

ASSPED 218 /2003

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

Dear Ms Courto

**RANDWICK BARRACKS SITE REMEDIATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
DEVELOPMENT**

You referred Submission No 8 from Moverly Precinct Committee dated 25 March 2003 to Defence for comment.

The Moverly Precinct Committee (the Committee) has had an interest in the Site since disposal planning commenced in 1996. The Secretary of the group, Ms Felicia Harris was also a member of the 1996/97 Community Reference Group that was the key community liaison body during the preparation of the rezoning proposal. The Defence disposal site (the Site) falls within their precinct area as defined by Randwick City Council (Council). The Committee has raised the following concerns:

1. The Department of Defence (Defence) should not be undertaking the proposed remediation and construction works as it does not have the relevant expertise;
2. As the Site is an operational Defence facility, there is no right of access or supervision by State authorities, Council or Unions;
3. The Committee has not had access to project documentation, including development applications, and that they have received inconsistent or contradictory information when inquiries are made at the Site Office;
4. That the Site should be sold 'as-is' with the purchaser undertaking remediation of the Site and construction of trunk infrastructure;
5. The adequacy of site remediation and ground water investigations including the suggestion that they have not had access to documentary proof of remediation;
6. The carrying out of site works including demolition, remediation and earthworks which risk worker and resident health and safety and has created dust clouds potentially containing asbestos;
7. The protection of flora and fauna, and in particular the removal of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) and the proposal to remove sediment from the wetland/detention basin;
8. There has been inadequate consultation during the disposal planning process and Defence is accused of rigidly pushing a particular outcome to achieve maximum financial gain; and
9. Whether adequate archaeological assessment of the Site has been undertaken.

## DEFENCE RESPONSE

### Comment 1

- Defence has expertise in land management and disposals both internally and externally. Many of the Defence public servants working within the Property Disposals Task Force (PDTF) have tertiary qualifications in environmental and project management or land economics. These internal skills are supplemented by external advice from specialist consultants as and when required. These specialists are often the same ones used by the most well-known and respected developers in Australia.
- The assessment of on-site contamination and the management of remediation have been, or are being undertaken by appropriately qualified environmental consultants and occupational hygienists. All testing and reporting is reviewed by an Environment Protection Authority (EPA) accredited Site Auditor prior to the issue of a Site Audit Statement under the *Contaminated Land Management Act* certifying that an area is suitable for its intended use.

### Comment 2

- All work on the site is being undertaken in accordance with all relevant Commonwealth and State Acts, Regulations, and Codes of Practice.
- All work is reviewed by an independent environmental consultant appointed by the NSW Labor Council. An Environmental/Community Liaison Officer also reports to Council.
- The NSW Labor Council, WorkCover and ComCare have reviewed project documentation, remediation processes and works in progress raising no issues which have prevented works from proceeding on-site.
- Council has open access to the Site.
- No court orders have been made against the Commonwealth or Defence at any time.

### Comment 3

- All relevant project documentation has been made available to the Committee. The Committee has been provided with their own copies of each Development Application by Council, as they are submitted by Defence, and invited to submit their objections during the extended exhibition periods.
- The Committee has also been advised that all public documentation relating to the project can be viewed at the Site Office. This offer has not been exercised by the Committee.

### Comment 4

- The option to sell the site 'as is' was considered by Defence in the disposal of the Site. Independent reviews, however, have consistently determined that the optimal return to the Commonwealth is achieved if Defence remediates the Site and construct trunk infrastructure.
- Furthermore, a staged disposal, as outlined in the Development Applications, is in accordance with the approved Master Plan for the Site and allows time for Army units, currently accommodated within the disposal area, to relocate to alternate facilities over the next three-five years.

#### Comment 5

- In the Master Plan for the Site, Council requires remediation to “...*the maximum standard for residential and other sensitive land uses ... where no standard exists the Site is to be remediated to an asbestos free level or to a level where no unacceptable risk remains as confirmed in writing by the relevant State and/or Commonwealth Government Authority*”. Following a review of the Site Audit Report, the NSW Dept of Health has formally advised that “*the risk to people’s health, if indeed a risk exists at all, is so small that it need not be considered further*”. This advice was accepted by Council and allowed the residential development of Stage 1A to proceed.
- All remediation (and demolition) work is being undertaken in accordance with relevant statutory regulations, codes and guidelines.
- All work is reviewed by an independent environmental consultant appointed by the NSW Labor Council. An Environmental/Community Liaison Officer also reports to Randwick City Council.
- The remaining ground water contamination on the Site has occurred from a leaking sewer main that is to be replaced during the development of the Site. The contaminant has been unequivocally identified as dry cleaning fluid from a source to the north of the Site and has been brought to the attention of Council. All other possible known sources of groundwater contamination have been removed.
- All reports relating to the validation of the Site, including the Site Audit Report and the letter from the NSW Department of Health, have been provided to the Committee.

