



The Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Suite R1 - 119
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Vivienne Courto

**DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS
AFFAIRS (DIMIA) RESPONSE TO PWC SUBMISSION FROM SUE NASH**

1. Thank you for referring a copy of the letter received on 9 February 2005 from Ms Sue Nash concerning the Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre (MIDC) Expansion Project.
2. The letter raises a number of important issues regarding:
 - (i) Immigration detention policy,
 - (ii) The size of rooms,
 - (iii) Consultation with stakeholders and residents, and
 - (iv) Whether the project is a good use of \$7 million.
3. Ms Nash would like to see the total number of people in detention reduced and encouraged DIMIA to explore alternatives to detention. Immigration detention policy issues are outside the scope of the PWC hearing, therefore DIMIA has not responded to this issue.
4. The room sizes have not been finalised. They are not 2.5x2.5 metres. Room sizes will vary to meet the occupancy requirements of each room type. The architects have designed the accommodation to meet all BCA and local statutory requirements and are of suitable standard. The design of the expanded facility provides for a greater variety of accommodation options. These include motel style accommodation for families and females, single bedroom suites, 2 bed and 4 bed ensuite rooms.

In the extended facility most single males will be accommodated in discrete bedrooms with up to 4 persons and access to recreation areas and some self-catering.

5. The consultation process is ongoing. DIMIA will continue to consult with relevant stakeholders including residents at the Centre. Formal consultation sessions are undertaken regularly between the detention service provider, DIMIA and resident representatives. Many suggestions have been made by the residents and have been incorporated in the current design. These include improved self catering facilities, additional external areas. As the plans develop there will be additional consultation with residents.

6. The MIDC has been operating at capacity for some years. Immigration detention residents represent some 0.6% of short-term visitor arrivals. At present short-term visitors are about 3-3.5 million per year, forecast to rise to 5 million in 2005-06. Current predictions are that short-term visitors will increase by 5% per year from 2006-07. The expansion will provide additional capacity not available in the current confines of the building. In addition to capacity, the expansion will also provide internal separation zones. The current physical layout of the MIDC generally only allows for the separate management of single adult males from females and families. The background of residents has been changing, and a growing number have criminal backgrounds and/or have used illicit drugs. In order to protect the welfare of residents and staff, immediate expansion of the facility is highly desirable.

Yours sincerely,

David Doherty
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Detention Contract and Infrastructure Branch
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17 February 2005