



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

**JOINT PARLIAMENTARY
COMMITTEE**

on

PUBLIC WORKS

Reference: Redevelopment of facilities at RAAF Base Amberley

BRISBANE

Tuesday, 19 May 1998

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Members:

Mr Tuckey (Chair)

Senator Calvert
Senator Ferguson
Senator Murphy

Mr Richard Evans
Mr Forrest
Mr Ted Grace
Mr Hatton
Mr Hollis

WITNESSES

GROWDER, Air Commodore Peter William, Commander Strike Reconnaissance Group, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306	3
KELLY, Brigadier Garry, Director General Project Delivery, Department of Defence, Room CP3-3-3, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600	3
KIMBER, Squadron Leader Sheldon Dwight, Commanding Officer, RAAF Security and Fire School, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306	3
MACLEAN, Lieutenant Colonel Graeme, Project Director 1, Department of Defence, Room CP3-3-3, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600	3
SARGEANT, Group Captain Richard James, Officer Commanding No. 503 Wing, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306 ..	3
SIZER, Mr Brian, Executive Engineer, Sinclair Knight Merz, 65 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill, Queensland 4004	3
STEINBACH, Wing Commander Johannes Werner, Officer Commanding No. 301 Airbase Wing, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306	3

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

Redevelopment of facilities at RAAF Base Amberley

BRISBANE

Tuesday, 19 May 1998

Present

Mr Tuckey (Chair)

Senator Calvert

Mr Forrest

Mr Hatton

Mr Hollis

Committee met at 1.34 p.m.

Mr Tuckey took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing into the proposed redevelopment of facilities at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report to parliament by the House of Representatives on 24 March 1998 at an estimated outturn cost of \$73.7 million. In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

- (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 RAAF Base Amberley. This inspection included an examination of facilities to be demolished or extended and the sites proposed for a number of elements of the proposed works. Today, the committee will hear evidence from the Department of Defence.

GROWDER, Air Commodore Peter William, Commander Strike Reconnaissance Group, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306

KELLY, Brigadier Garry, Director General Project Delivery, Department of Defence, Room CP3-3-3, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

KIMBER, Squadron Leader Sheldon Dwight, Commanding Officer, RAAF Security and Fire School, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306

MACLEAN, Lieutenant Colonel Graeme, Project Director 1, Department of Defence, Room CP3-3-3, Campbell Park Offices, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory 2600

SARGEANT, Group Captain Richard James, Officer Commanding No. 503 Wing, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306

SIZER, Mr Brian, Executive Engineer, Sinclair Knight Merz, 65 Astor Terrace, Spring Hill, Queensland 4004

STEINBACH, Wing Commander Johannes Werner, Officer Commanding No. 301 Airbase Wing, Department of Defence, RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland 4306

CHAIR—Welcome. The committee has received a submission from the Department of Defence dated April 1998. Do you wish to propose any amendment?

Brig. Kelly—I have a number of amendments which relate to technical issues or reflect organisational changes or changes of location. They do not actually change the thrust of the evidence, and I have already passed a fully amended copy of the evidence to the secretary.

CHAIR—It is proposed that the amended submission just referred to be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. Do members of the committee have any objections? 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 before we proceed to questions?

Brig. Kelly—The Department of Defence advocates the refurbishing and construction of new facilities at RAAF Base Amberley to provide the necessary functional capabilities in accordance with current standards. The Australian Defence Force is required to maintain a strike and reconnaissance capability with F111 aircraft. Defence has examined the potential capabilities of the F111 force and, with the avionics update to this aircraft and procurement of additional aircraft, the aircraft has a life of type to 2020.

RAAF Base Amberley is to be retained as the home base for the F111 aircraft and is the location of the strike reconnaissance group headquarters. The proposed works are needed to provide the base with the facilities to perform its operational role in a safe and effective manner. Many of the existing base facilities are over 50 years old and some of the facilities used for the support of the F111s are converted World War II buildings.

Some of the deficiencies include: No. 82 Wing headquarters building is old and poorly configured, making security screening in sensitive areas difficult to achieve, and it also has poor climate control and noise intrusion; No. 1 Squadron hangar requires fire protection and it also suffers from OH&S deficiencies; and Airfield Defence Wing occupies facilities which are substandard and dysfunctional.

There are no purpose built ordnance loading aprons at Amberley. The bomber replenishment aprons in use at Amberley are below current standards and only capable of taking one aircraft. The crossrunway and various taxiways are used to load ordnance, which inhibits their use when ordnance operations are taking place. The ordnance loading locations are distanced from explosive ordnance storage facilities and this requires hauling of ordnance over considerable distances.

Reticulated services to F111 flight lines are inadequate, badly located and poorly illuminated. Power and compressed air are provided by mobile carts and compressors. The operation of these carts to the three lines of shelters is not cost effective and raises OH&S issues. Training Services Flight and Field Training Flight are currently located in a variety of facilities which are not suited for their purpose. They are badly configured with poor airconditioning, ventilation and noise attenuation. Classes are being held outdoors due to classroom shortages and are often disrupted during bad weather. Fire school and fire training facilities are makeshift and temporary facilities which are defective in OH&S terms and pose environmental hazards.

The No. 23 Squadron and Air Training Corps facilities are unsatisfactory for the activities being performed. They present OH&S problems and have long exceeded their economic life. No. 301 Air Base Wing Headquarters is housed in a variety of separate buildings that are old, expensive to maintain, poorly designed for administrative functions and lack adequate noise attenuation. The gymnasium is presently located in an old

airmen's mess constructed during World War II. This building is poorly ventilated and too small to accommodate all the required sporting activities. Ablutions and change facilities are inadequate and poorly located, and OH&S issues need addressing.

The air movements terminal facility requires modification and enlargement to handle the capacity of 75 incoming and 75 outgoing passengers with seating for 130. Upgrade of facilities for customs and quarantine, crew briefing, VIP reception, a parent's room and ablutions and toilets are also required. The central store, built as part of the Defence logistics redevelopment program, currently lacks the capability to hold the stock requirements for the base. The fuel farm office is in a transportable building which is too small and does not have the appropriate amenities for staff. It also lacks a computer room, ablutions and showers, and has an inadequate lunch room and change room facilities.

The revetted engine run-up consists of two bays. Test cell 1 control cabin is too small for the number of staff it accommodates and it also lacks a positive air pressure system. Both test cells have inadequate lighting, and reductions in high noise levels need to be addressed. The surface finishing facility is currently located in a high aircraft noise area and suffers from high noise levels. The facility has no extraction system to remove vapours and dust. The waste entrapment is inefficient and potentially hazardous to the environment. The fuel tank deseal and reseal facility is currently located in a Bellman hangar. This facility is dysfunctional and suffers from OH&S and environmental issues.