#### Comment 6

- This issue has been addressed above. All current works are undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation, regulations and codes of practice and a site specific asbestos management policy. Contractors must comply with the current NSW Occupational Health & Safety Regulation, the WorkCover Codes of Practice. Asbestos removal works are undertaken by a licensed contractor;
- Defence has prepared a template Environmental Management Plan to assist contractors to complete and implement their own environmental management procedures including the minimisation of dust. During high wind periods, work that creates excessive dust is stopped. Sprinklers used to moisten soil stockpiles on the Site further assist with dust control.
- Air monitoring is undertaken around the Site and on the boundary during any work that may involve disturbing asbestos. During the demolition of the asbestos cement clad Naval Stores and the trial asbestos cement fragment sieving trial, a minimum of five air monitors were used on a 24 hour basis. These were located around the work sites and on the boundary fences. An exhaustive analysis undertaken to date has shown no asbestos fibres have ever been detected.

#### Comment 7

- All vegetation clearance on the development site has been reviewed and cleared by either Environment Australia, Council or the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) prior to commencing.

- Vegetation clearing within the Randwick Environmental Park (REP) has been limited to the clearing of lantana, a noxious weed. In all incidences relevant permission and/or approvals have been obtained from Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and/or Environment Australia.
- A specialist flora/fauna report was prepared for the Notice of Intent (NOI) prepared and approved under the *Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*. The NOI is a public document and was prepared in close consultation with State and Commonwealth environmental authorities. Recommendations and findings from the flora/fauna report were incorporated into the Site Master Plan, Development Application for the REP and REP Plan of Management.
- The Plan of Management also sets out the long term management and revegetation of the REP, which will protect all native vegetation whether classified as a threatened species or not. Part of the plan has been implemented with the removal of lantana that will assist in the natural regeneration of ESBS.
- Silt at the bottom of the wetland/detention basin has built up over the years, purportedly from the development of Moverly Green to the east of the Site. At the request of Council, a Development Application was lodged to excavate the sediment in dry conditions. Defence has acknowledged throughout the project that, from an environmental perspective, the REP cannot be a permanent water feature.
- Engineering advice in relation to these issues has been provided to the Committee.
- The sediment removal proposal is currently under environmental assessment by Council, in consultation with the Department of Land and Water Conservation, and the NSW Department of Fisheries.

#### Comment 8

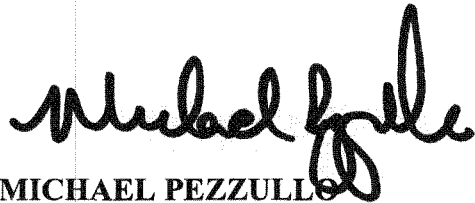
- The Master Plan considered Council and the broader community's responses to Defence proposals for the Site submitted during the previous five years. Extensive consultation was also undertaken with Council who in turn consulted with representatives of key community groups in the preparation of the final Master Plan, adopted in November 2001. A further public information session was held on 13 October 2001 during the Master Plan advertising and assessment period, providing yet another opportunity for the community to make submissions to Council.
- A number of attempts have been made, both directly and through Council, to brief the Committee on the project, however they are have not accepted. On the last occasion when Defence representatives attended a Committee meeting (3 March 2003), they were refused the opportunity to speak. This was despite advice to the Committee from Council that Defence and its representatives have the right, as a local landowner, to attend the Committee meetings.
- The Department regularly issues a Neighbourhood Newsletter to surrounding residents prior to the commencement of significant site works. The newsletter provides a detailed outline of the works proposed and the safety and environmental safeguards established to protect both the workers and the surrounding residents. Eight newsletters have been issued within the past 18 months.

- Defence has also briefed the Randwick Community Centre, SOS Preschool, Moverly Childcare Centre, Dr Paul Adam, WorkCover and the NSW Labor Council. ComCare was also initially briefed (with WorkCover) and, being satisfied with the process established for the remediation of the Site, advised that WorkCover would be their agent in all further dealings.

Comment 9

- An archaeological monitoring regime was established by Mary Dallas Consulting for the Site during the preparation of the Master Plan, which was adopted by Council on 13 November 2001. Subsequent Development Applications also outlined a process of archaeological monitoring to be initiated at the commencement of site works, particularly earthmoving activities.
- An archaeologist, together with a representative from the La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council, carried out a detailed assessment in the location of the proposed new Army oval and Stage 1A site following the lifting of the concrete slabs in late January 2003, prior to the commencement of earthworks. This included trenching in areas where it was suspected that items of archaeological significance may be found. There was no evidence of any aboriginal archaeological sites.

Yours sincerely



**MICHAEL PEZZULLO**  
Assistant Secretary  
Strategic Planning and Estate Development

4 April 2003