



**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY  
COMMITTEE**

on

**PUBLIC WORKS**

**Reference: Development of facilities—Stage 3 at HMAS *Stirling***

**GARDEN ISLAND, WA**

**Wednesday, 5 November 1997**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**CANBERRA**

**WITNESSES**

**KABLE, Commodore Garvon Paul, Director General Maritime Development,  
Department of Defence, Canberra 2600 3**

**KENNEDY, Air Commodore James Frederick George, Director General Project  
Delivery, Department of Defence, Canberra 2600 3**

**TOOTH, Wing Commander John Marsden, Project Director (A), Department of  
Defence, Canberra, 2600 3**

**TROTTER, Commodore Robert Neil, Commodore Fleet Bases, HMAS *Stirling*, WA  
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**JOHNSON, Mr Clark Gregory, President, Garden Island Preservation Society (Inc),  
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**KABLE, Commodore Garvon Paul, Director General Maritime Development,  
Department of Defence, Canberra115**

**KENNEDY, Air Commodore James Frederick George, Director General Project  
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JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

*Development of facilities—Stage 3 at HMAS Stirling*

GARDEN ISLAND, WA

Wednesday, 5 November 1997

Present

Mr Tuckey (Chair)

Senator CalvertMr Richard Evans

Senator FergusonMr Forrest

Mr Ted Grace

Mr Hollis

The committee met at 1.22 p.m.

Mr Tuckey took the chair.



**KABLE, Commodore Garvon Paul, Director General Maritime Development, Department of Defence, Canberra 2600**

**KENNEDY, Air Commodore James Frederick George, Director General Project Delivery, Department of Defence, Canberra 2600**

**TOOTH, Wing Commander John Marsden, Project Director (A), Department of Defence, Canberra, 2600**

**TROTTER, Commodore Robert Neil, Commodore Fleet Bases, HMAS *Stirling*, WA 6958**

CHAIR—Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to declare open this public hearing into the proposed development of facilities—Stage 3 at HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to the parliament by the House of Representatives on 23 September 1997 at an estimated outturn cost of \$19 million.

In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969, in considering and reporting on a public work, the committee shall have regard to:

- (3) In considering and reporting on a public work, the Committee shall have regard to—
  - (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
  - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
  - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
  - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
  - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

This morning the committee undertook an extensive inspection of naval facilities at Garden Island, including sites proposed for various elements of the proposed works. This afternoon the committee will hear evidence from the Department of Defence and the Garden Island Preservation Society.

The committee has received a submission from the Department of Defence dated September 1997. Welcome, gentlemen. Do you wish to propose any amendment to that submission?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Yes, Mr Chairman. I have four amendments which I would

like to read. Firstly, on page 6, paragraph 7, change the figure 2,270 to 2,433; page 8, paragraph 14, amend the first sentence to read:

Clearance divers carry out underwater tasks of mine counter measures, demolition, underwater battle damage repair, wreck clearance and construction, often in hazardous conditions.

On page 29, paragraph 87, in the table, change the number of naval sea personnel for 1997 from 1,180 to 1,343; also change the total naval personnel number for 1997 from 1,990 to 2,153; and on page 33, paragraph 99, replace paragraph 99 with a new paragraph as follows:

The provision of ANZAC and Frigate (FFG) Propulsion Control Simulators for procurement as Capital Equipment items is presently under review. Such simulators would be used to train marine engineering personnel in the operation of the propulsion control systems and the maintenance of the control consoles. Their provision would obviate the need for STIRLING based personnel to use the facility at Garden Island, Sydney, resulting in travel cost savings and improved personnel availability. An extension to the Training Centre in the order of 250 square metres would be required to accommodate the Simulators.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Air Commodore. It is proposed that the submission, as amended, be received, taken as read and incorporated into the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objection? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The document read as follows—*

**CHAIR**—Would a representative of the Department of Defence now read the summary statement to the committee, after which we will proceed with questions.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. The Department of Defence advocates the construction and modification of facilities at HMAS *Stirling*, Garden Island, Western Australia, as stage 3 of its development program.

The two-ocean policy calls for fleet basing on both the east and west coasts. HMAS *Stirling* is the fleet base on Australia's west coast. Although *Stirling* was commissioned in 1978, considerable additional works were subsequently undertaken. These works proceeded in several stages, the last of which is now nearing completion.

The works now proposed are to provide facilities needed for *Stirling* to perform its operational role in a safe, efficient and effective manner, as well as to improve conditions of service related to facilities. The need for the additional works primarily arises from the projected home porting of additional fleet units at *Stirling*, the efficiency and effectiveness objectives and recognition of the need for conditions of service improvements. In particular, accommodation deficiencies with clearance diving, emergency operations, headquarters functions, warehousing and medical services need rectification. Facilities to enable helicopter flight deck training need to be provided, facilities associated with safety within the ordnance depot need to be improved, additional installations are needed to improve efficiency in fuel management, and supplementation of recreation facilities and arrangements for improved care of members' personal effects are required.

The works comprise 14 individual proposals of an operational, training, logistics and personnel support nature. The outturn cost of the works is \$19 million, including construction costs, professional fees and charges, furniture and fittings and a contingency provision. Subject to parliamentary approval of this proposal, tenders for construction would be called in early 1998 with the aim of having construction completed by April 1999.

The proposed new facilities would enhance the overall operational effectiveness of HMAS *Stirling* by improving the safety and efficiency of day-to-day activities, enabling more effective training of personnel, overcoming existing occupational health and safety problems and raising the morale of personnel.

The Department of Defence's recognition of the need for sensitive environmental management on Garden Island is a matter of record. The requirements have been carefully developed with appropriate consultation and are documented in the environmental management plan finalised in 1993. Construction and future operational facilities proposed in stage 3 development would accord with this plan. An environmental certificate of

compliance has been issued for the proposed works. Commonwealth, state and local government representatives and instrumentalities have been advised or consulted.

**CHAIR**—There has been no recent public statement on strategic guidance. The documents cited in the Defence submission as forming the basis of the two ocean navy are either outdated or limited to an examination of efficiencies. Recently there have been successful fishery sovereignty patrols by HMAS *Anzac*, which is home ported here at Stirling, to the sub-Antarctic off Heard and McDonald Islands. Heard Island is 4,100 kilometres south of Perth. The waters off Macquarie Island immediately to the south of Hobart are also known to contain the Patagonian toothfish. Will vessels from HMAS *Stirling* be used to undertake fisheries patrols in these waters or is the area too remote from Stirling? Does the navy intend to use Hobart as a base for patrols or is the basis of the two ocean policy still valid?

**Cdre Trotter**—Certainly any patrols that HMAS *Stirling* mounted to the south of Australia from here would probably exclude those to the south of Tasmania, given that that would probably be closer to ships based on the east coast than here. As far as the strategic aspects are concerned, Commodore Kable might be better able to answer that.

**Cdre Kable**—Mr Chairman, you referred to a new strategic review that goes to cabinet on the 24th of this month. Naturally I am not at liberty to speak too much about that, although I can say that nothing we are proposing here in stage 3 at Stirling is in any way contrary to the new strategic guidance we are expecting to be approved by cabinet. The only thing I can say is that, whereas we tend to talk about the defence of Australia in the extant strategic guidance, in the new strategic guidance that will be slightly broadened to talk about Australia and her interests. I agree with Commodore Trotter that any responsive patrols to surveillance sightings around Macquarie Island would be dealt with by ships based in Sydney.

**CHAIR**—Fine. We just wanted to have that matter for the record.

**Senator CALVERT**—This morning we saw the fuel storage facility where you re-filter your fuel and your other fuel. Do you have bunds around those areas to stop any leakage or fuel escaping into the environment?

**Cdre Trotter**—Indeed, we do, Senator. All of the fuel storage capacity on the island, including the main F76 storage and the two large tanks that we saw, is in bunded facilities or bunded surrounds. I recall the bunds have to take one-third of the total capacity of the tanks.

**Senator CALVERT**—Have you ever had any accidents here when you have been re-fuelling and re-arming vessels? Now that it is increasing its usage and Garden Island being quite environmentally sensitive, are you concerned about any possibility of accidents that may pollute the area?



**Cdre Trotter**—Certainly, Senator. We are very concerned. We have a quite comprehensive emergency response set up in terms of both availability of people and material to counter that. There have been accidents here, but not to do with the handling of ammunition, unloading or loading of ships. In terms of the movement of fuels, there have been spills from time to time in the harbour but our situation is that the emergency response on each occasion is able to clean that up and stop the spread of any fuel spills outside of the island. I hasten to add that these were not large amounts of fuel.

**Senator CALVERT**—Given the extra activity that is going to occur here as a result of more vessels coming in and all the extensions that are happening, will you have sufficient means to be able to effectively deal with any future spills that might occur?

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes. It will be the same as we have now because we are seldom trying to fuel more than, at the most, about two ships at a time for that very reason so we can respond.

**Senator CALVERT**—While we are on the environmental side, I note that in a letter from the Garden Island Preservation Society they raised a concern about the anti-fouling paint, the TBT, and how it may affect mussels and the like—local seafood. Is that something that you monitor?

**Cdre Trotter**—Indeed we do. We have quite a constant program of surveillance of TBT levels. We are more than aware that within the Careening Bay area, which is the area where the main wharves are, the levels of tributyltin are far in excess of maximum limits in terms of the effects of molluscs. For this very reason, we would never contemplate eating any of the shellfish in the area—I emphasise that I am talking about the Careening Bay area. It is also for this reason that we have discouraged the moves, although they still continue, from the state aquaculture and fisheries department to establish mussel farms on this side of the sound, particularly at this end of the island.

The Defence Science and Technology Organisation has been monitoring the TBT levels here throughout naval waters, not just Careening Bay, since 1989. It confirms a lot of the controls that we have been undertaking with respect to the shot blasting of smaller craft on the slipway and the non-use now of tributyltin anti-foulings on ships that are less than 40 metres in length. These surveys show that the levels within Careening Bay are actually dropping. They are still well above the minimum limits.

The only option is to stop using tributyltins. In this respect the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, as is happening world-wide, is also investigating alternatives to the tributyltin. Indeed, HMAS *Anzac* has a trial coating. The submarine soon to arrive here will also have a trial coating which does not use tributyltins. They are just an example of the indigenous activities which are part of worldwide attempts to find alternatives.

**Senator CALVERT**—But the concentrates of TBT are confined to one area?

**Cdre Trotter**—In Careening Bay. The surveys show that as you move out of Careening Bay and go north, it drops off very quickly to standard Cockburn Sound levels.

**Senator CALVERT**—Does the public have access to these mussels that could be infected?

**Cdre Trotter**—No, they are very definitely within controlled naval waters.

**Senator CALVERT**—And there is no evidence of contamination where the public can actually have access?

**Cdre Trotter**—No. At the moment the major mussel farms are over near the wheat silos, almost opposite here. They have more trouble with E.coli than tributyltin.

**Senator CALVERT**—One of the things that I noted this morning—it was referred to when we were in the security area—was about fire. Your environment officer was talking to us about that too. With all these new facilities, is it likely that you will be increasing your mechanism to fight fires?

**Cdre Trotter**—No, Senator, because essentially the facilities that are being requested are either extensions to existing facilities or they are new buildings within already developed areas. Our fire policy is to protect the developed areas in a whole—from the effects of a wild fire rather than just a normal controllable bushfire—rather than go to some form of sophisticated attempts to try and battle a large fire. So the concentration is on protection of assets, and these facilities are going to be within the protected areas that exist now.

**Mr TED GRACE**—When we visited the present emergency operation centre this morning, I was intrigued that such a facility would have been undersized to start with. One of the questions I would like to ask you is whether it was an oversight that such a small facility was originally built in that area. Could you describe for the public record the difference between the security personnel and duty watch personnel, and describe the interaction between the two groups? Just as an adjunct to that, are you convinced now that 30 personnel will be suitable in the future, and how was the 120 square metres, I think it is, arrived at? The base of the question is, how come it is such a fragile service at the present time, and obviously inadequate?

**Cdre Trotter**—The existing facility is like many that existed before the stage 2 development, whereby they were designed for that early base. It was commissioned back in 1978, and was about half the size that it is now, and much reduced in terms of the people that were involved. I can only say, having not been here at the time, that events in terms of the build-up of the two ocean navy have overtaken that. With the taking on-line

of the new facilities from stage 2, it then became quite obvious in the emergency exercises, control exercises, security exercises, that it was quite inadequate, and hence the reason for it.

The difference between duty watch and security personnel is that the security personnel are essentially the navy police coxswains who are part of the complement of the base. They have a number of different tasks. Their two main tasks are either naval investigative services—in other words, it is a police function, investigation of offences and misdemeanours and the like—and the other, of course, is the physical security aspects. In that respect, they undertake random security patrols; they man the gate at the other end of the shore side of the causeway; they man the building in which the existing emergency operation centre is, also for 24 hours a day. It has certain alarms and communication circuits which are circuited to there and, therefore, observable 24 hours a day—or at least manned.

As to the difference between that and the duty watch, the duty watch is that strength of various types of people, whether they be cooks, stewards, people to assist in the berthing of ships, the manning of small boats and also to bolster the emergency response. It also includes fire service personnel, of which there are normally four within the duty watch, whereas the whole of the duty watch—in other words, the cook may well not be part of that emergency response team, but that element that is—is what we are seeking the separate accommodation for so that they are all housed in one area, so they can all be roused at any time to respond immediately as a group to any emergency, rather than the situation at the moment where we have to gather them in from all over the various messes: the officers', senior sailors' and junior sailors' messes.

The final part of your question, which was as to why we chose that square meterage, was that directed to the accommodation?

**Mr TED GRACE**—No, the overall size. Are you convinced there will be inadequate space now?

**Cdre Trotter**—Indeed. It is all based on the current scales and standards for the accommodation of personnel in buildings ashore. I hasten to add that it is quite different to what you will see in a ship at sea, of course. Added to that there is the adjudged requirement of the space needed for the emergency operations centre.

**Mr TED GRACE**—I noticed also that there is no provision made to alter or improve the inadequacy of beepers and mobile phones. Surely that would be a priority for security reasons alone?

**Cdre Trotter**—We have attempted to interest Telstra and Optus in putting a tower here on the island.

**Mr TED GRACE**—Successfully?

**Cdre Trotter**—No. There are a number of technical difficulties with that which, of course, could be overcome. They are more than happy to help us there, but at our cost.

