

Issues and Conclusions

Lack of Detailed Plans and Costs

- 3.1 The Public Works Committee *Manual of Procedures for Departments and Agencies* specifies that submissions should include planning and design concepts. However, DoTaRS' main submission did not include any plans for the design and/ or construction of the proposed recreation centre.
- 3.2 The Committee expressed its concern about the lack of detailed plans provided to it:
- “The Committee has got no working drawings, no plans and no site plans as to the siting of the building. We have the plan of the island, but it does not show us the footprint of the building on the island...all of that information must come forward for the Committee to appropriately deliberate on the matter.”¹
- 3.3 DoTaRS subsequently provided the Committee with details of the preferred tenderers' designs and construction costs.²

Building Materials

- 3.4 The Committee remarked that as a result of the lack of plans and specifications provided to it, it had no knowledge of the proposed building materials. The Committee expressed its concern about concrete tilt slab panels which it had previously seen used in the construction of housing on Christmas Island.

1 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 12

2 ib id, page 13

- 3.5 The Committee is aware of the potential for some building materials to deteriorate rapidly under harsh weather conditions. The Committee therefore recommends that the building materials used are suitable for Christmas Island's tropical climate. The Committee asked DoTaRS for further information on building materials and requested comments on their appropriateness for the climate and any maintenance required.³

Air Conditioning and Ventilation

- 3.6 The Committee wished to learn if air-conditioning is to be installed in the proposed recreation centre. DoTaRS responded that the building is to be partially air-conditioned:

“The whole idea was to make sure that...with ongoing operating costs, certain areas would be air-conditioned as required and others would have the flow-on effects of ceiling fans. The whole idea was to have an open entrance to the pool area- an open door area so that you could expand and open up the area for cooling purposes.”⁴

- 3.7 The Committee also wanted to know if there is to be some form of ventilation in the main playing hall of the new facility. DoTaRS replied that there will be good cross-ventilation at both high and low levels.⁵

Detailed Costs

- 3.8 The Committee also requested that DoTaRS supply it with more comprehensive material regarding costs for the project as a whole.⁶ DoTaRS complied with this request soon after the public hearing.

Location and Access

Alternative Sites

- 3.9 The DoTaRS main submission offers little information on any alternative sites considered for the proposed new recreation facility. The Committee

3 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 18

4 ib id, page 13

5 ib id

6 ib id

sought further details from DoTaRS about how it had selected the preferred site.⁷

- 3.10 DoTaRS explained that two sites in the Phosphate Hill area were identified as potentially suitable because of their proximity to power and services, appropriate size and ability to accommodate future growth on the island.⁸

Multiple Locations

- 3.11 The Committee noted that locating the new facility near the existing cricket ground and consolidating sporting facilities made sense in a small community such as Christmas Island. However, it was concerned that there remained a number of other sporting facilities spread across the Island.⁹

- 3.12 DoTaRS explained that the town plan for Christmas Island had developed the way it had for historical and cultural reasons.¹⁰ DoTaRS said that distances on the island are not substantial and that:

“... generally the distance factor on the island is comparable to anywhere in any local area, to get to those facilities.”¹¹

Transport

- 3.13 In its submission, the Shire raised concerns regarding the distance of the proposed site from the settled areas and the lack of public transport to and from the site.¹²
- 3.14 The Committee was interested to learn more about the nature of public transport on Christmas Island and possible solutions.¹³
- 3.15 DoTaRS acknowledged that the oval and new facility will be located some distance from the main areas of the settlement, that not everyone has access to transport, and that this is an issue that needs to be worked through with the Shire.¹⁴ The department posited that the cost of providing of a small bus on the island would not be great and that if it

7 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 2

8 ib id, page 3

9 ib id, page 9

10 ib id, page 10

11 ib id

12 Submission No. 3

13 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 8

14 ib id, pages 8 and page 16

increased the utilisation of the facility, it might be worthy of consideration.¹⁵

