

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 The proposed fit-out of new leased premises for the Bureau of Meteorology at 700 Collins Street, Docklands, Victoria was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report on 11 December 2002 in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*¹. The proponent agency for this project is the Bureau of Meteorology.
- 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 approximately \$19.22 million. Mr Slipper noted further that, subject to parliamentary approval, the integrated fit-out works would commence in August 2003, with relocation targeted for completion by 1 April 2004.

Background

- 1.3 The Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology is Australia's national meteorological service. The Bureau is an Executive Agency within the Environment and Heritage portfolio and operates under the

1 Extract from the Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives No. 68, Wednesday, 11 December 2002.

Meteorology Act 1955. The main task of the Bureau is to observe and understand Australia's weather and to provide meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic services:

- for the information of the public;
- for navigation, shipping and aviation;
- for Defence purposes; and
- to assist those engaged in primary production, industry, trade and commerce².

- 1.4 Since 1974, the Head Office of the Bureau of Meteorology has been located in leased premises at 150 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The Victorian Regional Office was collocated at these premises in 1988.
- 1.5 In May 1996 the Bureau negotiated a new lease with the owners of 150 Lonsdale Street. This lease will expire on 31 March 2004 and contains no lease renewal option period.
- 1.6 The Bureau states that prior to the 1996 lease renewal, there were concerns that the building services and infrastructure of 150 Lonsdale Street would not be adequate to meet their operational requirements beyond 2003³.
- 1.7 In late 1999 the Bureau began developing a strategy to meet its accommodation needs for the 10-20 year period following expiration of the Lonsdale Street lease. Following a strategic assessment of the Bureau's accommodation options, it was decided that the optimum solution would be relocation to new or refurbished premises in or near Melbourne's central business district.

Inquiry Process

- 1.8 The Committee is required by the *Public Works Committee Act* to consider public works over \$6 million⁴ 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;

² Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraphs 5-9

³ op cit, paragraphs 14-18

⁴ *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8).

- whether the cost of the work is being spent in the most cost efficient way;
- 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.⁵

1.9 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in *The Australian* on Friday, 20 December 2002 and *The Age* on Saturday, 4 January 2003. 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

1.10 The Committee travelled to the Docklands site and inspected at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. A public hearing was held in Melbourne on 7 February 2003⁶.

⁵ *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 17.

⁶ See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 7 February 2003 in Melbourne.

