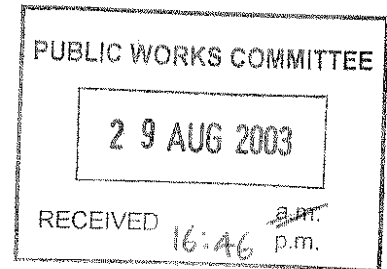




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File No: 1/14/40/128  
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29 August 2003

Ms Vivienne Courto  
Inquiry Secretary  
Public Works Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**RAAF Base Richmond Reinvestment Project**

Dear Ms Courto

The Australian Heritage Commission advises that RAAF Base Richmond is a place entered in the Interim list of the Register of the National Estate.

Information on the heritage values of RAAF Base Richmond and the potential impacts of proposals are provided in the attachment. On the basis of these matters, the Australian Heritage Commission would recommend that the Department of Defence continues to liaise with it on those aspects of the RAAF Base Richmond that have the potential to adversely affect national estate values.

Yours sincerely



Bruce Leaver  
Executive Director

cc Brian Grandin  
Defence Heritage Management

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RAAF BASE RICHMOND REINVESTMENT PROJECT  
AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION  
SUBMISSION

*Background*

1. On 20 May 2003 The Australian Heritage Commission issued a notice to the effect that it proposed to enter RAAF Base Richmond in the Register of the National Estate (RNE) and entered it in the Interim List. A three month period from that date was available for persons to object to the proposed entry. No objection was received. Places entered in the Interim list are provided the same level of protection as if they are entered in the RNE. The next stage involves the transfer of the place from the Interim list to the RNE in accordance with s 25 (4) of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* (AHC Act). This is expected to occur later this year.
2. The AHC Act obliges Ministers and Commonwealth agencies not to take any action likely to have an adverse effect on a place entered in the RNE or Interim list, unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative. Where there is no feasible and prudent alternative, Ministers and Commonwealth agencies must take all measures that can reasonably be taken to minimise any adverse effect on national estate values. Prior to taking any action that might affect a place entered in the RNE or Interim list to a significant extent, the Minister or Commonwealth agency must consult the Commission and give it the opportunity to consider and comment on it.
3. The passage of the current heritage bills that would amend the *Environment Protection and Conservation Biodiversity Act 1999*, would enhance protection of the Commonwealth's own heritage places through the establishment of a Commonwealth Heritage List.

4. In the first six months after the commencement of the new heritage system, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage may transfer to the Commonwealth Heritage List those places that are in Commonwealth areas currently listed in the RNE. RAAF Base Richmond could be considered for such transfer to, or be nominated for entry in, the proposed Commonwealth Heritage List.

#### *Significance*

5. RAAF Base Richmond is of exceptional importance in demonstrating the design and construction of the first purpose built military air force bases in Australia, and demonstrates their principal characteristics, including planning, land use zones and road layout. It is also important in illustrating the achievements of Commonwealth architectural staff during the 1930s in the design and execution of permanent buildings for the RAAF. Under the influence of the Art Deco and Functionalist architectural styles and the underlying revival of Georgian domestic forms, face brick walls and hipped roofs became unifying elements in small buildings with stylistic details articulating and adding scale and uniformity to workshop and hangar buildings.
6. Structures of individual significance that contribute to the heritage values of RAAF Base Richmond include the Fellman hangers (Buildings 311, 312 and 313) relocated from Evans Head after World War II. They are gabled metal framed demountable structures with single span roof trusses manufactured in Newcastle by Lysaghts during World War II.

*Potential impact on heritage values and minimisation measures*

7. The construction of the new Headquarters Complex, extensions to Building 522, the refurbishment of Buildings 122, 320 350 and 523, the upgrading of the high voltage reticulation, the construction of new ablution facilities and the storm water upgrade are unlikely to have any significant or adverse effect on the heritage values of RAAF Base Richmond. The removal of some 1980s demountable structures, when the new accommodation is available, is likely to enhance the heritage values of RAAF Base Richmond.
8. The construction of the proposed Mechanical Equipment Operations and Maintenance Section facility requires the removal of Bellman hangers 311 and 313. The Commission would encourage further exploration of whether there are alternatives to this removal.
9. The Commission notes that two out of five hangers are proposed to be retained for ongoing use. The Commission would wish to continue discussing with Defence the choice of hangers to be retained, and other alternatives, to avoid or minimise any adverse effect on national estate values. We would expect this to help achieve an outcome satisfying both operational capability requirements and conservation of national estate values.