Collocation With the School

- 3.16 The Committee asked DoTaRS whether it had considered collocating the facility with the school, with a view to improving the sporting and recreational facilities at the school and enhancing access for residents in general.¹⁶
- 3.17 DoTaRS explained that a site in Drumsite, close to the school, had been the preferred location over the last decade for a new swimming pool. However, once the decision was made to incorporate the new swimming pool into a multi-purpose recreation facility, the Drumsite site was no longer suitable because it was too small to accommodate the complex.¹⁷ DoTaRS informed the Committee that it intended to collocate facilities around the cricket ground because this facility is the most used by the community.¹⁸
- 3.18 DoTaRS acknowledged that the school would be a major user of the new recreation centre and added that the school's current bus arrangements would cater for their transport requirements to and from the new facility.¹⁹

Consultation

- 3.19 DoTaRS' main submission stated that the consultation process for the works was facilitated through the Administrator's Advisory Council (AAC) which is comprised of representatives from the Shire and a broad range of community organisations on Christmas Island.²⁰
- 3.20 Written evidence supplied by both the Christmas Island Cricket and Sporting Club Inc. and the Shire indicated that the community had concerns with the consultation process for this project.²¹ The Cricket Club expressed its surprise that it was not invited to comment on the proposal, given that it is the main sports club on the island.²² The Shire maintained

15 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 16

16 ib id, pages 3 – 4

17 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 4

18 ib id

19 ib id

20 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 45 - 48

21 Submission No. 2 and Submission No. 3

22 Submission No. 2

that DoTaRS had not engaged in comprehensive community consultation.²³

- 3.21 The Committee noted that the school was not consulted either and asked DoTaRS to comment on why neither the cricket club nor the school were approached directly for their views on the proposed recreation centre.²⁴
- 3.22 DoTaRS expressed its surprise that the cricket club was not represented on the AAC and said that input from the school had been sought informally, rather than through the AAC.²⁵

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services continue to consult with the Christmas Island Cricket and Sporting Club, the school and the Administrator's Advisory Council.

Surveys

- 3.23 The Committee inquired whether surveys had been undertaken to gauge the expected patronage of the new recreational facilities.²⁶
- 3.24 DoTaRS replied that while no quantitative surveys had been undertaken, qualitative responses were elicited from community representatives such as the Shire, the AAC and the Administrator.²⁷

Ongoing Management

- 3.25 In written evidence, the Shire expressed concern that the department had not provided it with sufficient details for either the ongoing management arrangements or the anticipated operational costs of the proposed facility. The Shire maintained that, despite repeated requests for information, the Commonwealth had failed to outline who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the facilities.²⁸

23 Submission No. 3

24 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 3

25 ib id, page 3

26 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 7

27 ib id, page 8

28 Submission No. 3

- 3.26 The Committee commented on the need to clarify responsibility for the management of the new facilities and the form these arrangements would take.²⁹
- 3.27 Given the high running costs of recreational facilities, the Committee believes that the issue of ongoing management of the proposed recreation centre is pivotal and it would like to see a forward management plan developed for the new facility.³⁰ This information was subsequently provided to the Committee.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport and Regional Services negotiate a settlement with the Christmas Island Shire Council to clarify ongoing maintenance of the recreation centre prior to the construction of the facility.

Revenue and Financial Viability

- 3.28 The main submission outlined DoTaRS' intention to derive revenue from leasing out parts of the new facility such as the gymnasium, kiosk and crèche.³¹
- 3.29 The Committee commented on the difficulties of recouping significant funds via leasing arrangements and expressed serious doubt that such a proposal could be made financially viable in a community as small as Christmas Island.³²

Swimming Pool

- 3.30 The DoTaRS main submission indicated that the existing community swimming pool is likely to continue to be used once the new facility becomes operational.³³
- 3.31 The Committee questioned how a community the size of Christmas Island could sustain the operation of two public swimming pools and reiterated the importance of clarifying the ongoing management arrangements for the new facilities.³⁴