No. 501 Wing's Central Management and Maintenance Facilities consist mainly of workshops for the deeper level maintenance of F111 aircraft. These workshops have OH&S problems and are too small to accommodate some of the larger aircraft components. Wing and Track Maintenance has two dispersed facilities which are poorly configured, too small for the functions being performed and have OH&S problems. No. 82 Wing's Alternative Mission Equipment Maintenance Section workshops are in three buildings. These facilities lack noise attenuation, are congested, are poorly laid out and are hot in the summer. The base perimeter fence is in poor condition, ranging from rural barbed wire to chain wire. The base engineering services are in poor condition and need to be upgraded to meet current day standards.

It is proposed to overcome these deficiencies by constructing new facilities where necessary, refurbishing existing facilities where appropriate and upgrading base engineering services as detailed in the written statement of evidence. Subject to parliamentary approval, tenders for the initial work will be called in late 1998, with the objective of having all projected work completed by mid-2003. The proposed development works will enhance the overall operational effectiveness of RAAF Base Amberley, overcome many OH&S problems, address environmental hazards and improve morale through the provision of work accommodation of a contemporary standard. The works will create job opportunities for the local community and the region.

An environmental certificate of compliance has been issued for the works. No

direct adverse environmental effects are foreseen, and measures to contain any possible environmental degradation are being incorporated into the design of the facilities. The environmental certificate lists four buildings which are not to be demolished pending further heritage examination. To date, no native title claims have been lodged in respect of the Commonwealth's Amberley properties. Relevant authorities and state and local government bodies have been consulted about this project. That completes my statement.

Mr FORREST—With respect to that last statement, Brigadier, I noticed those four buildings on the certificate of compliance, but you did not say why they are not to be demolished or whether they are just under consideration.

Brig. Kelly—The City of Ipswich has a heritage committee which has identified the base overall as being of some significance to the area because of its World War II heritage, and it has identified four particular buildings as being of special interest. They are not on the Register of the National Estate and they currently have no limitations on them, but the delegate for the environmental certificate of compliance has decreed that they are to be examined further before demolition proceeds.

Mr FORREST—It is a confusing picture trying to work out what the heritage listings are. There is a letter from the Commonwealth agency and there are letters from state agencies, but there is not a clear picture as to whether some buildings are meant to be retained or not. The way they write it, they are not clear either. I hope you are clear.

Brig. Kelly—The federal and state authorities have not identified any facilities which are to be retained. This is a local issue where the local heritage society has identified the potential for them to be considered important. We will simply examine that further before we make any decisions.

Mr FORREST—Have you got some consultative arrangements with the local communities about how that might work?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—I am not aware of any such arrangements. We certainly have not been involved with the Ipswich heritage society over this.

Mr FORREST—I need to know how you are going to work your way through this. I am sure one of those buildings has to be removed to clear the site. Maybe I am a bit confused myself, but there were four buildings: buildings 41, 42, 65 and 54. Some of those buildings have to be removed to clear the site for the new facility. So it needs to be resolved.

Brig. Kelly—It needs to be resolved. Finding them to be significant from a heritage point of view does not mean that we cannot demolish them. We would prefer, I suppose, not to and certainly the local community, if they considered them important, would prefer that we did not. But there are provisions that can be taken whereby we

record accurately, photograph, retain elements of the building which we think are of significance and then proceed with demolition. We also, at this stage of the project, have some potential to relocate the planned buildings.

Lt Col. Maclean—The only building that is critical is building 58.

CHAIR—The freestanding one—the one that looks like a bungalow, like a house?

Lt Col. Maclean—No.

Mr Sizer—No, it is the flammable liquid store; the one next to the paint shop.

Lt Col. Maclean—It is where the proposed paint shop location is.

Mr Sizer—I do not think anybody mentioned it on—

Brig. Kelly—It is the only one of the four that we did not identify during the tour.

Mr FORREST—But it is not listed. I assume that if it is not on this list it has already been cleared for demolition. This certificate says, ‘Demolition of the following buildings is not cleared to proceed: Buildings 41, 42, 65 and 54.’

Mr Sizer—It is 54; it is the flammable liquid store.

Mr FORREST—That is the one that you have just referred to.

CHAIR—Without putting myself forward as an expert on heritage, in our travels I felt that the one freestanding one there that looks a little bit more like a house was probably the only one that had any genuine claim to at least look like something a bit different. I think the blue buildings, which were rather typical of Defence establishments 50 years ago, were otherwise unexceptional.

Brig. Kelly—I believe that the gym, which was previously an airmen’s mess, was the first building constructed on the site.

Mr FORREST—I am still not satisfied as to how you would resolve it. If the impetus is coming from the locals, surely you will need some sort of consultative group to decide this.

Brig. Kelly—I cannot quote the report that has caused us to put this limitation on the demolition plan. It obviously comes from that sort of consultation, and there is no doubt a report which indicates that interest. The very fact that the limitation has been put on it means that we will have to go to local heritage groups, and Queensland and Commonwealth organisations for that matter, and properly determine exactly what their

status is.

Mr Sizer—You have discussions with the local heritage people and, if it is decided that there is absolutely a need to demolish the building, a report is written on that building, it is photographed, it is drawn and it is archived in several places. That is the process, and that is the process that has been set out in the environmental certificate.

Mr HATTON—As a matter of course, not in regard to those four buildings, if you are demolishing a lot of buildings, is it not a prospect that you would just take a video record of what has been demolished there and add that to the history of the base, because for the significant time that the base has been around people have had to live and work in those kinds of conditions? When they are knocked over and done away with, you have not got any record at all. Do you intend to keep some kind of record of the details?

Brig. Kelly—I am not sure that we had planned to do that, but there is certainly no reason why we should not take a video, or preferably a still photographic record, to retain evidence of their presence.

Mr HATTON—And show the new troops as they come in—

Brig. Kelly—How lucky they are.

Mr HATTON—How lucky they are. As a follow-up to the heritage part, we have received a new letter which says:

In relation to the Vietnam conflict the group of aluminium buildings adjacent to the runways is considered to be possibly unique in Australia.

The current building work that is going to be done here does not involve those at all until a later stage. Do you think that they are unique?

Brig. Kelly—If they are the Lysaght huts that I believe 6 Squadron used to use, they are certainly not unique. There are hundreds of them that we are steadily trying to get rid of at bases around Australia. I have no doubt that some will be retained somewhere if we want to be reminded of that period.

Mr HATTON—That is where the video record and the other way of doing it is more appropriate because you get the utility and the functionality.

Brig. Kelly—It would, however, be difficult to retain them because they are in the apron area and I think the AMEMS fueller might actually be going into that location. I have the wrong group, apparently.

Air Cdr Growder—I was trying to work it out from that letter. I suspect it might

be where No. 9 Squadron used to be some time ago. There might be the old Kingstrand style of hut down there, but I agree with the brigadier that there are plenty of them around.

CHAIR—Obviously, the Department of the Environment has made an eleventh hour bid to become involved.

Mr FORREST—I am not quite sure of that.

Brig. Kelly—I do not believe that is the case. This is a limitation that we have imposed upon ourselves internally.

CHAIR—Except they have now written to us.

