

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 12 October 2005 the proposal for fit-out of an extension to new leased premises in Woden, ACT, 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 IP Australia (IP).
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the works was \$12.95 million, with an additional \$2 million for work on existing premises. Subject to parliamentary approval construction of the proposed fit-out will be undertaken concurrently with the later stages of the base-building construction. Both are due for completion in early September 2007.

1 Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 61, 12 October 2005

Background

IP Australia

- 1.3 IP Australia is a prescribed agency of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, and is the Federal Government agency responsible for administering the Australian Patents, Trade Marks, Designs and Plant Breeders Rights system.²

Inquiry Process

- 1.4 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million³ 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.⁴
- 1.5 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in the *Canberra Times* on Saturday, 14 January 2006. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, ACT 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.

Inspection and Public Hearing

- 1.6 On 10 February 2006 the Committee visited IP's current premises and also inspected the site and environs of the proposed works. A confidential

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 1.1.1

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

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

briefing from IP and a public hearing were held at Parliament House, Canberra, later that day.⁵

5 See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 10 February 2006 in Canberra