Last year we did a total census of the number of mobile phones that are used on the base, both officially and those that are owned by private individuals, and Telstra—the local Telstra manager—felt that the number that we were operating was probably sufficient for him to convince his board to put a tower somewhere here on the island. He failed to get that approval for that level of investment. And Optus has not had much interest.

We have tried Motorola. Again, they are more than willing to help with—I forget the name of it now—a combination between radio and telephone. You can actually use a two-way radio like a telephone. I forget now what the system is described as, but again it is very expensive. I think they were talking about a million or more dollars just to improve efficiency of communications.

I think as the population increases in this area we are going to see an improvement anyway. We do have small projects in hand to actually improve the use of radios around the base because even those, because of the undulating nature of it, can be very deceptive in terms of their reliability.

**CHAIR**—To what extent have you researched the current rush of cordless phones? I actually had an experience with one that works up to 20 kilometres. I rang the fellow who was selling them, and I realised I had rung his business number. Then I asked him to write something down and he said, ‘I can’t do it, I am out fishing’. That was on a cordless phone. That would appear to me to be a fairly good solution for an island of this nature because these are provided with a whip aerial like on a motor car.

**Cdre Trotter**—As a by-product of the investigations we had via Motorola and with Telstra, one of the difficulties they have in a network—and it becomes more apparent with some of the technical difficulties that I alluded to—because of our proximity, being off the coast, to a number of transmitters on the coast—and the same would occur whether they be mobile towers or whether they be someone else’s cordless telephone—is that they expect to get a lot of interference and breakthrough from other cells in terms of the mobile, and probably the same with cordless phones. Because we are off an inhabited coast, we are probably going to pick up the chatter which is going on up and down as well as that which is within our own cell.

**CHAIR**—I suggest you try one. It is not our experience. The great difficulty is that Telstra and others do not like licensing them, but that should not be a problem for the Navy.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Gentlemen, we are now up to stage 3. Was stage 2 completed on time and within budget?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Stage 2 is still continuing. There are a couple of components that are yet to be completed. One is the magnetic treatment facility, a dolphin facility that is being put in place at the moment. The second component is the living-in accommodation, which has not proceeded for several reasons. One is the review that has been ongoing in Defence. You may have heard of the Glenn review, relating to members without families. We have been reviewing the appropriate way of accommodating members without families. A report has just been completed within the last week or so. It is now being looked at in Canberra with a view to coming up with an appropriate solution for meeting the accommodation needs here at *Stirling*.

The third component relates to the power station and the provision of a static converter in terms of providing special power to ships. We expect that to be completed during next year. They are the three components. I should have mentioned there is one that has been cancelled, and that is the small arms range. The small arms range will not be built on Garden Island. We will be looking to how that can be met on the mainland using existing facilities or building one on the mainland, but certainly—

**Mr HOLLIS**—That was one of the recommendations of the committee, wasn't it, that it not proceed here? It is sort of getting wisdom late.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—It certainly will not be built on Garden Island.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Senator Calvert asked a question about the fire and you answered in general terms. What lessons were learnt from that fire?

**Cdre Trotter**—There were a number of lessons, one of which was that it really confirmed our policy of, if we cannot put it out quickly then we have got to rely on the fact that we retreat to the developed zones and just protect ourselves because, even with tracks around the island, even four-wheel drive vehicles found it very tough, particularly the fire vehicles with the sorts of loads they carry. Indeed, we did get one around the back of the fire which became bogged, which would have been quite dangerous for the people there if there was a burn-back of that particular fire. That was one lesson we learnt, that access was bad without driving lots of roads through the island, which we are reluctant to do from an environmental point of view.

The other lesson we learnt—as a result of its being the first time in a few years that we have actually seen the results of a fire—is the way in which it actually denudes everything. In fact, it just leaves the sand; there was no ash or anything left there. We also re-learnt previous lessons, such as fencing off the scene of the fire to prevent the tammar kangaroos getting in and eating the new growth as and when it occurs after the first rains.

We also learnt, I think, that we have a security problem in controlling public access on the island. It was almost certainly a fire that was lit by a member of the public, given that it was in an area that was remote from any of the military areas and it was in the public access area and people from boats were seen in the area immediately prior to the fire. They are the main lessons we learnt.

**Mr HOLLIS**—On our trip around the island this morning it was said to us that it was not appropriate to burn off. Where I live, at this time of the year there is always a lot of burning going on because of the undergrowth, to make sure that there is not a fuel build-up. It was put to us this morning, if I understood correctly, that that was not appropriate here.

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes, that is right. One reason is that for most periods of the year, other than at the height of summer, it is very difficult to get a fire going because of the very high moisture and salt contents in the undergrowth, or the understorey.

The other thing is that you can get a condition where a fire will burn and because of the relationship across the vertical dimension of most of the bush areas of island you would not be able to control it such that it just burnt through the understorey. It would take out the upper storey as well. That would totally destroy the types of vegetation on the island because they are very fire sensitive. After re-propagating it takes some years for some of the flora to have the ability to seed and if you burn them out again before that then that particular vegetation would never be seen again, particularly if fire were frequent. If you were to compare this island with Rottnest, for instance, where they have had a number of fires over the years, you would see that their flora are quite different. Some years ago their vegetation was identical.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What consultation has there been with the various groups? I was a little bit surprised this time when I had a look at the people coming before the committee. In the previous two hearings about this island that I have been associated with we had hearings of a couple of days and we had a list of witnesses ranging from the wild flower people through to local government. This time there seems to be a dearth of witnesses. Is that because, first, there is no interest, second, there has been no consultation or, third, that people do not have any concerns?

**Cdre Trotter**—There is a very high level of interest in what goes on on this island. It seems that half the population of Western Australia used to own a shack on Garden Island prior to the 1970s. I think it is the influence of the Garden Island Environmental Advisory Committee and the fact that, since 1975 and as a result of the last hearings regarding development here, a community or non-government environment member was put on that committee—Mr Tom Perrigo, the Chief Executive Officer of the National Trust of Western Australia. Also during the year we have a number of open days, particularly environmental open days, where the environment groups or those with an interest in the environment can come along and take part in, or at least view, what is

going on in the environmental management of the island.

Returning to the GIEAC, all of these proposals for stage three were put to that committee and considered by each of the key members—the state, Commonwealth and community representatives—who do consult with some of these other organisations. That is probably why most of the groups are more than satisfied with the way we are managing the environment here.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What contact have you had with the Garden Island Preservation Society?

**Cdre Trotter**—Normally the contact which is made with the Garden Island Preservation Society is made by the society whenever there is an item of significance, like an event on the island or a hearing such as this.

**Mr HOLLIS**—As regards defence housing, there is going to be a build up of personnel here and, from memory, the committee has never had any hearings about accommodation or housing on this area at all. Have you been in contact with the Defence Housing Authority or have they been in contact with you? Are there plans in train to house the additional personnel who are going to come here?

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes. We are in constant contact on a daily requirements basis to meet immediate requirements for accommodation and also to forecast the need for married accommodation within the area. It is all done on a forward look and assessment of how many people will be bringing their families with them. The DHA work out how many houses they might need, depending on the number of people. Yes, planning is in hand to increase the accommodation in the Rockingham and beyond area.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I am aware that the costs are commercial-in-confidence. Why? You people always put these things as commercial-in-confidence. Many times when we ask these questions, there is absolutely no need to put these as commercial-in-confidence. But it is commercial-in-confidence, and I will respect that. But I think we are going to have to have a look at that some time. Is the contingency within the normal allowance for contingency?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Yes.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Do you expect a few mistakes?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—No. There are a couple of aspects of contingency. First of all, the facilities have not been designed yet. These are estimates of costs based on design concepts only.

**Mr HOLLIS**—That is what worries me. I sometimes think that not only you people but other people give a cost and then design the buildings and design everything to make sure that it is immediately within that cost. I will tell you what I base that on. The science building in Canberra came to the committee for something like \$120 million. We took \$10 million off it and told them to build it within that, and miraculously they did. What would happen if the committee took \$3 million or \$4 million off this and came back to you and said, 'Build it within that?' Would contingency suffer?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—No. What it would mean is that we would have to delete some items off the list. I think the contingency allowance is appropriate for a project that is at this stage of development.

**Mr HOLLIS**—But it is only a guess.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—No, it is based on experience for—

**Mr HOLLIS**—But how can it be based on experience if you really do not have the final costs of all these buildings? You are only estimating the cost. I suspect that you have estimated that you have a certain amount of money from the government and you have said, 'Okay, we have to spend X amount of money. How do we do that? We will put all these things down. When we have missed out on a little bit we will put that in as contingency.'

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—No. We have a very extensive capital development program in Defence. There are extensive competing priorities for work to get on to that program. There certainly is a very strong scrutiny process in Defence to ensure that elements, including the contingency, are appropriate. If the contingency element is too high or the estimates of cost are too high as well it means that projects we would like to have priority to get on to the program would be denied being included.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I might leave it to Mr Forrest. He is much more of an expert in this field than I am. He might have a few more detailed questions for you.

**CHAIR**—Just following on that, would you be prepared to comment on the performance of the buildings constructed to date—I know many of them are now inadequate by way of size—and their design; construction materials; and their resistance to the climatic conditions that exist here, particularly the marine environment and corrosion and things of that nature? What has been the annual expenditure on repairs and maintenance? Are all the facilities subject to specified repair and maintenance cycles? In all of that, and consequently, what will dictate your design criteria this time: existing architecture or architecture design and construction materials that might, from this experience, respond in many ways to any problems you have had to date?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—We are very conscious of the need for design of through life



costing of the facilities—not just the capital cost up front. We are very conscious of the high cost of maintenance. So that will certainly be a very significant requirement in function design briefings for the designers to look at. John, do you have the ongoing maintenance figures?

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—Not for the overall base.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Generally, Mr Chairman, as you went around this morning you would have seen that the facilities appear to be standing up pretty well in a structural and maintenance sense. As to size, a lot of the facilities are cramped and that is the reason for rationalising them. From my experience I believe that the facilities have performed pretty well.

**CHAIR**—Fine.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Gentlemen, could you please give me an overview of the master plan and when it was prepared? You are up to stage 3 now. How many stages are involved in it? Have the plans been changed in any way as you have been working through, and does that compromise any future plans?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The master plan for Garden Island has recently been completed. In fact, it was reviewed this year. Master planning involves real estate reservations based on a vision of what is likely to happen over the forthcoming 10 to 20 years. So the plan that has just been signed off would look ahead into, say, the year 2010. The plans in themselves are quite flexible documents, being real estate reservations, and are individually controlled from a separate area in Canberra, the facilities operations area who are really the land planners for defence.

If there is a facility to be built, it needs siting approval from that authority, that organisation. Some modification to the plan may be required to reflect that requirement. If there is a significant change in strategic guidance, for example, the two-ocean basing policy, if one of those came along, that would necessitate a total review of the master plan for the area. Generally, amendments would be issued as they occurred, and then there will be a major review of the master plan about every 10 years.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—So we are at stage 3 now?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Yes.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Have stage 1 and stage 2 been changed in any way which might compromise this master plan, or has the master plan been changed to allow for any changes?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The general concept of the master plan is intact in terms of

the concept that was originally envisaged way back in the 1970s. That concept is still prevailing.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—What percentage of the way through are we?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The plan has been amended on a couple of occasions. Just recently it has been revisited and amended again with a new plan this year looking forward to about the year 2010.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—The facilities and amenities that we saw today seem to me to be a bit inadequate for the current use. What you are catering for with this stage 3 is perhaps bringing it into line with current needs. What planning are you doing for future needs, given that you are going to have an increase to the base with submarines and increasing personnel by about a third? Will these new works and amenities be able to cater for all this increased activity, or do you plan to be doing more works in the future to cater for the personnel?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The only works envisaged are those indicated in the evidence as possible future works. Having said that, my crystal ball is not always accurate and things do emerge from time to time. The plan itself should be flexible enough to be able to accommodate that, as the existing facilities should be flexible enough to be extendable to take any unforeseen expansion.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—With these works, are you bringing things up to current need or are you allowing for some excess?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—We are bringing it up to current need. The current strategic guidance for Garden Island is to be the year 2004.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—In relation to the amenities, in particular for service personnel and also the car parking and storage, have rank and file members had an input into the planning?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—There has been a value management exercise carried out.

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—There was a value management exercise undertaken late last year or earlier this year. They had a look at the more significant elements of the project to determine what would be the most appropriate solution to it. If I can give one example, the emergency operations centre and the duty watch accommodation were to be two separate components. However, through that value management exercise it was determined to combine those two facilities.

Another example would be the fuel facilities component. There were considerable

losses incurred in disposing of the fuels to contaminated fuel contractors, and the repayment for that element of the works is about 1.6 years. So, for the higher cost items, there certainly has been a value management exercise undertaken.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—In relation to the amenities in this region that we are currently in, have you sought advice from other ranks to get what they need, or are you assuming that they do need pinball parlours and things like that?

**Cdre Trotter**—Some time ago, the addition of these things into the stage 3 development was judged as being a necessary requirement. These are the things that interest people of those particular age groups who are entering the navy now. They are the sorts of things that would interest them if they were ashore. It is the sorts of things they do there. Especially as the age of the people who we are talking about is gradually getting lower, that will stay the same, or at least be very similar to it.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Has advice been taken from that demographic as to what they want, or are we assuming this is what they want?

**Cdre Trotter**—There is no yes or no answer to it, I am sorry, Mr Evans. In the navy we operate through a divisional system. The organisation of a place like this is established in divisions and each division has a divisional officer and a divisional senior sailor. That is the way in which we deal with welfare and discipline aspects, and the likes and dislikes of our sailors. Most of what has gone into the thinking is what we have derived from the feedback from that system.

So, no, we did not go out with a sheet of paper asking ‘What do you want?’, but what we have arrived at is what we would quite reliably say is what is needed because of that feedback system that we get through from sailors of all ranks.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—I would like to get the cost associated with your environment program. I would like to know what the annual costs are. What do you do? At the same time, do you report to the local authority, the local Garden Island protection group as to the work you have done say in the last 12 months or something?

**Cdre Trotter**—Answering the last one first, Mr Evans, as from last year, for the first time, we produced an annual report for the year 1995-96. We will continue to do that on an annual basis. The report describes in a very comprehensive way what we do in terms of the environmental management of the island. That is released publicly on a mailing list which involves all of the environmental groups that we know of. But, more particularly, it goes out to schools, universities and libraries. It is quite an extensive distribution that we push it out to, within the state of Western Australia. We do not go very much wider than that.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I will interrupt you, if I may, for one moment. Could we be added?