Brig. Kelly—But there was nothing in that letter, I think, that raised any great issues of concern.

CHAIR—They said there should be a further inquiry; I am not convinced of that. Then they carry on about noise levels and things like that, which are hardly going to be adversely affected by this activity. If anything, to the extent of your maintenance activities, you will be reducing them.

Brig. Kelly—The environmental issues on the base will be significantly improved as a result of this project, ranging from disposal of contaminated waste through to OH&S issues with noise.

CHAIR—There are two letters: one addressed to Sergeant Brialey from Vanessa Hughes, which talks about waste water management, dust and light management, et cetera. It may be valuable for the record to respond to those remarks so that we do not have to have another meeting at another date.

Mr Sizer—I believe our report for the environmental certificate does address all of those issues.

Brig. Kelly—It was actually answered through the secretary.

CHAIR—So we have a response to this letter already?

Lt Col. Maclean—We faxed it through about quarter to five on Friday evening.

Mr FORREST—The statement was 14 May, so you have done very well.

CHAIR—The main thing is that, by one means or another, I think we need to put on the record your response. Have you got a copy of that correspondence? That is it. I

think you should briefly speak to it because then members will know whether they want to ask any questions.

Mr FORREST—That would be very helpful. We have the Commonwealth agency saying, ‘There are a few concerns but they are not major,’ and then we have the state agency coming in at the eleventh hour quoting a report by Peter Read, which we had no reference to anywhere, and I think being difficult at the last minute.

CHAIR—I strongly recommend that there is some formal response now, simply because we do not want to come back and discuss it later. We have got this letter. If that is your response to us, then I would suggest you briefly speak to it so that it is a matter of record.

Brig. Kelly—The submission made a number of comments about issues that would arise during the construction phase and our response indicated that the environmental certificate of compliance addressed them. In particular, it requires that construction contractors have a construction environmental management plan which looks at things like solid waste, trade waste and so on as part of the construction process.

We noted that all the works are within the developed area of the base. There are no significant green field sites that we would assess as being of environmental importance. We noted that an indigenous cultural heritage study on RAAF Base Amberley had been completed. The study indicated the proposed works for the base would have no impact on indigenous cultural heritage. However, the study did identify Warrill Creek as having indigenous cultural heritage. The facilities to be constructed or refurbished as part of this project are not in the area of Warrill Creek. We indicated that we would hold discussions on the fate of the buildings of heritage interest with the Australian Heritage Commission.

We noted that the Ipswich City Council is also being consulted regarding the heritage implications of the base redevelopment. We noted that a study—the National Heritage Assessment for Amberley RAAF Base, which was an appendix to the heritage study of Amberley RAAF Base completed by Dames and Moore in 1998—illustrated the distribution of vegetation communities within the base and noted that the communities do not encroach upon the area which is being redeveloped. On that basis we assessed that the environmental implications of the project were minimal.

Mr HOLLIS—I have got a couple of questions. Quite a lot of money has been spent on this phase. A couple of years ago we spent money. Are we getting value for the money that we are spending there? I do not expect you to say no, but I expect you to tell me why we are getting value.

Brig. Kelly—I am looking for the longer answer, Mr Hollis. The procedures that we have in place in our contracting processes, which are based on value for money, mean that we are confident that we get the best designers, project managers and contractors. So,

from that point of view, I believe we get value for money. From the point of view of the actual works that we undertake, I think you saw this morning the difference between the current 1 Squadron facilities and the almost completed 6 Squadron facilities. I am sure that those people who have to work in there consider that they have received value for money.

Mr HOLLIS—Defence has a large block of land there, but there are 10 adjoining properties. What is the story with the 10 adjoining properties? Has Defence got a lease over those?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Those associated properties are used for a number of reasons. Some are used for training by the Security and Fire Training School. A lot of them have been purchased just because they are buffers. We are trying to eliminate urban encroachment on the base itself and also contain areas of high noise.

Mr HOLLIS—So Defence actually owns them?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Defence owns them and sometimes they are leased for agricultural purposes or back to farmers.

CHAIR—So the tenure of those adjoining properties is an issue?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Yes, it is an issue.

Mr HATTON—The Queensland government Department of Environment make a very general statement in their submission about the development of the base. They say:

Another consideration relates to the early layout of the site and the manner in which this demonstrates the reporting hierarchy and functional behaviours of a military base.

Subsequent development has generally ignored this layout and there is a potential for it to be obliterated over time.

My guess is that, in the development of any military base or any major facility, because over time the functions change, the way in which the place is built therefore changes. They are arguing here that whatever happened in World War II, whatever the reporting hierarchies were, wherever the base was set out told a particular story. Because the base has been changed over time, and will be dramatically changed by what happens here, then the memory of the way things used to be is being lost. Have you any comment in relation to that?

Brig. Kelly—It is true that with new equipment and new ways of doing business the actual layout of a base changes significantly. We have retained some similar facilities in other places. For example, at Puckapunyal Army base in Victoria, where we have removed virtually all of the World War II buildings, the World War II street layout has

been retained. So in the middle of an open field there are roads still indicating where the old World War II huts were. I believe that on a busy air base like Amberley it would be very difficult to be able to satisfy that requirement. Our master planning process has to be a dynamic one to take account of changing times, changing facilities, changing organisations. The requirements of aircraft today are so different and the logistic support is so different from that of World War II that I would be very surprised if we were able to accommodate that.

Air Cdre Growder—The major changes I believe would be upwards from the base. That really should not affect the actual construct of the organisation on the base. Right now the OC of the flying wing works for me. The OC of the air base wing works for me. If he went off and worked for another master somewhere, then that should not really affect our organisational issues. I think with modern technology that link would just be to that individual. As I said at the start, we have the three commands represented on the base, working for different people. I think that has not caused us a dramatic problem. That has only evolved over the last probably five to seven years.

Mr HATTON—I think this goes to the current fashion for almost an industrial archaeological approach to heritage. They have moved on from just saying, ‘That’s a nice looking house and the only one of its type,’ to saying, ‘You should leave everything as it was so we can see what it was like.’ I would think it is far more sensible to make the changes but to record what you have gotten rid of so that, firstly, for the institution’s own purpose its institutional memory is retained and, secondly, you have that available in terms of an historical record. But this type of questioning should become more common in the future where they have taken a much broader approach to heritage values than previously has been undertaken.

In relation to another matter, are the ordinance loading aprons proposed to be built the only ones on Amberley? Are the ones that are proposed to be built the only ones like this?

Air Cdre Growder—As it said in the statement, we actually have a bomb replenishment area over the other side which is totally inadequate because the danger area overlaps surrounding areas. We have had to move down, and we use one of the existing runways. The cross-runway is where we can position our aircraft. That can only be a temporary activity because you are denying the use of that runway. To position a proper one is required. Also, we probably did not point out this morning that our weapons storage is down at that end of the base too. So to take weapons prepared you now have to take them basically through the whole length of the base to the aircraft up on the cross-runway. This will be a heck of a lot more functional and, I think, closer to the weapon area.

