

Kirsten Livermore MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Shadow Minister For Education, Employment and Training
Federal Member for Capricornia

12 July, 2006

Mr R. Knight
Inquiry Secretary
Joint Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

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Dear Mr Knight,

FACILITIES UPGRADE TO SHOALWATER BAY TRAINING AREA

Thank you for the invitation to be part of the committee's activities when it travels to Central Queensland for the inspection of Shoalwater Bay and the hearing into the proposed upgrade of facilities on that site.

I would like to take this opportunity as the local member to make the committee members aware of the significance of the Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA) and associated defence activities to this region.

While there is a great deal of support here in Central Queensland for the defence force exercises that take place at Shoalwater Bay, it is very important that such support is not taken for granted and that the concerns and interests of local residents are always foremost in any deliberations about the use of Shoalwater Bay.

That is particularly the case when considering the proposal that is currently before the committee.

Based on the Defence Department's community briefing that I attended earlier this year, it does not appear that this construction project will of itself have any major impact on the SWBTA or the surrounding area. It is however one part of preparing Shoalwater Bay for its expanded role as part of the Joint Combined Training Centre project and needs to be seen in that context.

The decision of the government to expand the role of the SWBTA is one that was made in the national interest and was therefore necessarily based on broad national objectives. In fulfilling those national objectives, however, the government must not overlook the needs and interests of those communities living adjacent to Shoalwater Bay that will be affected by the expected increase in both the number and size of exercises at the SWBTA once these facilities upgrades are completed.

In particular, the Department of Defence must acknowledge that any increase in training activity at Shoalwater Bay resulting from these upgrades will impact on the infrastructure of the surrounding region. It should not fall to the local residents alone to bear the cost of maintaining the infrastructure that supports the SWBTA when the training that takes place there is for the benefit of all Australians and our allies.

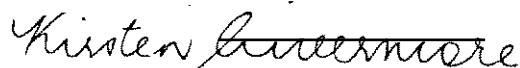
I would also like the committee members to be aware of the concerns held by a growing number of residents in Central Queensland regarding the environmental impact of training exercises on this stunning stretch of Queensland's coastline.

Like many of my constituents, I have read about the experiences of communities in other parts of the world that have suffered environmental degradation as a result of military activities. For example, there are reports from the Philippines which are suggesting that the people of that country will have to pay \$US 2.5 billion to clean up the environment around the Clark Air Base.

In light of such reports, the Defence Department needs to do everything it can to allay community fears about possible contamination of soil and water in and around Shoalwater Bay.

Thank you for taking these points into consideration. I look forward to welcoming you to Central Queensland later this month.

Yours sincerely



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Parliamentary Secretary to the
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