We have had quite an association with this island, and it will continue, I imagine. I do not know what you think, Mr Chairman, but it would be good if the committee secretariat could be placed on that mailing list so that we can be kept apprised of what is happening environmentally here.

**Cdre Trotter**—We would be more than happy to do so, Mr Hollis.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Is that all right?

**CHAIR**—Yes, thank you. It is an excellent idea.

**Cdre Trotter**—Do you mind if we charge?

**CHAIR**—We do not mind, but we do not pay our bills! I will come back to you, Richard.

Following on from that, during our tour it was suggested that the actual daily administrative function of the recreation areas is handled by the other ranks themselves. It is a separate business activity, if you like. Consequently, when one looks at the areas that we are considering the cost of, to what extent will that organisation be involved in the provision of table tennis tables, pool tables and things of that nature? Or is that expected to be part of the costs that we are considering today?

**Cdre Trotter**—As far as I am aware, the costs that you are looking at today are for the costs of the building. The costs of equipping it would be a combination, depending on what is actually needed, of public money and the money of the ship's welfare fund. A lot of the smaller items, I would think, would be equipped from within the base—in other words, from the pockets of the sailors themselves. Those that are part of the infrastructure, I would say, would be equipped through the various other means we have of buying equipment for welfare of sailors purposes.

**CHAIR**—I asked that question as a follow-up to Richard's point. Really, with regard to the decision as to what forms of entertainment might eventually end up in that space, if the other ranks and those people are making some financial contribution then I am sure they will buy what they think they like.

**Cdre Trotter**—Indeed.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Getting back to the environment side of things, you have handled the reporting process, but what about the operation and the cost involved with that?

**Cdre Trotter**—I would have to take the cost on notice. I do not have a ready figure, because it is inherent in so many other different things that we do. It is part of the

energy management, part of the naval stores operation and part of the fuelling operation—

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—It is part of the whole culture.

**Cdre Trotter**—It is part of the whole culture. In the centre of that, we have the facilitator, who is the environmental manager, Dr Wykes, whom we have had on the books since 1995. It entails the work on the two types of sewage disposal we have on the island. It involves the toxic waste removal contracts. We could assemble the data for you, if you wished, but it would not be an easy operation to get it very quickly.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Okay. That would be good, if you could do that. Just one final question: do you look after the surrounding waters, or are they under someone else's control?

**Cdre Trotter**—The commanding officer of the base is the Superintendent of Naval Waters. Under the Control of Naval Waters Act, he has quite significant powers of control over the waters all around the island.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Environmentally?

**Cdre Trotter**—No. He has control of those waters where inhibition of naval operations and safety are involved. It extends to the waters but not to the sea bottom: that is a state matter.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Would you like to have the sea bottom under your control, environmentally?

**Cdre Trotter**—If I had the resources, yes; but I think it more appropriate that it be a state matter. Indeed, we are talking with the state now perhaps to extend the marine park to the south of this island in order to include this island and its waters. That would then give both ourselves and the state a vehicle to put us in a better position to be able to control things like fishing, moorings et cetera.

**Mr FORREST**—I am a little concerned about what might appear, to someone like me on their first visit to the site, to be some adhocery going on. We are talking about extending buildings, like the recreational facility, that are not very old. There are major extensions to the clearance diving unit and to the health unit: all of that involves rearranging underground services, readjusting fire services and electricals. Given your assurance that all of this fits a master plan, I am wondering whether in fact it does. It is my impression that there is adhocery and that we are extending things that are not very old, and I want to know why that is happening. Why is there not a more strategic approach that has designed this building originally for it to be logically extended—and similarly for the other facilities? How much money has consequently been wasted in dead-end services that have to be ripped up and replaced and so forth? Any idea on that?

**CHAIR**—Before you answer, I would like to add a question I have to that. As this is a problem of space, has consideration been given, for instance, to a brand new building for your diving clearance people—who I think, from observation, require an entirely different facility—and to the reshuffling of some other activity to the existing building, rather than what appears to be in that case, particularly, just adding on an ever lengthening corridor on both sides of the U? Please take John's part of the question, although I think they go together.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Mr Forrest, I assure you that it is not adhocery in terms of what is happening. Basically, as was explained to you this morning, strategic decisions have been taken on the role and the activities of Garden Island since the base was first commissioned in 1978, and that has led to new developments taking place. We are talking about stage 2 with several phases, and now we are into stage 3.

The key proposal that has occurred during that time would be the two-ocean basing, but there have been some other changes in more recent times that were briefed to you this morning, changes that are leading into stage 3. Basically, the buildings lend themselves to extension. If they did not, we would build a new facility. In fact, a couple of new facilities are being built. Detailed value engineering has taken place to address those concerns that you are talking about, to look at the functions that are being carried out and, with a lateral thinking approach, to ensure that we are looking ahead to how we should do things better rather than doing them as we did in the past. All those factors have been taken into account during the value engineering exercise.

When we look at the key facilities—the medical facility, the clearance diving facility, the emergency operations facility—there has been a significant increase of personnel. For the medical facility, there has been a significant increase in the number of patients that are going through that facility. If any adhocery has taken place, it is in terms of how they have coped with those changes. But that has given us excellent data regarding how we should design the facility to be able to cope with the future. From the medical facility, we have considerable experience right across the Defence Force, in designing medical facilities. A detailed study was carried out by the Surgeon General a couple of years ago to determine the need for medical facilities. They are interphased with their local medical communities, and that has led to a number of new medical facilities, replacement facilities, being constructed—two major ones for the army and quite a number for the air force. So a lot of that experience has gone into what is required here.

Generally speaking, the facility here in terms of the medical facility is significantly and grossly undersized. In fact, when I first saw it, it reminded me a little of trying to put a medical facility into a ship. It would have been part of the culture of the time. Basically, I think it is grossly undersized, but fortunately the designers of the day had the foresight to predict that extensions would be required and most of the facilities here are extendable.

**Mr FORREST**—The existing floor space is able to be made good use of.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Exactly.

**Mr FORREST**—We have not been presented with the master plan, but it must be much broader. It does not come down to the level of detail that you are considering now.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—No. The master plan does not take into account individual facilities and the design of those facilities. It primarily looks at the activities that are going to be conducted at a location and establishment. The real estate reservation needs to be set aside to accommodate those facilities. There are the engineering service requirements to link those facilities—that sort of approach. When it gets down to the design, that is done separately. If it cannot be accommodated—it should be able to be accommodated but if it cannot be—then the master planners need to re-look at it with a new siting approval, and that would create an amendment to the master plan.

**Mr FORREST**—So with all of the extensions going on we are not going to be digging up and replacing an existing fire service main, water main or sewerage line? That has all been planned before?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I sincerely hope not, Mr Forrest.

**Mr FORREST**—What about Mr Tuckey's question about an additional facility rather than trying to build and extend the clearance diving unit?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The options have been looked at in terms of continuing with the existing facilities, extending them and building new ones. Those options have all been looked at. The most appropriate cost-effective solution is the one that we are presenting here today.

**Mr FORREST**—Just one more question on the diving unit. Because of the two oceans policy now, the facility at Waterhen in Sydney was approved for additional works improvement back in 1993 by this committee. Will we be reinventing the wheel? Will that investment still be needed in Sydney at Waterhen in addition to this one here?

**Cdre Kable**—Yes. Part of the two ocean basing policy is to have clearance diving teams on both coasts. The size of the teams varies and has varied over time, but we need them on both coasts and that is what we are planning to have.

**Mr FORREST**—I had just one other question in addition to the one asked by Senator Calvert about the environment. We have been told this morning about the very good work that the navy does out here on Garden Island. Can you give us some idea about how much budget is spent annually on environmental issues?

**CHAIR**—I think that has been taken on notice.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I just want to return to the issue of security and public access that Senator Calvert and Mr Hollis raised earlier. You have a major naval defence facility on an island that is owned by the Commonwealth. We have been told this morning that we have a very fragile and unique environment on an island of about 1,200 hectares with an ever increasing population on the mainland coast in close proximity. Why should there be public access at all?

**Cdre Trotter**—History. The island originally was much as you see it now but without any buildings on it at all. Then for many years, while it was still owned by the Commonwealth, it was leased to holiday makers who stayed on the island—they were not allowed to stay on the island the full year; I forget what the conditions of the lease were but they had to be absent for a certain number of months of the year—and also day trippers. So for many years in the history of Western Australia Garden Island was a region for recreation for the public.

Decisions were taken in the 1960s for the Commonwealth to terminate that arrangement. It was decided to do what had been under consideration for some 50 years at that stage which was to build a naval base on the west coast. The first stage of termination of that arrangement occurred when this main part of the base was built. The lessees of the shacks continued to hold their leases in the far north of the island up until, I think, about 1979-80. I could be corrected on that, but it was about the time when the armament depot was built. It was clearly unsatisfactory to have people living on the island when it was also a large-scale munitions storage area.

As a result of that a number of things happened. One, there was a lot of, I would say, negotiation between the state and Commonwealth authorities to preserve some aspects of that history and that was done in two ways. One was the agreement between the state and Commonwealth governments to continue to permit public access to the island under certain conditions and the other was to continue to permit those last remaining lessees to hold moorings on the north-western side of the island in a bay called Herring Bay, which they hold to this day. It was really a matter of history and state concern that they wanted to preserve a recreational pursuit for the public of Western Australia and the Commonwealth government of the day agreed to that suggestion.

It is strictly controlled insofar as we are able. We are reluctant to put a lot of resources into policing the public access aspects of the island because, indeed, it is really one area for which we are not resourced, nor indeed should we be resourced, given that our primary role is defence, not to control a recreation area.

In general it works well. I have a park ranger who works directly for the commanding officer. He is seconded to the CO from the Department of Conservation and Land Management. He does a very good job at policing, if you want to call it that, public access. I would agree that the problem is increasing. Indeed, we are already looking at ways of augmenting his efforts, particularly during the December, January and February



period which is the peak time of the year for public access to the island. We are looking at things like volunteer rangers who would assist him by merely walking the beaches and reporting to him any infringements of the various rules that we have in force.

I guess the next phase would be to ask CALM for another ranger during that period. This coming summer we are also going to introduce random boat patrols, which we have not done before, to start making—randomly, not every day of the year—an obvious, uniformed presence. We are showing an interest not only in what is happening on the island but in what the fishermen and boat owners are doing within the naval waters area.

**Senator FERGUSON**—The point I am making is that when there is an establishment of a major defence facility—which this is and it is going to be larger in the future—it would not be the first time that access had been restricted. Where previously people had either had holiday dwellings or some other form of activity, the nature of the defence facility meant that they were no longer able to access it. I am quite sure that the people who had weekenders or holiday dwellings here were not very happy when they had to remove them—

**Cdre Trotter**—They are still not.

**Senator FERGUSON**—They are probably still not happy and that happens all over the place. We are not talking about just a base here. It seems to me that if you have got an area this size where we have got a major defence facility and an environment which we have been told is very fragile, it would seem logical that at some stage in the future with an ever expanding population—when this was started the population was probably only half of what it is on the mainland nearby—the defence forces are going to say it is getting too difficult to patrol and there are too many people accessing it. Can you see any time in the future when that might happen?

**Cdre Trotter**—I cannot forecast the time, Senator Ferguson, but, certainly in a strategic sense, again via the GIEAC doing a bit of crystal balling, that is certainly what we would envisage. In order to protect the cultural and environmental values of the island, we—the global government we—are going to have to be far more restrictive than we are now. Otherwise, as you say, not only are the security aspects going to be difficult to control but also the environmental and cultural values of the island will probably be at risk.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Can I turn to the issue of the flight deck procedural trainer? We spent some time seeing where it was going to be put up this morning. I know you described at length then the reasons for having it situated exactly where you want to put it and so it can be shifted. Could you briefly state for the Hansard record why it is necessary to have something that is moveable off of the airstrip? Also, what I would really like to know is how often that facility is likely to be used.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I will speak in terms of the safety aspects for a start and then I will ask the commodore to relate how often it will be used. One component of the reason for it being retractable is for the safety of the airfield. This has been looked at by the safety authority in Canberra and we have been advised that the facility cannot be left against the airfield itself. Its location away from the airfield would necessitate additional cost and also removal of vegetation on the approach to the facility. It is the most cost effective solution and there is not a significant cost to have it retractable. They are the prime reasons: safety and cost effectiveness.

**Senator FERGUSON**—How often is it likely to be used?

**Cdre Trotter**—Rather than directly answering your question of how often it will be used, we can say we expect that we will have something like 210 personnel per annum to be trained through that facility once it is there. That is based on the number of air capable ships that we have here—the FFGs and the ANZACs; this is in the mature two ocean Navy—and the fact that helicopter control officers, flight deck marshallers and the flight deck team, which is about 30 per ship, would require initial and continuation training at various times through the year. It works out that around about 210 personnel per year would be using it. From that, I would say it would be almost on a weekly basis that it would be in operation.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Is there no commercial training facility available anywhere that you could use?

**Cdre Trotter**—Not for that style of training, no.

**Senator FERGUSON**—In paragraph 47 you talk about the need for 1,300 square metres of additional warehousing space and say that it needs to be available close to the point of ship de-storing. How was the actual area or the amount of additional warehousing space determined? I ask that only because I looked at where you were doing it and there was a lot of open space where there is stuff that has obviously been taken off ships. I was just wondering how you determined how much you need?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Certainly there is open space that you saw this morning but I see that as mandatory circulation space for the ground mechanical equipment that has to be used within that space.

In terms of the figures, I cannot answer that but I will get the answer for you exactly. I would assume that it was being covered in the value engineering, as well. I will come back to you shortly on that.

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—I can confirm that it was addressed as part of the end process. I am not sure whether the actual area was an element of that VM study.

**Senator FERGUSON**—How were the storage activities undertaken at Garden Island in Sydney?

**Cdre Trotter**—With difficulty, Senator, because most of the warehousing is some kilometres away—apart from some sort of what you might call ‘ready use’ storage. I cannot recall the distance between Meadowbank and Garden Island—25 kilometres?

**Cdre Kable**—Yes. The equivalent in the east is the Meadowbank Australian Defence Force storage facility and, as the commodore has alluded to, that causes problems in transit. We are very lucky here in that we can have the warehouse and the ships collocated.