Mr HATTON—But, if you compare what is available here with what is available at Tindal, Tindal has a hell of a lot more capacity. Is there a specific reason why they have all that capacity for OLAs and there is not much here?

Air Cdre Growder—Normally here we would see our aircraft being taken from the carport areas, where they are kept undercover, down to the OLA, prepped and then go. In Tindal, they permanently reside in the OLA up there, so it has a different shape and a different approach to it.

Mr HATTON—But does the lack of OLAs create problems in getting aircraft out speedily? Would you need more in the future? Have you looked at that in your planning?

Air Cdre Growder—I believe the number there now will meet our normal training requirement. As I said this morning, I do not envisage that we are going to fight the battle from Amberley. But who knows. The intent would be that most of our missions, if we are using four aircraft and one spare, meets by far the greater majority of our training requirements out of the Amberley base. When we are at other bases the construct and the exercise that you are participating in may require more aircraft.

CHAIR—But the facilities exist at Curtin or those sorts of places if you were more in a war zone situation?

Air Cdre Growder—Yes.

Senator CALVERT—We saw the other day one of your planes at the 25th anniversary of the base. Why has it taken so long for this particular ordnance loading facility to be put forward? You are flying bombers. Obviously, apart from putting a pilot in the plane, putting bombs on is probably one of the most important parts of the exercise. Yet 25 years later you have decided all of a sudden that it is important.

Air Cdre Growder—We have used the stopgap measure of using that cross-runway as an OLA, but progressively that is not meeting our need. The other thing is that we deploy a lot to other bases. We will go to Learmonth, to Curtin or to Tindal to do high explosive bombing, and a lot of it is just the program. We are finding that on the east coast now, at Shoalwater Bay high range training area, there are a lot more exercises where we are working conjointly with the Army or another foreign force, so we are using more high explosive bombs. That is all we need it for—for the high explosive bombs out of Amberley to be part of those exercises.

Senator CALVERT—Did that show up last year during Tandem Thrust?

Air Cdre Growder—I really cannot answer that because I was not there.

Senator CALVERT—When some of us were there last year there was a whole contingent of US marines there. I wondered whether the fact that they were there and that you were operating an exercise partly from Amberley may have accentuated the problem and brought it forward.

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—It certainly did. We had many overseas aircraft at Amberley at the time and, because we had to use the cross-runway not so much for arming purposes but to park visiting C5s and Orions, we were restricted quite severely as to when we could arm those aircraft and when we could not.

Brig. Kelly—If I could make a comment on the original question, although we have no requirement for additional OLAs, the 1997 master plan does make provision to duplicate the proposed facility adjacent to it, if necessary.

Senator CALVERT—Obviously, looking down the track, you must be feeling that there might be a lot more joint exercises with other nations in the east coast area rather than in the north of the country, or are you just keeping your options open?

Brig. Kelly—If you are referring to the master planning process, master planning is simply that: it is to ensure that we do not build such that we preclude the option in the future to provide additional rather than to reflect that we actually need additional at the moment, or even foresee it.

Senator CALVERT—Did you have any comment from the US marines about the lack of loading facilities during Tandem Thrust last year?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—We did accommodate them, but we were not able to conduct as many operations as would have been ideal for them.

Air Cdre Growder—The other point is that at Tindal we normally have more aircraft involved in the exercise. They are normally a larger scale exercise. Tandem Thrust was a big one. I am informed that the weather played a fair amount in scaling it down a bit. So maybe that worked for us because it reduced the problem. At the Tindal base, as we find now, a lot of marines are coming in—a lot of the foreign forces are using that—and it does get a fair amount of demand for OLAs and HE bombing.

Senator CALVERT—Thank you.

CHAIR—Mr Forrest, do you have some questions?

Mr FORREST—As my colleagues will know, I am no fan of some of these heritage listings. I just think, if you are not proactive early, you get done like a dinner and you end up having to preserve a blue stone fence. It goes from the sublime to the ridiculous sometimes.

I might just refer to the submission for the environmental certificate of compliance, which has not been submitted yet but has been provided to me to peruse. It sets out a procedure in consultation with the Ipswich City Council about heritage implications. The department is telling us that the Ipswich City Council and others have concerns about

heritage, yet not one of them has made a submission about it. I think someone is going over the top a bit here in insisting that we preserve aluminium buildings which were probably put there temporarily 20 years ago. There needs to be proper consultation to ensure we do not get done on this.

Brig. Kelly—I agree. At this stage, all we are saying is that we will not demolish them without undertaking further study. That is the limitation at this stage.

Mr FORREST—I might just leave that one and move on to some of the specifics of the project. This morning I asked, given there was a large number of individual buildings to be built, whether it was possible to minimise that, consolidate more and so forth and get better scales of economy. I was interested in the brief we had in respect of the resealing of the fuel leakage. I understand that the fuel tank is removed, taken there and then treated in that particular part of the facility. The whole plane does not go there. Is that correct?

Air Cdre Growder—The fuel tank is an integral part of the aircraft. It is not a separate tank like a motor vehicle petrol tank. The aircraft is part of it and actually forms the fuel tank. What the individuals have to do is get in and pick the sealant out of the construct of the aircraft.

Mr FORREST—So it is not possible to outsource that or contract that out?

Air Cdre Growder—No, it is not a separate tank that you can just pull out and send off. We have wing tanks, but that is not the issue we are talking about. It is part of the wing. We have fuel in the wing of the aircraft and we have fuel in the fuselage. In fact, we have two main tanks in the aircraft and those form part of the fuselage of the aircraft, so they are, as I said, an integral part of that aircraft.

Group Capt. Sargeant—That is quite correct. The entire aircraft goes into the deseal/reseal facility and we have to get right into the actual tank itself. In the old days, we did have to remove the sealant. What we now use is a spray on sealant. So rather than having to go through and remove all the old sealant, we can actually spray over the existing. That is a new technique we are using, but as a result of that, whilst productivity improves, it also brings with it greater lethality and so forth of the spray on sealant.

Mr FORREST—My question was why that could not be contracted out and I think you have answered it. The whole fuselage would have to go.

CHAIR—You would have to provide facilities on base anyway, even if a contractor came in and did the job. They cannot take the plane.

Group Capt. Sargeant—That is correct.

Mr FORREST—Perhaps on that theme, are there other elements like that which need an individual, dedicated building? Was outsourcing considered for discrete items of maintenance and so forth?

Group Capt. Sargeant—In terms of facility requirements?

Mr FORREST—Rather than Defence building a new dedicated building to do it, private enterprise could do it.

Group Capt. Sargeant—All the buildings we looked at this morning basically have day-to-day functional dependencies with the main hangar, so they have to be on Amberley. After we mark a test, if in fact it does go to contract, the contract will have to operate in those facilities.

Mr FORREST—That is the nature of your contracting out anyway. It is actually on-site?

Group Capt. Sargeant—Yes, that is correct.