29 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 11 and page 14

30 ib id, page 18

31 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 49

32 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 4

33 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 9

34 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 14

Upgrade of the Oval

Soccer Pitch

- 3.32 The school site contains a soccer pitch used for soccer training by the general community one night per week and for a game on Sunday.³⁵
- 3.33 In its submission, the Shire alluded to the popularity of soccer on Christmas Island and suggested that the new recreation centre should include a full-sized soccer pitch.³⁶
- 3.34 The Committee asked DoTaRS whether any thought had been given to constructing a soccer pitch at the proposed new facility. DoTaRS said its concept plan envisaged an upgrade of the cricket oval which would allow a number of sports to be played there, including soccer.³⁷
- 3.35 The Committee commented on the low cost of drawing up boundary and goal lines so that soccer can be played on the oval, and stressed the importance to the community of accommodating this option.³⁸
- 3.36 DoTaRS acknowledged that the provision of soccer markings would not incur a large expense and said that it would discuss the matter with the Shire and, subject to budgetary constraints, try to facilitate this option.³⁹

Costs of Reticulation

- 3.37 The Committee asked DoTaRS to explain why reticulation of the oval was necessary, given the island's high annual rainfall. DoTaRS described the current condition of the cricket ground as poor, stating that:

“It is dry and like playing on concrete, and it is like that for nine months of the year. It becomes a dustbowl during the dry season.”⁴⁰

35 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 12 (e)

36 Submission No. 3

37 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 5

38 ib id, page 6

39 ib id

40 ib id, page 19

Impact of Immigration Reception and Processing Centre (IRPC)

- 3.38 The Committee noted that the proposed construction of the recreation centre coincides with the construction of the Immigration Reception and Processing Centre and wanted to know if that project had the potential to impact on these works.⁴¹
- 3.39 DoTaRS said that the two projects were discrete and that the IRPC works should not impact at all on the construction requirements of the new recreation centre.⁴²

Anticipated Population Increase

- 3.40 DoTaRS main submission described long-term population growth on Christmas Island as a major factor in the need for a new recreation facility. DoTaRS stated that the population is expected to reach 5, 000, partly due to the IRPC project.⁴³
- 3.41 The Committee was therefore interested to learn more about the basis of that prediction. DoTaRS outlined that its projections were based on the proposed IRPC and Asia Pacific Space Centre (APSC) projects, and the number of employees associated with the mines.⁴⁴
- 3.42 DoTaRS noted that the capacity of the IRPC to accommodate 1200 detainees had been reduced to 800, but stressed that this did not impact upon the general requirement on Christmas Island for a
“reasonably sized gymnasium and a reasonably sized sports facility.”⁴⁵

Comparisons with Other Remote Communities

- 3.43 The DoTaRs main submission stated that information on recreation centres in Derby and Broome, Western Australia, was used as a point of comparison for the proposed recreation centre on Christmas Island.⁴⁶ The

41 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 6

42 ib id

43 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 36

44 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 16

45 ib id, page 7

46 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 31 - 34

Committee wanted to know why these particular communities had been selected.⁴⁷

- 3.44 While acknowledging the uniqueness of Christmas Island, DoTaRS stated that it uses whatever comparators may be available, and added that the Shire had asked it to look at comparisons with Broome. Furthermore, DoTaRS was looking at recently constructed recreation facilities to gauge the facilities that were available in similarly remote areas.⁴⁸

Environmental Impacts

- 3.45 The main submission stated that no significant environmental impacts were envisaged in relation to this project.⁴⁹
- 3.46 The Committee requested that DoTaRS provide it with written details of the consultation process it had undertaken in this regard.⁵⁰

Conclusion

- 3.47 While the Committee was concerned at the lack of design and cost detail originally supplied by DoTaRS and believes there could have been greater consultation with the Christmas Island community, the Committee acknowledges the need to improve sporting and recreational facilities on Christmas Island.
- 3.48 The Committee therefore recommends that the proposed community recreation centre proceed at the estimated cost of \$8 million.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the proposed community recreation centre on Christmas Island proceed at the estimated cost of \$8 million.

47 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 9

48 ib id

49 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 41

50 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, page 18

Hon Judi Moylan MP

Chair

2 December 2003