**Senator FERGUSON**—But if it is so important to have your storage needs close to the point of ship destoring and equipment returns here, why is it not just as essential at Garden Island in Sydney? Alternatively, aren’t there commercial properties nearby within two or three miles that you might be able to use?

**Cdre Kable**—We are, in fact, assessing that point as part of our investigations into another project which is the Garden Island Sydney project.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I have just a couple of additional questions about the health care facility that was built in 1978. What was the design population of the facility when that was built in 1978? The question I am really getting to is: if you knew what the design population was going to be then, why wasn’t it forecast what it would be today and a large facility built at the time?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I would say that their crystal ball was not that good in those times.

**Cdre Trotter**—That was well before the two ocean navy announcement in 1987 and the later announcement to base all six of the Collins class here. It was also prior to the submarine escape training facility being established which places a particular tasking on the medical staff, as well.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I have those figures for you. Patients attending increased from approximately 1,119 in 1984 to approximately 13,000 in 1996. This is anticipated to increase further to 16,000 by the year 2000. So, it is an exponential increase.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Do you have any breakdown of the major reasons for admissions to the facility? Is it accident or injury? If so many people are so fit, is it recreational? Is it knee reconstructions? I am just wondering. Do you keep records of the types of injuries that occur on this base?

**Cdre Trotter**—We certainly do, yes. It is obligatory under the legislation for

Comcare for accidents and work cover and just for the sake of keeping medical records on our people.

**Senator FERGUSON**—How difficult would it be for us to get a breakdown? I would not want to put you to too much time, but I wonder how difficult it would be.

**Cdre Trotter**—I do not think that it would be very easy, but we could see what we have got on the breakdown. It crosses all disciplines, and with the one exception—as I would expect with other areas of the military—the medical staff are usually dealing with basically healthy people. So, it is really minor ailments, I would think, and injuries.

With increasing numbers of female officers and sailors in the services, too, we also have an obligation there for different styles more associated with female problems. So there have been quite a number of circumstances regarding both the requirement and the types of people that we have within the service now that increases the throughput.

**Cdre Kable**—Our policy in the Australian Defence Force is preventative medicine, so we put a lot of effort into routine annual medical surveys of all our people which are, I think, far more comprehensive than you would expect in the civilian community. And for particular roles there are additional surveys carried out. For example, the clearance divers have to be medically cleared before they do dives to certain depths. The people who go through the submarine escape procedure have to have medicals before they do that, and our air crew based here to fly the helicopters have particular survey requirements, as well, before they fly. So it is very much a preventative thing. I would imagine that for the majority of the workload you would not be looking at sick people, but at well people to make sure they are well and continue to be well.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I hope they do not start on MPs.

**CHAIR**—I know that it is not exactly part of this particular reference, but I did notice as we walked in there that all the medical records appear to be maintained on paper. There was a very large section of what appeared to be individual records behind the reception counter. My GP now keeps me on computer—what are the plans there? It does seem that there must be substantial additional cost involved in that particular means of keeping records and accessing them. People were sitting outside the door with their own little folders, for instance.

**Cdre Kable**—There is a project in the Defence Force which is sponsored by the surgeon general to computerise all medical records so that when a ship, or an air squadron, or a submarine, is away then the records can be accessed by communications links. That project is under way now.

**CHAIR**—And place to place, presumably, when you consider the mobility of your people.

**Cdre Kable**—Yes, indeed. And we have got, of course, the information technology projects in hand to transmit other forms of information—strategic and tactical information—and those same bearers will be used for the medical information.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Can you tell me why the number of permanent living-in personnel has diminished? I think you state in paragraph 57 that you have got a higher proportion of living-in members, trainees, that live in for a variable duration. On the other hand, the number of permanent living-in personnel has diminished.

**Cdre Trotter**—Because we are indeed short of accommodation, we must give preference to those people that are here for short periods, as was intended, indeed, when we were planning for this area. Those that come here for short courses, either from ships or from interstate, come here with very little and so we provide or give preference to them for the accommodation.

The only permanent members that we guarantee to give permanent accommodation to are the submarine crews. Whenever a submarine is in harbour, we prefer to accommodate them ashore to give them a bit of a break from the confines of the submarine. So, it is not so much that the number of permanent members has diminished, it is just that the policy that we have exercised here is to give preference to the short termers for live-in accommodation.

**Senator FERGUSON**—So there is no surplus live-in accommodation at all?

**Cdre Trotter**—There is no surplus.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Have you ever done a study, or do you keep records, of the percentage of personnel that live on the base or on ships that do not have access to transport to leave the base at HMAS *Stirling*? There is no public transport service. I guess the additional question is: have you ever spoken to the state government about supplying a public transport service to and from the base because it seems as though unless you have got your own motor vehicle, you are stuck here.

**Cdre Trotter**—Indeed, we have spoken with local authorities on the matter of bus services and I regret to say that they are probably some years behind considering the provision of light rail service to Rockingham. But we have undertaken a number of surveys, projects and trials in terms of providing transport. Indeed, we have at the moment a contract with a civilian bus operator to do a routine bus service to and from the island on a regular basis—outside of working hours basically—to provide the facility to get people ashore.

That is something for which we have only just got approval. Strange as it may seem, if a ship is at anchor, the CO is quite at liberty to use his own boats to ferry people ashore in their free time; but it is not actually permitted to use Commonwealth assets—

like a Commonwealth owned bus—on a shore establishment to ferry people for individual recreational pursuits, rather than team recreational pursuits, like just going ashore. It is only just recently that we have been able to overcome that difficulty. But rather than using our own assets, which are stretched, we went to contract for that. So that has provided an opportunity for people to get ashore. As with anything—and particularly with the size of the population we have got here—it does not satisfy everyone. The routine does not satisfy all.

**Senator FERGUSON**—When you say ‘going ashore’, you mean going to the mainland rather than the island?

**Cdre Trotter**—Going to the mainland.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I feel pretty ashore here actually.

**Mr FORREST**—Can I ask a question about these mini storage units. I have built some of these in the past and they have turned out to be absolute disasters because people are putting their personal belongings—like furniture—into an environment that is not like a normal home. For example, there are extreme temperature variations. I am just wondering how well researched they are and whether the navy might be better off involving private enterprise in a trial rather than wasting a lot of money which is included in the estimate.

You build them cheaply out of some sort of iron product, then you have to figure out a way to keep the birds, vermin and everything else that leave their mess behind out of it. Given the population of snakes on this island, you have to contend with that problem, too. I am just wondering whether that has been a well researched question so far. I can see the reason for the need. I can see that the navy has to accept the responsibility of accommodating these persons’ personal belongings, but this kind of mini storage idea in this kind of environment, I just do not think will work.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—We have experienced them. We have built them in other locations for permanent living-in people—more recently, at RAAF base Richmond. They work extremely well. The contemporary members without family have a lot of chattels. In past times, they have been required to either store them in their rooms or leave them with mum. The unfortunate part of military careers is that mum can be in any part of the country. So to get ready access to these goods, they need an appropriate space to store them.

A year ago, we built similar facilities at RAAF base Richmond. They were well received. We do not have the problems you are alluding to in terms of vermin and those sorts of things infiltrating those areas. The key thing is to have them appropriately designed for the environment in terms of the thermal conditions that may be there—so to have appropriate insulation and those sorts of aspects. But they work well. Certainly, in

terms of conditions of service, that is the way we are heading in looking after the members without family.

**Mr FORREST**—The cost estimates are substantial. Given that it is a trial, why couldn't a trial involving private enterprise on the mainland be the way to approach it to get it right? Without mentioning the amount that you have provided in a confidential cost estimate, it is quite a lot of money for a trial.

**Cdre Trotter**—Basically, it would be a waste of money. The guys and girls want their goods and chattels where they are—not 11 kilometres away, which is the nearest practical place. Indeed, most of what you might call the semi, light industrial areas of Rockingham where you might find these storage units—'you lock it, you store it' type things—are even further away, probably 15 or 20 kilometres away. If you are in a situation where your means of transport is in there, like your bicycle, it just does not suit them. The surf is here on the west coast so if it is their surfboard then they want to get it now and not travel to Rockingham to pick it up.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Are there 38 different compartments in each of those facilities for storage?

**Cdre Trotter**—There is a total of 74. There are two facilities.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I know it is commercial-in-confidence but it seems like an awful lot of money just for a storage facility. You could almost build them something to live in for that. Of all the figures, that is the only one that really stands out as being a very large amount for something that is just a storage facility. I do not know if you have done anything comparable anywhere else.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I am fairly certain that the figures are accurate, not only for the storage but, as we mentioned, for encircling the long-term storage car parks and appropriate devices for that as well. In terms of square metres I think you will find that it is right.

**Mr FORREST**—I can see the reason why some of them might want to store their motorcycle or even their bicycle, but if it is somebody's furniture—beds and stereo equipment—why do they need it so instantly?

**Cdre Trotter**—There may well be items of furniture. Some of the people might have come from what we call an LOA—living out allowance—situation where they were, for the first time, required to buy items of furniture. Then when they get a posting to a ship or to here or to a shore establishment they have either got to sell that stuff or bring it with them and store it. I would say that that would be in the minority. The majority of what we are talking about here are sailors who travel around the country with an amazing amount of common, contemporarily accepted paraphernalia, goods and chattels, that are

required by a young person in this day and age—as opposed to some 20 years ago when it was a kit bag and that was it. It is surf boards, diving gear, wetsuits.

**Mr FORREST**—I accept all that and I understand the responsibility. All I am saying is: why does the Navy have to invest a substantial amount of money in that when somebody in private enterprise on the mainland could provide the service which the Navy could pay rent for on behalf of the users?

**Cdre Trotter**—I do not think the sailors would use it because it is too far away, essentially.

**Mr FORREST**—But you have not conducted a trial to test that. That is my point.

**Cdre Trotter**—We know that there is a need. Perhaps we should have walked through some of the cabins and looked at some of the cars and trailers in the car parks which are just full of this stuff.

**CHAIR**—I can understand the logical argument as to why it has to be nearby. We have already agreed that the area is fairly remote. The other question that has been raised, which may be taken on notice, is the estimated cost. You certainly would not want to be spending that sort of money and try to rent it. It is very substantial for what is, in terms of the structure, a fairly basic building. You might want to take that on notice.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—I can table the breakdown of the cost of that item. As I said, it is an estimate.

**CHAIR**—Having got the breakdown, it does not alter the fact that it is a very expensive building. I think it is one where some attention to other design or construction factors might be brought to account.

**Mr FORREST**—Whose responsibility is this equipment and furniture once it is put into the storage? Obviously the Navy has to carry some insurance if it is being stored on behalf of an officer or other personnel. Whose responsibility is it?

**Cdre Trotter**—It will be the individual's. We will have responsibility for the upkeep of the facility, but it will be just like a sailor's locker ashore in years gone by and a sailor's locker at sea now. It is his personal responsibility. He draws the key, he signs for that key and, to all intents and purposes, it is his for the period of his lease, so to speak, of the area. But we—

**Mr FORREST**—Does he pay any rent? Do they pay rent for a facility like this at Richmond? How does it work at Richmond?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—They pay for food and quarters.



**CHAIR**—No, they are talking about the storage facilities.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—It is part of their food and quarters requirement. It is a good idea to put this into perspective, If you are a married person, you get a house, a garage, a shed and all those sorts of things, for ready access to all your gear. If you are a single person, you are given a room. That has been a deficiency over the years.

What we are now saying is that they require some element of storage, so that they can store items rather than shoving them under the bed or stacking them in the corner. They have so much stuff these days. Bear in mind that, if you are talking about the junior ranks, you are talking about the old scale of 9.9 square metres per person. That is now being reviewed and is likely to go to something like 23 or 24 square metres per person.

But, even with that, that is living space. It is not a store for a bicycle, a surfboard or what have you. We have a responsibility to be able to provide them with appropriate, secure storage, so that they can have access to these personal items to use as and when they want to. They do not want to go 15 kilometres down the road if they want to go surfing in the opposite direction. It is an amenity which I believe and the department believes has been denied the single member. Certainly, that conclusion was arrived at in terms of the independent Glenn review.

**Cdre Kable**—Can I just clarify this about the types you are talking about. Mr Forrest, you mentioned furniture before, but furniture comes under a different category. Let us say a single sailor is posted from HMAS *Albatross* near Nowra to a ship here in Fleet Base West. He is entitled to either remove his furniture or have it stored at departmental expense. That is done through what is now the Department of Finance and Administration, replacing DAS, by commercial storers around the country, depending where the person wants it stored.

What we are talking about here in these storage facilities are what I would call 'ready-use' items, like motorbikes, bicycles, surfboards, computers and stereo equipment. The hypothetical sailor I am talking about is in a ship down at the wharf. If he wants to take off to Geraldton for a weekend with his girlfriend and wants to take his surfboard and all his diving equipment, he wants to have it near the ship so that he can get going on a Friday afternoon on his weekend off.

**CHAIR**—I think we will move on from that because I think that has been pretty well exposed.

**Senator CALVERT**—I notice in this interesting document that the first environmental vandals that defiled this place came from Tasmania. I can assure you we do not do those sorts of things any more.

How many security personnel would you have on the island here?

**Cdre Trotter**—Twenty.

**Senator CALVERT**—Do you believe that is adequate, given that you are going to have something like 3,000 odd-bods to look after over the next few years. Will you have to increase security personnel?

**Cdre Trotter**—As far as physical security is concerned, to a certain extent that tends to be independent of the number of people here. As far as the policing aspect of the security group is concerned, perhaps we will. I say perhaps, because the greatest increase that is going to occur is going to be in the number of ships here, each of which has their own security arrangement. That is very easy to do in a ship. You have the ability to put a security barrier around it, by virtue of the fact that it is just a gangway and you can put a man on it. And they have their own naval police staff on board the ships.

The short answer to your question is that we have always needed more here but, due to various undermannings across the navy and across the Defence Force, we have not had the numbers that we would have preferred. That is not to say that we have not been able to do the job: it is just that it has meant that everyone has been a lot busier than they thought they might be.

**Senator CALVERT**—There has been an amount of speculation in the media in recent times about organised pilfering within the navy, and drug gangs and all the rest of it. Given that you are the first port of call for navy ships coming in from those Asian ports, do you have a special regime in place here to ensure that you do not become—

**Cdre Trotter**—No more so than other areas. The normal thing for a ship that is making its first call coming from overseas is that it would embark Customs—off Geraldton, usually—and Customs would clear the ship on its way through. If they cannot achieve that—that is, Customs sometimes do not have the resources to do it—the ship will usually anchor in Gage Roads, which is just to the north of the entrance to the sound, and will take as long as Customs want to clear the ship then.