Mr FORREST—Could you just lead us through the reasons why there are so many individual buildings right across the site? We have seen half of them this morning and there are still a lot listed. Why are there so many? Can't you consolidate a bit more and get better economies of building construction?

Group Capt. Sargeant—That is what we are trying to do. Certainly in terms of 501 Wing we are trying to ensure that facilities are closer to the main hangar. For example, when we look at the non-destructive inspection or we look at the bonded panel, it is on the other side of a hangar. It introduces significant inefficiencies because larger panels have to be taken right around the entire hangar. We are relocating those into purpose-built facilities so that they will be proximate to the areas they serve. A good example is probably wings. You saw the distance that the wing maintenance facility is away from the main hangar and, because of servicing requirements and also because we lack an overhead gantry, the wing can traverse between the main hangar and the wing maintenance facility up to six times. As you saw, the wing maintenance facility will now be directly adjacent to the main hangar.

Mr FORREST—How will it be conveyed from one to the other?

Group Capt. Sargeant—Right now, we still convey them on trolleys, but it is a very short distance. The further we transport these, the greater the potential for damage. They are quite costly items.

Senator CALVERT—Has there been any damage so far?

Group Capt. Sargeant—We had some damage to the stabilisers but not to the wings as such. That is due more to the professionalism of our people. As well as that, I think you can appreciate that it is quite a significant inefficiency because you cannot move these things too quickly. They require people to monitor at all points along the wing as it is moving. It goes down the main thoroughfare. Then we also have to manoeuvre it through those extraordinarily narrow doors in what was a motor transport garage.

Senator CALVERT—Would you move them around on a windy day?

Group Capt. Sargeant—As long as there is appropriate supervision, there is not normally a problem. That is a key issue: there has to be appropriate supervision at all points in the movement of the wing.

Brig. Kelly—In addition to the technical areas, a number of other areas have been looked at for co-location to make best use of common facilities. An example would be the Security and Fire Training School and the Airfield Defence Wing which will be co-located and can make common use of some facilities. A number of the facilities belong to different commands within Air Force, which makes it somewhat difficult to co-locate them, and some of the functions are so different. I suppose you would say that No. 82 Wing and No. 301 Air Base Wing headquarter buildings are similar in nature and form, but they cannot be co-located because 82 Wing obviously needs to be near its squadrons and 301, which is the landlord for the organisation, should be at the front gate where it can perform that function appropriately.

Air Cdre Growder—We are trying to co-locate the training services activities. Also, we are trying to put the gymnasium in a new building where we have Medical Flight right now because the physical training instructors are part of health services. In our concept, we are trying to get the like activities as close together as is sensible and practical to do.

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—That extends to the case of 301 Air Base Wing headquarters. We currently have about seven buildings at which administrative functions are being performed. We are trying to bring them together in the one headquarters. It is the same with storage. We have a number of storehouses around the base. We are trying to put them all into a central area. There is a conscious effort to bring things together.

Mr FORREST—You have probably answered my question by doing it anyway. I was amazed today, driving around, how easy it would be to meander on to this base, either for mischief or for any activity, and that security is so minimal.

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—One of the items in the submission is a perimeter fence right around the base.

Mr FORREST—Where is that?

CHAIR—There is a reference to the type of fencing.

Mr HOLLIS—Related to that, have you had any security problems with people coming on to the base? Have you never had a security problem?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—We have people coming onto the base; they are duly picked up very quickly and taken off the base.

Mr HOLLIS—Do you have people patrolling?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—We have patrols—we have dog teams and security police patrolling the perimeter. There is a road going around the base.

Mr HOLLIS—Have you ever had any damage? I remember that some years back there was a fire at Albatross in one of the hangars—it had been lit. Have you ever had any major problems here on the base?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—No, not in my time. I am not aware of any.

Air Cdre Growder—We also drum into our own people that they are also responsible for the security of their own area. So if they see someone wandering around it is their job to challenge them; it is not someone else's job. You find that people will be challenged. If they look lost they will be asked what they are doing and looked after.

Mr FORREST—I am not allowed to ask questions about the cost estimate. Which item on there is actually the item?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—This one.

Mr FORREST—I am satisfied on that.

Mr HATTON—This is a lot of money that you are spending. This is a big statement about the future of Amberley. You have basically been in Dodgy Brothers circumstances for the past 40 or 50 years with a lot of the material that you have had on the base. Given that you have made the decision to go with the F111 until 2020 or so, do you envisage that you will have to do a lot more in the future apart from what is being proposed here?

CHAIR—By way of further building development.

Mr HATTON—Further building developments and so on to deal with the other problems that you have on the base.

Air Cdre Growder—Yes, we would like to do other things. The ideal world

would have us moving our accommodation back out of the noise sensitive areas—the housing probably back up the hill. But that has already been accepted as part of the base master plan. We have a base works priority committee and over the last 18 months they have been through this to work out exactly what we saw as the priority items to make sure, as you said, that we can step through to at least 2020. Not a lot of major development has really happened since the F111 arrived in the early 1970s and we see these as the sorts of things that need to be done, firstly, for the environment, secondly, for OH&S reasons and, thirdly, for productivity. They are the main ones that we would like to step into. But, as I say, I believe that there will be other issues.

CHAIR—You are basically telling us that your master plan has other projects envisaged but they will be subject to funding availability.

Air Cdre Growder—They will.

Brig. Kelly—The current capital works plan includes provision for the replacement of the living-in accommodation on base, as the Air Commodore mentioned. There is a requirement to store the stores and aircraft procured from the US to support the extended life of this aircraft, but no decision has been made as to where that will be. Amberley may not be the best place to store it. There may be other options, such as the DNSDC at Moorebank. I do not know whether those studies have begun or been completed.

There will, however, be other works that I cannot identify now over the period of another 22 years. A lot of the buildings that we looked at today, which appear to be in fairly good shape, will need over 22 years some sort of mid-life upgrades or refurbishment to keep them going—although the evidence that you have seen today indicating that we have kept most of the base from World War II would not give us a lot of encouragement there, I suppose.

CHAIR—Where is the break-even graph, if I can use that terminology—even though 2020 sounds a long time away I can still remember the controversy when we bought the F111. Would it be that a future aircraft replacement for the F111 would continue ideally to be located at Amberley but because of, say, shorter range or whatever it may have to be, for instance, further north. Is the focus over time as you look to F18 derivatives or something like that—F22s or whatever they are up to—going to change? When do we stop building at Amberley on account of the F111? Is it that we continue building because it would be compatible with a replacement aircraft?

Air Cdre Growder—I do not think any real study has been done as yet to determine what would be the replacement aircraft for the F111 or the F18.

CHAIR—I think we are well aware of that.

Air Cdre Growder—But Amberley is accepted in the Air Force as a base of the

future. The urban encroachment is not there, and that is why buying the land has given us some guarantee of being able to keep away. I also see that in the future, hopefully, aircraft engines may become a bit quieter and the noise issue in the community might not be such a big issue. Where the break-even point is I imagine would depend on the aircraft that is actually chosen, but I am quite confident, from the Air Force's perspective, that Amberley is definitely guaranteed as an airfield for the future.

