



Australian Government

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HQJOCP/115/2004

Ms Vivienne Courto

Inquiry Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Courto

**HEADQUARTERS JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND PROJECT
RESPONSE TO PWC SUBMISSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the submission dated 28 May 2004 from the University of Sydney School of Physics, Molonglo Radio Observatory.

In April 2003, following a number of detailed site studies for the new Headquarters, a Defence Site Selection Board selected the project site, located 11km south west of Bungendore within the "Woodlands" property. As part of their deliberations, the Board took into consideration the possible impact of the Headquarters on external stakeholders, including the Molonglo Radio Synthesis Observatory (the Observatory), which is located 5.4 km to the south east of the Headquarters site.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Project makes comment on emissions that can cause interference to observations at the Observatory. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement also looks at a range of possible mitigation measures, including the physical placement of the Headquarters, electronic shielding, minimising electrical device usage during observing times, and tree planting on the ridge between the Headquarters and the Observatory.

The University of Sydney submission in response to the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in October 2003 indicated that through the use of passive and active mitigation measures the likelihood of the successful co-existence of the Headquarters and the Observatory was high. Defence acknowledges that successful co-existence is dependent upon an accurate determination of the radio frequency interference signature of the Headquarters, the likely impact upon the Observatory, and the implementation of appropriate mitigation strategies.

The 28 May 2004 submission by the University of Sydney notes that the site selected for the Headquarters was the best of several possible sites in the area, and was the result of consultation between Defence and Observatory representatives. Defence concurs that the Steering Committee and Working Group set up between the Project team and Observatory representatives have been very productive, and is committed to continuing the consultative process throughout the development and operation of the Headquarters. Mitigation strategies

such as those listed in the University of Sydney's 2004 submission will be further investigated during the design phase of the project.

The submission also notes that a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being negotiated between Defence and University of Sydney. The MOU is a non-binding agreement between both parties to ensure that the needs and priorities of each are appropriately represented at all times, and makes provision for research into interference mitigation techniques where the interference is attributable to, or is likely to be caused during, the construction or operation of the Headquarters. The MOU does not provide for compensation if ongoing research proves impossible.

Defence is committed to continuing the consultation process through the already established Steering Committee and Working Group, and appreciates the contribution of University of Sydney and Observatory personnel.

Yours sincerely

Original signed on 2 June 2004

B.E. PLENTY

Air Commodore

Director General Headquarters Joint Operations Command Project

June 2004