We have yet to have Customs ask to do this, but they have often done it in other areas of the country: sometimes they will set up their own surveillance organisation within the base, for some hours or days after a ship comes back from Asian or foreign ports. In my time here, nearly 2½ years, Customs have not chosen to do that. We have had very few, and only very minor, transgressions that have been detected: the odd carton of fags or whatever—which you expect to see, on a statistical basis, in any airport or whatever, from otherwise honest people. We have systems in force to detect pilferage. There is heaps of scope here within the base for pilferage. We had a case recently where a sailor was detected and was arrested.

**Senator CALVERT**—I suppose they cannot get off the island, can they? You always have that one checkpoint, if you really want it. Do you have spot checks there?

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes, but it is a very complicated process. For instance, the only person that can in fact search another sailor is a qualified and badge-wearing naval police coxswain. Any other sailor or officer who is on the gate is not entitled to search. They can ask to but, if the person says no, they cannot insist upon it. That is just a function of the way laws have evolved over the years. It used to be quite different: a quartermaster, someone on a gate, did have those rights.

**Senator CALVERT**—And you could not but notice this morning when we went to the warehouse facilities that it was quite open, with a lot of stuff lying around. Temptation is always in the way. But you are reasonably satisfied with the way it is working at the moment, are you? For instance, have there been any break-ins to these storage depot areas—because they would obviously keep the stuff in there that people would be after: videos, stereos and all that sort of stuff. Has there been any evidence of that at all?

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes; indeed, it is one of the reasons we want the security provisions around the long-term car park, which is provided for the sailors on deployed ships to leave their vehicles in. It is a fenced and barbed-wired, locked enclosure, and the only way to gain entry is via the naval police coxswains. Nonetheless, that element in our society is reflected amongst the number of people, both uniformed and civilian, that we have here on the island. There have been cases of people scaling the barbed-wire and breaking into vehicles—which we find very sad—and therefore we are asking for security.

**Senator CALVERT**—Has this been on the increase?

**Cdre Trotter**—I would not think so. I think it is just a steady background noise, and we wish it were otherwise.

**CHAIR**—While we are some distance from the actual letting of contracts on this matter, could you update the committee on the extent to which you will attempt to accommodate local contractors and subcontractors in these works? How will contractors be guaranteed payment for work undertaken in this project?

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—The Defence policy on letting contracts is a two-stage one. We have no policy of directing it only to the local construction industry. It is advertised in the press. We are looking for value for money for taxpayers as a whole. It is in keeping with the CIDA recommendations. We gather expressions of interest, we short-list some prime contractors and then we request tenders on those and appoint a contractor. That contractor could be a national company or a local company, based on value for money, which is basically technical merit and price looked at together.

Our experience would be that, whoever the prime contractor may be, they would make use of local resources. They could bring them in from the eastern states or elsewhere but, from our experience, they are more likely to use local subcontractors.

**CHAIR**—Have you any comment to make on how your contracts are reading these days, in terms of protection of subcontractors? Historically when builders have gone broke, the pain has fallen more on the subcontractors who have not been paid when the builder has been paid. Are you—

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—We require the contractor to demonstrate his payment of subcontractors before he gets his next payment.

**CHAIR**—That is quite a practical arrangement and sounds quite good. I will also raise the matter I raised in the bus this morning. It was fairly adequately answered, but I would like it put on the record. We noted that the parking facility to be applied for semi-trailers carrying ordnance and explosives will be a four-vehicle facility surrounded by adequate protection. I raised the question of what happens if there are four trucks there and one blows up. Quite clearly there is a great threat to the other three. But you did answer that, and I wonder if you might do so again from the record.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Unfortunately, I am not the expert who answered the question this morning. But the situation is that the risk is low, in terms of the type of the ordnance and the state of the ordnance being stored there. If I remember rightly, it related to the quantities being held in totality. Basically, one would equate the amount of ordnance on those four vehicles as an appropriate element in terms of very low risk.

The other aspect that our specialist indicated was that it is also the most cost-effective way of storing the ordnance. The other option is to separate them, storing them at more than one location. That is quite expensive, in terms of both capital costs and security aspects, bearing in mind the low risk associated with it.

**CHAIR**—Is everyone happy with that? I think someone suggested that individual spaces would have to be 270 metres apart or something. I thought it was an interesting point that I hope we never have to confront in the future. Thank you.

[3.29 p.m.]

**JOHNSON, Mr Clark Gregory, President, Garden Island Preservation Society (Inc),  
c/- 159 Scarborough Beach Road, Mount Hawthorn, Western Australia 6016**

**CHAIR**—Welcome to this hearing. The committee has received a submission from the Garden Island Preservation Society dated 24 October 1997. Do you wish to propose any amendments to that submission?

**Mr Johnson**—Yes, I do, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR**—Would you like to proceed?

**Mr Johnson**—Yes, Mr Chairman. Basically I am going to extend my evidence in relation to that submitted, which was rather cryptic. Thank you for the opportunity to address you all here today—

**CHAIR**—In other words, your advice to us is that you wish add to that submission—

**Mr Johnson**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—but not specifically at the moment?

**Mr Johnson**—I will now attend to that. Is that what I am being questioned on now, that you would wish me to—

**CHAIR**—The question is if you have any amendments of a minor nature; if you just intend—in the submission I will ask you to make in a minute—to add to that with a series of words, I think it would be better to do it then. So there is nothing in this submission that you wish to amend by way of correction?

**Mr Johnson**—No; suffice to say that I wish to expand on that.

**CHAIR**—All right. We will take that from you at the moment and I will proceed with the formalities. It is proposed that the submission and the Department of Defence response be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The documents read as follows—*

**CHAIR**—Mr Johnson, I now invite you to make a short statement in support of your submission before we proceed to questions. You are welcome to add some words if you wish at that time.

**Mr Johnson**—Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will not take too much of the committee's time; we have been here for some hour and a half this afternoon and I know it is a tedious task. However, there are some additions to my evidence which are required to be put here today. In particular, I would firstly like to address two issues. One is your correspondence to me in regard to the terms of reference today. I have had correspondence, which I will table in evidence, but I would like to read from your direction to me in reference to the evidence presented, where you said, 'Whilst I understand that there may be other matters you may wish to raise, it is not my intention to allow evidence which addresses issues outside the reference give by parliament.'

Mr Chairman, I understand very clearly that direction and will be addressing this evidence to those terms of reference. I have appeared before at similar inquiries to this and do understand the leading of evidence. However, I also wish to point out to you that I am not leading evidence here as an expert witness; I am leading evidence here in relation to facts, opinion and argument, sworn in good faith and under oath.

Furthermore, in recognising that direction from the chairman, there is one matter that I would like to address to the parliamentary committee today. I would like to quote from *Hansard* one of your colleagues in the parliament in relation to the operation of committees such as we have here today. The quotation is from the member for Banks, Mr Melham, who said:

The committee bears an onerous responsibility . . . It must fairly and dispassionately allow stakeholders a desperate last chance to be heard. The committee owes it to the parliament and the people of Australia to be a servant of the parliament and an agent of an incisive and fair inquiry. It should neither be a lackey to the government nor an agent of obstruction.

Given these facts, as related to yourselves in the parliament, I would like you all to note those comments in the hearing of my evidence.

I would now like to address two matters of procedure—housekeeping, I guess—before I get to the evidence. Firstly, we received the documents from your committee on 16 October 1997 and submissions closed on 24 October. It allowed us just one week to examine those documents, which are fairly detailed, and come up with a response. That necessitated, of course, a cryptic response, hence my appearance here today to add to that response. I would suggest that, as this is a tedious process and a time-consuming one, if we had been given a little more time we could have put further information into the initial evidence and it would not have required the same amount of time here today in speaking evidence.

The second matter, which I raised at the previous parliamentary inquiry, is that this process is a public process; this is a public inquiry enacted by the legislation of 1913. As such, we believe it should be convened in a public place. This is not a public place, this is a restricted place; this is a naval base. There is the problem that you people also have to inspect the facilities, and we understand that. However, notwithstanding that, there is considerable public interest and it is a difficult site to get to.

Additionally, whilst the navy would not restrict public access given these circumstances, a lot of people do not know how to get here. I have had inquiries from other members of the public as to how you get to Garden Island and what arrangements you have to make to get to this hearing. I just point that out and I would like the committee to take that on board for future reference. I would suggest that, having visited this facility, at some stage later in the afternoon a public recording of these proceedings could be done in Rockingham, perhaps in council chambers. That might then allow other people to access these proceedings much more easily.

I will now move on to the evidence in chief and give you a very quick outline of who we are without boring you, because among the members of this committee, Colin Hollis, the member for Throsby, who has been chairman, does understand our organisation and from whence we come. Additionally, I have had some correspondence with Paul Calvert from Tasmania who also understands where we come from. However, as this is not a continuous committee, I feel it is incumbent upon me to outline to the committee who we are and what our interest is in this island.

Basically, the Garden Island Preservation Society comprises ordinary people from the community. It is an incorporated body, it has elected office bearers, and meets like any other ordinary incorporated organisation. It derives its income from membership and donations. Its interest, more particularly, is in the island's history, heritage and environment. The people who are in the society have been coming to this island for in excess of 30 years—and some of those people are in their seventies and came here many more years ago than that. Some of them occupied leases here, as we heard previously.

Garden Island, for those of you who may not be aware, is the first point of settlement for Western Australia. Captain James Stirling arrived here in 1829 and this was the first place of Western Australia's settlement. It is for that reason a particularly significant place in the lives of all Western Australians and in the history of Western Australia. It has particular heritage significance. For those members of the committee who come from the other side of the country, this place has the same significance as where Captain Cook first ventured into Botany Bay. It established the colony of Western Australia. Of course some time later, when it was discovered that the island was unsuitable for habitation on a long-term basis, Captain Stirling then ventured up the Swan River and established what later on became the city of Perth.

But the first government stores were established on Garden Island and there was a

reasonable settlement. The first gardens were established here. You may have seen today the significant historic point of Cliff Head where those matters occurred. The first registered death in this state occurred here. The first horse race in this state occurred here. Among the names you see in the vicinity, Mangles Bay was named after the maiden name of Mrs Stirling and the name of Carnac Island was from one of Stirling's officers. These are historic names and points that you see on this island and the heritage that is associated with it.

Without going into a long dissertation of its history, which is a very colourful one and extends right through the world wars so that it does have a lot of association with the military and the Department of Defence, I wish to just bring that to your attention. That is the significance of it. It is in that regard that our organisation and our people find great interest in ensuring that the island's history, heritage and amenity is maintained and, more importantly, is able to be accessed. There is no point in having our original points of history here as part of our heritage if we cannot access it. There is no point in having a wonderful environment if it cannot be enjoyed. They are the interests which we have.

Let me make one other thing quite clear, both to the parliamentary committee and to the Department of Defence: we are not about obstruction of the Department of Defence. We accept this is a base, and it is a major base. We are not about any other agenda, whether it be social or political. We wish to work in harmony with the Department of Defence. But, in doing so, we wish them to respect the integrity of what we are about.

I would now like to move on to some of the particular points which I registered in my evidence in relation to specific areas that it is intended to be expanded. In relation to the flight deck procedural trainer, we have been concerned about this area right from its inception. Our concern is that it is a very large facility—it is a runway some 400 metres long. We understand, from some information which has been provided by fliers, that it has the possibility of running fixed-wing aircraft—PC9s potentially, Caribous maybe. I am not an expert in this area but it has that potential, possibly in an emergency or if it were extended.

In the original establishment of that facility there were some important trees: the cheesewood trees, which are genetically rare pockets of trees. They are only found here on Garden Island. They have been developed over many years in their own species. Some of that area was impacted upon. Our concern in relation to this large expansion is this: what will be the impact on that environment? Has it been acquitted by GIEAC? And was there an environmental impact statement specific to that location?

Of course, the cost cannot be ignored, and that is what you people are here today also examining. We too, as taxpayers, have an interest in that cost. You are in possession of some information which we are not, because it is obviously commercially confidential. We do not understand what that cost is. I would think that, from the discussions that have previously gone on, you people do. The other question in relation to that is whether



alternatives have been questioned in relation to that cost, and what alternative proposals could have been presented? That is a matter that we require investigated.

More importantly, the flight path in training will be, as we understand, because of the prevailing wind—which most of us know, because we have been involved with the island for a long while—in a south-west, north-east direction for most of the year and most of the day. Flight take-off and paths, particularly in training, may have some impact in relation to the sea area over to the south-west. We would like to know what impact that will have, if it will impact upon the accessing of the waters and the marine areas by the public. Should there be closure involved, if training is undertaken? If that is the case, what impact will that have on the professional fishing undertaken in that area and also on recreational fishing? Further to that, what man-hours are intended? We have heard some evidence today in that regard. What will be the cost of the man-hours in that regard? That is the main question that we have in regard to the specific proposal put to us.

I would like to move on to the extensions to the armaments, weapons and equipment depot that you have inspected today. It is down near the Cliff Head area, the historical area. That will, we understand, involve some further risk management. It is a new facility, in particular the holding yard where the trucks are to assemble. The questions that we have about that are these. Was GIEAC consulted in relation to that? Was an environmental impact statement specific to that area undertaken by GIEAC? Additionally, what will be the management risk with the zone of risk being spread? Will that impact upon the beach and the recreational area to the north-east of that, which is currently quite heavily used by boating people? Will that area be required to be closed off?

Members of this committee may not understand that the beach where the armaments depot and the submarine extensions jetty are is completely banned. You cannot go onto that beach. It is in a very restricted area because of the armaments depot. It is a beautiful beach. It was one of the historic beaches, but that is now out of bounds to the community. Indeed, I have experienced that, if you step onto that beach, within a very short space of time you will have an officer come down and warn you off. That has been, in the last 12 months, an area of concern for the naval defence facility here, because of the advent of jet skis. Jet skis have been coming across here and they use that area extensively. Jet skis are now banned. The response by the Department of Defence is to ban jet skis and to have a \$1,000 fine. So we are concerned that the impact on the area further north-east may also have some implications in terms of the zone of risk. We would like that question answered, in addition to the questions on the disturbance of vegetation and the placing of that holding area.