CHAIR—Irrespective of the future aircraft type?

Air Cdre Growder—Well, I think then we would just look at what other aircraft you have in your inventory and, if there is pressure on other bases, it could well be that they get relocated to Amberley if that is the decision that is made at that time.

CHAIR—I guess the answer to my question is that it will happen when the Air Force decide they need a new strike and reconnaissance aircraft, and it will be another ten years before they get it.

Air Cdre Growder—Definitely. I think the gestation time is that long.

Brig. Kelly—The point you raised is one of the most difficult planning issues that we face. When do we stop putting capital investment into a property that we either plan to dispose of or we are not exactly sure what we will do with it in 10 years time? A decision to not do capital works means that people start to suffer because of the poor condition of buildings, and it gets to a point where we also do not want to do maintenance on them. In this case it will depend on the study into the replacement for the F111.

Senator CALVERT—I have been thinking about the demonstration we had this morning of firefighting, and I ask the obvious question: do we need to have a fire training facility? Why can't they be trained at the facilities at Eagle Farm or whatever? Why do we need a special facility? Is it because you use special fuel in these particular planes? Why do they have to be trained in-house? Why can't they be trained outside?

Air Cdre Growder—Could I seek your indulgence, Mr Chairman, to introduce the expert, the squadron leader who showed us around this morning.

CHAIR—Please sit down. You heard the question, which was why do we train the people on the base for specific purposes, as we saw this morning, when maybe they could go off to presumably a normal public fire brigade school. Is that what you are suggesting, Senator Calvert?

Senator CALVERT—Well, every airfield has its own facilities.

CHAIR—You are talking about a commercial airport.

Senator CALVERT—Why do they have to be done in-house? Why can't you take your personnel outside rather than go to the expense of putting a lot of capital in? It is quite obvious that you have been doing it on a shoestring as it is anyway. I wondered whether you have investigated the possibility of going outside the base to do your training privately.

Sqn Ldr Kimber—We have extensively investigated it. This project has been through the Air Force committee process to see if it was in fact viable, given that civilians carry out training. What we discovered was that they do carry out firefighting training but they do not carry out and are not prepared to undertake the training of advanced firefighters and airfield fire controllers, which is unique to what we do within the Air Force in particular. As a result, we looked into the viability of their trying to develop those mechanisms and those training schemes and it was not found, as part of our research and investigation, that that was a viable proposition for them. It was more economical for us to pursue it. Indeed, as part of our new facilities proposal, we identified that we may be able to lease the facilities in the future if they do have unique aspects that they wish to undertake but do not have to maintain the overall skills we need for our airfield fire controllers and indeed our firefighters in the ADF.

On the shoestring budget, I should say that the budget for the training is sufficient for us to meet the requirements. The facilities have been the only issue that has posed a problem. I can continue with the world-class training standards that we have maintained, particularly if the facility is upgraded, to overcome the environmental and OH&S concerns that I raised this morning.

Air Cdre Growder—The other point that I would like to add is that they did, as part of the process of looking at this facility, try to enter into an arrangement with the Queensland fire authority. That got basically down to the wire and then they withdrew because I think they had other commercial imperatives. So we have been quite innovative in trying to come up with a facility that would help.

Sqn Ldr Kimber—It is fair to say it was actively pursued and was not found to be viable. Indeed, we found that there were economies of scale by continuing with it ourselves.

Senator CALVERT—Do you see the new facility as having the possibility of bringing people in from outside and giving them specialist training in firefighting techniques?

Sqn Ldr Kimber—Most definitely. There are a number of issues that I could have touched on today, and that is one of those. It has been identified that the leasing proposition is a possibility and that we could recoup some of the funds outlay by virtue of training—as I mentioned before, specialised civilian aspects here at the school—and indeed the ADF firefighters in the wider area within south-east Queensland can also access

a facility to maintain their skills and improve their standards.

Senator CALVERT—How many personnel would you be training there on an annual basis?

Sqn Ldr Kimber—The exact figures we have given in the documentation. Just going back over them, annually it is approximately 200 that we put through there from the ADF—specialised firefighters—and there may be a capacity to take on other people within the facilities, but obviously there is a limited access time that people can have to it. Of the courses that I mentioned today, in some courses the majority of the time is spent actually on the fireground. That would limit the use from outside agencies, and we can only get so many firefighters through there at a given time, but throughout the year we envisage that there may be a couple of windows of opportunity to undertake some leasing propositions.

CHAIR—Does that answer your question, Senator?

Senator CALVERT—I think it does, yes.

Mr FORREST—Can I follow on from that theme because it is a good issue. I am just wondering whether this kind of capital investment has to occur on every base. I am wondering if Defence could say in the broad, ‘There is a proposal to consolidate,’ rather than invest this sort of capital here at Amberley as well as at Richmond, Williamtown and all the other bases.

Brig. Kelly—This is where all ADF fire training is done. In fact Army fire training was closed down a number of years ago; that is now undertaken here. No doubt each base has its own very local training area and airfields to keep their skills up, but that has already occurred—this is the consolidated ADF fire training facility.

Sqn Ldr Kimber—In support of that, Oakey was actually part of the area development in looking at constructing firefighting training facilities. When ours was mooted and indeed progressed within the Air Force, it was seen that ours was the better option and that they would actually access ours as part of their firefighting commitment.

CHAIR—When you refer to Oakey, are you are talking about the involvement of Singaporeans or just within ADF?

Sqn Ldr Kimber—Lieutenant Colonel Maclean could probably identify that further, but I think that was the go.

Lt Col. Maclean—The only firefighters there are the ADF firefighters who provide that service for the republic.

CHAIR—So the Singaporeans will not be requiring our help in that regard?

Lt Col. Maclean—No. We are providing that service for them.

CHAIR—While they are at Oakey?

Lt Col. Maclean—Yes.

Brig. Kelly—Basically the Singaporean presence is an Air Puma squadron. All the support to keep them in the air from the point of view of the base—i.e. fire and rescue, communications, air traffic control and so on—is provided by the ADF.

Mr FORREST—Are the firefighting crews dedicated crews or does everybody do it? Who does this course?

Sqn Ldr Kimber—In the Army and Air Force they are dedicated firefighters. The Navy is now looking at the restructuring of it to see how much of the firefighting skills will remain a specialist option, but they will roll them into a mustering that also has other activities. But in the Army and the Air Force it is inherently a specialist skill and that is their primary role within both those services.

Mr HATTON—We have established now that you need it, you need to spend the money, you will have to spend more later, that there is a long lifetime for the F111 and that the way the base is configured will probably work for what will come after it. If you have to fly them, you have to use bombs and do a bit of practice. You have saved this area from encroachment. What problems have you got with the Evans Head weapons range in terms of coastal encroachment and so on? How long do you think you will be able to use that into the future?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—The Evans Head range is located in a national park environment and is looked after by the New South Wales state government. As long as that remains a national park, there is no chance of encroachment.

