

## Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley

- 2.1 The Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland, proposes to expand and modify facilities and infrastructure at RAAF Base Amberley in Queensland to support No 82 Wing's No 1 Squadron, No 6 Squadron and No 278 Squadron transition from the F-111 to the F/A-18F Super Hornet. The estimated cost of the project is \$117.1 million (excluding GST).
- 2.2 The proposal was referred to the Committee on 28 May 2008.

### Conduct of the inquiry

- 2.3 The inquiry was advertised in the *Canberra Times* 19 April 2008, *The Courier Mail* on 26 July 2008 and *The Australian* on 6 August 2008. The Committee received five submissions to the inquiry, two supplementary submissions and one confidential submission detailing the project cost estimates. A list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 2.4 The Committee undertook a site inspection, in-camera hearing and public hearing on 20 August 2008 in Amberley. A list of witnesses can be found at Appendix B.
- 2.5 The transcript of the public hearing as well as the submissions to the inquiry is available on the Committee's website<sup>1</sup>. Plans for the proposed works are detailed in Submission 1, Department of Defence (Defence).

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1 <[www.aph.gov.au/pwc](http://www.aph.gov.au/pwc)>

## Need for works

- 2.6 The Committee was advised that, as the home base for No 82 Wing, RAAF Base Amberley provides full operational and maintenance support for the Precision Strike element of the Air Combat Group. The change in aircraft specification, operations, maintenance and training, and corresponding changes in unit roles and organisational structure, requires changes in airfield facilities and infrastructure at the Base.<sup>2</sup>
- 2.7 The Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project will contribute to future capability at RAAF Base Amberley by supporting:
- No 82 Wing (including No 1 Squadron and No 6 Squadron) for headquarters, maintenance, logistics and operations functions;
  - No 278 Squadron Technical Training Flight – Amberley for trade training functions; and
  - Defence Contractors operating the Simulator and Intermediate level Maintenance facilities.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.8 No 82 Wing and its squadrons are currently accommodated in a variety of facilities that range from construction in the 1960s to the most recent in the 1990s. Whilst the older buildings have been progressively modified to enable them to support No 82 Wing's operations, all facilities require further works in order to support future No 82 Wing capability. The older buildings generally do not comply with the latest structural codes, the building code of Australia, Defence's Manual of Fire Protection Engineering, current Occupational Health and Safety Acts or environmental legislation.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.9 Some maintenance support activities which are currently conducted in a number of facilities at the Base will be consolidated into a new facility.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.10 In assessing existing facilities, the Committee finds that there is a need for the proposed works, Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley Queensland.

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2 Submission 1, Department of Defence (Defence), p. 2.

3 Submission 1, Defence, p. 2.

4 Submission 1, Defence, p. 2

5 Submission 1, Defence, p. 3.

## Scope of works

- 2.11 The proposed scope of works is detailed in Submission 1, Department of Defence.<sup>6</sup> The project includes 11 separate elements as summarised below.
- 2.12 New No 1 Squadron Facility:
- Headquarters facility – including upgrades to the Information and Communications Technology systems;
  - Hangar facility – hangar floor for up to four F/A-18F aircraft, flight line, maintenance and logistic working accommodation, installation of foam suppression, epoxy coating of floors, install aircraft power and compressed air systems;
  - Demolish Building 363.
- 2.13 Modified and upgraded No 6 Squadron Facilities:
- Headquarters facility – reconfiguration of existing space to provide additional dedicated training rooms and upgrading of air conditioning system;
  - Hangar facility – configure existing hangar facility to allow maintenance of aircraft, including resurfacing floor with epoxy coating, upgrading aircraft power and compressed air systems and providing an additional Briefing room and office.
- 2.14 Expanded Common Use Operational Level Maintenance Facilities:
- Extend Alternate Mission Equipment Maintenance Section facility, survey new compass calibration pad and provide line markings.
- 2.15 New Ground Support Equipment Shelter and External Fuel Tank Storage:
- Construction of additional dedicated storage space for Ground Support Equipment and external fuel tanks – in the area currently occupied by Building 363 (see 2.12 above).
- 2.16 New and Reconfigured Training Facilities:
- Aircrew Training Simulator Facility – new facility including computer based training room, briefing rooms and simulator

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<sup>6</sup> The submission is available on the Committee's website or by contacting the Committee Secretariat.

maintenance. Maintenance includes electrical and mechanical workshops, offices, software/modelling room, heavy equipment store, document library/store and flammable liquid store;

- Trade Training Facility – existing facility reconfigured to allow for training using Integrated Visual Environment Maintenance Trainer systems, computer based training and aircraft practical training.

