

27802 SENATE Tuesday, 25 September 2001

## COMMITTEES

### Public Works Committee

#### Reports

**Senator McGAURAN** (Victoria) (4.40 p.m.)—On behalf of Senator Calvert and on behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee

on Public Works, I present the following reports: No. 11 of 2001—New Freight and Passenger Facilities at Rumah Baru on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands;

No. 12 of 2001—Redevelopment of Residential Areas at Royal Military College, Duntroon, Australian Capital Territory; and No. 13 of 2001—Defence Intelligence Training

Centre at Canungra, Queensland. I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the reports.

Leave granted.

**Senator McGAURAN**—I move:

That the Senate take note of the reports.

I seek leave to incorporate my tabling statement

in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

*The statement read as follows—*

#### Introduction

On behalf of the Parliamentary Standing Committee

on Public Works I would like to make some brief comments on the three reports I have just tabled. They are:

the Committee's Eleventh Report of 2001 titled, New Freight and Passenger Facilities at Rumah Baru on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands;

the Committee's Twelfth Report of 2001 titled, Redevelopment of Residential Areas at Royal Military College, Duntroon, and

the Committee's Thirteenth Report of 2001 titled, Defence Intelligence Training Centre at Canungra, Queensland.

#### Freight and passenger facilities at Rumah Baru

The first report I have tabled relates to the construction

of new freight and passenger facilities at Rumah Baru on West Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

#### Problems

Historically, freight handling and passenger transfer

on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands have been characterised by many logistical and environmental

problems.

While West Island-bound containers are more numerous than those for Home Island, the direct transfer of containers to West Island is not possible

due to the lack of suitable freight facilities.

In addition, containers need to be partially unloaded

on Home Island to reduce container loads.

This is because there is insufficient capacity on the barge to transport containers one at a time across the lagoon to West Island.

The existing passenger jetty is located at the north-eastern end of West Island and is in a very exposed position. This results in unsafe passenger

transfers during high wind and heavy swell conditions.

#### Preferred solution

The preferred solution proposed by the Department

of Transport and Regional Services is to construct an offshore island at Rumah Baru on the

eastern side of West Island, which would be connected

to the shore by an access bridge. The island would be linked to deeper water in the lagoon

by a dredged channel of approximately 400 metres in length.

#### Benefits

The works in this proposal will allow freight containers to be towed directly from a supply ship

to the offshore island at West Island without the need for containers to be reduced in weight.

The proposal will also improve:

the safety;

efficiency; and

reliability of freight and passenger facilities.

During its inspections, the Committee was able to observe, at first hand, the hazardous nature of freight and passenger handling operations and procedures.

#### Recommendation

The Committee has formed the view that there is an urgent need for the provision of new freight

and passenger facilities on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Accordingly, the Committee has recommended

that the works proceed as a single stage project at a cost of \$16 million.

#### Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT

The second report I have tabled today relates to the development of residential areas at the Royal Military College, Duntroon.

The Defence Housing Authority (or DHA as it is more commonly known) is proposing to construct

100

on-base residences at Royal Military College for married accompanied Defence staff.

Committee caution

I note that the Committee views DHA's proposals for on-base accommodation for Defence personnel with some caution, even though dwellings are more cost-effective because they are constructed on Defence land. The Committee's cautionary view comes from its experience with similar projects. An example is dwellings built at RAAF Base Tindal near Katherine (in the Northern Territory) in the early 1980s. They became surplus to Defence's requirements because improved technology resulted in a decrease in staff numbers. Added to this, the Committee continues to have doubts about the numbers of Defence personnel and their families who wish to live on-base. To this end the Committee has recommended that surveys of the views of personnel and their families be undertaken together with the future viability of the Base in question. However, in the specific case of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, the Committee took into account its long history and role as a recognised unique training centre for Australian Army officers as well as military officers from other countries.

**Energy management**  
I turn now to the question of energy management. In keeping with Government policy, the Committee expects that Commonwealth departments and agencies should lead the way in effecting change in how energy is managed in the community. The Committee has therefore recommended that Commonwealth departments and agencies provide detailed comparative cost analyses between the various forms of energy, including solar energy, with any works proposals presented to the Public Works Committee.

**Greenhouse emissions**  
Related to this is the minimisation of greenhouse emissions. In this area the Committee is increasingly interested to assess Commonwealth departments and agencies in terms of their commitment to the aims of the Australian Greenhouse Office. The Committee has therefore recommended that Commonwealth departments and agencies ensure that consultations take place with the Australian Greenhouse Office about the most appropriate and effective methods of minimising energy for proposed public works.

**National Estate issues**  
A number of heritage buildings are located within the Royal Military College Duntroon area and are

entered on the Register of the National Estate. Any new buildings constructed in the heritage area should be sympathetic to their surround.

**Heritage issues**  
The Committee has recommended that close consultation be maintained with the Australian Heritage Commission, particularly in relation to final design drawings. The Committee has also recommended the establishment of a monitoring process during trenching or excavation of all sub-surface works and that this be monitored by an archaeologist.

**Recommendation**  
Despite these various recommendations, the Committee supports the proposed works and has recommended the redevelopment proceed at the cost of \$23 million.

**Defence Intelligence Centre, Canungra, QLD**  
The third report I have tabled today relates to the redevelopment of facilities for the Defence Intelligence Training Centre at Canungra, Queensland.

**History**  
Following a review of defence intelligence matters, the separate Defence intelligence training organisations were amalgamated in 1994 to form the Defence Intelligence Training Wing. In 1997 this organisation was amalgamated with the School of Military Intelligence to form the Defence Intelligence Training Centre.

**Main factors**  
In recommending that this work proceed at an estimated cost of \$17.745 million, the Committee has based its decision on three main factors. They are:

1. First, the recognition in the White Paper on Defence 2000 that the implementation of Australia's strategic policy requires the development of an intelligence capability through the enhancement of analytical and assessment expertise in military and strategic intelligence;
2. Secondly, the inadequacies of the existing facilities of the Defence Intelligence Training Centre in terms of:
  - size;
  - security; and
  - occupational health and safety issues; and
3. Thirdly, the Strategic Plan for the Defence Estate has confirmed that Canungra should be retained a significant Defence training base.

**Heritage issues**  
The Committee has recommended that Defence consult with the Australian Heritage Commission to ensure the protection of sites of both cultural and ecological significance.

Australian Greenhouse Office

The Committee has also recommended that Defence consult with the Australian Greenhouse Office in relation to the application of the Commonwealth's energy policy to Defence capital works projects.

Local environment issues

Finally, the Committee has recommended that, as a matter of urgency, Defence establish an environmental

advisory committee for the Canungra Close Training Area to provide a forum at which local environmental issues can be discussed.

This is an importance recommendation and I hasten to add that the Committee was impressed by evidence from community groups regarding the importance of the area to the local community.

I commend to the Senate each of the reports that I have tabled.

Question resolved in the affirmative.