Mr HATTON—So you have got that well into the future?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—We have no problem with the New South Wales government.

CHAIR—What is the title on that? Is that Defence land, within the park?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—No, it is not Defence land. We have an arrangement with the New South Wales state government and we hold on to that. We do not own it, but there are no moves, as far as I am aware, to take it back or exclude us from it.

Mr HATTON—How much is that used? Delamere has now become extremely popular. Everyone wants to use it. In fact, they think they may have to do another four

OLAs so that we can keep using it as well as the Singaporeans, the Americans and so on. How much use is made of the Evans Head range?

Air Cdre Growder—Evans Head would be used every day and probably four nights of the week when we fly locally. Obviously, when the squadrons are deployed the usage is fairly minimal. I think it is fair to say that, over the 20-odd years that I have been using the place, there has been some encroachment, but we are cognisant of that and we take care not to annoy the people who are moving into that area. Australians love to live on the coast and that will be a pressure for us, but we have tried to be a sensible corporate citizen in using the range, and generally people accept that.

CHAIR—I raised a question today which is more for the record, but I would like some undertaking—considering the magnitude of this particular project—that future expansion of the computer networks on the base is adequately catered for in conduits and things of that nature. Computers and things not only are positioned around walls but can be in the middle of a room, and it strikes me that you should be reticulating computer cable as you would reticulate air and electricity. I do not see that the ongoing need is to plug a little hand-held operation in and then take that and plug it in somewhere else or write out a yellow form. In the reticulation process you would probably be accessing computer records with a laptop computer plugged directly into your mainframe or something of that nature. Whilst a lot of that is somebody else's problem, I would be disappointed if the communications between buildings that is arising from this extensive development did not take account of that future need.

Brig. Kelly—The upgrade to services, as part of this project, does replace most of the copper cabling around the base with fibre optic, so that is supporting the principle you speak of. Brian, do you have any comments on the actual design of the buildings?

Mr Sizer—Not really; except that, if 1 Division Headquarters at Enoggera is anything to go by, all the buildings will be fully conduited and wired for computers today and into the future.

CHAIR—Without being an expert in your line of business, I constantly argue that a computer is most valuable if the information that you are going to deal in is inputted at the very first opportunity. We still seem to have a paper mentality where we operate on paper up to a point and then put someone in a room and tell them to key that information in to the computer. Often things are lost or mistakes made in that process, so the sooner it can be done the better. Rather than discovering all that later and having to get in there with a jackhammer and take up half the floor of the hangar, I think that knowing you have some plastic pipes and a draw wire that would cater for your future requirements would make it easier.

Brig. Kelly—As part of the design process, we will be conducting value management workshops with all of the users. While I do not think that will result in huge

changes to the way they do business, often as part of that process—rather than just looking at the facilities and rebuilding what we currently have—we look at what has to happen at that particular facility. That often leads to changes in process or procedures, in addition to developing the building. So it can be a useful part of the value management to look at the procedures that are used in addition to the actual facilities required.

Air Cdre Growder—The No. 6 Squadron building we saw this morning will be hooked up to the normal RAAF communication network, the secure network and the computer aided management system. I have subsequently found out that the computer aided management system will, as you expressed, get rid of the yellow page. Part of that process is that it will be electrified from the word go, and the entry will be done by the air crew, the technical people or whomsoever, and the book will become a thing of the past. That will be introduced to the F111 world in the latter part of next year into the year 2000. It is already being introduced as we speak into 38 Squadron—the Caribou Squadron—at Amberley. There will be a period of time where they will run parallel systems to make sure that they do not lose any information, but that is the way we are going.

CHAIRMAN—Thank you. As I said, as long as you see these things materialise in the actual building construction.

Mr HOLLIS—There is one thing that we have not mentioned here. I would imagine that there would be quite a lot of washing down of planes, et cetera on the base. What procedures do you have in place to stop pollution getting into the main water streams around here? Do you have special provision there?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—For many of the processes there are steps taken to contain any chemically important items at the source before they are flushed away or before the residue goes into the mains.

Mr HOLLIS—Where are the planes washed down? I take it that the planes are washed down every so often.

Air Cdre Growder—Where we first walked into No. 1 Squadron hangar, there was an aircraft parked out in front there. Just back from us near the road, there is a wash-down area and it has a particular drain that captures that water. My understanding is that that water is then fed into the system but it is controlled. I believe that the agents that are used are nowhere near as toxic as they were thought to be in the past.

Mr HOLLIS—From memory, on other bases, they have special containers. In Townsville—and they wash down a lot there because of the seaspray—when we were there doing an inquiry they made a big point about how all that water is captured and not fed into the main system.

Group Capt. Sargeant—There are certainly designated points for washing down aircraft. My understanding is that the materials that we use to do the cleaning are all approved. It is not necessary to say that they are biodegradable, but certainly they have to be approved. Secondly, there are dedicated catchment traps at each of those points to ensure that we do not pollute the environment. We actually capture stuff that comes off the aircraft.

Mr HOLLIS—You capture, but then what do you do with it?

Group Capt. Sargeant—At this stage we have no filtering beyond that.

Mr Sizer—You also have a problem with fuel spillage and washing fuel into the stormwater drains. With the newer ones that have been constructed, they have grated side drains and they collect all the water that comes off the aprons. It then goes into separator pits which separates the oil and the fuels from the water before the water is discharged to the stormwater drains. Those pits are emptied of oil and fuel periodically which is then taken to a toxic waste dump. I would imagine the same thing happens with the wash-down pads.

Mr HOLLIS—Can we get that clarified. You may want to take it on notice and get back to us. It seems to me that we are making much of this going to be the base into the future. If it is, I would like to be assured that, in a few years time, we are not going to come up with a problem with all this stuff getting into the waterworks. Maybe you could get back to the committee on that. I would not mind knowing about the various wash-down places and exactly how the material is used and what happens to it.

Brig. Kelly—We will document that, certainly.

Mr HATTON—I just wanted to commend Cottee Parker on the presentation we had this morning. Having that computerised simulation, even though it was conceptual, really helped us to see the base as an entire entity before we looked at it on the ground. I think it was extremely well done.

Senator CALVERT—There has been plenty of evidence to suggest that we will be looking at using F111s through at least the next 20 to 25 years. We know the Americans have stopped using them. Are you confident that you can obtain all the spare parts you need to keep our fleet of F111s going? In particular, I think I asked a question of some of you this morning about that particular sealant you use that you obtain from the Americans; obviously it is an essential part of keeping the planes in the air. What if they stop making it in the states? Do you have a contingency plan for providing spare parts and sealants and all the essential bits and pieces that are needed?

Air Cdre Growder—I will step back to your first part about keeping going. In 1995, I think it was, we formed a very large team to look at that very issue: what do you

have to do to keep this aircraft going until whatever year, and what could the year be? We understood even at that stage the Americans were debating about whether to keep the F111. That team looked at every item that goes into maintaining the F111. They worked out what they could get, whether they could source the original part or another part that might be used on another aircraft, whether it be an F16 or something like that. Out of that, we came up with a very composite list.