I would like to now move on to my third point made in the original evidence on the environmental management considerations in general. The documents that you see before you speak quite briefly in relation to the environment. If you have a close read, you will see that they acquit themselves under an environmental certificate and say that everything is fine. Then they go on to say that, in terms of the heritage and the

environment, everything is okay. They give an historical outline of what has gone on here more than they address the current proposals or, indeed, the future proposals. We believe that that is deficient. We believe that there should have been some statement specifically from GIEAC in the report.

I have been assured by officers of the Department of Defence, in relation to our initial submissions, that these matters are all okay. But we believe that, in evidence submitted of this nature, they need to do more. We would like to see more done in relation to assuring our group and others that the heritage and the environment are not impacted upon specifically by the activities that they are intending to undertake. We have been told in general terms that they will not be, but we are still concerned as to that assurance—a general assurance—so we would like to see some further impact statement and have some further specific matters looked into in relation to those questions in general.

I would like to now move on to a question that this committee has raised, and that I believe is a critical one. You might find that this is an unusual one for an environmental and heritage group to move to. However, most of our members are involved in the community in management or in business or in an enterprise of some kind, and so we have an interest as taxpayers beyond our interest just as Garden Island Preservation Society members who are interested in our heritage and environment.

The Department of Defence document pays particular attention to aspects of design standards and talks about the philosophy of design features. It goes very extensively and very particularly into matters of Australian codes. It goes into standards of building, design philosophies, and very technical matters of that nature. It has several pages on that. It is manifestly concerned with that; and of course the questions asked today of the navy by you people here have addressed very specifically the types of materials, the maintenance of them and those sorts of things, so one can well understand the navy's preoccupation with technicalities.

But the one thing that this document does not have, the one thing that this document is bereft of—and you people have pointed to it—is any assurance in regard to local contracts, local content and local contract management. This is a big community issue. What are the benefits that are going to flow to the local small business community out of the \$19 million expenditure on this base? As all parliamentarians will be aware, the economic situation is important; and the community needs to see some philosophy expressed in the expenditure of that \$19 million. It has not been expressed there, and we would suggest that that is as critical as anything else in the development of these proposals.

I would like to conclude my speaking evidence by looking at the key matters that concern us. Firstly, regarding cost specific management, you gentlemen may be in possession of those particular expenditures in relation to each and every one of the items

proposed. We are not, and so I stand corrected on that, if that is the case. But this document lacks general cost specific management. You seem to have access to some papers which indicate how much each area costs, so I may stand corrected, as I said.

Secondly, regarding GIEAC, we are concerned still that the role of GIEAC in relation to environment and heritage, as it pertains to the specific works and not to the general proposals, is not acquitted sufficiently. We would like to see impact statements specifically related to each area from the GIEAC committee.

Thirdly, we would like to see some form of local content assurance. You may well all be aware that, in each state now and federally, there is a local content policy being developed. The Western Australian government, under the auspices of the Minister for Resources, Colin Barnett, and the Minister for Trade and Commerce, Hendy Cowan, have a Local Content Advisory Committee. It is funded to the tune of \$450,000 and is comprised of major groups in our society, who all have an interest in ensuring that the money is flowing back into our own economy.

We believe that there should be some management philosophy expressed in future in relation to these proposals. Furthermore, there are mentions in this proposal of the savings and the benefits; however, beyond the general and unsubstantiated statements, there are no specifics in relation to the savings. For example, on page 74, the document talks about the operating cost savings in fuel management and handling. It talks about the reasons for establishing a fuel laboratory and it says in those statements that there will be substantial savings. It does not quantify those savings and, in any other arena, without quantifying savings, it would be an irrelevant statement.

Furthermore, there is one general issue that we would like to draw the parliamentary committee's attention to. This is not to say that it is a criticism of the navy or the Department of Defence by any means. However, it is a matter that does require attention and I would urge the committee here today to give it serious consideration. It is the naval management focus.

It seems to us in reading these documents that the management techniques are entirely focused on expansion of facilities. All ostensibly are shore based and all ostensibly are capital works programs. The management style is an infrastructure culture. It is not a seagoing focus. As such, it does not consider the core and non-core activities of its operation in terms of outsourcing. Some of those questions have been raised—and it is most encouraging that members of this committee have raised those questions. We believe that management best practice in relation to core and non-core activities is just as important for naval management as it is for government and corporate management.

We really question the navy investing in public storage, car parks, health care, accommodation, fuel laboratories, recreational and non-core activities. These can all be delivered much more efficiently and effectively by outsourcing—and today's management

and modern practice has all gone out to that style of thing. The navy, however, seems to be trapped in some sort of time warp in relation to the management of these types of things. Again, we are not here to criticise the Department of Defence, but to raise the issue with a view, perhaps, to ensuring that in the future a different culture can be developed and a different approach made.

In this aspect of our submission I would like to refer to and concur with Captain Nye from the 1994 parliamentary inquiry in the same room. Captain Nye closed the submission by saying that Defence had a finite budget and that he was interested in buying new ships, new equipment and new weapons. Every dollar spent ashore meant less money spent on hardware. As a fundamental operator his role was to make sure that money was put into operations and not into infrastructure ashore. I would like you to seriously consider what Captain Nye put there because we believe that he understood the philosophy of expansion of facilities.

I would also like, in closing, to further draw your attention to the Australian National Audit Office report which you received in parliament last week entitled *Management of Defence inventory*. This report was highly critical of Defence's failure to use total cost analysis and the techniques so widespread in private sector management. Thank you for the opportunity to present my evidence today. I urge you to consider the points we put and we would welcome any questions.

**CHAIR**—Mr Johnson, just prior to asking my colleagues if they have any particular questions, and for your information, the process by which this committee calls attention to its activities is, of course, through major media circulating in the district. In this case the *West Australian* is that paper in these areas. The first advice therefore published relating to this particular inquiry was in that newspaper on 4 October. It was because of the past concerns that you had in other inquiries here that the committee extended to you a special courtesy of sending you a letter which happened to get out of the office on 14 October.

In terms of your concern there, I must encourage you in the future to watch the papers because that is the way by which we actually inform people. The previous chairman and the secretary of the committee thought it worthwhile to let you know personally, otherwise you would not have known because that is not the obligation. I do not want to start a debate on that; I just want to put on the record that, in fact, the inquiry was first advertised on 4 October. Thank you very much for your contribution in that regard.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I just want to comment on a couple of things that you said in your submission. You spoke about this not being a continuous committee. Mr Johnson, can I respond by saying that it is not a continuous committee because being a member of parliament is not a very continuous job. If some 50 or so members happen to leave parliament after one election, you are bound to find some new members on the Public

Works Committee. We try as hard as we can to understand every issue by looking at things that have gone on in the past. We are very well briefed by our secretariat, so I think you can be aware that the contributions that you have made in the past have not gone unnoticed.

**Mr Johnson**—Can I respond to that, please, Senator Ferguson?

**CHAIR**—I think the point you made there was that you wanted to say a few things because there were new members on the committee. We will go on with questions and that will give you the opportunity then—

**Senator FERGUSON**—You made a reference to obviously a comment that I made. It may not have been as a direct result of a comment I made to the witnesses about access by the public to the island. I think your words were somewhere along the lines, ‘It’s no good protecting the environment and having an environment that can’t be enjoyed by those people who would want to see it or who would want to enjoy the fact that it is protected.’ But isn’t it a fact that if by their very presence they are destroying the environment they want protected—and if the numbers are great enough that can happen—the only way to protect the environment, particularly for the sake of natural fauna and natural flora, is sometimes for an area as small as this not to be visited by numbers of people?

**Mr Johnson**—That is a very good question and I am glad you have asked it. You showed a particular interest in access to this island, and it is a very big issue. The Department of Defence, in particular the navy, has done a very good job here with the environment. The fact that the island does not have full and commercial access has caused this environment to continue to be very special. However, the point I was making was that, provided it is maintained on a limited basis, we believe the role of enjoying the amenity and the environment that this island has can continue. It is a very limited access. So for that reason the island, we believe, has maintained its environment.

It is a bit like having a zoo, if you like, and never being allowed to go to the zoo. There is not much point having it. You may as well destroy it because you are not getting any enjoyment out of it at all. But, having said that, if it can be managed with everybody being able to achieve the roles and objectives, we feel that is an ideal position. As I said, we respect the fact that some of the species here are unique and have been kept unique. There are no cats and dogs permitted on this island, and that is one of the things that ensured some of the species here remain as they do and propagate very well. Additionally, the navy and the Department of Defence, through GIEAC and the resources that are here, ensure that that environment continues to be maintained.

In relation to access, which is an issue that you have raised, we do have a particularly strong view on that. The island has some of the most beautiful beaches that you will find in Australia. On the eastern coast, which is the rugged coast, the fishing is

superb, not only from a recreational point of view. The reefs are also fished commercially and are an important source of export income for Western Australia in terms of the crayfish and the lobster industry. Despite the fact that they are contained within naval waters, should access in any form be impinged upon, let me assure you that it would not just be the recreational people that would have a great concern about it but you would have the professional organisations as well.

**Senator FERGUSON**—With respect, Mr Johnson, I do not think anybody has suggested there should be any restriction to access to fishing. I do not think anybody has even suggested that. We are only talking about people actually physically being present on the island.

**Mr Johnson**—I do not want to continue, because there are other questions, but perhaps the Department of Defence might outline to you the limited restriction that is available. It is to the high-water line during the hours of sun up and sun down. So you cannot actually access the island. You cannot go beyond the high-water mark. It is illegal to do so, and you will be warned off immediately when you do so. That is the point I am making. That is reasonable. You can still access the environment—the special heritage point is accessible and so are some of the other points. If you start going into the interior of the island, let me assure you that within a very short space of time you will be moved on very quickly.

**Mr TED GRACE**—You mentioned that it is illegal to go beyond the high-water mark; yet navy have pointed out to us that they have supplied barbecue facilities. I would suggest to you that you cannot facilitate a barbecue at a high-water level. Somebody is fibbing.

**Mr Johnson**—Mr Grace, you are right. There is a very special area at the north-east end of the island, Herring Bay, which has been mentioned by the navy. People in that bay have moorings which they put in themselves. A lot of them previously held leases on this island. That was the very special concession that was granted when the arrangements were made between the state and the Commonwealth. That remains in situ. Navy and the Department of Defence assist with that in cooperation with that community. It seems to work very well. The facilities are higher than the high-water mark.

**Mr TED GRACE**—Are there no other facilities elsewhere?

**Mr Johnson**—No, except for the heritage point at Cliff Point. The Garden Island Fishing and Aquatic Club have great respect for the rules there. If you would continue to move out of that zone, let me assure you that you would upset that community. They would upset the very fine relations they have with the Department of Defence. Most people respect and appreciate that. In our opinion, it would appear to work extremely well. That is the type of thing that we are concerned to ensure will be maintained on this island, notwithstanding its strategic future, and it accommodates everybody in that regard.

**CHAIR**—Mr Johnson, just for the record, would you confirm or deny that it is the policy of your society that the current arrangements for access should be maintained?

**Mr Johnson**—Thank you for the question, Mr Tuckey. We would certainly assure you that they should be maintained now and forever.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Senator FERGUSON**—The only other question I was going to raise was about fixed wing aircraft. If we are recalling the members of the Defence Force, we will let them answer that.

**CHAIR**—By the way, we will be doing that to address some of your questions. At this stage, we are only here to hear statements, not to make judgments.

**Mr FORREST**—In the additional evidence, Mr Johnson mentioned some species of some trees he is concerned about in relation to the landing facility. Do you know what species?

**Mr Johnson**—They are cheesewood trees. They are a genetic species that have developed on this island over a period of time because of its unique location.

**CHAIR**—They were drawn to our attention this morning.

**Mr Johnson**—They are a darker green than normal trees. I am certainly not a botanist. They do have a particular significance and they were interfered with at one stage.

**CHAIR**—I think we will get a response on that because the matter was drawn to our attention in our inspection this morning.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Mr Johnson, we heard in evidence from Commodore Trotter that there is a culture of being attuned to the environment associated with this base. Do you accept that that is part of the culture of the naval personnel here?

**Mr Johnson**—The answer to the question very succinctly is we do accept that. However, the development of that culture is not without its history. The recommendations are one of the things that have come out of these public inquiries and, in particular, out of the last one at which the then chairman, Mr Hollis, played a very significant role. Prior to the 1994 inquiry, GIEAC did exist. It existed under the arrangements between the state and the Commonwealth. It had a public representative position, but that position had never been appointed or made. Navy were not accountable to anyone other than themselves when it came to the environment. That has changed because of the recommendations of Mr Hollis. The public representative now is Mr Tom Perrigo from the National Trust of Australia.

I might add that, since that time, the activities of the GIEAC committee have certainly been enhanced. They meet quite regularly now. They do report. They have notes and, very significantly this year, they have come out with their annual report. The annual report had never been done until we raised it.

The question that we raised at a parliamentary inquiry like this in 1994, and subsequent to that, was: why have a committee, and have notes and everybody attending, if it is not made public? The response was, 'That is quite a good idea, why don't we do that?' They now acquit an annual report. It is a good report. We do have some reservations about the operation of some of the things within GIEAC. In particular, when you get a copy of that report—which you will now all be on the mailing list for—you will note that this year they said they had some workshops and they had consulted with the community. When you have a look at who they consulted, it was government consulting with government, as is so often done. Everybody in that workshop was from some government agency. There was nobody there representing the general community.

To answer your question, yes, we appreciate the navy's concern for the environment, for the heritage, absolutely. They do a very good job and are very cognisant of the environment. We hope that will continue and I can see no reason why it could not.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—If you are happy with that and you accept the fact that they are now reporting publicly about their environmental activities, and you are happy with the quality of advice they are receiving through their officers, why would you be seeking independent impact statements?

**Mr Johnson**—One of the problems we have is the fact that while there is a public representative on that body it is chaired by the commander of the base. As you gentlemen well know, unless you are seen to be at arm's-length in activities, you can be accused of being biased. The downfall, as we have seen in the last 12 months, of many a chairman has been because he has not been at arm's-length.

We have some reservations about the commander being the chairperson. We believe an independent chairperson might more correctly reflect the activities of GIEAC, not that we believe that there are any untoward activity that the chairman would undertake. There is a public perception, as you gentlemen more than anyone know, about chairing bodies and committees that is so critical. We would like to see that. We have no reason to criticise what they are doing. We have no reason to believe that they are not doing their absolute best. But a lot of that has come about because of the findings of the 1994 inquiry chaired by Mr Hollis.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—I accept what you are saying but you are also strongly recommend that we should have an independent impact statement on the training section of this capital works. Given your comments about how you support their activities currently, how can you justify an independent impact statement with the training facilities?



