.
- 1.10 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.

Inspections and Public Hearing

- 1.11 A public hearing was held at Parliament House, Canberra on Friday, 31 October 2003.⁹
- 1.12 In their submission the Shire of Christmas Island expressed disappointment that the Committee was not going to conduct an investigation on Christmas Island.¹⁰
- 1.13 The Committee stated that given the community's wish to see the new facility proceed and the fact that the Committee had visited the island the previous year, as well as the difficulties of transport out to the island, it

7 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (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 on Friday, 31 October 2003 at Parliament House, Canberra.

10 Submission No. 3

did not wish to delay the project further. In consideration of these factors, the Committee thought it preferable to hold the hearing in Canberra.¹¹

- 1.14 The Committee noted the detailed submissions which it received from the community, and asked that DoTaRS pay close attention to the points made by the Shire.¹²

11 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 18

12 ib id