Also, as the Americans have been withdrawing their aircraft, they have been offering us parts at 10 per cent of the list price. So we have bought quite a significant number of parts. That is why some storage is now required that we did not foresee probably five years ago. By having that supply of parts, we now know the life cycle.

I think the other part is: we have been operating this aircraft for 20-plus years ourselves, so we have a very deep understanding of what it takes to keep it going. We have not always relied on them for everything. We bought a hybrid aircraft to start off with. That is not exactly matched by any of their models over there. So we have had to do a lot of our own weapons clearances, our own maintenance type profiles. I think that has given us the Australian independence; it has been forced on us, probably. On the sealant, I will refer to my expert here.

Group Capt. Sargeant—I will also address the first question as well. There was an extensive study done to look at the extensibility of the life of the type through to 2020. Even at that point, our expectation was that we would have the option to purchase only peculiar spares from the USAF; in other words, if the item on the F111 was common to one of their other aircraft variants, that would be available to us. In fact, it has gone quite the opposite. Originally we were looking at, I believe, in the order of several tens of thousands of lines to review. We are now looking at reviewing 90 peculiar but also common items. So we will be reviewing over the next two to three years something like 130,000 line items, both peculiar and common to the aircraft, coming out of the US inventory.

In addition to that, the study looked at a whole range of other issues. For example, another thing that comes out of it is what we call a cold proof load test. It is a facility that we have previously put our aircraft through in the US but which the US will now discontinue, and it allows us to certify the airframe for so many more flying hours. In fact, we will be building a cold proof load test facility at Amberley, and we expect to have that up and running by 2001.

We have looked at the issue of data. There is data scattered across this country and across the US dealing with the F111. We have had quite an extensive study done. What we are doing is putting together an extensive index of all the data that is available not only in this country but also in the US and at various OEMs in the US so we can access that data. We have also been establishing quite substantial linkages with US OEMs. In fact, we can guarantee the support of this aircraft with the availability of data design

services well into the future. So it is quite extensive.

Mr FORREST—What is an OEM?

Group Capt. Sargeant—Original equipment manufacturer; for example, Lockheed Martin, or Pratt Whitney for the engine—my apologies.

The sealant is a recent development. As I mentioned previously, in our deseal/reseal we had to pluck out or pick out the old sealant and apply the new. This we can spray directly over the old sealant, with a guarantee of integrity. That was developed, as I understand, for the Gulf crisis, and I know of no plans for the US to withdraw that. So my understanding is that a supply of that will certainly be available well into the future.

Senator CALVERT—They use it in other planes?

Group Capt. Sargeant—Yes. It certainly was not developed specifically for the F111.

Senator CALVERT—Given that the F111 has proved to be such an efficient bomb platform to deliver these new age bombs, and the Americans still have not come up with a replacement for the F111, is it stupid to think down the track that we might end up retraining American pilots how to fly F111s when they pull them out of the desert?

Air Cdre Growder—We would have to be the only source to do it. We are the only ones who have got them.

Mr FORREST—I am sure Brigadier Kelly will be disappointed if someone does not ask him if this site has flooding problems, given our experience down at Williamtown. I will put the question to him because he may have got himself well briefed on it.

Brig. Kelly—Since this time yesterday, I have undertaken an extensive study of drainage at Amberley. I am advised that there have been no instances of flooding in recent years. However, some work was done on the base as a result of the 1974 floods and a fairly large bung has been constructed on the south side of the base in the direction of the Bremer River to protect the base from flooding in that direction.

Mr FORREST—That protects the base, but does that exacerbate problems for somebody else as soon as you put levies up, and a bung is just another name for a levy?

Brig. Kelly—It stops water getting onto the base, as opposed to directing water going off the base, which was the issue we talked about yesterday.

Mr HOLLIS—I have a couple of questions about the passenger terminal there.

How often do aircraft with passengers land there at Amberley?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Our regular service is Tuesdays and Fridays and there are many ad hoc internal movements. There are substantial movements when we have exercises and when we have foreign troops coming onto the base.

Mr HOLLIS—When you said regular services, are they military services or commercial?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—They are military services.

Mr HOLLIS—It is not like Williamtown which is also used commercially?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—No. That is strictly a military air movements section at this time.

Mr HOLLIS—If you have overseas flights, I take it that they have to use Immigration, Customs and the whole lot?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Yes.

Mr HOLLIS—And there are facilities there now for Immigration and Customs?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—There are no dedicated facilities. When we are aware of an international flight coming in, we get the people from the Department of Customs and the quarantine people to come out. They have impromptu arrangements where they process people.

Mr HOLLIS—With the extension to the terminal building will there be facilities there for Customs and Immigration?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—There will be dedicated facilities for those purposes.

Senator CALVERT—And quarantine?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Quarantine, yes.

Mr HOLLIS—That was used somewhat during Tandem Thrust, was it?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Yes, it was.

Mr HOLLIS—And how did it work out on an ad hoc basis, as you say?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—The immigration man set up his desk. I think it was in this case somewhere to the side of the air movements section and he processed the people through it. It just crowded everything up. It holds things up.

CHAIR—That is why you want to expand it, because if you can more adequately deal with this problem.

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Yes.

Mr HOLLIS—There has never been any discussion or any request submitted for there to be a civilian component there. Is it too close to Brisbane?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—There is a proposal to put a civil air terminal on the other side of the airfield. The Ipswich Regional Development Corporation has had its sights on the site for some time. It has not been firmed up as yet. They are looking at a twice daily commuter service between Ipswich and Sydney.

Mr FORREST—When we were here for our last inquiry at Amberley—and I think that was during Tandem Thrust—there were tents and people everywhere. It was pretty untidy. I know that is probably not something that occurs a lot, but is there a proposal to have areas set aside like that for tents? They were bivouacked everywhere. They were all over the place.

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—We had up to 1,200 marines in tentage on the base at the time. They were located mainly in that old compound where the Air Training Corps is now; they put in special duckboard flooring for that purpose. It is the only way you can readily accommodate those numbers of people at short notice.

CHAIR—Surely, that is also part of what an exercise is all about?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Definitely.

CHAIR—You cannot ring up your enemy and say, ‘Please let me know where we are going to fight so I can put the sewerage system in.’ That is probably the test of the exercise, isn’t it?

Wing Cmdr Steinbach—Yes.

CHAIR—I think we have covered the matter extremely well, and thank you for all that. As there are no further questions, it is proposed that the correspondence that has been circulated to members of the committee and the late submission from the Queensland Department of Environment and the Department of Defence response be received, taken as read and incorporated in the transcript of evidence. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The documents read as follows—

CHAIR—Before closing I would like to thank the witnesses who have appeared before the committee today and those who assisted our inspections this morning. They were very informative. I also thank my fellow committee members, *Hansard* and the secretariat.

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 and submissions presented at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 2.57 p.m.