**Mr Johnson**—The evidence that I gave was in relation to a general statement. The statements that you see generally say that the environment is fine. It does not relate specifically to this proposal. I do not have any evidence before me that each and every proposal has been acquitted. I do not have any knowledge or information that the GIEAC committee specifically went to the site, analysed the site and came back saying that everything that was going to be done on that site meets the standards.

**Mr RICHARD EVANS**—Okay.

**CHAIR**—Mr Johnson, you gave evidence relating to outsourcing of certain facilities such as the storage facility for individual serving personnel, et cetera. Considering that quite legitimate evidence was given as to the need to have such facilities within the base, and as near as possible to those wishing to use them, do you perceive that as part of the private sector involvement that would otherwise occur? For instance, that does occur with the provision of off-base housing where the Defence Housing Authority sells its own houses to investors who are prepared to lease them back. Do you see that as a practical solution within the confines of this base, or are you talking in the broader sense?

**Mr Johnson**—You are asking me for an opinion and I will give you my opinion based on—

**CHAIR**—You have given the evidence and I am asking you to clarify it.

**Mr Johnson**—Outsourcing is critical to the management of this base. One has to be very cautious about the continuing build up of infrastructure here, as opposed to the build up of seagoing resources. We have, just two kilometres away from us, a large community that can provide a lot of those resources. I understand the Department of Defence, and navy in particular, has purchased 1,200 hectares at a cost of \$3 million for residential land at Port Kennedy. Abutting that is a commercial and industrial area which would be entirely suitable for storage and would be entirely suitable for some of the other activities that do not need to be done here.

I cannot understand the philosophy of building another city here, if you like, when two kilometres away a city exists. In other countries you check in at work in the morning, unless you are going to sea, and you check out. You integrate your community into the rest of the community and you do not isolate your community. My concern is that inadvertently this community is being isolated, is not being integrated. You will see in the manpower report that most of the people will be living on this base. I do not see there is that necessity when two kilometres down the road you have a community with all the resources that can provide those facilities on a contracted out basis. At the end of the day, given the finite budget that Australia has, I cannot understand why there is the building of city facilities—sewerage, energy, lighting, management, and all the other things that we need to live our daily lives—here on this base.

If I can relate some experience in relation to mining companies, they used to operate similarly. They used to have secured areas in the biggest mining companies in the world and provide all those resources on those sites. They no longer do that. They are out of that business. They have very sophisticated environments, very secure environments. All those matters are contracted out and they save themselves millions and millions of dollars. They have been forced to do it. They originally did not want to do it but they have been forced to do it.

I do not see that the running and management of a base of this nature needs to be different, with the exception of the seagoing resources. I understand there are some special requirements such as a hyperbaric unit which could only be provided here. But with things like psychiatry services, hospitals, those types of services, to me it is just duplication of what a community has two kilometres away. In addition, the navy is already preparing to accommodate some of its staff in this region. I believe that there could be enormous savings to our community. There are benefits to the navy in looking at that and there are benefits to our wider community, including the small business community.

**CHAIR**—The area of your focus in the first instance is that to the extent possible, people should be accommodated off the base, be they single or married, and that as a consequence the positioning of storage facilities, for instance, would be adjacent to where they were then living. But evidence has been given to us that a very large percentage of these people who want this type of storage do not live on the land at all, they live on those ships that are tied up alongside the jetties and the wharves out there. How do we handle that?

**Mr Johnson**—That needs further investigation. I do not understand the ramifications of that in particular but I think the committee should investigate that further. There are other bases in the world in sophisticated environments where they simply use the base as a seagoing activity and when they are not seagoing, they come and go and do their normal daily activities, as anyone would in a job. I do not see why this base is any different to those elsewhere.

**CHAIR**—Yes, but we have people who are sent to sea from Sydney or Melbourne or somewhere else. They have been sent to sea on one of those ships and they are in port here for a week or two weeks. Are you suggesting that they should be relocated to shore based accommodation while the ship is here? We are advised that that is done for submariners, and it is pretty obvious why that is done. Are you suggesting that the Department of Defence should go to the expense of relocating all those people while they are tied up here? Is that part of your proposition to—

**Mr Johnson**—I would suggest that be considered, yes. As I understand it, the Department of Defence, and the navy in particular, if they have some special activity going on here and they need people over here, put them up in Rockingham hotels and motels and also in South Fremantle.

**CHAIR**—Those people have probably flown here, not come by ship.

**Mr Johnson**—I am uncertain of that, but I understand there are specialist activities from time to time.

**Mr FORREST**—On a point of clarification, in answer to a question earlier today I was told the community is 11 kilometres away. It is a bit impractical to say it is 2 kilometres from here.

**Mr Johnson**—Maybe I have stretched my imagination. You would have to ask the navy. It would appear to be directly, from the sea to here, three kilometres at the most. The community commences here. There is accommodation just up the road. You can have a look as you return.

**Mr FORREST**—Yes, but the real community is 11 kilometres away.

**Mr Johnson**—The real community and the area that, I understand, the navy has purchased is approximately 10 kilometres away. In this environment, unlike Sydney or Melbourne—or South Australia, potentially, which is not so much a problem—accessing your work is not a problem. Rockingham is not a busy city.

**Mr FORREST**—Could you give us some local advice on what the public transport is like?

**Mr Johnson**—I could not give you any advice whatsoever, Mr Forrest. No, I could not. But I am assured that, in Western Australia, we are privatising all our transport. In fact, as I understand it, from this area in particular, this was one of the first privatised bus services, transport services—much to the chagrin of a lot of our community. But it is a fact of life, and I would have thought that there would have been a contractor, potentially a local contractor, who could provide a service. I cannot see any problems with that if it was investigated.

Basically, running one of these bases is no different, ostensibly, other than the seagoing resources—the navy will disagree with me on this—from running a large corporation or to running a large mining company. It has similar management practices that need to be adopted. The alternative is not to accept that culture; the alternative is to remain where we are and build a huge infrastructure here. At the end of the day, we will simply not be able to bear that cost.

**Mr HOLLIS**—When we were here before, I think the Garden Island Preservation Society had not been formed for very long. What is the membership now? Has the membership grown substantially?

**Mr Johnson**—No. It had been in formation; it had not been formally incorporated.

It has been formally incorporated and was in the throes when we spoke with you. Our membership grows and wanes from time to time. We find that our membership grows in circumstances of this nature, where people feel threatened, particularly in relation to access. All of a sudden, we get calls from boaters and all sorts of groups that say, 'What's going on? How do we harness some energy down there?' Membership sits at between 80 and 100 families from time to time, plus our affiliations with the yacht clubs and the boating clubs and the fishing organisations, but it does vary.

**Mr HOLLIS**—It is like the trade unions: they never join it until they feel they are threatened.

**Mr Johnson**—Yes.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Do they pay a membership fee?

**Mr Johnson**—The annual membership fee is \$25.

**Mr HOLLIS**—What sort of contact or liaison do you have with management here?

**Mr Johnson**—My contact is very limited, I guess. From time to time I might raise an issue, but we do not have a great deal of contact. I have had, recently, contact from Commodore Trotter in relation to the hearing and in relation to some other matters I raised. We do not need to be in contact on a weekly or a monthly basis, as long as we are provided with the information as to what is happening.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I understand that every so often they have open days.

**Mr Johnson**—Yes.

**Mr HOLLIS**—Do your members come and have a look at what is going on out here?

**Mr Johnson**—From time to time people have visited the island, but we do not come down en masse as a group and say, 'We're the Garden Island Preservation Society and we are here for open day.' That does not happen.

**Mr HOLLIS**—No, but you would come without wearing your badges and make notes and report back, surely.

**Mr Johnson**—That happens from time to time, but it is not an organised event. Most of our members come here over that busy period at Christmas with their boats and families. That is their interaction with the island.

**Mr HOLLIS**—I took note of what you said about local content. I do not think that there is anywhere in Australia—bear in mind that this committee goes all around Australia—where we go, especially when we are dealing with contracts, as we do all the time, where that issue is not raised with us as a plea. It is usually the local master builders, or various other people, for example the chamber of commerce, and they always come and put that to us.

All of us, I think, are sympathetic to local content. The difficulty we have is that whatever government is in power, whether it is the Labor Party or the current government, it always puts certain caveats on people and say that they have to have competitive tendering.

Governments of all political persuasions have been trying, over recent years, to get the best possible outcome for the taxpayers' dollar. That is a difficulty I have. I noted that you said that it should be written in. No government is going to do that. We cannot say to organisations, or people like the navy, or anyone, 'You've got to have X amount of local content' in one voice, and then say to them in the next voice, 'You've got to get the best possible result for the taxpayer dollar.' What we inevitably find is that local people often get the contract because they have a built-in competitive advantage.

I do not think you would find that this committee would go so far as to recommend that that be written in, because it would be going against what the government is saying in the other voice. We put it to these people all the time: you have to get the best possible outcome. One of the things we are doing, going around here, is making sure that the navy does get the best possible outcome for the taxpayer's dollar. The ones that would come back to us would say, 'Look, you have just put X extra costs on us.' That is the difficulty I have—balancing these two things—and everywhere we go in Australia we hear exactly those words put to us.

**Mr Johnson**—Mr Hollis, I take on board what you say: we have to be competitive. There is no question about that. It does not mean to say that we have to have preferred suppliers and not be competitive. Regional local preference does exist in this state in government purchasing. It does exist; it is written policy; and 10 per cent of purchasing in a regional area is required.

Notwithstanding the fact that of course you have to be competitive, and of course the tendering process has to be competitive, there are some anomalies that have occurred in recent times. The community is very sceptical about the purchasing policies that exist.

I will relate something to you that is relevant to this question you have raised. Recently, a defence department order for \$900,000 was awarded to a two-dollar company that had existed for some months, against a major corporation that had been around for 38 years supplying the Department of Defence. It was not done on a more competitive basis. At the end of the day, that was not the reason for it. The directors of that two-dollar

company happened to be foreign directors and the materials will be sourced externally—from China—I understand.

That company went and got defence department accreditation to supply. It cost them over \$100,000 to do so. It makes us very sceptical when we raise these issues with you. I would just like the committee to know that. Notwithstanding that, we understand very clearly what you are saying.

**Senator CALVERT**—The last person who raised a matter of local content with us, I think, was at the Amberley Air Force Base at Ipswich. Was it Pauline Hanson who raised it?

Mr Johnson, this morning you would have heard evidence by the defence department—it is something about which I know in earlier times you were most concerned—about small arms. You heard this morning that that is not going to happen now, so I guess that is one of the concerns out of the way. You also would have heard the answers that were given to me on your concerns about tributyltin. Those answers—do they alleviate your fears somewhat?

**Mr Johnson**—They were not within the terms of reference. But you have raised them, so I will address them. It was just a matter I raised by way of general concern. In fact, when you see the letter that I addressed, I think it did form my way of putting the Department of Defence on notice—

**Senator CALVERT**—You concerned me when you spoke about the TBT concentrates in mussels at Garden Island, a major source of products for the restaurant trade in Perth. I was looking forward to going out to a fish restaurant tonight. Given those concerns that you raised, I am just wondering whether in fact it is safe to eat mussels.

**Mr Johnson**—I would suggest you stick with Tasmanian scallops. But notwithstanding that, the point I make there is that the coastal waters report has recently come out: TBT was recorded here, as has been indicated, in equally the highest levels within the sound. One of the points about that is that we need to be concerned about it. We need to note it. The navy have also pointed out that the mussel farms have shifted; they are now located on the other side and have a problem with E.coli. That is just as big a problem as TBT is because they all have a huge effect on you.

The navy has a management policy. That is the most important thing. That is the thing that came out of today. It is very critical. You can continue to ignore it—you are permitted to have TBT. International ships over here would have TBT. All I am suggesting is that if it does continue there will be at some stage, because of our litigious society, a Slater and Gordon style class action and the navy will be involved in it. My letter was just to take some management strategy. I appreciate the fact that you have raised it. We are very thankful that, very responsibly, the navy are taking their own action.

It is terrific to see that. They are to be commended.

In relation to the other question of the small arms range, we are delighted to have evidence here today that that will no longer continue here in this place. However, if you have a look at the drawings, you will see the small arms range is in very roughly. I could not understand the map, because it was in very small letters and quite sketchy.

**Senator CALVERT**—It does not matter. It is not going to happen anyway.

**CHAIR**—That was a proposal. We have been advised today—

**Mr Johnson**—We are delighted. We commend the navy on responding. We commend the parliamentary committee on that response. It was a terrific and very important outcome.

**Senator CALVERT**—The other things you raised were your environmental concerns for stage three. In the evidence we have—you are probably not aware of this—there is an environmental certificate of compliance which has to be conformed with by the Department of Defence. Very significantly, it says that the project is to ensure that all development is to be undertaken in accordance with the guidelines as forwarded by GIEAC and the documentation support for application, et cetera.

In other words, it seems that Air Commodore Kennedy, when he is signing off on this quite extensive environmental impact report, has to attest to the fact that GIEAC have been in consultation through the whole process. Surely that should answer any concerns you have about stage three?

**Mr Johnson**—I would hope so, yes. We have raised the questions because I spoke to Mr Perrigo in relation to some of those matters. Perhaps it was the impression I got or perhaps he gave that impression, but he was vague as to some of those matters. Maybe that is why we are not fully au fait about that report. I have had some information in response to my initial presentations that have referred to those. I would have thought that, in this report at least, we would have some more specific matters, beyond just the general statement. That is all I have got to go on. I do not have the information before you. I only have that information.

**Senator CALVERT**—Are there any other like-minded organisations besides yours?

**Mr Johnson**—There is the Garden Island Fishing and Aquatic Club and the Swan Yacht Club.

**Senator CALVERT**—None of those have chosen to give evidence. Do you think that is because they are satisfied with the way things are going?

**Mr Johnson**—We are particularly interested in what goes on here. We monitor this on a constant basis. Some of those other organisations—in particular the Herring Bay group of people—have, as I understand, a very good relationship with the Department of Defence and are very satisfied with what goes on, despite the fact that they have some questions. Because of their relationship, they feel they do not want to jeopardise that, and so they do not like to raise any major issues at inquiries of this nature. I guess they direct them—

**Senator CALVERT**—They do not want to rock the boat, in other words?

**Mr Johnson**—Absolutely. Many of them are getting on, and some of them are quite conservative. Some of them are past members of the defence forces. So they tend to be very cautious in raising any public issues.