2.17 Modified Aircraft Shelters:

- Upgrades to fire detection and environmental systems.

2.18 Modified Headquarters No 82 Wing Facilities:

- Reconfigure existing space to provide additional office accommodation for approximately ten staff and provision of video conferencing capability.

2.19 Upgraded Engine Run Up and Testing Facilities:

- Modifications to Engine Test Cell 3 to suit the future No 82 Wing aircraft dimensions and noise attenuation requirements, including the F/A-18F Super Hornet and its F414-GE-400 engine.

2.20 Upgraded Aircraft Wash Facility:

- New facility which meets the relevant environmental standards.

2.21 New and Refurbished Intermediate Level Maintenance Facilities:

- Non-destructive Inspection Shop and Composite Repair Shop – building 834 – minor internal services modifications for the provision of special power supply;
- Fuel Systems Repair Facility – Building 289 – minor modification to accommodate the new 480 gallon external fuel tank test system and upgrade for Air Refuelling Store service and repair;
- New purpose built workshop with hydraulic/pneumatic, tyre and wheel, avionics and aviation life support Intermediate Level Maintenance functions.

- 2.22 Upgrades to associated Site Works and engineering Services:
- Provide and upgrade connections to trunk engineering services.<sup>7</sup>
- 2.23 The Committee has assessed the scope of the works and finds them suitable to support the transition from F-111 to F/A-18F Super Hornets at RAAF Base Amberley.

## Cost of works

- 2.24 The total out-turn cost of this work is estimated to be \$117.1 million (excluding GST) which includes the construction costs, management and design fees, furniture, fittings and equipment, contingencies and an escalation allowance.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.25 The Committee received detailed cost plans for the project and held an in-camera hearing with the Department of Defence on the full project costs.
- 2.26 The Committee is satisfied that the costings for the project provided to it are adequate and that suitable contingency planning is in place to ensure that the overall project is not compromised.

## Project issues

- 2.27 The Committee sought reassurance that the design of the new facilities would allow adaptation considering that further changes to aircraft type are envisaged. Defence confirmed that facilities have been 'sized and designed to cater for possible replacements which may come in at a later date.'<sup>9</sup>
- 2.28 The Committee was concerned that the new aircraft may increase noise levels and impact on the local community. Defence noted that the aircraft operate differently and will have 'different noise signatures'.<sup>10</sup> The Committee notes full studies are being undertaken on noise levels and Defence aims to ensure that noise impacts on the community are mitigated as far as possible.<sup>11</sup>
- 2.29 The Committee acknowledged the support of the local council for RAAF Base Amberley and the good relationship which has been

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7 Submission 1, Defence, pp. 6-11.

8 Submission 1, Defence, p. 25.

9 Brig Grice, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 20 August 2008, p. 5.

10 Mr Trinder, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 20 August 2008, p. 7.

11 Mr Trinder, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 20 August 2008, p. 7.

fostered between Defence and the council. An ongoing program of extensive consultation with stakeholders in the area and specific consultation was undertaken for this project.<sup>12</sup>

- 2.30 The Committee noted that the Main Roads Department and the local community had concerns regarding the cumulative effect of the expansion of RAAF Amberley but that the concerns were not specific to this project.

### Committee comment

- 2.31 Overall, the Committee is satisfied that this project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 2.32 Having examined the purpose, need, use, revenue and public value of the work, the Committee considers that it is expedient that the proposed works proceed.

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### Recommendation 1

**The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18 (7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: Australian Super Hornet Facilities Project, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland.**

Mark Butler MP  
Chair  
16 October 2008

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<sup>12</sup> Mr Olsen, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 20 August 2008, p. 5.  
Group Capt. Robertson, Defence, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 20 August 2008, p. 5.