We, whether you like it or not, do not have any of those problems and we are very independent in our thinking and, as you can well see here, in our questioning of the issues.

**Senator FERGUSON**—I have a final question. I have been pondering your answer before to Mr Forrest, because you raised the issue of your concerns about capital expenditure here and building up the infrastructure, when you think it should, perhaps, be spent on the mainland or in the nearby community.

I raised the question with Defence officials about public transport to this place and access to this place. They said they had tried to negotiate for some time to get a public transport system here and been unable to get one. Then Mr Forrest raised the issue with you about the availability of public transport, and I think your words were, ‘Much to the chagrin of many people, they have now been let out to private contractors.’ The question I really want to ask you, is: how good was the public transport system when it was still public?

**Mr Johnson**—I do not believe I am really in a position to answer that question. I am not a great public transport user. However, I have caught a bus from Fremantle to Rockingham, and I am aware of what happens. I understand the service was quite a good service, because it was provided by the government, but unfortunately I do not think it made a lot of money.

**CHAIR**—For people’s information, the privatisation process that has been proceeding here in Western Australia of the public bus service has not been one that really just hands over a section of public transport and people start making their own schedules. They have taken over the government’s buses. It is more a management and staffing contract than someone taking over an area and being totally independent and making their own judgements on schedules and things of that nature. There is a payment for the operation of the service. There has been community reaction to the idea that these bus drivers are now not employed by the government. On the other hand, I think it is worth



noting too that—irrespective of whether it is practical or not—if you had twice as many people coming and going to this base every day, someone would want to take them there and back.

**Senator FERGUSON**—Mr Chairman, you might have been trying to pre-empt my final question. I was going to say to Mr Johnson that I understand that the defence forces are negotiating with private contractors to see if they can get public transport to Garden Island facilities. Perhaps the chagrin of many of the people who did not want private contractors to take over might change to some sort of joy if they realised that a facility will exist at some stage in the future.

**CHAIR**—Thanks, Mr Johnson. That concludes any questions the committee has for you. We are recalling representatives of the defence department to address any of the issues you have raised and any other questions they think should be addressed as a conclusion to this inquiry. You may wish to wait and hear what they have to say.

[4.33 p.m.]

**KABLE, Commodore Garvon Paul, Director General Maritime Development, Department of Defence, Canberra**

**KENNEDY, Air Commodore James Frederick George, Director General Project Delivery, Department of Defence, Canberra**

**TOOTH, Wing Commander John Marsden, Project Director (A), Department of Defence, Canberra**

**TROTTER, Commodore Robert Neil, Commodore Fleet Bases, HMAS *Stirling*, WA 6958**

**CHAIR**—Gentlemen, you have heard the evidence just received. We would be interested if you wish to address any specifics related to that in a brief statement to which we may have some following questions.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—Thank you, Mr Tuckey. Mr Johnson raised a number of elements on which I would like to comment. The first one related to putting capital into shore based facilities. Unfortunately, Navy needs to be supported on land. It cannot have all its facilities at sea. The Department of Defence has taken a very important look at the core and non-core elements, not just for the navy, but for the defence force as a whole. They have a very detailed commercial support program. The committee would have seen in the press over recent times that there has been significant downsizing of military personnel in the Department of Defence.

Commercial support is something that we are very conscious of and that certainly has been taken into account in addressing this proposal. Just as an example, Mr Johnson raised the question of the medical facility. I should point out that the figure of some 16,000 consultations per year was mentioned earlier in the presentation. If those went off to Rockingham, even if the medical community could support it, it would be expensive getting people to and from those consultations, in terms of a loss of time away from the workplace in particular.

From a commercial support point of view, we have been very conscious of that. That is taken into account in this proposal. In terms of benefits to the local community, I mentioned earlier the way in which we go about contracts. I mentioned in the reply to the submission made by Mr Johnson in writing to the committee that we are obliged to take account of Australian and New Zealand content in the materials which are provided where it is feasible to do so.

I should also point out that we do not engage two-dollar companies for contractual work, not that Mr Johnson was referring to it in terms of capital facilities. I should point

out that companies have to demonstrate their financial viability before they are engaged.

On the environment side for GIEAC, before signing the environmental certificate of compliance, I ensured that GIEAC reviewed all elements of the project. They made certain recommendations on those elements. I am pleased to say that we have accepted all recommendations and they will be implemented as part of this project.

Regarding his prime concern dealing with the flight deck procedural trainer, significant attention has been given to protection of the environment in that particular proposal. The cheesewood trees at the southern end of the runway were pointed out to the committee. They are seen as a vital asset to the environment and they will be protected. This proposal does not affect them at all. We have recognised the need to minimise the amount of vegetation clearance and that is the reason why the facility will be a retractable one. I should also point out that the airfield there does not support fixed wing aircraft. It is a rotary wing airfield only.

The extensions proposed to the armament facilities do not extend beyond the original zone in the master plan as it originally was. The GIEAC's policy is that clearing is only undertaken as required. They do not say, 'That is the zone, therefore it should be cleared.' They only clear as required. The clearance zones remain and are not extended. Clearance of vegetation will take place to accommodate the elements that are proposed.

All works are required to meet the NATO safety standards. In particular, they will provide greater efficiency and use of the current storage. We do not propose to augment that storage. In particular, it relates to the safety of workers in that environment.

Generally speaking, GIEAC has been consulted and all their recommendations have been taken on board. I think they were the key elements, Mr Chairman.

**Cdre Kable**—There is one statement I would like to respond to. That was the quote Mr Johnson made from Captain Nye in the previous committee considerations. I would like to assure the committee that, in making proposals to government, Defence tries to minimise the amount of money put into shore infrastructure and maximise the money put into fighting equipment. In the maritime field, I presently have, approved or about to be approved by government, projects of fighting equipment valued at \$20,000 million. That is \$20 billion. All around Australia my proposals for shore infrastructure amount to \$250 million. That is a ratio of one dollar ashore to every \$80 in fighting equipment at sea, which I think is not a bad ratio.

**CHAIR**—Yes, thank you. In giving your answer, would you also give us some advice as to the ratios of your full staff here at any one time? How many would be resident aboard ship or visiting short-term on the base here compared with those long-term single people who would be accommodated on the base. Would you be able to do that with whatever else you were going to tell us?

**Cdre Trotter**—Yes. I might need to seek advice on exact numbers but I can give you some general numbers. When all of the ships are in, there are about 2,000 people here, about 1,000 of whom are on the ships. A proportion of those that are on the ships have their families living here in the local area so that, when the ships are in, they move ashore. The remainder are either single members or members that have chosen to come across here to a ship, and not move their family across, and they live on board the ship.

The total accommodation that we have available here on the base is for 440. The majority of that is held by transient people—for example, those people who are going through a course. Of course, as I mentioned, there are also the permanent members such as the submariners. A lot of the single people, because they like the bright lights of Perth, have chosen at their own expense to live ashore in digs, usually in groups, in the Fremantle and southern suburbs areas of Perth and, fortuitously, that has lessened the strain on our accommodation here.

Nevertheless, quite recently, we did a survey on accommodation requirements. It was substantially to do with an analysis of the preferences of our personnel without families, and whether they wanted to live on board in barracks style accommodation or live ashore within the civilian community. It also covered areas such as size, style and layout of amenities that they might like either on board or ashore.

The responses to that were presented to the Deputy Chief of Navy and the Head of the Defence Estate earlier this year. As a result, there has been a consultant engaged to have a look at the development of shared townhouse-unit developments specifically for this area. They will probably be closer to Fremantle than Rockingham because that was the expressed view of the majority of those surveyed. When I say the majority of those surveyed, I mean all of those members on the ships and all of those living on board *Stirling*. Does that answer your immediate question?

**CHAIR**—Yes, thank you.

**Cdre Trotter**—There are a couple of specifics that I would like to cover concerning the GIPS submission. Again, much of this is substantially for the record and to put a few things in context. We have talked about contribution to the community of this place. When you add the families, we represent four per cent of the Rockingham community, which is not an insignificant amount. By our calculations—this is direct input only, and does not look at the secondary and tertiary effects of the employment of families, and the fact that they are living in DHA houses for which, presumably, DHA pays rates to the local communities and whatever—this base contributes some \$200 million per annum to the local community. I do not think that is insignificant in any respect.

With respect to outsourcing, Air Commodore Kennedy mentioned the lively and comprehensive commercial support program across the Australian defence forces,

including navy. For here, though, we have a specific factor which must be taken into account, and I raised it in the briefings with you this morning, about the geographical stability for our families here. That requires the provision of sufficient shore positions for sailors so that they can rotate to and from the ships without undue strain.

Normally it means 1½ to two years at sea and, depending on rank, between one and two years ashore. If we did not have uniform positions here on the base, it would mean that, substantially, a number of people on ships here would come just for that posting. As I said, that might be for 1½ to two years. If they were willing to do so, they would bring their families with them and then two years later move them back east. Defence policy is that we should, where possible, not move people geographically more than once within five years. That decision was made for reasons of children's schooling, proximity to extended family and friends, and basically to provide a settled environment for our people. If we were to go through any large scale outsourcing which impacted upon that in this area—which is already unsatisfactory regarding sea/shore—then we would be totally unable to provide a settled environment for our people and their families.

Mr Johnson mentioned the strategic plan workshop. Just for the record, the people who attended were not all government people. The attendees were: Professor Harry Recher of Edith Cowan University, a noted and very active man of green opinion; Dr Chris Back of the Western Australian Bushfire Board; Dr Chris Simpson of the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Marine Branch; Dr Libby Mattiske, environmental consultant and member of the Australian Heritage Commission; Mrs Susan Arthur of the Defence environment and heritage section; Commander Jim Buchanan, Director of the navy Western Australia project, and internal staff from HMAS *Stirling*.

The workshop was a strategic planning exercise. That is why we brought in those experts, whether they be government or outside of government, that we judged to be best at advising us how best to plan in a strategic sense for the environmental management of Garden Island.

With regard to access to the island, yes, we do discourage people coming off the shore, other than into the facilities that we have provided for them, such as the two small picnic areas—one in Buchanan Bay and one in Herring Bay—particularly during the busy periods. The north end of this island is very dangerous. The bush is very thick and impenetrable in many places and full of all sorts of traps, apart from the reptile population. But, the most alarming thing, given the resources that we have, is that if there were to be a fire then we would need to know where people are. We generally discourage them from coming much further than the beach line into the bush. That is a matter of public safety and one which, I think, we have a duty of care to enforce.

Last, but not least, I can assure Mr Johnson that our relationship with GIFA—the Garden Island Fishing Association—is not as smooth as silk. Indeed, we met with them just recently and it was, I can say, an interesting meeting. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Cdre Trotter**—I have some of the answers to the questions taken on notice. Do you want to have those now?

**CHAIR**—Yes, please.

**Cdre Trotter**—With regard to the matter of consultation with the sailors, I mentioned the survey we had for the accommodation aspects. In terms of coming up with the plans for the development of this area here, the facilities for single unaccompanied sailors, I mentioned that we did it also through the divisional system. We also went through the ship's welfare committee, that is, the welfare committee here of HMAS *Stirling*.

We also had meetings with the COs of the home ported ships here. They went back to their ships and discussed the plans for this with their officers and sailors. Indeed, in the initial submission there was a plan for a bowling alley, just a two-lane indoor style one, not a public one. But, as a result of meeting with the commands of the affected ships and our own welfare committee, that was changed because it was quite clearly not what the sailors wanted and, indeed, the input to it was what we now have in the submission which is what the sailors would have preferred to have. I say that to give you the assurance that there was a fairly comprehensive level of consultation with all of the people that we would be expecting to use this facility here.

The question was asked about the budget for environmental management. Instead of tracking through all the finite elements of the budget, for which there might be an environmental aspect, I wonder whether you would just be satisfied with the answer that we spend, in a direct sense, about \$430,000 per annum on environmental management. That goes into about \$100,000 on weed eradication and another \$130,000 on the environmental manager and his budget, including his salary. We pay \$80,000 to CALM, the Department of Conservation and Land Management, for the purposes of the ranger—and CALM works on the islands. The GIEAC secretary spends half her time as the secretary—she has other things to do—so that is about another \$20,000. The CSIRO have for some time now been conducting a ground water study of the island to see which way the water, particularly the sewage, is tracking—whether it is going east or west into the Indian Ocean or into Cockburn Sound—and that is at an expense of \$100,000 per annum.

So, in a direct sense we spend, as I say, \$430,000 a year in environmental management. In an indirect sense, in all sorts of things like toxic waste management and removal, the movement of fuels, precautions, energy management et cetera, we would spend a lot more. But without tracking through that it would be a long and tedious task.

**CHAIR**—Just arising out of those remarks, have you got your own sewage

treatment plant out here or is it a septic tank type system?

**Cdre Trotter**—It is a settling pond style of sewage treatment unit, biological decay over time. We then pump the effluent from that to an area of the island where it just evaporates.

**CHAIR**—And you have never chosen to use it for reticulation or anything of that nature?

**Cdre Trotter**—We have an area of investigation. Just recently we went and had a look at the new facility over on Rottnest—to see whether or not it was something that we could incorporate here—where they have a system whereby they treat it to the point of being able to use it for reticulation and the like. We do not do that here because we have a specific problem with dealing with saltwater waste from the ships as well as freshwater waste from the toilets within the island. So it is a more difficult issue, but it is a line of investigation.

**Air Cdre Kennedy**—There is one other item relating to the warehouse extensions.

**Wing Cmdr Tooth**—I think the question in relation to the size of the warehouse extension was from Senator Ferguson. The requirement has been based on the floor space utilised for the current number of ships.

This has been extrapolated for the additional vessels to be home ported at Stirling and the requirement is centred upon repair at point of failure; that is, sorting of defective stores items from ships, reviewing of individual ships inventories and a refit staging store, and gathering stores in preparation for a ship going into refit. So basically that is what it was centred on.

**CHAIR**—If there are no further questions it is proposed that the correspondence received that has been circulated to members of the committee be incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members have any objections? There being no objection, it is so

*The documents read as follows -*

**CHAIR**—Before closing I would like to thank the witnesses who appeared before the committee today and those who assisted our inspections today. I also thank the committee members, my colleagues, Hansard and the secretariat for the work that they have put in. Mr Hollis would you care to move the motion concerning the publication of evidence.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Hollis**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 4.55 p.m.**